
Volume 4

Number 1 *This issue is devoted to a catalog of an exhibition from the W. Hugh Peal Collection in the University of Kentucky Libraries.*

Article 6

1982

Catalog of the Peal Exhibition: Samuel Taylor Coleridge

John Spalding Gatton
University of Kentucky

Follow this and additional works at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/kentucky-review>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Gatton, John Spalding (1982) "Catalog of the Peal Exhibition: Samuel Taylor Coleridge," *The Kentucky Review*: Vol. 4 : No. 1 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/kentucky-review/vol4/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Kentucky Libraries at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Kentucky Review by an authorized editor of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

In Wordsworth's judgment, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was "the most *wonderful* man" he ever met. Endowed with one of the most brilliant and complex minds of his day, he would, like Chaucer's parson, "gladly . . . learn, and gladly teach." If he squandered a wealth of thought in correspondence and conversation, and left unfinished or merely projected major poems, lectures, and systematic expositions of his philosophical tenets, his critical theories, and his theology, he nevertheless produced a vast and impressive array of poetry, prose, and criticism. Few men have accomplished more. As a poet, he influenced Scott in the choice of meter for *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and he repeatedly affected Keats and Shelley. As a critic, especially of Shakespeare, he laid the foundation for the interpretations of Lamb, Hazlitt, and De Quincey. In social and political thought he inspired the young Carlyle and John Stuart Mill.

While a student at Christ's Hospital, London (1782-1791), he established a lifelong friendship with Charles Lamb, who described Coleridge as "alone among six hundred playmates," but even then, a "Logician, Metaphysician, Bard," unfolding in his "deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus," and "reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar." Here, too, he became an ardent admirer of the sonnets that the Rev. William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850) published in 1789, and he responded with his own feeble attempts in the form. In 1796 he printed a more polished sonnet dedicated to Bowles. As he records in the first chapter of the *Biographia Literaria*, he also made "within less than a year and a half, more than forty transcriptions" of Bowles's verses which he presented to friends. Coleridge believed that "of the then living poets, Bowles and Cowper were . . . the first who combined natural thoughts with natural diction; the first who reconciled the heart with the head." His own poetry would follow a similar course.

At Jesus College, Cambridge, which he entered in 1791, Coleridge showed amazing promise. So seriously and successfully did he pursue his studies that he won a scholarship and the Browne

Gold Medal for a Greek ode on the slave trade. But debts, carousing, unrequited love, and the excitement of politics undermined his earlier diligence, and using the fantastic alias Silas Tomkyn Comberbacke he enlisted in the cavalry. Rescued by his brothers, he returned to Cambridge but left in 1794 without a degree.

In June of that year he visited Oxford, where he met Robert Southey. The two young poets immediately became friends. Both burned with the contemporary spirit of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, and conceived the idea of a utopian community, Pantisocracy, which they planned to establish on the banks of the Susquehanna River. Financial problems and Southey's withdrawal from the project helped doom the venture. Nevertheless, Coleridge and Southey collaborated on a play, *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794), and on their marriages. Prodded by Southey (whom he never quite forgave), Coleridge married Sarah Fricker, the sister of Southey's betrothed, Edith. Coleridge entered into the union "resolved, but wretched." Sarah, prim and intellectually limited, could not understand her husband. The relationship had no more hope of success than Pantisocracy.

In 1796 Coleridge published *Poems on Various Subjects* (item 18). "The Eolian Harp" ("Effusion XXXV") represents the best example in the collection of the "conversation poem," the personal, descriptive, meditative verse form that he originated and perfected. In "Religious Musings" he voices his support for the French Revolution and for his cherished dream of Pantisocracy. The volume also included four of Charles Lamb's sonnets that Coleridge had extensively revised. Lamb, however, received no credit on the title page for his efforts.

The second edition of Coleridge's *Poems* (1797) omitted almost a third of the previously printed works and substituted about an equal number of new verses (item 19). In "Ode to the Departing Year," an attempt in the Pindaric mode, he predicts the downfall of England as the result of its opposition to the revolution in France. Lamb provided several additional pieces, which Coleridge did not alter, and saw his name on the title page. Charles Lloyd, whom Coleridge had taken on as a pupil in 1796, also contributed to the book. Lloyd's novel *Edmund Oliver* (1798) contains a satiric portrait of Coleridge in the form of its frantic hero. In 1798 he also collaborated with Lamb on *Blank Verse*. Lamb arranged the third edition of Coleridge's *Poems* and saw it through the press in 1803

(item 20).

