James Vigus

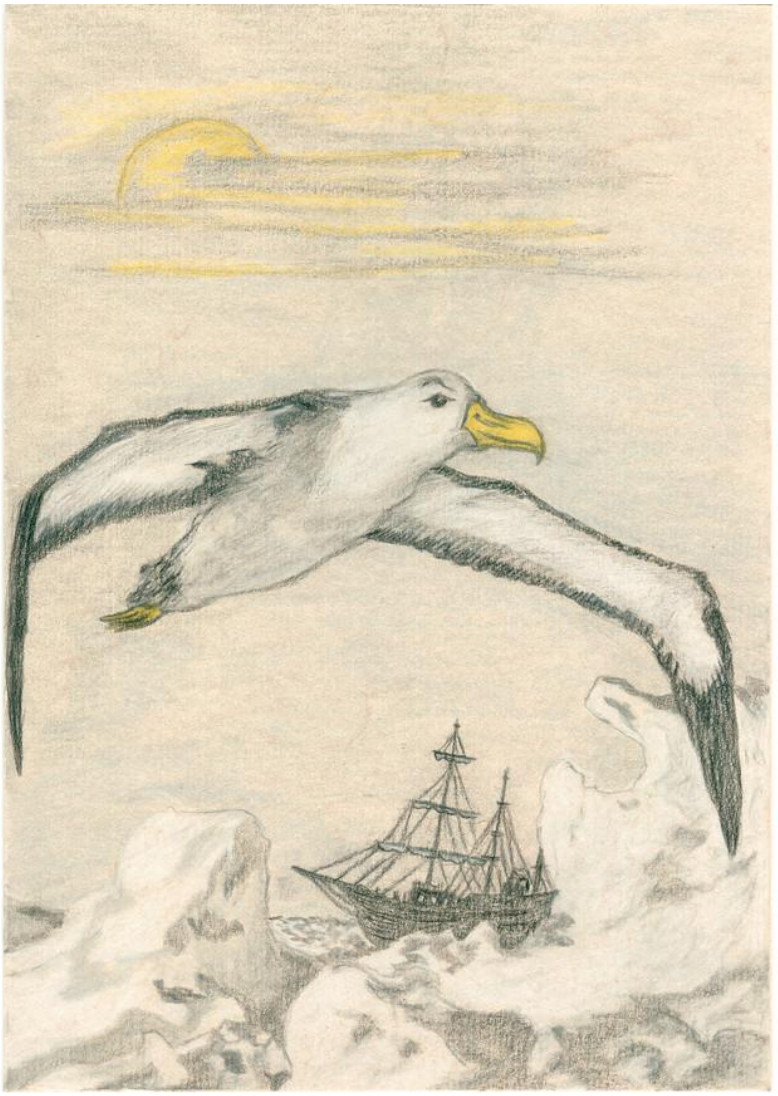
presents

Il Canto dell'Antico Navicante: Edizioni 1798 e 1834 di Samuel Taylor Coleridge

(Handwritten manuscript, Bergamo, 2014)

translated and illustrated

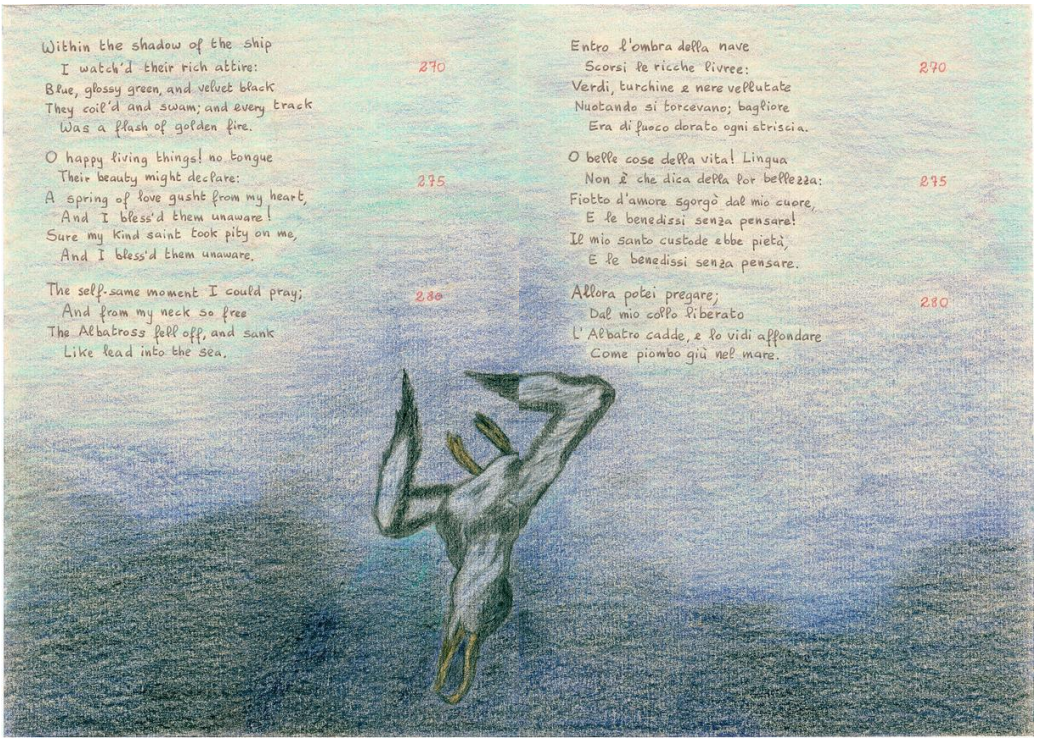
by Ugo Gervasoni



THE *COLERIDGE BULLETIN* HAS RECEIVED AN ITALIAN TRANSLATION of Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Ugo Gervasoni. It is a beautifully presented work. Both main versions of the poem are provided (1798 and 1834), handwritten; and hand-drawn, coloured illustrations accompany the 1798 version, while the 1834 version has explanatory notes. In

