Introduction

Despite its place among the foremost works of criticism in English, the *Biographia Literaria* has been a difficult book to defend, even more difficult to understand. The structure is imbalanced from padding, the content is riddled with plagiarized passages, the reasoning sometimes lapses into whimsy or prejudice. What Samuel Taylor Coleridge originally conceived as a preface to his *Sybiline Leaves*, grew into two companion volumes which would provide, as he described the changes to John Gutch (Sept. 17, 1815), “Biographical Sketches of my literary life, Principles, and Opinions, chiefly on the subjects of Poetry and Philosophy.” Coleridge had apparently decided to write his own version of the “Growth of a Poet’s Mind” and to make that biography at the same time a cogent critical theory. However, in editing from his own notebooks, he let himself be distracted from reconciling these two tasks into a single text; other tasks, and other texts, intervene. As a result, Coleridge left us with such a collage that his text, or texts, get in the way of his meaning. The dominant purpose of this volume is to address the conflicts, and explain problematic relationships, between text and meaning; the particular difficulties in understanding the *Biographia* are set forth, chapter by chapter, in terms of differing strategies and methods. The chapters survey several major concerns: the writing, editing, and reading of the text; the critical topoi and privileged discourse of Coleridge’s language; the ideological pretensions which shape and direct his meaning.

In the opening chapter, “Editing and Annotating the *Biographia Literaria*,” Norman Fruman calls particular attention to the differences between the 1817 and the 1847 editions, arguing that in preparing the latter Sara Coleridge and Henry Nelson Coleridge relied on Coleridge’s own revisions and amendments. John Shawcross in his edition (1909) gave preference to the 1847, but the recent edition of James Engell and Walter Bate (1983) returns to the 1817. With due appreciation of their colossal schol-
early effort, Fruman shows how their edition adds many new problems and resolves but few of the old ones. Every investigation into Coleridge's use of sources erodes more of what we might want to praise as original in his critical thinking. Nevertheless, the Engell-Bate edition presents the illusion that the German sources are now fully catalogued and the overdue debt is paid. If the original edition, Fruman objects, had provided (as does the Engell-Bate edition) the running heads in the ninth chapter acknowledging "Obligations to Schelling," the plagiarism dispute might well have been forestalled. Although he praises Shawcross for following, at least in part, the 1847 edition, Fruman objects to his abbreviating and deleting the notes in which Sara identified the unacknowledged sources. Suppressing the evidence, Shawcross claims that Coleridge was independent of German thought. Fruman, however, is bothered not just by undocumented sources. Basing his case on the first chapter of the Biographia, Fruman addresses another challenge in the editorial task of annotation. Fruman takes a careful look at the autobiographical self which Coleridge introduces here, and he finds it filled with distortions and misrepresentations that all previous editors have ignored.

Thomas Vogler, in "Coleridge's Book of Moonlight," is also concerned with the concept of "editing," both as a textual practice performed by conventional editors on texts, and as a part of the creative process itself as a form of "self-editing." As examples of the latter, Vogler calls attention to Blake in the Urizenic role of editing the Book of Urizen, Carlyle editing Sartor Resartus, Kierkegaard editing The Point of View for my Work as an Author: A Report to History. In editing his own Notebooks into the text of the Biographia, Coleridge catches himself in the rational traps of discourse. Vogler emphasizes the importance of textual space: the randomness of the Notebooks versus the ordered structure of an edited book. Citing Foucault's account of the "author function" of the book, Vogler explores Coleridge's reluctance to implicate himself, his struggle against the inevitability of identifying himself with the text. The physical shape of the Engell-Bate edition Vogler describes as an "editorial sandwich," which contains a "philosophical sandwich," which contains, in turn, the "meat." But it is not just the extensive editorial annotation of chapters 5 through 13 that makes the "sandwich" an apt metaphor. Coleridge himself builds up layers of textual space: the philosophical history of chapters 5 through 9, followed by "a chapter of digressions and anecdotes," followed in chapter 11 by an "affectionate exhortation to youthful literati."
In chapter 12, Coleridge presents his “requests and premonitions concerning the perusal of the chapter that follows.” The “premonitions,” as the annotations make clear, are translations, paraphrases, and summaries pieced together from Schelling. Finally, in chapter 13, Coleridge arrives at the “meat,” his promised exposition “On the imagination, or esemplastic power,” only to interrupt himself with a “letter from a friend.” In a close reading of this interruption, Vogler shows that Coleridge is—in Carlyle’s terms—playing the role of “English Editor” to his own alter-ego of the “Germanic Metaphysical Visionary.” Coleridge escapes his “metaphysical cul-de-sac” by resorting to the aposiopesis of Cervantes or Swift. Rather than be disappointed with Coleridge’s evasions, his delays and digressions, Vogler suggests that we should delight in them with full appreciation of the satirical manipulation. Coleridge may have failed to define the imagination, but he demonstrated it. Vogler concludes with an analysis of Coleridge’s authorial voice, his revelation of subjective presence and “inward power.” Demonstrating Coleridge’s art of self-presentation in “The Blossoming of the Solitary Date-Tree,” Vogler argues similar authorial presence in other poems (“Kubla Khan,” “Hymn Before Sunrise”) as well as in the Biographia.

