

P E N G U I N



C L A S S I C S

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Selected Poetry

PENGUIN



CLASSICS

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE:
SELECTED POEMS

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was born in 1772 at Ottery St Mary, Devon, the youngest son of a clergyman. A precocious reader and talker as a child, he was educated at Christ's Hospital School, London, where he began his friendship with Charles Lamb and wrote his early sonnets, and Jesus College, Cambridge. In 1794 he met Robert Southey and together they planned Pantisocracy, an ideal community to be founded in America, but the project collapsed after a quarrel. Coleridge's sonnets were published in the *Morning Chronicle*, and in 1795 he wrote 'The Eolian Harp' for Sara Fricker, whom he married in the same year, although the marriage was an unhappy one. He first met Dorothy and William Wordsworth in 1797 and a close association developed between them. Coleridge wrote his famous 'Kubla Khan' in the same year, followed in 1798 by 'Frost at Midnight'. In 1798 he and Wordsworth published the *Lyrical Ballads*, which marked a conscious break with eighteenth century tradition and included one of Coleridge's greatest poems, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. During a visit to the Wordsworths in 1799 he met Sara Hutchinson, who became his lifelong love and the subject of his Asra poems. In the following year Coleridge and his family settled at Greta Hall, Keswick, where he completed the second part of 'Christabel', begun in 1798, but also became addicted to opium. In 1804 he separated from his wife and spent the following years in the Mediterranean or London, returning in 1808 to live with the Wordsworths in Grasmere. In 1809 he established *The Friend*, a political, literary and philosophical weekly journal, which he published regularly over the next year. After a disagreement with Wordsworth in 1810 Coleridge left the Lake District for ever, centring his life thereafter in London, where he gave his *Shakespeare Lectures*. He presented his literary and philosophical theories in the two-volume *Biographia Literaria*, published in 1817, and collected his poems in *Sibylline Leaves*. In an attempt to control his opium addiction, he entered the household and care of Dr James Gillman at Highgate in 1816. Here he was to remain for the last eighteen years of his life, writing a number of late confessional poems and prose works, including *Aids to Reflection*, published in 1825. Coleridge died in 1834, having overseen a final edition of his *Poetical Works*.

Poet, philosopher and critic, Coleridge stands as one of the seminal figures of his time. William Hazlitt wrote: 'His thoughts did not seem to come with labour and effort; but as if borne on the gusts of genius, and as if the wings of his imagination lifted him from off his feet', and Wordsworth called him 'the only wonderful man I ever knew'.

RICHARD HOLMES was born in 1945 and educated at Churchill College, Cambridge. His books include *Shelley: The Pursuit* (1974), which won the Somerset Maugham Award; *Footsteps* (1985), hailed by Michael Holroyd as 'a modern masterpiece'; *Coleridge: Early Visions* (1989), which won the Whitbread Book of the Year Prize, and its companion volume, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (1998), winner of the Duff Cooper Prize; *Dr Johnson & Mr Savage* (1993), which won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize; *The Romantic Poets and their Circle* (1997); and *Sidetracks* (2000). He has presented biographic works of Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin and Rudyard Kipling for Penguin Classics and a highly praised critical study of Coleridge for Oxford Past Masters. He has also made several radio documentaries, one of which, *The Nightwalking* (1995), received a Sony Award. Richard Holmes is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, a Fellow of the British Academy and, in 1992, was made an OBE.

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COLERIDGE
SELECTED POEMS

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

RICHARD HOLMES

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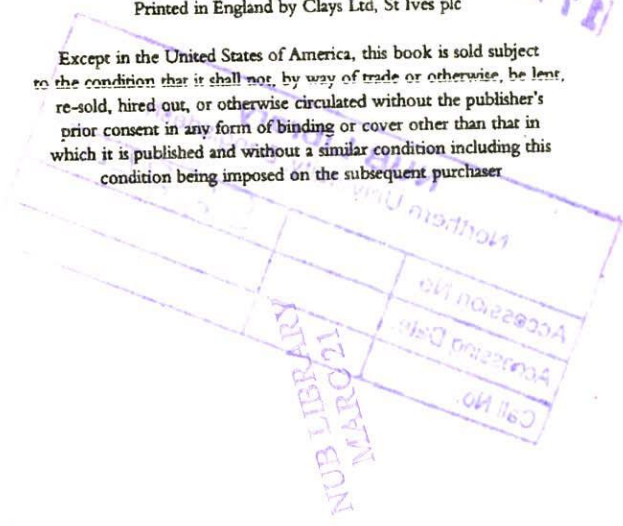
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INTRODUCTION

COLERIDGE IS A GREAT and daring poet. His presence is felt echoing through the English language by anyone who has heard the magical names of "Kubla Khan" or "Christabel" or "The Ancient Mariner". But he is also an unknown poet, much of whose work has been neglected for many years, and whose range and skill has never been properly appreciated. "The Poet", he once said, "is the man made to solve the riddle of the Universe."

The aim of this new selection of one hundred and one poems is to transform Coleridge's reputation, and find him a new generation of readers. What did the older generation think of him? From T. S. Eliot to Ted Hughes, he has been considered as a man "briefly visited" by the Muse in a period of dazzling intensity, quickly obliterated by the darkness of drugs, metaphysics and obsessive theological speculation. He was thought of as the author of "a handful of golden poems" (the influential phrase comes from his hostile biographer E. K. Chambers) which were produced in a few inspired months between 1797 and 1798, when Coleridge was intimate with William and Dorothy Wordsworth.

