

than a horse, and such like; instead of that beautiful interest in wild tales, which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with tales and old wives' fables in childhood, you had been crammed with geography and natural history!

Hang them!—I mean the cursed Barbauld crew, those blights and blasts of all that is human in man and child.

It was thirty-three years after the writing of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* when Coleridge's nephew heard his uncle's account of Mrs. Barbauld's criticism. Frankly, I think that Coleridge was chaffing her, as he chaffed John Pinkerton, the Scottish historian and antiquary, when the poet dined beside him at Mrs. Barbauld's and echoed his dispraise of the anonymously published *Lyrical Ballads*, and especially of *The Ancient Mariner*. Coleridge knew his Mrs. Barbauld (who, thought Hazlitt, "strews the flowers of poetry most agreeably round the borders of religious controversy") and his private impatience with the second of her opinions may have led him to disparage lightly (as Professor Lowes and certain other critics disparage rather heavily) the moral quality of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. That moral quality, as Hugh Fausset has shown, is

no mere miracle of inventive fantasy, but an involuntary but inevitable projection into imagery of his own inner discord. The Mariner's sin against Nature in shooting the Albatross imaged his own morbid divorce from the physical; and the poem was therefore moral in its essence, in its implicit recognition of creative values and of the spiritual death which dogs their frustration.¹

¹Hugh I'Anson Fausset: *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, p. 166.