IMAGINATION IN COLERIDGE

By the same editor

THE ROMANTIC IMAGINATION (*Casebook*)

IMAGINATION IN COLERIDGE

Edited by

JOHN SPENCER HILL

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for Janet

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Now how to get back, having thus belabyrinthed myself in these most parenthetical parentheses? Cut thro' at once, & now say in half a dozen a Lines what half a dozen Lines would have enabled me to say at the very beginning/ but my Thoughts, my Pocket-book Thoughts at least, moved like a pregnant Polypus in sprouting Time, clung all over with young Polypi each of which is to be a thing of itself—and every motion out springs a new Twig of Jelly-Life/—

February 1805; CN ii 2431

There is no way of arriving at any sciential End but by finding it at every step. The End is in the Means: or the adequacy of each Mean is already it's end. 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, & FLASH!—strait as a line!—he has it in his mouth!—Even so, I replied, might a Cannibal say to an Anatomist, whom he had watched dissecting a body. But the fact is—I do not care twopence 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. I follow the Chamois-Hunters, and seem to set out with the same Object. But I am no Hunter of *that* Chamois Goat; but avail myself of the Chace in order to [achieve] a nobler purpose— that of making a road across the Mountains, on which Common Sense may hereafter pass backward and forward, without desperate Leaps or Balloons that scar [soar?] indeed but do not improve the chance of getting onward.—

August 1820; CL v 98

Preface

Undoubtedly the most widely discussed aspect of Coleridge's literary criticism is his theory of Imagination and, principally, his distinction between Fancy and Imagination. Notwithstanding the importance and critical omnipresence of the theory both in Coleridge's own writings and in those of his commentators, however, students have been handicapped by the fact that Coleridge's pronouncements on Imagination are scattered throughout his works and cannot, in many cases, be found without a great deal of diligence on the student's part. Motivated by the desire to facilitate the study of his theory of Imagination, and hoping to bring his thought—or at least an aspect of it—within the grasp of a larger number of readers than it has hitherto had the fortune to meet, I have prepared this 'source-book' of Coleridge's statements on the nature and function of the Imagination.

The task I have set myself in the following pages is that of bringing together under one cover all of Coleridge's major, and the larger part of his 'minor' or less celebrated pronouncements on the Imagination. Such a methodology is fraught with difficulties and numerous compromises have been forced upon me. It will, for example, surprise some readers to discover that 'Kubla Khan' has been included while 'The Ancient Mariner' has not, and these readers will quite rightly complain that both poems are concerned with Imagination. I can only plead that some cut-off points were necessary and that 'Kubla Khan' seems to me more relevant to Coleridge's *theory* of Imagination than does 'The Ancient Mariner'.

More surprising, perhaps, than some of the exclusions will appear certain of the inclusions. The simple fact here is that Coleridge is an organicist, for whom Imagination is not exclusively—indeed, not even pre-eminently—a literary phenomenon. In Coleridge's scheme Imagination is one of the five central powers of the human mind, the remaining four being Reason, Understanding, Sense and Fancy. Now, while the operation of Imagination may be singled out for the

purpose of argument or illustration, in actuality it forms an integral and inseparable part of the process of human cognition and thought. Imagination, that is to say, functions as an instrument of enquiry in philosophy, psychology, science and theology, as well as in literature and art; it cannot without serious distortion be abstracted and isolated on the dissecting table of the literary critic and treated *sui generis* as an aspect of artistic creativity alone. In Coleridge's writings (especially after 1815) Imagination exfoliates out and shades off into his thinking about almost everything else; indeed, divorced from the other components of his system, his theory of Imagination becomes virtually incomprehensible. For this reason it has been necessary to include Extracts and Notes explicating other seminal aspects of his thought, as (for example) his distinctions between Reason—Understanding and Imitation—Copy, his specialised use of such key terms as Symbol, 'One Life', Thought—Thing, and so forth. Coleridge is a difficult, but rewarding, author; and, since he was groping his way towards concepts for which neither a vocabulary nor a conceptual framework lay ready to hand, it is of crucial importance to meet him on his own ground, however difficult that may at times be. This book, then, while it concentrates on the theory of Imagination, may also serve as a critical Ariadne's thread to guide the reader into the labyrinth of Coleridge's thought and, I hope still clutching the thread, safely out again as well.