It was held that much of his best poetry was fragmented or unfinished. The critic I. A. Richards even went so far as to say that Coleridge wrote "no completed poem to match his fragments". It was generally considered that his inspiration died at the age of thirty in 1802, after he had written "Dejection: An Ode". Coleridge, in other words, was a sort of poetic star-shell or firework, who lit up the sky for one brilliant bursting moment, and then dropped back to earth, burnt out and blackened into prose, conservatism and apologetic piety.

This selection sets out to prove otherwise. It offers a new way into the intellectual scope, the beauty and the fine workmanship of Coleridge's poetry over his whole lifetime. Darkness, disaster, drugs and metaphysics certainly feature a great deal in his work (see "Limbo", No. 68, dated 1811-15). The possibilities of visionary and religious experience are a recurrent, and often agonizing, concern

(see "A Dark Sky", No. 79, dated 1807). The question of creative inspiration – its sources, its loss and its recovery – is a major preoccupation in a quite modern way (see "The Blossoming of the Solitary Date-Tree", No. 77, dated 1805). But these are part of a larger effort of artistic experiment, and psychological exploration, which Coleridge sustained over more than forty years.

He began writing poetry in 1789 at the age of sixteen, and continued to the year before his death. Though he did many other kinds of literary work – as a journalist, travel-writer, naturalist, dramatist, critic, public lecturer, philosopher and theologian – it is the poetry that gives us the continuing story of his imaginative life, at its deepest symbolic level. His letters (six volumes of them), and even his remarkable Notebooks, do not go further than the poetry (see "Human Life", No. 67, dated 1814–15).

* * *

The Chronology will show that Coleridge lived in many places during his working life – the West Country, Germany, the Lake District, the southern Mediterranean, Leicestershire, Wiltshire, London and Highgate – and these wanderings in search of a spiritual home are also reflected continuously in his poems. Coleridge is a master of imaginary or dream topography, but these vistas are often inspired by his physical journeys, especially in the unsettled years between 1794 and 1816. During all these years he was very rarely at one address for more than eighteen months at a time. The exterior landscapes of his travels are gradually converted into the interior heartlands of his poetry (see "Constancy to an Ideal Object", No. 58, dated 1825).

Coleridge's restlessness, which he eventually defined as his own "Inquiring Spirit", was a measure of the times in which he lived. From the fall of the Bastille in 1789, through the twenty-year upheaval of the Napoleonic Wars, to the industrial agitation leading up to the Great Reform Bill of 1832, Coleridge lived through what Tom Paine called "the times that try men's souls", and what modern cultural historians call the Romantic revolution.

Fundamental questions were being asked about the scope of individual liberty, the meaning of political democracy, and the impact of science on religious beliefs. The complexities of human psychology (a favourite Coleridge word), the discoveries of the early explorers and anthropologists, and the symbolic patterning of

folklore, dreams and mythology, were suggesting new depths to the human spirit and the Kantian notion of our "subjective" perceptions of time and space. All these touched on the poetry that Coleridge wrote, from the early years when his verse is still a scrapbook of his student reading and speculations (see "Invisible Powers", No. 96, dating from 1795). It is impossible to appreciate a great sequence like the Conversation Poems (see Nos. 22–30, which date between 1794 and 1807) without seeing the breadth of this intellectual engagement with the world around him.

Coleridge believed that the poet, "described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity" (see chapter 14 of his *Biographia Literaria*, dated 1817). He also thought that the poet should be a "metaphysician": one who uses language to explore the nature of existence, the experience of being alive and conscious in a mysterious universe:

A great Poet must be, *implicite* if not *explicitè*, a profound Metaphysician. He may not have it in logical coherence, in his Brain & Tongue; but he must have it by *Tact*: for all sounds, & forms of human nature he must have the *ear* of a wild Arab listening in the silent Desert, the *eye* of a North American Indian tracing the footsteps of an Enemy upon the Leaves that strew the Forest; the *touch* of a Blind Man feeling the face of a darling Child.

(*Letters*, 13 July 1802)

From these beliefs, which transcend a merely "magical" approach to poetry, arose the fundamentally autobiographical and philosophical drive of his imagination. Even his highly stylized ballads are powered by this sense of daring enquiry into spiritual and psychological truths which everyone can recognize in themselves (see "The Three Graves", No. 31, with its preface, dated 1809).

Coleridge used poetry to ask the most profound questions he could conceive:

The Poet is not only the man who is made to solve the riddle of the Universe, but he is also the man who feels where it is not solved and which continually awakens his feelings . . . What is old and worn out, not in itself, but from the dimness of the intellectual eye brought on by worldly passions, he makes new: he pours upon it the dew that glistens, and blows round us the breeze which cooled us in childhood.

(*Lecture on Poetry*, 12 December 1811)

What is our place in the natural universe? What are the sources of human love and hope? What are the origins of evil, guilt, cruelty and depression? Can we learn anything from the extremes of suffering and disaster? Can we depend, in any sense at all, upon a visionary or religious view of the world? And what is the meaning, if any, of the creative faculty: the gift which produces the consolations of poetry and art itself, in a troubled existence of change, grief, and decay? These are the great, recurrent themes of Coleridge's one hundred and one poems in this selection.

* * *

In order to reveal them fully, a basic shift in the way of approaching Coleridge's work is put forward. This selection abandons the principle of simple chronological ordering, which has been traditionally used since the *Poetical Works* of 1834. Instead, for the first time, it reorganizes Coleridge's poetry within eight thematic sections. Each section is provided with a short explanatory preface, and every poem has a full critical note at the back of the book. The order of composition is retained within the sections, as far as it is known.