Catherine Miles Wallace agrees that the “philosophical chapters” fail to provide a lucid account of the imagination. Where Vogler turns to Coleridge’s promotion of a “willing suspension of disbelief” and subjective cooperation, Wallace directs attention to the “rich and lively polemic.” Instead of lamenting his digressions, she advises, we should recognize their initiatory function, as part of the author’s desire to engage his readers in thinking about ideas. In “The Besetting Sins of Coleridge’s Prose,” she investigates the metaphoricality of Coleridge’s definitions, the disjuncture of his argumentation, and his supra-historical appeal to, and participation in, a presiding intellectual community of minds. Coleridge’s thought is *eidetic*; his logic requires visual models. Wallace shows how his definitions rely on manipulating mental pictures. For De Quincey, the secret of great prose was in the art of connection and transition. There is little such art to be found in the Biographia. But Wallace suggests that we be patient with the seeming discontinuity of Coleridge’s mental leaps: “at such times he is probably doing one of a finite number of reasonable things which he (quite unreasonably) does not signal to us in advance.” With a few apt examples, she provides some general exercises in building the logical bridges that Coleridge fails to construct in his prose. She then reveals a
visual continuity that Coleridge saw in the great philosophical tradition, a peculiarly ahistorical space into which the mind peers, possessing what it perceives. This is the exalted perception into "the hidden order of intellectual things" (Synesius) praised by Coleridge as an act of the philosophical imagination.

When Coleridge agonizes over text and meaning, it is not because their relationship is disparate, rather because it is arbitrary. Through promiscuous use and equivocation, the finer distinctions and discriminations of language erode. If we surrender to what has been "naturalized" in "general currency," then "language itself does as it were think for us." Thus he calls for the desynonimization of words (Biographia, ch. 4; Philosophical Lectures, ch. 5). But if communication depends upon a general acceptance of arbitrary signs, how can language be creative? In "Coleridge and the Language of Adam," Robert N. Essick paraphrases a Coleridgean text: "Adamic language is one with human perception, an echo of God's creative Word, differing from the Logos only in degree, and in the mode of its operation." Commentaries on Adam's naming of the beasts in Genesis resolved, Essick tells us, into two linguistic ideals: a universal language, known to all mankind; and a language in which there is a real (or, in modern terminology, a "motivated") relationship between the word and the thing it signifies. Essick briefly recounts the rationalist and taxonomic linguistic studies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, noting that the rising interest in primitive poetry carried with it a belief in the presence of a natural, Adamic language. Discontent with the taxonomic view of language, one that limits "the conceivable" to "the picturable" through associationist matching, Coleridge distinguishes this "language of words," or arbitrary signs, from "a language of spirits" in a way that parallels his famous desynonimization of "fancy" and "imagination." Coleridge joins the German romantics in gleaning the mystical wisdom of Jacob Boehme, for whom God's language is infinite and spiritual, man's finite and sensual, while the language in and of the world always strives to reconcile the difference between the individual and the divine. The reconciliation is promised by a semiotics that struggles "to idealize and unify" the binary opposites generated by a fallen, taxonomic linguistics. Like the language of Adam, this ideal mode repeats in the realm of finite discourse the structure of the Logos. Its essential constituent is not the word but the symbol (as defined in The Statesman's Manual) in counterdistinction to the "picture-language" of allegory. By partaking "of the reality which it renders in-
telligible," the Coleridgean symbol becomes the chief romantic form of Adamic utterance. By considering Coleridge's "imagination" and "symbol" from this linguistic perspective, we can perceive something of their historical background—but also the extent to which they are transcendental, even nostalgic, ideals rather than the tools of a practical poetic.