Coleridge met Wordsworth in 1795, but their association became close only in 1797 when Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy moved near Nether Stowey, where Coleridge had a cottage. Coleridge revered his neighbor as "the best poet of the age." During the following eighteen months of their almost daily contact, Coleridge composed much of his finest poetry, culminating in his collaboration with Wordsworth on the *Lyrical Ballads*. In this "annus mirabilis," the wonderful year of June 1797 to September 1798, he produced "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (addressed to Charles Lamb), *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan*, and the first part of *Christabel*. At the conclusion of *The Prelude* (1805-1806), Wordsworth reminded him of this joyful, productive period:

Thou in delicious words, with happy heart,
Didst speak the vision of that Ancient Man,
The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel.

But with no regular income, Coleridge reluctantly planned to become a Unitarian minister, until, in January 1798, Thomas and Josiah Wedgwood, sons of the founder of the famous pottery firm, offered him a life annuity of £150, that he might use his obvious talents as he thought best.

In 1798 Joseph Cottle published the *Lyrical Ballads*. Four of its twenty-three poems belonged to Coleridge, including the opening work, *The Ancient Mariner*. Wordsworth composed the remainder, among them, the closing piece, "Tintern Abbey." Although the professional reviewers were restrained, such writers as Lamb, Hazlitt, and De Quincey read the volume enthusiastically.

After a trip to Germany with the Wordsworths in 1799, Coleridge settled at Greta Hall, Keswick, in the Lake District, not far from Dove Cottage, Grasmere, where the Wordsworths had moved. The Southneys, too, came to live at Greta Hall in 1803. Misery and illness clouded Coleridge's life. Romantically, he felt for Sara Hutchinson a tremendous but hopeless passion that for some ten years dominated him, divorce from his wife being then legally impossible. The relationship inspired his partly autobiographical poem *Love* and informed the original version of *Dejection: An Ode*. In 1802 Wordsworth wedded Sara's sister Mary.

Physically, Coleridge suffered from nausea, diarrhea, dyspepsia, and neuralgia. Wordsworth describes how, in a sudden spasm of agony, Coleridge would sometimes "throw himself down and writhe like a worm upon the ground." For relief he turned to laudanum (opium dissolved in alcohol), a standard, freely available remedy, which he had taken in college, and possibly earlier. Coleridge soon recognized that he had developed a dependence on the drug. A two-year sojourn on Malta from 1804 failed to restore him, and he returned to England more wretched and addicted than ever. He separated from his wife in 1807, although he continued to support her and their children, and thereafter lived primarily in London.

Despite such obstacles, Coleridge maintained an active association with literature. In 1808 he gave his first course of public lectures, on "Principles of Poetry." Over the next eleven years he mounted the platform to talk on Shakespeare, Milton, and other English poets; on classic and romantic drama; on political issues; on English poetry from the Middle Ages to the Restoration; and on the history of philosophy. He contributed articles to newspapers and attempted to write, publish, and distribute a periodical, *The Friend* (1809-1810). Despite a playing time of nearly five hours, his tragedy *Remorse* (a revision of his earlier play, *Osorio*) ran for twenty nights at Drury Lane in 1813 (item 21). In 1815 he wrote the *Biographia Literaria*, his great, if uneven, treatise on the nature of poetry and the poet, with its extended criticism of Wordsworth's works (item 23).

For a time Coleridge lived with the Wordsworths at Grasmere and dictated his essays to Sara Hutchinson. Hearing that his host had spoken out against his habits, Coleridge cooled toward him. They were reconciled in 1812, but their "glad morning of friendship" could not be recaptured.

