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A COLERIDGE COMPANION

An Introduction to the Major Poems
and the *Biographia Literaria*

JOHN SPENCER HILL

M

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For Boyd R. Buttsworth

ὁ τοῦ βιοῦ στέφανος φίλια ἔστιν

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Preface

Like Tristram Shandy, this book can trace its conception to a particular event and point in time. It began in March 1976 from a colleague's stricken lament, as he was going off to lecture on Coleridge, that it is impossible for a non-specialist to teach Coleridge well because so many of his critics take too much for granted and tend to disappear without warning into impenetrable, swirling mists of aesthetic theory or metaphysics or theology. Somebody, he said, should explain their explanations.

The chapters which follow are an attempt to provide a readable distillation of Coleridge scholarship and to make the general reader aware of the major problems and major lines of analysis associated with the most frequently studied of Coleridge's works. Each chapter begins with a detailed account of the composition and publication history of the poem (or prose work) under consideration, followed by sections that take up specific questions of criticism (e.g. is 'Kubla Khan' a 'fragment?') or of relevant background information (e.g. Coleridge, Wordsworth and the Supernatural), and concludes with a summary of the various interpretative approaches to the work. It has been necessary, of course, to be selective and to arbitrate between various critical views, but I have tried to be both fair and comprehensive within reason. The book is not a descriptive bibliography but is rather, in intention at least, a work of genial criticism in which the reader is guided through the primary texts and secondary materials in an orderly, illuminating fashion.

Initially I proposed, naïvely enough, to cover 'all' of Coleridge, with chapters not only on the major poems and *Biographia Literaria* but also on the dramas, minor poetry and remaining prose works, and on Coleridge's philosophy, theology, politics and literary criticism. It did not take me long to see the impracticality of attempting so much in one short book and the necessity of

limiting myself to the major writings. As the book progressed, numerous other compromises were forced upon me by considerations of length. Undoubtedly the most regrettable of these is the omission of 'Christabel', which, had more space been available, would most certainly have been included.

My greatest debt in writing this book is to the many Coleridge scholars whose industry and insights have made it both possible and necessary. Their names appear throughout the text and in the notes at the end of the volume. Other debts are more personal in nature. I am profoundly grateful to my wife and our three children for their patience, encouragement and understanding; it has not always been easy, but they were more than equal to the task. The book is dedicated with great affection to Dr Boyd Buttsworth, physician and friend, whose concern and advice made the work possible. A simple dedication, however grateful and sincere, is no adequate recompense for so much kindness, generosity, wisdom and friendship. But it is at least a beginning.

*Ottawa,
Canada*

J. S. H.

List of Abbreviations

- AP* *Anima Poetae, from the Unpublished Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London, 1895)
- BL* S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria . . . with the Aesthetical Essays*, ed. J. Shawcross, 2 vols (London and New York, 1907; corrected edition 1954)
- BL [W]* S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. George Watson (London and New York, 1965; repr. 1975)
- CC* *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, general editor Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols and index (London and Princeton, NJ, 1967)
- CL* *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs, 6 vols (London and New York, 1956–71)
- CN* *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, 5 vols and index (London and New York, 1957)
- CPW* *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, 2 vols (London and New York, 1912)
- E&S* *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*
- EIC* *Essays in Criticism*
- ELH* *A Journal of English Literary History*
- HCR* *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers*, ed. E. J. Morley, 3 vols (London, 1938)
- IS* *Inquiring Spirit: A New Presentation of Coleridge from his Published and Unpublished Prose Writings*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London, New York and Toronto, 1951; repr. London and Toronto, 1979)
- JDW* *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Mary Moorman, 2nd edn (London and New York, 1971; repr. 1976)

