

The poem is declared, as Coleridge himself declared it, to be "a work of pure imagination".

If we are rifling the urns where the dead bones of fact have long quietly rested, it is because the unquenchable spirit which gives beauty for ashes is there not wholly past finding out.¹³

Yet in the succeeding chapter Professor Lowes is discussing Coleridge's interest in animal magnetism and ocular hypnosis.

The Mariner is no more a mesmerist than he is the Wandering Jew. Yet though neither, he partakes, through the alchemy of genius, of the attributes of both. And in the eye that holds spell-bound one of three, another of those strange 'facts of mind' which were Coleridge's darling studies has lent to a denizen of the borderland between two worlds that 'eredibilizing effect' which secures for these shadows of imagination our willing suspension of disbelief.¹⁴

There is nowhere here or elsewhere in the book a hint of the history behind the Mariner's glittering eye, a suggestion of the poet's bold transfer of the glitter in the dead seamen's eyes (Death) to those of the Mariner (Life-in-Death). The poet introduces the Mariner abruptly and repetitively as one with a glittering eye. A similar emphasis is given to the epithet *bright-eyed* (as in the penultimate stanza of Part VII); and when the fearful question, "Why look'st thou so?", is asked, our thoughts revert to that sinister glitter. Now consider this stanza in Part III:

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye,

and these stanzas also from Part IV:

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 241. ¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 254.