In 1816 Coleridge placed himself for the remainder of his life under the care of the physician James Gillman, who lived in the north London suburb of Highgate. The doctor managed to control, but not to eliminate, his patient's consumption of opium. Yet Coleridge recovered much of his former power, and for the next three years, enjoyed a sustained period of literary activity, from which date a number of newspaper articles; the publication in 1816 of a volume of poetry containing *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, and *The Pains of Sleep* (item 22); the appearance of the *Biographia Literaria* (1817); a play, *Zapolya* (1817); a second book of poems, *Sibylline*

Leaves (1817); a collection of revised essays from *The Friend* (1818); treatises on religious and philosophical themes; and two courses of lectures (1818-1819), for which he wrote *On Poetry or Art*. In his last years he completed *Aids to Reflection* (1825), toured the Rhineland with Wordsworth (1828), and wrote *On the Constitution of Church and State* (1830). He also labored on the magnum opus that would contain the definitive statement of many of his beliefs; he left it unfinished at his death.

Although generally bedridden for the last four years of his life, Coleridge remained intellectually alert, composing letters and outlining projects. He also retained much of his conversational prowess, and his rooms became a literary shrine to which old friends and visitors from England and abroad made pilgrimage until 1834, when death stilled "the Oracle of Highgate."

18. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. *Poems on Various Subjects*. London: G.G. and J. Robinson and J. Cottle, 1796.

The Willis Vickery-Ernest Dressel North-William Warren Carman copy. Peal 7,859.

19. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. *Poems, . . . Second Edition. To Which Are Now Added Poems by Charles Lamb, and Charles Lloyd*. London: J. Cottle and Messrs. Robinson, 1797.

Peal 4,216.

20. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. *Poems*. Third Edition. London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1803.

The Alfred Ainger copy. Peal 7,876.

21. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. *Remorse. A Tragedy in Five Acts*. London: W. Pople, 1813.

Charles Lamb provided the Prologue to this first edition.

Peal 7,877.

22. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. *Christabel: Kubla Khan, A Vision; The Pains of Sleep*. London: John Murray, 1816.

The Outhwaite-Harry B. Smith-Walter P. Chrysler, Jr. copy. Peal 7,329.

23. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. *Biographia Literaria; or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*. 2 vols. London: Rest Fenner, 1817.

Charles Lamb copied Coleridge's poem "Youth and Age" on the verso of the half title of volume one, although he signed it "S.T.C." Attached to the flyleaf is an A.L.s. dated 30 September 1891, from James Dykes Campbell, editor of Coleridge's poetic and dramatic works, to the scholar Harry Buxton Forman, referring to variations in the manuscripts of "Youth and Age." There are also laid in, loose, some bibliographical notes, presumably by Forman.

The Harry Buxton Forman-Ernest Dressel North-William Warren Carman copy. Peal 7,541-7,542.

24. TERENCE. *Comoediae sex ex recensione Heinsiana*. Amstelaedami: Apud Henr. Wetstenium, n.d.

On the leaf opposite the title page appears the inscription "S.T. Coleridge / from / C.L. / Sepr. 1." A note on the inside of the back cover says that Lamb, who owned the book, gave it to Coleridge, and that Coleridge wrote the presentation inscription. Peal 8,755.

25. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.L.s. to William Sotheby, 19 September 1802.

Sotheby (1757-1833) gained a certain reputation as a poet, translator, and author of unsuccessful tragedies. He enjoyed the esteem not only of Coleridge, but of Wordsworth, Scott, and Southey. Byron, however, ridiculed him in *Beppo* as a "bustling Botherby." In this letter Coleridge offers him disinterested advice on a house Sotheby considers buying. He has a possible rival in Sir Wilfrid Lawson, already the owner of "a noble, . . . a kingly Mansion at Brighton." Lawson "never lets money stand in the way of any of his inclinations," and he has told Coleridge that "tho' he would not make a fool of himself by giving an extravagant price"

for the house, "yet he would bid hard." Coleridge remarks in a postscript that Lawson has "a most splendid Library at Brighton / in Voyages, Travels, & Books of Natural History it is no doubt the first in the Island—next to Sir Joseph Banks's." Lawson himself impresses Coleridge as "an extremely liberal & good-natured Creature."

From the collection of H.G. Sotheby. Peal 10,509.

26. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.N.s. to Joseph Cottle, 26 April 1814.