the translation to the latter version, the gloss is also translated. An afterword and select bibliography complete the book.

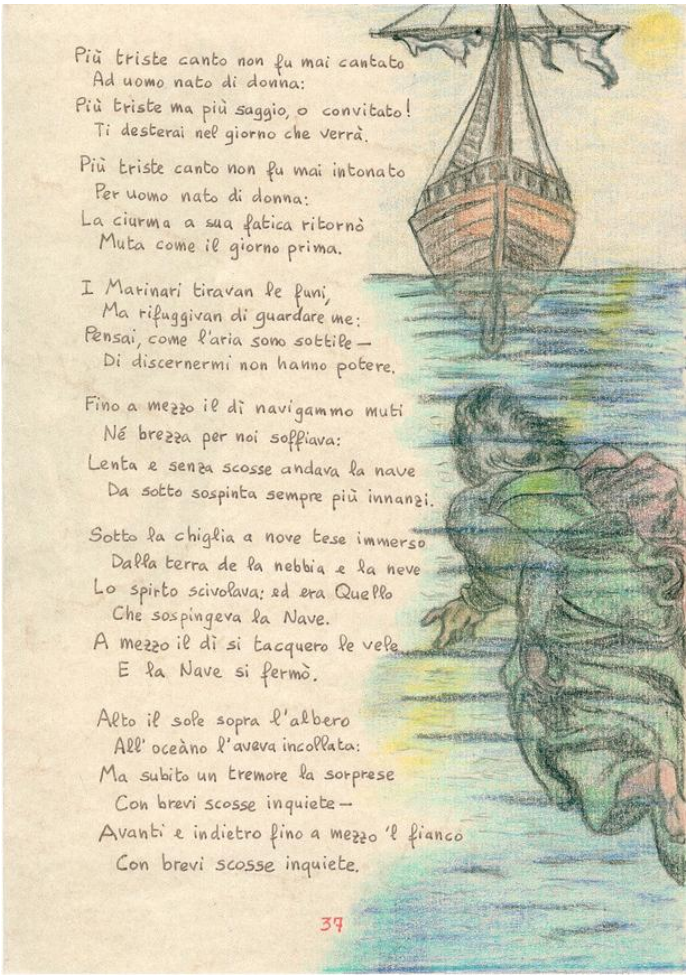
The English text faces the Italian translation, and as Ugo Gervasoni mentions, the illustrations sometimes link two pages: 'At the end of part 4, for example, when "The albatross fell off, and sank/ Like lead into the sea", I suggest the sinking of the bird by colouring the two facing pages in different shades of blue.' The blue darkens as the albatross sinks.



Ugo Gervasoni also explains his metrical choice: he uses the eleven-syllable line that is the traditional measure of Italian poetry, combining it with the eight-syllable line, 'in order to give the stanzas variety and suppleness' and thus a musical quality to echo the original. Archaic language also helps to provide an Italian equivalent of Coleridge's diction. The title – by contrast, for instance, with 'La ballata del vecchio marinaio' in Beppe Finoglio's translation published in 1964 – borrows the word 'navicante' from Dante's *Purgatorio*, producing an alliteration: 'Ant*ic*o Nav*ic*ante' (emphasis added). A note at the end of the 1798 version indicates the careful reflection that has informed such translation choices. Ugo Gervasoni quotes Julian W. Abernethy's comment in his edition of 1907 to the effect that the words 'Ancient Mariner' provide the keynote of the poem, by suggesting something remote and uncanny. He adds: 'I too was struck by Coleridge's unusual word choice, before I encountered Abernethy's observation. Hence the decision to recur to the epithet Antico Navicante in my version, which effects a change from the soft music of the palatal consonants

and alveolars of the original to the harder sound of the velars and labiodentals in the translation, in order to preserve an echo of the enchanting spatial and temporal distance' (p. 71, trans. JV).

A similar attention to sound throughout the text produces a suitably haunting effect, enhanced by the images. It is to be hoped that this work will reach many readers of Italian—not that Italian is needed to appreciate the English text and illustrations.



Publication

The Friends of Coleridge would like to support a publication by subscription of Ugo Gervasoni's *Il Canto dell'Antico Navicante*. A minimum print run of 25 copies would cost each subscriber £20 plus p&p. The work is hand-written throughout, with illustrations on every page of the parallel text, and the work 130 pages in all. If you would like to subscribe, please contact Graham Davidson at gcdd@bluyeonder.co.uk