**An Annotated Transcription of Marginalia in a First Edition of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria: or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*. Vol. I.**

DESCRIPTION: 1817, FIRST EDITION, 1st of 2 vols., some foxing, pp.[iv], 300; [iv], 309, [3, ads], 8vo, uncut in fairly recent calf backed marbled boards, red lettering pieces, numbered in gilt direct

DATES: Book published in 1817. Inscription on half-title page dated 1820. Title page inscription undated. Flyleaf annotations and notes on p. 7, 52, 53, 167, 225, and 295 all in the same hand and appear to have been written c. 1830, according to references to other published works (see 2 n 5 below).

1. Initial (modern) flyleaf

Bookplate (modern) bearing the name Brian Fenwick Smith.

2. Flyleaf annotation

See Edinburgh Rev. for August for a critique upon this work written by Mr. Jeffrey –

p. 488.[[1]](#footnote-1)

See also “Spirit of the Age” by W Hazlitt: p: 61. Considered one of the best articles in that work:[[2]](#footnote-2)

One of the earliest and most intimate friends of Mr. Coleridge was the late Sir. H. Davy[[3]](#footnote-3); whose literary talents, as Sir W Scott has observed were almost as remarkable as his wonderful scientific attainments.[[4]](#footnote-4) The following extract from some of Sir Humphry’s letter published in his life[[5]](#footnote-5) by Dr Paris shew that illustrious man’s opinion of Mr Coleridge in so favourable a view that I have given them here verbatim. Oct: 1804: letter to Tho. Poole Esq.[[6]](#footnote-6) p. 127:[[7]](#footnote-7)

“I have rec’d [received] a letter from Coleridge within the last 3 weeks: he writes from Malta[[8]](#footnote-8) in good spirits & as usual from the very depths of his being. God bless him: He was intended for a great man: I hope & trust he will at some period appear such.”

3. Half-title page inscription:

Fanny Scroope

From my beloved Mother

May 28th

1820

4. Title page Inscription:

Margaret Scott. [placed just above title in top margin]

5. p. 7:

Footnote to “At school” marked with a + in last paragraph. Footnote reads: + Christ’s Hospital London[[9]](#footnote-9)

6. p. 52-53

Note written just above a long footnote on pg. 52:

See an answer to the following note written by Mr Jeffery in the Edinb. Rev. for Aug. 1817\*[[10]](#footnote-10)

Note written along the bottom of pg. 52 and along the bottom of pg. 53:

But the answer is by no means satisfactory: for Mr Jeffrey to whom Mr Coleridge alludes and indeed the whole tribe of Edinburgh Reviewers has always indulged [text continues here onto p. 53] \*in the most unmanly personality and a constant spirit unfairness agt. those eminent poets whom the Reviewers are pleased to style “of Lake School”

7. p. 84-5

Pencil line in right-hand margin on p. 84 marking a section of text that continues on to p. 85:

“…spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with [here the text continues onto the next page] it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents and situations, of which, for the common view, custom has bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

8. p. 115

Pencil note in right-hand margin:

Abercrombie[[12]](#footnote-12)

9. p. 122

Pencil lines in left-hand and right-hand margins marking a section of text:

“…possible exceptions, independent of his particular system. So true it is, that the faith, which saves and sanctifies, is a collective energy, a total act of the whole moral being; that its living sensorium is in the *heart*; and that no errors of the understanding can be morally arraigned unless they have proceeded from the heart.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

10. p. 167

Note along bottom of page:

Mr Coleridge obtained one of Sir W Browne’s[[14]](#footnote-14) medals at Cambridge for “the best Greek Ode in imitation of Sappho” in 1792.

11. p. 225

“Darwin and Roscoe”[[15]](#footnote-15) underlined and marked with a + in the margin. Note off to the right-hand side of that same line:

Might not the name of Brougham[[16]](#footnote-16) be added to the list---

Note along the bottom of the page:

Dr Darwin as is well known was a physician: Mr Roscoe, was educated for and practised for a short time as an Attorney in Liverpool. He was afterwards a banker - in which business he became a bankrupt.

12. p. 295

Note under a letter quoted at length:

R Southey Keswick [illegible][[17]](#footnote-17)

**An Annotated Transcription of Marginalia in a First Edition of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria: or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*. Vol. II.**

DESCRIPTION: 1817, FIRST EDITION, 2 vols., some foxing (as usual), pp.[iv], 300; [iv], 309, [3, ads], 8vo, uncut in fairly recent calf backed marbled boards, red lettering pieces, numbered in gilt direct

DATES: Book published in 1817. Inscription on half-title page dated 1820. Title page inscription undated. Flyleaf annotations, notes on p. 7, 52, 53, 167, 225, and 295 of Vol. I and on p. 183 and 254 of Vol. II all in the same hand and appear to have been written c. 1830, according to references to other published works.