The editor's prefaces and notes can of course be ignored; or they can be read through consecutively as a single, continuous essay on Coleridge's poetic development. What counts is the new and startling coherence that emerges in the sequence of poems, giving an entirely fresh and enlarged sense of Coleridge's creative powers. The transforming effect of this will be immediately clear from the new layout of the Contents page.

Coleridge himself once argued against thematic selection. "After all you can say, I still think the chronological order the best for arranging a poet's work. All your divisions are in particular instances inadequate, and they destroy the interest which arises from watching the progress, maturity, and even the decay of genius." (*Table Talk*, 1823.) This is a strong argument; and characteristic of Coleridge's interest in the psychology of the creative process.

Yet in practice, Coleridge also used thematic divisions in his own collections, and they are peculiarly appropriate to his otherwise bewildering versatility. His edition of *Sibylline Leaves* in 1817 contained five separate sections: (1) Political Events, (2) Love Poems, (3) Meditative Poems, (4) Odes, (5) Epigrams, Moralities, and Things without a Name, together with an early grouping of the Ballads.

The present selection is an extension of these generic categories

into eight sections. Broadly speaking, the early Meditative Poems become the full Conversation sequence; the Ballads are extended to everything Coleridge wrote in this narrative form; the Love Poems become the mysterious Asra sequence; the Odes expand into the revealing Confessional group; and the Political Events become an ideological survey of Coleridge's ideas, with an unexpected emphasis on comedy. The grouping of Sonnets, Hill Walking Poems, and Visionary Fragments are essentially new.

All are based on the same principle of thematically developed sequences, retaining the chronological order of composition within each section. So the natural parabola of "progress, maturity and even decay" (which Coleridge regarded as so important) is never lost. Moreover, as explained in the Prefaces, each section reflects a new phase in his biography as a poet, over forty years.

This should help the general reader explore Coleridge's wonderful energy and range of output; as well as the student who is assigned some particular aspect of his craftsmanship, such as the intimate, blank-verse conversation line; or the magical imagery of the ballads; or shifts in ideological rhetoric in the public poems. It is hoped that certain sections – the emotional intensity of the Asra Poems, the physical immediacy of the Hill Walking Poems – will be something of a revelation even to Coleridge scholars.

Most important of all, the thematic principle of selection should produce virtually a new Coleridge for the contemporary reader. In the first place, his whole work is given a strong and immediate autobiographical quality, with the beautiful group of Conversation Poems lying at its centre. Next, the weight of Coleridge's output is moved away from the juvenilia, and thrown towards the moving, but far less familiar, work of the middle years such as the Asra Poems and Confessional Poems. Finally, Coleridge's sustained and conscious interest in the experimental and psychological aspects of his craft, is revealed in the Ballads and Visionary Fragments as the work of many years.

Altogether this shift of emphasis radically alters the idea of Coleridge's creative "peak" lying isolated in a few, inspired, golden months in his mid-twenties in the Quantock hills. Coleridge may have written, or at least begun, many of his best-known pieces at this time; though several of them were worked on for long periods afterwards. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" did not reach its final form until 1817; "Christabel" took nearly three years to reach Part II in autumn 1800; "The Eolian Harp" and several of the other

Conversation Poems received significant additions over more than a decade; and even "Kubla Khan" was probably being altered as late as 1816.

Coleridge's Notebooks really suggest that he had several, recurrent bursts of intense poetic activity during his lifetime: in 1797-8 in the Quantocks; in 1801-2 in the Lake District; in 1804-5 in the Mediterranean; in 1807-11 in London; when he first moved to Highgate in 1816-17, and again after 1825. The shape of his creative career is less of a single peak, and more of a jagged mountain range (though with many chasms and landslides, to be sure).

More than fifty of the poems in this selection date from 1802 onwards (the year in which his inspiration was supposed to have been extinguished forever). So more than half were begun between the ages of 30 and 60, and this significantly alters our profile of Coleridge's poetic development and maturity. If the later poems tend to be shorter, they are also denser in texture and allusion. Yet there are still long, sustained poems after 1820, such as "Alice Du Clos" (No. 36), "The Garden of Boccaccio" (No. 70) and "The Delinquent Travellers" (No. 101). This last is representative of a mass of comic and occasional verse which is still being disinterred from Coleridge's later letters, notebooks and inscriptions. From 1827 a number of editors of rival anthologies – the annual *Bijou*, *Amulet*, and *Literary Souvenir* – were pressing him for new and unpublished work, and the demand produced an Indian summer of inspiration.

When urged by an old friend, Lady Beaumont, in 1828 to rekindle his "spirit of imagination", Coleridge characteristically denied that he could "resume Poetry" at so late a date. But in the very act of denying it, he gave one of his most moving and suggestive descriptions of that inspiration at work:

Is the power extinct? No! No! As in a still Summer Noon, when the lulled Air at irregular intervals wakes up with a startled *Hush-st*, that seems to re-demand the silence which it breaks, or heaves a long profound Sigh in its Sleep, and an Aeolian Harp has been left in the chink of the not quite shut Casement – even so – how often! – scarce a week of my Life shuffles by, that does not at some moment feel the spur of the old genial impulse – even so do there fall on my inward Ear swells, and broken snatches of sweet Melody, reminding me that I still have that within me which is both Harp and Breeze.

(*Letters*, 17 March 1828)

So if the youthful, inspired Coleridge is still very much present and never quite lost; the darker, more subtle and meditative Coleridge of the mature years makes a formidable and disturbing appearance, in a way that I hope will be challenging to many readers. The familiar author of "Kubla Khan" (No. 74) is also the strange author of "Limbo" (No. 68), and "Phantom or Fact" (No. 71) and "The World That Spidery Witch" (No. 91).