Cottle (1770-1853), a poet and a bookseller in Bristol, published the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. Cottle had recently learned of Coleridge's excessive use of opium and wrote that he was "afflicted to perceive that Satan" was "so busy" with Coleridge. He urged the poet to "pray earnestly," knowing that he would be heard by the "Father, which is in Heaven." In the displayed note, Coleridge thanks Cottle for his letter, but assures him that he has "no conception of the dreadful Hell" of Coleridge's "mind & conscience & body." Yet he does pray "inwardly to be able to pray." He closes with a *cri de coeur*: "O if to feel how infinitely worthless I am, how poor a wretch, with just free will enough to be deserving of wrath, & of my own contempt, & of none to merit a moment's peace, can make a part of a Christian's creed; so far I am a Christian—"

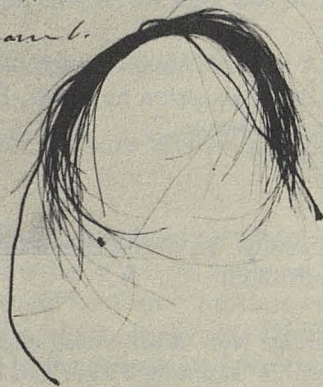
Peal 10,332.

27. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.L.s. to William Sotheby, 13 July 1829.

With parental pride Coleridge comments that his son Derwent (1800-1883) "has very fine talents; and a particularly fine sense of metrical music." However, he is "confessedly not equal" to his older brother Hartley (1796-1849) "in original conception and either depth or opulence of Intellect." Coleridge admits that he can "never read Wordsworth's delightful Lines 'To H.C. at six years old' without a feeling of awe, blended with tenderer emotions—so prophetic were they." In the poem Wordsworth wrote of Hartley, "I think of thee with many fears / For what may be thy lot in future years," notably, "too industrious folly!" and "vain and causeless

Mr Coleridge presents his respects & compliments to Mr Kirkland, or the Gentleman, his assistant - requests, that there may be sent by the Bearer three ounces of Laudanum (in the accompanying bottle - or whatever quantity it may hold) half an oz of crude opium (if there be none purified) - & two ounces of the Tincture of Carduus. as soon as the weather relaxes, Mr Coleridge will call in on Mr Kirkland, and settle his general account.

Sunday morning.



Coleridge to Mr. Kirkland, requesting laudanum and opium (item 31); and a lock of Coleridge's hair (item 29)

melancholy." Hartley, for whom his father entertained high hopes, was expelled from Cambridge for intemperance and never rose

above the level of minor poet. He did, however, achieve distinction in the sonnet, ranking as one of the best exponents of the form between Wordsworth and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Peal 10,517.

28. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.L.s. to [Frederic Mansel Reynolds], 8 August 1828.

Reynolds, the son of Frederic Reynolds, the dramatist, edited *The Keepsake* from 1829 to 1835 and again in 1839. In the summer of 1828 Coleridge toured the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany with Wordsworth and his daughter. Wordsworth, "magnus Apollo," had promised that the trip would last three weeks "at the extreme Limit in Time," but "by pure force of attraction," Coleridge's travelling companions carried him "o'er Ditch and Dell, River and Plain, not to speak of German Mountains and Dutch Steeples and Rhenish Towers, like the Prodigal Son in Scripture *wasting* my substance (i.e. my Obesity, especially during the hot weather) in a foreign Land, on and on, & round about, even to the commencement of the 7th Week."

From the collection of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr. Peal 7,796(3).

29. A lock of "Mr Coleridge's hair—from the back part of the head." In his accession note, Mr. Peal writes that Coleridge's "hair is a lustrous brown."

Peal 11,717.

30. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.L.s. to Sara Hutchinson, [ca. 13 March 1823].

Coleridge was "much vexed and startled" on returning home to find that his "standing Ticket had been lent" and that his "sitting one" was "locked up in Mr Gillman's Escrutoir." He has, however, procured "a substitute," which he believes to be "a good seat," but for one person only. If Miss Hutchinson arrives by ten, she should be able to obtain "a standing Room" ticket. The occasion in question may have been an "Oratorio" the next evening that Miss Hutchinson attended and napped through.

Peal 11,715.

31. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.N. to Mr. Kirkland, [late December 1815?].

Coleridge requests that his correspondent send "three ounces of Laudanum (in the accompanying bottle—or whatever quantity it may hold) half an oz of crude opium (if there be none purified)—& two ounces of the Tincture of Cardamum." When the weather "relaxes," Coleridge promises to call on Mr. Kirkland to "settle his general account."

Peal 8,329.

32. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. Holograph of "The Study of History Preferable to the Study of Natural History."