P. 183:

Note under the chapter title, “Satyrane’s Letters”:

originally published in the Friend see page 209[[18]](#footnote-18)

P. 254:

Tragedy of Bertram underlined. Note along the bottom:

by the Rev. [space as though for a first name] Maturin[[19]](#footnote-19)

P. 300:

Pencil line marking a section: “O we are querulous creatures! Little less / Than all things can suffice to make us happy:/ And little more than nothing is enough / To make us wretched”[[20]](#footnote-20)

1. On pages 507-12 of the August 1817 edition of the *Edinburgh Review* (vol. 28), Francis Jeffrey addresses Coleridge’s comments from page 52 of the *Biographia Literaria* and attempts to respond in full to the charges made. See 6 n. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. William Hazlitt’s (1778-1830) *Spirit of the Age* was published in 1825 and was one of his most successful works. Hazlitt had a curious relationship with Coleridge, having heard him preach for the first time in 1798 and having come under the influence of Coleridge and William and Dorothy Wordsworth. Hazlitt later fell out of favor with the Wordsworths and Coleridge over a review Hazlitt wrote about William Wordsworth’s *The Excursion* in 1814 (see entry for Hazlitt in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [*ODNB*]) and reports about Hazlitt’s scandalous treatment of a young woman while visiting the Lake District. Hazlitt’s sketch of Coleridge in *The Spirit of the Age* criticizes the diffusion of thoughts present in the *Biographia Literaria*, saying that if Coleridge’s “poetry is inferior to his conversation, his prose is utterly abortive. Hardly a gleam is to be found in it of the brilliancy and richness of those stores of thought and language that he pours out incessantly when they are lost like drops of water in the ground” (75-6). Coleridge’s mind, says Hazlitt, is like a ship “‘taught with the little nautilus to sail,’ the sport of every breath, dancing to every wave, ‘Youth at its prow, and Pleasure at its helm,’ flutters its gaudy pennons in the air, glitters in the sun, but we wait in vain to hear of its arrival in the destined harbour” (79). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sir Humphry Davy, a chemist, inventor, and writer, lived from 1778-1829 (*ODNB*). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sir Walter Scott wrote a glowing review of Davy’s *Salmonia: or Days of Fly-Fishing* in the *Quarterly Review* for October 1828. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This refers to John Ayrton Paris’s book *The Life of Sir Humphry Davy* published in 1831. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Thomas Poole (1766-1837) met Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1794, quickly becoming a friend. At the time of his death in 1837, he was working on a memoir of Coleridge. The two men lived in the same neighborhood from 1797 to 1800. Poole was also a close friend of Humphry Davy, whom he met in 1799. Poole and Coleridge had a falling out over Coleridge’s decision to follow Wordsworth to the Lake District (*ODNB*) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Refers to a letter published on p. 196-7 of *The Life of Sir Humphry Davy* by John Ayrton Paris. The letter was written to Poole in October 1804. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Coleridge had gone to Malta in 1804 to recover from an opium dependency. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Christ’s Hospital was originally a charity school founded in the 16th century by Henry VIII. Coleridge started at Christ’s Hospital in 1781 and left for Jesus College at Cambridge in 1791. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Lord Jeffrey led the *Edinburgh Review* as editor from 1803-1829. Under Jeffrey’s editorship, the *Review* “marked the emergence of a middle-class public opinion, culturally and politically aware” (*ODNB*). The August 1817 edition of the *Edinburgh Review* contains a lengthy footnote in which Jeffrey replies to Coleridge’s accusations of false friendship, plagiarism, and slander. Jeffrey answers Coleridge’s charge of false friendship, saying, “I suppose I might lawfully visit and even pay compliments to an ingenious gentleman, whose poetry I was, notwithstanding, obliged to characterize as whining and hypochondriacal” (509). Jeffrey also emphatically denies plagiarizing Coleridge’s words, and points to specific statements from the review in question in order to clarify what exactly he *did* say about Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Joanna Baillie. Jeffrey also denies printing a malicious review of Coleridge’s Lay Sermon, saying that he was unaware of the Lay Sermon’s existence until an unnamed gentleman submitted a review of it. The review was printed after a few emendations. Jeffrey’s footnote may seem disingenuous, however, due to its position within a less-than-favorable review of Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*.