The thematic sections are also intended to place Coleridge's familiar major poems in a larger and more revealing critical context, which may again help the student to read them freshly. The Sonnets, with their rapid stylistic development, influenced later Victorian writers such as Christina Rossetti to find an intimate domestic and religious voice. The Ballads form a consistent, brilliantly crafted experiment into various aspects of folklore and fairytale, which created a revolution in Romantic archetypes of disaster and possession, pushed to extremes of psychic violence and disruption. Coleridge's interest in symbolic, transcendental and non-rational experiences, often with strong sexual and occult undertones from the Gothic tradition, opened up a powerful line of narrative poetry through Keats and Robert Browning. By contrast, the tender, low-key meditative style of the Conversation Poems, with their quiet English radiance of sacred pastoral, established a characteristic voice that continued through Tennyson, Hardy and Edward Thomas.

The Hill Walking Poems show how Coleridge's poetry grew almost physically out of his striding, observant movement through wild landscapes and uplands. The remarkable love poems dedicated to Sara Hutchinson (Wordsworth's sister-in-law, and Coleridge's muse-figure for more than a decade after 1799) are brought together in the new sequence of the Asra Poems. Their mixture of obsessive sensual imagery, and intense philosophic speculation, provides a revealing new context for that great, pivotal Romantic poem – about depression and imagination – "Dejection: An Ode" (No. 50). Similarly, the baffling genius of "Kubla Khan" (No. 74) takes on an even greater resonance when it is read as just one of a whole sequence of Visionary Fragments which Coleridge worked on and discarded over many years, including the haunting, isolated images of "A Sunset" (No. 78), "The Tropic Tree" (No. 80), and "Psyche" (No. 81).

* * *

A great deal of Coleridge's poetry is experimental, in the sense that it pushes the limits of conventional eighteenth-century forms. The Odes of Thomas Gray and William Collins (which he read at Cambridge), the blank verse meditations of William Cowper, the introspective sonnets of William Bowles, the descriptive landscapes of James Thomson, the lurid Border Ballads collected by Bishop Percy, all these are absorbed and then transformed into something new and distinctive. Coleridge's correspondence with Charles Lamb in 1794-6, his discussions with Wordsworth in 1797-8 (later continued as formal criticism in the *Biographia Literaria*) and his brilliant series of six long literary letters to the translator William Sotheby in the summer of 1802, record this process of creating a new Romantic theory of poetry and the imagination.

The key propositions of this new Poetics are threefold: passionate expression, intensity of subjective conception, and organic unity of thought and feeling. Writing to Sotheby in 1802, he remarked how even an emotional eighteenth-century poet like Bowles (only ten years his senior) seemed to lack the intensity and intellectual risk he was looking for:

Bowles has indeed the *sensibility* of a poet; but he has not the *passion* of a great Poet. His latter writings all want *native Passion* – Milton here and there supplies him with an appearance of it – but he has no native Passion, because he is not a Thinker – and has probably weakened his Intellect by the haunting Fear of becoming extravagant.

(*Letters*, 10 September 1802)

For Coleridge, extravagance or intellectual daring was essential to poetry. To solve the riddle of the Universe, it was necessary to take risks. All his images of the poet-metaphysician as wild Arab, or American Indian, or Blind man (which can also be found throughout the poetry) are symbols of praeternatural sensitivity and daring. The poet is a metaphysical hunter, a mariner on the high seas of existence, an enquiring spirit in the remotest hills (see the preface to the *Hill Walking Poems*).

As so often in Coleridge, this most serious and subtle conception of the poet's task can also be found in a memorable and self-mocking joke. Quite late in life he recalled the difference between himself and Robert Southey as writers:

Southey once said to me; You are nosing every Nettle along the Hedge, while the Greyhound (meaning himself, I presume) wants only to get sight of the Hare, and flash, — straight as a line! he has it in his mouth! Even so, I replied, might a Cannibal say to an Anatomist, who has watched him dissecting a body. But the fact is — I do not care two pence for the Hare; but I value most highly the excellencies of scent, patience, discrimination; free Activity; and find a Hare in every Nettle I make myself acquainted with.

(British Library, Egerton MS. 2801 f.126)

Yet for all its originality, Coleridge's poetry also reflects a distinct and beautiful literary tradition. It is deeply English, bucolic, and tenderly observant, with a strong idealizing, religious or neo-Platonic strain. His characteristic imagery is drawn from sun, moon, and stars; rivers, lakes and seas; woods, wild animals, and birds; gardens, villages, and harbours. One can never forget that his father (who died when Coleridge was only nine) was a country parson. It is recognizably the same world as that of Constable, Turner, and Samuel Palmer. Even its more exotic elements are drawn from sources deep within the popular late eighteenth-century culture: Gothic romance, folk ballads, travellers tales, scientific lectures, church hymns, and of course the Bible.

What Coleridge did as a poet was to make this familiar world seem suddenly strange and perilous; and, as we can now see, distinctively modern. The metaphysical daring of his poetry called everything into question. Beneath the material surface always lay a spiritual mystery, waiting to be recognized. In middle age, during the worst period of his opium addiction (as revealed by the Confessional Poems), when he was thought to be long-finished as a poet, Coleridge wrote this in his Notebook:

I would compare the human Soul to a Ship's Crew cast on an unknown Island (a fair Simile: for these questions could not suggest themselves unless the mind had previously felt convictions, that the present World was not its whole destiny and abiding Country). What would be their first business? Surely, to enquire what the Island was? in what Latitude? what ships visited that Island? when & whither they went? . . . The moment, when the Soul begins to be sufficiently self-conscious, to ask concerning itself, & its relations, is the first moment of its *intellectual* arrival in the World. Its *Being* — enigmatic as it must seem — is posterior to its

Existence. Suppose the shipwrecked man stunned, & for many weeks in a state of Idiocy or utter loss of Thought & Memory. And then gradually awakened . . .