In this Cambridge essay, Coleridge argues that "it is History, which must make Faith Reason, and the Philosopher a Christian. The light of History is indeed sure to expose the Vanity of all those popular systems and prejudices, which are to be found in every country: derived originally from fraud or superstition; and craftily imposed on the many to serve the interests of a few." He concludes that "the Dominion of Truth must at last prevail, and Philosophy guided by the Torch of History will cleanse the dark and noisome cave of superstitious Error!"

From the collection of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr. Peal 7,331.

33. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.L.s. to William Sotheby, 31 January 1816.

Coleridge relates that he has almost completed his "dramatic Romance," *Zapolya*. He must still write "a general Prologue," in which he will discuss Shakespeare and the French neoclassical dramatists, as well as "a character-prologue spoken by TIME, between the Prelude & the Play." In the *Biographia Literaria*, then in the press, he believes that he has "settled the controversy concerning the nature of poetic diction as far as Reasoning can settle it." He anticipates that his "Criticisms will not please or satisfy Wordsworth, or Wordsworth's Detractors," but he knows that "a true philosophical Critique was wanting, & will be of more service to his just reputation than 20 idolaters of his mannerisms."

From the collection of H.G. Sotheby. Peal 10,513.

34. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.L.s. to Francis Wrangham, 26 September 1794.

Wrangham (1769-1842), a classical scholar, edited Plutarch, and translated and imitated Petrarch. He later took orders and became an Archdeacon, and Prebend of York and of Chester. With this letter Coleridge forwards his English translation, "or rather Imitation," of the Rev. Wrangham's Latin verses, "To Miss Brunton (now Mrs. Merry) on her departure from Cambridge—October 1790." Wrangham addressed his "exquisite Bruntoniad" to Anne Brunton (1769-1808), an English actress popular on both sides of the Atlantic. The holograph poem contains minor corrections in Wrangham's hand, the most significant emendation being the substitution of "fragrant" for "starry" in line 33.

Peal 7,796(1).

35. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.L.s. to George Dyer, [10 March 1795], readdressed to William Wordsworth.

Dyer (1755-1841), educated at Christ's Hospital and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, was a literary hack. His friend Charles Lamb drew on his absent-mindedness, near-sightedness, naïveté, and improvidence for subjects in "Amicus Redivivus" and "Oxford in the Vacation." Coleridge muses that "it is melancholy to think, that the best of us are liable to be shaped & coloured by surrounding Objects—and a demonstrative proof, that Man was not made to live in Great Cities! Almost all the physical Evil in the world depends on the existence of moral Evil—and the long-continued contemplation of the latter does not tend to meliorate the human heart.—The pleasures, which we receive from rural beauties, are of little Consequence compared with the moral Effect of these pleasures—beholding constantly the Best possible we at last become ourselves the best possible." He wishes that he could form a Pantisocracy in England and that Dyer would join him in the venture. "The finely-fibred Heart, that like the statue of Memnon trembles into melody on the sun-beam touch of Benevolence, is most easily jarred into the dissonance of Misanthropy. But you will never suffer your feelings to be benumbed by the torpedo Touch of that Fiend."

Peal 12,174.

36. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. A.L.s. to William Sotheby, 5 July 1804.

Writing from Malta, where he had landed on 18 May, Coleridge acknowledges that Sotheby's letters of introduction to the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball, and to General Villette "produced every effect that Letters could possibly do," including the allocation to Coleridge of "a suite of delightfully cool & commanding Rooms" at the Palace. Between Gibraltar and Malta he experienced "a most distressful Passage of almost continual Illness," and at one time he "expected to die." But since his arrival he has never felt the "sharp illnesses" he had in England. He has also "revolutionized" his "system," forcing himself to eat meals and drink a little Port wine afterwards; to bathe regularly, "at or before sunrise"; to read very little, brood less; and to try not to be idle for a moment. Consequently, he has been "perceptibly better." His breathing is "less smothered," and he is "less apt to sink at once into nervous dosings, with twitches, &c." He realizes that as "greatly as something or other" within him—"Stomach, or Liver, or mesentery"—is "deranged," he can "establish" his health only "very slowly." Fortunately, the very hot weather, which registers "86 in the Shade," agrees with him.

From the collection of H.G. Sotheby. Peal 10,511.