I considered the possibility of arranging the extracts which follow into thematic groups, but eventually rejected this notion in the belief that it would impose a rigidity on the material and a patterned artificiality foreign to the fluidity of Coleridge's thinking about Imagination. Moreover, such editorial intrusion would run the risk both of perverting Coleridge's intentions and of oversimplifying the subject. It seemed, therefore, that the only possible arrangement was a chronological one—for which, in any case, we have Coleridge's own warrant: 'All your divisions', he told his nephew and son-in-law Henry Nelson Coleridge toward the end of his life, 'are in particular instances inadequate, and they destroy the interest which arises from watching the progress, maturity, and even the decay of genius.'

I have tried throughout the book to allow Coleridge to speak for himself. This may seem a strange assertion to anyone who has glanced forward through the notes, which are numerous and often lengthy. However, since this book is intended primarily for students and non-specialists (although I hope, of course, that the Coleridge specialist will also find it useful), it has been necessary to explain a large number

of terms and ideas which might otherwise be taken for granted. In general, the Notes appended to each Extract have been used for the following purposes: (a) to quote (or sometimes simply to refer the reader to) parallel or explanatory passages from elsewhere in Coleridge's writings in support or elucidation of a point under consideration; (b) to provide, occasionally, explanatory quotations from modern critics or to refer the reader to precise locations in their commentaries that bear on a point in question; (c) to give cross-references to other extracts or notes in the present volume; (d) to cite sources for and, where appropriate, to provide translations of passages which Coleridge has drawn from other authors; and (e) to give brief biographical and critical notices for important persons whom Coleridge mentions, and short explanatory statements of terms and conceptions (e.g. Baconian *idols* and Plato's theory of *recollection*) to which he alludes. These notes are intended to be helpful, but not exhaustive. I hope they will encourage the reader to explore the subject further, rather than to rest content with the hints and suggestions offered here.

I am indebted to a number of friends and colleagues who gave freely of their time and expertise to help make this a better book than I alone would have been capable of producing: *omnia non licet uni, non sperasse uni licet omnia*. I am much indebted to Dr John Beer of Peterhouse, Cambridge, who read the manuscript as it passed through the inevitable metamorphoses involved in growing from adolescence to maturity; he made many valuable suggestions and corrected me on numerous points of detail in the notes and bibliography. I owe much, too, to Professor George Whalley of Queen's University (Canada) who read the final typescript with minute attention; his depth of scholarship and familiarity with Coleridge are responsible for many corrections in the notes and I am especially in his debt for his help with the Introduction, which indeed would never have been written but for his prompting and guidance—although I suspect he may not be entirely satisfied with everything that I have said there. Dr Tony Miller and Dr Christopher Wortham, friends and colleagues at the University of Western Australia, graciously set aside their own work to read the Introduction as it was pulled, still smoking, from the typewriter. Miss Mary Alexander and her staff in the Reference Section efficiently and cheerfully filled my innumerable requests for material not available in the Reid Library. I am under a special obligation to Mrs Honoria Robertson-Dick for her scrupulous

proofreading of the final typescript, and also to her husband for so selflessly sacrificing her company during the several weeks required to perform this arduous task. My greatest debt is to my wife (who survived this book still smiling) and my gratitude for her support is acknowledged, where it ought to be, in the dedication.

Last, but by no means least, the publisher and I wish to thank the following who have kindly given permission for the use of copyright material. Constable & Company Ltd for the extracts from *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, edited by T. M. Raysor; J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd for the extracts from *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, edited by T. M. Raysor, and *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers*, edited by E. J. Morley. Oxford University Press for the extracts from S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, edited by J. Shawcross; *The Table Talk and Omnia of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by H.N. Coleridge; *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by E. H. Coleridge; the *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by E. L. Griggs, and S. T. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, edited by H. N. Coleridge. Also Pantheon Books (Division of Random House Inc.), for the extracts from *The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Kathleen Coburn; Princeton University Press for the extracts from *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Kathleen Coburn, and Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd and Princeton University Press for the extracts from *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Kathleen Coburn.

Perth, Australia
May 1977

J.S.H.