(*Notebooks*, 1809)

For Coleridge, poetry was this continual awakening into the mystery of the world that surrounds us all.

THE POET'S CHRONOLOGY

(The numbers in brackets refer to poems in this collection.)

- 1772 Born 21 October, the youngest and favourite child of the Reverend John Coleridge, vicar and headmaster at Ottery St Mary, a small market town on the river Otter in Devon. His eight elder brothers subsequently became soldiers, doctors or clergymen; he himself was destined for the church.
- 1778 Coleridge remembers long talks with his father about the moon and stars. Already a precocious reader, dreamer and talker.
- 1780 Intense rivalry with his elder brother Frank, and arguments with his mother. Runs away one night after a quarrel to the river Otter. Period of childhood fevers and nightmares.
- 1781 Sudden death of his father, after Frank had been sent away to India as a soldier.
- 1782 Sent away by widowed mother as "charity boy" to Christ's Hospital School, London. Rarely returns home, except for summer visits, over next decade. Refers to himself as "orphan".
- 1789 Early sonnets (Nos. 1-2), and poems in the Christ's Hospital "Book of Gold". "An Ode on the Destruction of the Bastille" (No. 93). Friendship with Charles Lamb. Reads poetry of William Bowles (No. 7).
- 1791 Exhibitioner to Jesus College, Cambridge. Death of his beloved sister Anne, commemorated in Sonnets (Nos. 3-4.)
- 1792 Wins Browne Poetry Medal, with "Ode on the Slave Trade" in Greek. Works hard, reads widely.
- 1793 Fails to win Browne Poetry Medal, with "Ode on Astronomy" in Greek. Political activity, drinking, debts, unrequited love. First published poem in the *Morning Chronicle*. December: runs away to London, enlists in 15th Light Dragoons.
- 1794 Coleridge nurses a fellow dragoon with smallpox quarantined in Henley Pest House. April: discharged from Dragoons as "insane", returns to Cambridge. June: meets Southey at

- Oxford, plans Pantisocracy, writes topical sonnets (Nos. 6–9), begins "Religious Musings" (No. 95). "To a Young Ass" (No. 94). *December*: twelve sonnets published in the *Morning Chronicle*. Abandons Cambridge degree.
- 1795 Settles in Bristol with Southey, gives Political Lectures, begins "The Destiny of Nations" (No. 96). First Conversation Poems written "To a Friend (Charles Lamb)" (No. 22) and "The Eolian Harp" (No. 23) to Sara Fricker, whom Coleridge marries on 4 October. Quarrels with Southey, abandons Pantisocracy.
- 1796 Publishes ten issues of his radical Christian newspaper the *Watchman* in Bristol (see No. 24). *April*: first book published *Poems on Various Subjects*. *September*: first child, Hartley, born (see Nos. 10–12). "To the River Otter" (No. 5) completed. Evidence of opium-taking from letters.
- 1797 *January*: Settles in cottage at Nether Stowey, at foot of Quantock hills, North Somerset, near Tom Poole (see No. 25). Completes play *Osorio*, and publishes enlarged second edition of *Poems*. *June*: brings William and Dorothy Wordsworth to Alfoxden, and writes "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (No. 26). *October*: "Kubla Khan" (No. 74). *November*: begins "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (No. 32).
- 1798 *February*: "Frost at Midnight" (No. 27). Begins "Christabel, Part I" (No. 33). £150 annuity from Wedgwood brothers. *April*: "Fears in Solitude" (No. 28), and "France: An Ode" (No. 98). Collaborates with Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads*. *September*: to Germany for a nine-month period of academic study.
- 1799 *February*: enrolls at University of Gottingen. Learns of death of second child, Berkeley. Climbs the Brocken in the Hartz mountains (see No. 39). *July*: returns to England. "The Devil's Thoughts" (No. 99). *November*: first visit to the Lake District, meets "Asra" (see No. 45), and writes ballad "Love" (No. 35).
- 1800 In London, writing political journalism for the *Morning Post* and translating Schiller's *Wallenstein*. *July*: settles at Greta Hall, Keswick in Lake District near the Wordsworths at Grasmere. *October*: completes "Christabel Part II" (No. 33) which Wordsworth rejects for second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Long and often solitary hill walking expeditions (see Nos. 40–42).