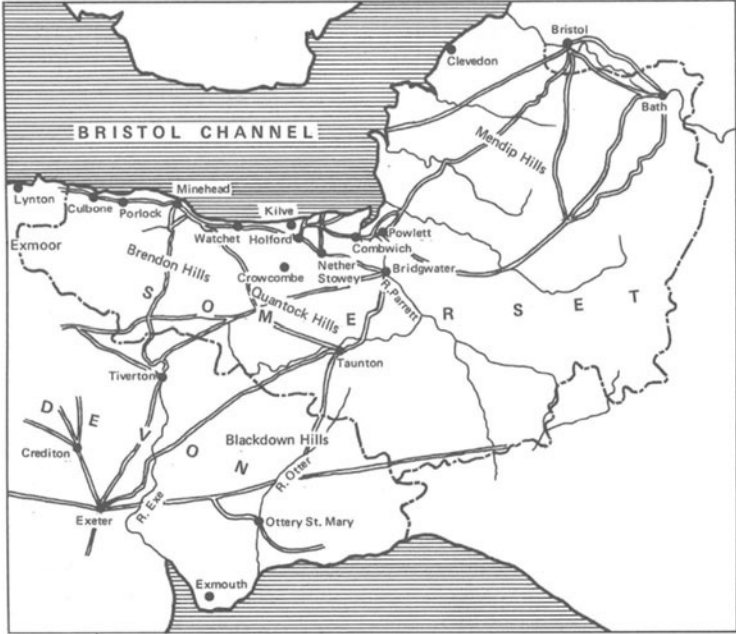
- JEGP* *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
LL *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. E. W. Marris, Jr, 5 vols (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1975)
LW: EY *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787–1805*, ed. E. de Selincourt and Chester L. Shaver, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1967)
MC *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (London, 1936)
MLN *Modern Language Notes*
MLQ *Modern Language Quarterly*
MP *Modern Philology*
N&Q *Notes and Queries*
PAPS *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*
PMLA *Publications of the Modern Language Association*
PQ *Philological Quarterly*
PWW *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford, 1974)
PWW [G] *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 3 vols (London, 1876; repr. New York, 1967)
REL *Review of English Literature*
RES *Review of English Studies*
SC *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor, 2 vols (London, 1930; revised and slightly abridged, London, 1960)
SEL *Studies in English Literature* (Rice University)
SIB *Studies in Bibliography*
SIP *Studies in Philology*
SIR *Studies in Romanticism*
TLS *The Times Literary Supplement*
TSE *Tulane Studies in English*
TT *The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. H. N. Coleridge (London and New York, 1917)
TWC *The Wordsworth Circle*
UTQ *University of Toronto Quarterly*
WPW *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt and H. Darbishire, 5 vols (Oxford, 1940–9; repr. 1967)

- WW* Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography*, 2 vols (London, Oxford and New York, 1957; repr. 1968)

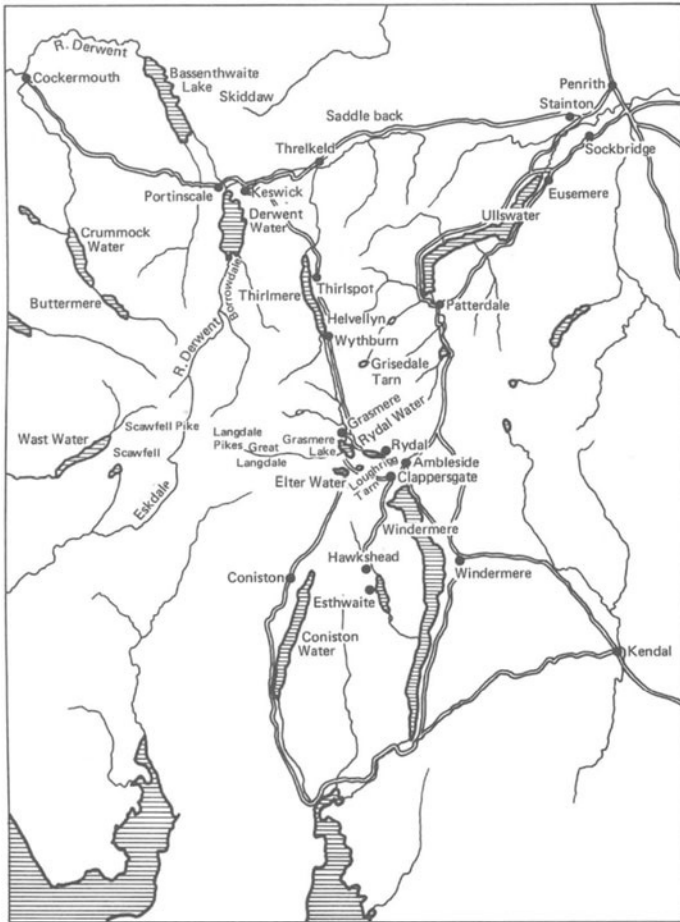
References to the above books and periodicals are by page only (e.g. *LW: EY*, p. 188), volume and page (e.g. *CL*, I 357; *ELH*, xxvi 525–6), or by volume and entry number (e.g. *CN*, I no. 1575). For other books and periodicals, the system is parallel.

Most references to individual poems are by line only, or by book and line (e.g. *The Task*, iv 286–310).

References to classical works follow the appropriate tradition.



Map 1 Somerset and Devon



Map 2 The Lake District