List of Abbreviations

Works cited in the notes by author's surname and date of publication will be found in the Bibliography. Unless otherwise stated, quotations and page numbers in the notes refer to the most recent edition cited.

- AN&Q *American Notes and Queries*
 AP *Anima Poetæ*, from the *Unpublished Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge. London: Heinemann, 1895.
 AR S. T. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*. London, 1825; 4th edition, ed. H. N. Coleridge, London, 1839.
 AV Authorised Version (1611) of the Bible
 BJA *British Journal of Aesthetics*
 BL S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria . . . with the Aesthetical Essays*, ed. J. Shawcross. 2 vols. London and New York: O.U.P., 1907; corrected ed. 1954.
 BMQ *The British Museum Quarterly*
 CC *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (general editor K. Coburn). 16 vols and index (partially completed). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967—
 CE *College English*
 CL *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs. 6 vols. London and New York: O.U.P., 1956–71.
 CN *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. K. Coburn. 3 double vols so far published. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York: Pantheon Books, 1957—
 CPW *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge. 2 vols. London and New York: O.U.P., 1912.
 CSC *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, ed. R. F. Brinkley. Durham: Duke, University Press, 1955; New York: Green-

- wood Press, 1968.
- CT *Coleridge the Talker: A Series of Contemporary Descriptions and Comments*, ed. R. W. Armour and R. F. Howes. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, London: Milford, 1940.
- C.U.P. Cambridge University Press
- DNB *Dictionary of National Biography*
- DP *Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. D. D. Runes. New York: Philosophical Library, 1960; Totowa, N. J.: Littlefield, Adams, 1972.
- DRC *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. T. Sadler. 3 vols. London: Macmillan, 1869.
- E&S *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*
- EHC Ernest Hartley Coleridge
- EIC *Essays in Criticism*
- ELH *Journal of English Literary History*
- EM *English Miscellany*
- ES *English Studies* (Amsterdam)
- HCR *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers*, ed. E. J. Morley. 3 vols. London: Dent, 1938.
- HNC Henry Nelson Coleridge
- IS *Inquiring Spirit. A New Presentation of Coleridge from his Published and Unpublished Prose Writings*, ed. K. Coburn. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York: Pantheon Books, Toronto: McClelland, 1951.
- JAAC *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*
- JEGP *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
- JHI *Journal of the History of Ideas*
- KSJ *Keats-Shelley Journal*
- LR *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. H. N. Coleridge. 4 vols. London, 1836-9.
- MC *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor. London: Constable, 1936.
- MLN *Modern Language Notes*
- MLQ *Modern Language Quarterly*
- MP *Modern Philology*
- MSP Cardinal Mercier et al., *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, trans. T. L. and S. A. Parker. 2 vols. London: Kegan Paul, 1915; 3rd ed. 1923, repr. 1960.
- N&Q *Notes and Queries*
- NEB *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha* (O.U.P. and C.U.P., 1961; 2nd ed. 1970).

- OCD *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard. 2nd ed. corrected. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- OCCL *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, ed. Sir Paul Harvey. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937; corrected ed. 1940, repr. 1969.
- OCEL *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Sir Paul Harvey and Dorothy Eagle. Oxford and New York: O.U.P., 1932; 4th ed. revised, 1967.
- ODCC *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone. 2nd ed. London and New York: O.U.P., 1974.
- OED *The Oxford English Dictionary*
(Note: All word definitions cited in the Notes which are NOT marked 'OED' are quoted or adapted from *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. corrected, 2 vols, 1975.)
- O.U.P. Oxford University Press
- PL *The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. K. Coburn. London: Pilot Press, New York: Philosophical Library, 1949.
- PMLA *Publications of the Modern Language Association*
- PQ *Philological Quarterly*
- REL *Review of English Literature*
- RES *Review of English Studies*
- SC *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor. 2 vols. London: Constable, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930; London: Dent, 1960 (slightly abridged).
- SEL *Studies in English Literature* (Rice University)
- SIR *Studies in Romanticism*
- SP *Studies in Philology*
- SR *Sewanee Review*
- STC Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- TLS *The Times Literary Supplement*
- TT *The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. H. N. Coleridge. London and New York: O.U.P., 1917.
- TWC *The Wordsworth Circle*
- UTQ *University of Toronto Quarterly*

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