- 1801 Bedridden until the spring, studies Kant and Schelling. Now begins heavy opium-taking which will become serious drug-addiction over next fifteen years (see No. 60). *July*: visits Asra at Durham and Scarborough, and writes "Day-Dream" poems (Nos. 47-8). *November*: marital discord, goes to London to write political journalism again.
- 1802 Returns to Greta Hall. *April*: "A Letter to Sara Hutchinson" (No. 49) written and then edited as "Dejection: An Ode" (No. 50). Letters to William Sotheby on the metaphysical nature of poetry and inspiration. *August*: solo fell-climbing expedition over Buttermere and Scafell. "Hymn before Sun-Rise" (No. 43). Spends winter with Wedgwoods in Wales.
- 1803 Writes will, takes out life insurance, dreams of Mediterranean escape, returns to Greta Hall. *June*: third edition of *Poems*. More political journalism. *August*: Highland walking tour, partly to break opium addiction. "Pains of Sleep" (No. 60). Southey moves into Greta Hall. Christmas at Grasmere.
- 1804 *April*: sails to Mediterranean in wartime convoy. Visits Sicily, settles in Malta as Private Secretary to the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball. Beautiful Notebook entries on his travels, recollections of Asra, and fragmentary poems including "Phantom" (No. 52) and "A Sunset" (No. 78).
- 1805 *January*: appointed Acting Public Secretary at Valletta. Spends summer at Governor's Palace at San Antonio, where he writes "The Blossoming of the Solitary Date-Tree" (No. 77) and probably begins "Constancy to an Ideal Object" (No. 58). Opium addiction increases. *September*: leaves for Sicily, Naples and Rome.
- 1806 Visits galleries in Rome and Florence. Mixes with German expatriate intellectuals (including Tieck and Von Humboldt), and befriends American painter Washington Allston. *June*: flees French invasion and sails for England from Livorno, nearly dying on voyage. Determines to separate from his wife, and start new career in London, lecturing on Art and Literature. In fact settles with the Wordsworths and Asra at Coleorton, Leicestershire.
- 1807 *January*: listens to Wordsworth's *Prelude* (dedicated to Coleridge) and writes "To William Wordsworth" (No. 30), "The Tropic Tree" (No. 80), and Asra fragments (Nos. 53-6). *June*: stays with Poole at Stowey in further attempt to break opium addiction, and meets De Quincey.

- "Recollections of Love" (No. 57). *November*: moves back to London to plan lectures. "To Two Sisters" (No. 61) dedicated to Mary Morgan and Charlotte Brent.
- 1808 *January*: begins first Lecture Series, "Poetry and the Principles of Taste", at the Royal Institution, with central concept of the dynamic Imagination. *July*: reviews Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* for the *Edinburgh Review*. Plans to publish a newspaper, *The Friend*, in London. *September*: moves to Allan Bank, near Grasmere, with Wordsworths and Asra. *November*: issues prospectus for *The Friend* to be published from Penrith.
- 1809 *June*: after many delays begins *The Friend*, a journal of political, philosophical and literary essays, with Asra as his amanuensis. It runs regularly for twenty-eight weekly issues, publishing "The Three Graves" (No. 31) and "A Tombless Epitaph" (No. 62).
- 1810 *March*: Asra leaves abruptly for Wales; last issue of *The Friend*. *May*: Coleridge leaves Allan Bank and returns to his wife at Greta Hall, Keswick. *October*: moves back to London to lecture and seek opium cure. The chance remark of a mutual friend, Basil Montagu, brings into the open Coleridge's quarrel with Wordsworth (see Nos. 54 and 80). Long confessional entries in the Notebooks.
- 1811 *January*: settles with the Morgans and Charlotte Brent in Hamlets Smith. Heavy drinking and opium-taking; journalism for the *Courier*. Friendship with Henry Crabb Robinson of *The Times*. The start of several Confessional Poems, "The Pang More Sharp Than All" (No. 63), "Hope and Time" (No. 64), "The Suicide's Argument" (No. 65) belongs to this period. *November*: second Lecture Series, "On Shakespeare, Milton and Modern Poetry", at the Philosophical Society (which Byron and Rogers attend).
- 1812 Moves with Morgans to Berners Street, Soho. *May*: third Lecture Series, "On Shakespeare and the Drama" at Willis's Rooms in fashionable Mayfair. Begins to rewrite his play *Osorio* (1797) as *Remorse* (see No. 87). "Psyche" (No. 81) and "The Visionary Hope" (No. 66) at about this period. *November*: fourth Lectures Series, at the Surrey Institution.
- 1813 *January*: *Remorse* runs successfully at Drury Lane for twenty nights, text is published in three editions, earns £400. Dines out, meets Madame De Staël, plunges deeper into opium. *August*: John Morgan bankrupt and flees to Ireland. *October*:

- Coleridge moves to Bristol and Bath, gives fifth and sixth Lectures Series, and supports Mary and Charlotte Brent in lodgings at Ashley, near Bath. *December*: opium crisis at the Greyhound Inn, Bath, brings Coleridge close to death.
- 1814 Taken in by his old Unitarian friend Josiah Wade, at Bristol, and treated for six months for addiction and suicidal depression. *June*: during slow recovery meets Washington Allston again, who paints his sombre portrait (National Gallery); friendship with Dr Joseph Brabant; many confessional letters, poems and fragments, including "Human Life" (No. 67). Essays on Kantian aesthetics ("On the Principles of Genial Criticism") for *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*. *December*: settles with re-united Morgan family at Calne in Wiltshire. Plans collected edition of his poems and essays.
- 1815 Preface to his poems expands into an Autobiography. *May*: correspondence with Wordsworth about "The Excursion". Autobiography now expands again into two-volume *Biographia Literaria*, largely complete by September. The marginal glosses to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (No. 32) written at about this period, as the *Sibylline Leaves* (collected poems) is prepared. Correspondence with Byron about publication of his works; writes celebrated Preface to "Kubla Khan" (No. 74). *December*: *Zapolya*, a Christmas play with songs (see No. 88).
- 1816 Grant from Literary Fund, and £100 gift from Byron. *March*: moves back to London with the Morgans to publish his works. *April*: further opium crisis, settles with the young surgeon James Gillman and his wife Ann at Highgate, London (see "Limbo" No. 68 and "The Garden of Boccaccio" No. 70). *May*: *Christabel, Kubla Khan and the Pains of Sleep*, published by Murray through Byron's influence. *December*: *The Statesman's Manual*, a political sermon, with important Appendix on symbolical language. Hazlitt's bitter attacks begin in the liberal press (see No. 100).
- 1817 Coleridge finds new London publisher, Rest Fenner, who brings out the accumulated body of his work. *March*: *Second Lay Sermon*; *July*: *Biographia Literaria* (with accounts of his early poetry and collaboration with Wordsworth in Chapters 4, 10, and 14); *August*: *Sibylline Leaves* (with early groupings of the Ballads, Conversation and Confessional Poems); *November*: *Zapolya*. Meets J. H. Green (future president of the