    Like Hazlitt, who criticizes Coleridge’s confusingly diffuse stream of ideas in the *Biographia*, Jeffrey disparages the gap between the author’s avowed subject (his literary biography) and the actual content of the work, which is, in Jeffrey’s words, not “an account of his Life and Opinions” as much as an “Apology for them” and “an explanation of the author’s Political and Philosophical creed” (488). Jeffrey’s criticism of Coleridge’s philosophy of the imagination is particularly scathing: “With chap. IV begins the formidable ascent of that mountainous and barren ridge of clouds piled on precipices and precipices on clouds, from the top of which the author deludes us with a view of the Promised Land that divides the regions of Fancy from those of the Imagination, and extends through 200 pages with various inequalities and declensions to the end of the volume” (495). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. It is not clear which owner of the book wrote the marginalia or which one made this series of pencil marks (or if they are the same person). This particular section comes within a longer section about the “poetic Psyche,” the genius, of Wordsworth’s recitation of a poem at the time unpublished. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This note comes shortly after Coleridge tells of a woman who spoke in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew while under the influence of a nervous fever, although she had exhibited no prior knowledge of those languages. Coleridge explains that a physician in her town discovered that she had lived with a pastor when she was a young girl and, thus, had heard him read in these languages aloud many times. His conclusion is that “reliques of sensation may exist for an indefinite time in a latent state…and as we cannot rationally suppose the feverish state of the brain to act in any other way than as a stimulus, this fact…[makes] it possible that all thoughts are in themselves imperishable” (*BL* 115).

    Given the context, this writer of this note may be referring to John Abercrombie, a Scottish physician who published a work entitled *Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth* in 1830 (placing the date of the pencil marginalia somewhere around the same time as that of the penned marginalia). Abercrombie described this work as a “study of the phenomena of mind” and, thus, a medical approach to “the philosophy of mind” (1-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This passage comes within Coleridge’s criticism of David Hartley’s theories, specifically the disjunction between the first volume of his work (*Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations. In Two Parts*, published in 1749) and the second volume. According to Coleridge, in the lines immediately preceding the marked section, Hartley’s ideas in the second volume of his work are “independent of his peculiar system” laid out in volume one. Coleridge points out the seeming dissonance between the scientific approach to man as a mechanism for study and the religious approach to man as a member of the body of Christ. Hartley attempts to synthesize these two “by showing that bodily ‘frame,’ moral ‘duty,’ and religious ‘expectations’ all converge on the same point” (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Sir William Browne, a physician, left instructions in his will for gold medals to be given to Cambridge undergraduates who write the best Greek Ode in imitation of Sappho, the best Latin ode in imitation of Horace, the best Greek epigram after Anthologia and the best Latin epigram after Martial. The prizes are still awarded today. Coleridge, as the reader notes, received the award in 1792. He received the award for an ode on the slave trade. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. According to James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, editors of the 1983 edition of the *Biographia Literaria* by Princeton University Press, Coleridge is referring to Erasmus Darwin and William Roscoe. Darwin, a physician, wrote *The Botanic Garden*, which Coleridge lauds in chapter one of the *Biographia*. William Roscoe wrote poetry, two biographies, and several works on topics such as the slave-trade and botany. Coleridge was connected to both men via their involvement with *The Watchman* (see pg. 225, n. 2 of Engell and Bate’s edition). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Perhaps a reference to Henry Peter Brougham (1778-1868) who helped start the *Edinburgh Review* and whose numerous contributions helped shape the journalistic style and editorial policy of the publication, as well as its reputation as sympathetic to the whig party. This is a curious addition to the list given the reader’s previous remarks on Jeffrey and the writers for the *Edinburgh Review*. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. According to Engell and Bate’s notes to their edition of the *Biographia*, this letter was written by Coleridge to himself. The writer of the marginalia erroneously identifies the writer of the letter as Robert Southey. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Coleridge published a series of weekly papers from 1809 to 1812 called *The Friend; Literary, Moral, and Political Weekly Paper, excluding personal and party politics and the events of the day*. In 1812, the essays were collected and published as a book under the title of *The Friend*; *a series of essays*. The essays were reprinted, with emendations, in a second edition in 1818. This note refers to the 1812 edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Charles Robert Maturin (1780-1824), a Church of England clergyman, wrote the *Tragedy of Bertram* in 1814 under the mentorship of Sir Walter Scott. The play opened in 1816 and was a huge success. It would be Maturin’s only significant dramatic success. William Hazlitt reviewed the play in 1816 for *The Examiner*, deeming it “a tragedy without business” and without “action” (304-5). It is, Hazlitt opines, “a sentimental drama, it is a romantic drama, but it is not a tragedy, in the best sense of the word. That is to say, the passion described does not arise naturally out of the previous circumstances, nor lead necessarily to the consequences that follow” (305). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Coleridge includes this snippet as an example of the “predestined metaphysics” that have led critics and readers, he believes, to reject his poetry. Engell and Bate’s edition identifies this as a quotation from Coleridge’s play *Zapolya*, which had been rejected for production on the London stage (240, n. 1-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)