- Royal College of Surgeons) who will replace Morgan as his amanuensis. "The Poet in the Clouds" (No. 17).
- 1818 *January*: new series of Lectures "On European Literature" at the Philosophical Society; meets his first Highgate "disciple" Thomas Allsop. Introduced to William Blake's poetry by the Swedenborgian C. A. Tulk, MP. *April*: two pamphlets in support of Peel's Child Labour Bill (limiting child labour hours in factories). *November*: three-volume edition of *The Friend* (with essays on language and the nature of logic, vision and inspiration). *December*: second Lecture Series "On the History of Philosophy". T. L. Peacock caricatures Coleridge as Mr Flosky, the incomprehensible metaphysician, in *Nightmare Abbey* (alongside Shelley and Byron).
- 1819 *March*: publisher Fenner goes bankrupt and reneges on all Coleridge's royalties, amounting to about £1,000, leaving him penniless. Financial support comes from Gillman, Green and Allsop. *April*: meets John Keats in Millfield Lane, Highgate, and talks of nightingales. Contributes to *Blackwood's Magazine*. Hartley appointed Fellow at Oriel College, Oxford.
- 1820 *March*: renewed plans for his *Opus Maximum* with J. H. Green, to be the philosophical "harvesting of my Life's labour". Begins a series of confessional and autobiographical letters to Allsop, who starts recording Coleridge's table talk. *May*: Hartley dismissed from Oriel Fellowship for eccentricity and drunkenness; Coleridge tries unsuccessfully to retrieve the situation with passionate letters and interviews defending his son (really himself). "To Nature" (No. 18).
- 1821 Dictating first part of *Opus Maximum* to Green, which will become a separate treatise on Logic. Letters to Allsop discussing philosophical view of love and marriage. *September*: articles on "Witchcraft", "Faery Land" etc. for *Blackwoods Magazine*. Hartley in London, looking for literary work with Coleridge's help, but continually "vanishing" on drinking bouts.
- 1822 *February*: advertises (in the *Courier*) weekly philosophy classes at Highgate, as extensions of his talks with Allsop: two hours' dictation from the *Opus Maximum*, followed by an hour's discussion, for young men in their twenties (ideally post-graduates training for the Law, Medicine, or Church). These continue over next five years. The ms. of the *Logic*

- completed (but not published till 1990). *October*: celebrates fiftieth birthday sea-bathing at Ramsgate. Hartley returns to the Lakes, supposedly to teach.
- 1823 *January*: Coleridge's daughter Sara and nephew H. N. Coleridge meet at Highgate and fall secretly in love. H. N. Coleridge begins recording Coleridge's *Table Talk*. *April*: "Parnassus" dinner-party hosted by Monkhouse, at which "half the Poetry of England constellated": Coleridge, Wordsworth, Tom Moore, Samuel Rogers, Charles Lamb. *July*: working on a Life of Archbishop Leighton (the seventeenth-century Scottish divine) whose moral "aphorisms" Coleridge has used in philosophy classes and which will become *Aids to Reflection*. *September*: "Youth and Age" (No. 69). *December*: moves with Gillmans to 3 The Grove, Highgate, with new study and attic bedroom overlooking Hampstead Heath.
- 1824 *March*: elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, with an annuity of 100 guineas. *April*: brief estrangement from the Gillmans over his secret opium supplies from the Highgate chemist, T. H. Dunn. As part of reconciliation, "Thursday evenings" are established at Highgate when Coleridge's visitors and disciples can call without invitation for several hours of Coleridge's poetry recitations and "Oneversation". *June*: Thomas Carlyle's visit upon which he later based his satiric portrait of Coleridge as the mystic "Sage of Highgate".
- 1825 Hazlitt's critical assessment of "Mr Coleridge" and his wasted genius appears in *The Spirit of the Age*, deeply wounding Coleridge. *February*: writes his great sonnet "Work Without Hope" (No. 19) as part of a long poem to Ann Gillman, "The World That Spidery Witch" (No. 91). *May*: delivers lecture "On the Prometheus of Aeschylus" to Royal Society of Literature. Publication of *Aids to Reflection in the Formation of A Manly Character*, with Coleridge's meditations on the process of spiritual self-discovery, and an important concluding chapter on the nature of "mystical" or "poetical" experience, and the validity of "inspired" language in a scientific world.
- 1826 Still reacting to Hazlitt's attacks, writes "Duty Surviving Self-Love" (No. 20) and the comic apologia "A Character" (No. 100). Long letters to his nephew Edward Coleridge (a master at Eton), on the concepts of Evolution and Individuation, the "Ascent of Powers", and the metaphysics

- of "Hope". (These ideas were clearly intended as part of the unfinished *Opus Maximum*, to which the *Aids* was now seen as another prelude, like the *Logic*.) Probably visited William Blake at Fountain Court this or previous winter.
- 1827 *Spring*: during a period of illness and depression writes "The Garden of Boccaccio" (No. 70) to Ann Gillman. Growing interest in his unpublished poetry is encouraged by his nephew H. N. Coleridge, who continues with *Table Talk* at Highgate. (Coleridge has agreed to the marriage of Sara and H. N. C., who will become the most important Victorian editors of both his poetry and prose.) Begins his last ballad "Alice Du Clos" (No. 36) at this time.
- 1828 *March*: secretly writes that his poetic power is "not extinct". *June*: embarks on six-week tour, with Wordsworth and his daughter Dora, down the Rhine through Germany and Holland. Coleridge's Notebook sketches include "The Netherlands" (No. 92), and the comic "The Delinquent Travellers" (No. 101). *July*: *Poetical Works* published by Thomas Pickering in three volumes. Green is appointed Professor of Anatomy, and made Coleridge's chief literary executor. Editors of annual anthologies (*Friendship's Garland*, the *Amulet*, the *Literary Souvenir*) compete for Coleridge's poems.
- 1829 Progressive heart-failure begins to weaken Coleridge. *May*: second edition of *Poetical Works*. The famous Paris bookseller Galignani brings out a popular, but unauthorized, collection, *Poetical Works of Coleridge, Keats and Shelley*, which identifies Coleridge with the younger Romantic generation. *July*: Coleridge passes on a bequest of £50 to Hartley, who is adrift in the Lake District, writing sonnets. *December*: *On the Constitution of Church and State*, containing the concept of an independent "clerisy" or intelligentsia (including poets) who will shape and unify the national "culture" outside established political or religious institutions.
- 1830 Coleridge's health continues to decline, and he writes few letters, but H. N. C.'s *Table Talk* is recorded almost daily. Second editions of *Church and State* and *Aids to Reflection*. Coleridge has bequeathed the unfinished ms. of *Opus Maximum* to J. H. Green (which will eventually be published as volume 15 of the *Collected Coleridge*). "Phantom or Fact" (No. 71). Visits from the young philosopher John Stuart Mill, and John Sterling from Cambridge, continue to expand

- Coleridge's influence among youthful intellectuals. Death of Hazlitt, and last meeting with Wordsworth.
- 1831 Coleridge shows lively interest in Parliamentary Reform, though now an invalid confined to his rooms at Highgate. Significant American editions of *The Friend* and *Aids to Reflection* appear (edited by Professor Marsh of Vermont University), and Coleridge's poetry and prose is widely read by the New England Transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Edgar Allan Poe. Coleridge writes a short appreciation of Shelley's beliefs and genius.
- 1832 Coleridge's health temporarily improves as opium doses are increased. Talks for five hours at granddaughter's christening, and begins work on third revised edition of *Poetical Works* with H. N. C.
- 1833 Hartley's first *Poems* appear, dedicated to his father in a touching sonnet which refers to "Frost at Midnight" (No. 27). Coleridge makes a final visit to Cambridge for the British Association conference. Continues work on revised edition with H. N. C.; writes "To the Young Artist" (No. 21), "Love's Apparition and Evanishment" (No. 72) and "Epitaph" (No. 73), his last poems.
- 1834 *March*: publication of revised third edition of *Poetical Works*, the standard text (Coleridge refers to "my poetical publisher, Mr Pickle-Herring"). *May*: last visit to Highgate by Asra. The Gillmans, H. N. Coleridge and J. H. Green are in constant attendance at Coleridge's bedside. *5 July*: Coleridge makes last painful journey to his bedroom window to gaze over "the glorious landscape" of Hampstead Heath. Gillman begins opium injections. *24 July*: Coleridge writes a note requesting a legacy for his faithful maidservant, and tells Green that he knows he is dying but his mind is still clear: "I could even be witty". *25 July*: Coleridge slips into a coma and dies just after sunrise. Buried at Highgate Churchyard. H. N. C. writes a major re-assessment of Coleridge's poetry which is published in the *Quarterly Review*.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

I BEGAN COMPILING this selection of Coleridge's poetry over ten years ago, as I was working on his biography. It was purely for my own use, and took early shape as a treasured collection of notes and photocopies in a scarlet binder, which went with me to the Quantocks and the Hartz mountains, to Etna and to Highgate. As it grew more battered, it grew more interesting. It was my private, travelling edition of what I loved best and what intrigued me most about Coleridge's haunting work. As I added to it progressively, with annotations and cross-references, it began to shape itself in the way I have described in the introduction. It also became an instrument of research, a way of looking at the deep patterns of creativity which ran through Coleridge's troubled and restless life. I hope it has retained something of both these original impulses: personal affection and scholarly enquiry.

The primary aim of this edition is to present Coleridge afresh for the reader, through a new clarity of text, selection and commentary. The considerable textual difficulties behind many of the poems, like the problem of plagiarism or "adaptation", are clearly indicated in the Notes but not exaggerated. The discovery of a growing number of Coleridge's manuscript versions and later alterations has brought a notion of "textual instability" to many of his poems, particularly given Coleridge's life-long habit of revision. (See Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems*, OUP, 1994.) Nevertheless the two-volume *Poetical Works* edited by E. H. Coleridge (Oxford, 1912) which is based on the *Poetical Works* of 1834 (the last overseen by Coleridge himself in his lifetime) remains a sound basis for the general reader and student. This is the primary text used here.

However, as indicated in my notes, I have also consulted Coleridge's very important earlier edition, *Sibylline Leaves* (1817); the great Victorian edition by J. D. Campbell (1893); and Professor John Beer's scholarly Everyman edition (1974). Many points have been clarified by reference to *The Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited

by E. L. Griggs, 6 volumes, Oxford; and of course the great *Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Kathleen Coburn, four double volumes, Routledge (1957-90). The editorial work of Professor Heather Jackson has also been an inspiration.

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