Are any of the tools of Coleridge's philosophical poetic serviceable as tools of a practical poetic? Is the Biographia the keystone in the great arch that joins philosophy and poetry, or simply a stumbling block in the way? The questions have been asked before, and variously answered. The answers J. H. Haeger gives us in "Anti-Materialism, Autobiography, and the Abyss of Unmeaning in the Biographia Literaria" are positive, but laden with provisos. He reads the "philosophical chapters" as a desperate metaphysical self-defense. Yes, they have practical applicability in analyzing poetry—Coleridge's poetry, especially the "mystery poems" and all those Coleridgean broodings over the dark side of human consciousness. Promising to "investigate the seminal principle" of the fancy and the imagination, and proceeding to explore the epistemological bases of his "poetic creed," these chapters are charged with a personal exposition of a psychological as well as philosophical struggle out of the abyss of dejection. Just as he wavers in his reaction to Schelling's pantheism, so too his account of self-perception shifts uncertainly from confessional to metaphysical discourse. While his philosophical formulations present one perspective, his style suggests another. In appropriating from Schelling the elements of a dynamic or constructive philosophy, Coleridge is more preoccupied with his own response to the metaphorical tensions than he is with the metaphysical implications. Haeger summons telling evidence of the autobiographical/philosophical struggle. Coleridge describes himself as a wanderer in the labyrinth (whose "best good fortune was finally to have found his way out again"), storm tossed on a sea of doubts ("and it was long ere my ark touched upon Ararat, and rested"); other metaphors describe darkness and danger without rescue or salvation. Coleridge's discursive statements point toward increasing mental abstraction and autonomy in relation to the external world, but his figurative language consistently dwells upon the chiaroscuro of an uncertain earthly terrain.

Coleridge considers the tension between meaning and text inherent in language, not just a problem peculiar to the Biographia. Because language is shaped by mind, our words are ordered by the same habitual connections we use in organizing sights and sounds, thoughts and feelings. The
perceptions may be fallible, but optical illusions and other distortions of
the senses are discovered through experience and corrected by reason.
This habitual correcting and censoring are all too efficient; through habit
the perceptions are numbed, and language loses its sensual vitality. Cole-
ridge recounts in the Biographia the origin of the Lyrical Ballads, tracing
his and Wordsworth's intentions in the poems to a desire to shatter en-
tirely the habits of their readers, and most particularly their visual habits.
Although Coleridge and Wordsworth found themselves opposing much
in Enlightenment thought, they shared that age's assumption that ways of
seeing largely determine what we think and know. Richard Fadem begins
his chapter, "Coleridge, Habit, and the Politics of Vision," by recounting
the Molyneux question on the relation between perception and experi-
ence, and the pondering of that question by Locke, Berkeley, and Hume.
When Coleridge journeys through this philosophical territory in the Bio-
graphia, he tells how he came to recognize habit as an impediment to vision
and see the dangers in Hartley and Associationism. He regards habit
as drastically skewing and limiting our relation to reality. Fadem shows
that the concern with habit in the philosophical chapters leads directly
to the chapters on Wordsworth. The poets had agreed, Coleridge writes,
that the two "cardinal points of poetry" consisted in "truth to nature"
and in "novelty." Novelty would emerge from the play of "the modifying
colors of the imagination" upon the natural world (Wordsworth's venue)
or from the imagination's lighting up the supernatural world (Coleridge's
territory). Despite their very different assignments one element remained
common to both poets: "The awakening of the mind's attention from the
lethargy of custom." Fadem then calls attention to Coleridge's repetition
of the same objective in the motto to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."
Fadem points out the visual/verbal construct of the poem, its theme of
vision numbed and renewed, its visual imagery of deception and discovery,
its language of puns and look-alikes. From his study of Coleridge's use
of habit, as outlined in the Biographia and as evident in "The Ancient
Mariner," Fadem concludes by noting that the stick Coleridge employs
to beat the Enlightenment turns out oddly to be the same one that such
late descendants of the Romantics as Pater and Wilde use to repudiate
elements of Romantic vision.

As Fadem sets forth the entangled case of Coleridge's opposition to
Locke and the philosophy of the Enlightenment, Stuart Peterfreund stud-
ies the opposition to Newton and the science of the Enlightenment. Al-
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Though literary historians have generally associated the shift from Classicism to Romanticism with the philosophical shift from Materialism to Idealism, both the literary and philosophical movements may be circumscribed by the shift in scientific thinking from a matter-based physics to an energy-based physics. Peterfreund begins his chapter, "Coleridge and Energy," with a selective sampling of Coleridge's references to energy as an efficacious ability to do the work of shaping the world, whether it be the world of Joan of Arc in The Destiny of Nations (1796) or the literary world shaped by the secondary, "esemplastic" imagination in the Biographia. When Coleridge praises Richard Saumarez's The Principles of Physiological and Physical Science (1812) for overthrowing "Sir Iky's System of Gravitation, Color, & the whole 39 Articles of the Hydrostatic, chemic, & Physiologic Churches" (letter to John Rickman, July 17, 1812), his objections to Newton are aptly couched in the metaphor of religion, for matter-based physics ignores the energy of God that Coleridge holds to be manifest in both mind and nature. He looked to science, to Young, Davy, and Saumarez, for something more than a metaphor. Coleridge insists on the relevance of energy in contexts of theology and literature as well as of physics. The theological origin of the term and concept are especially important to Coleridge, since the word energy (from its use in the Epistles of the New Testament to its use by Priestley and Wesley) is a word that refers to the workings responsible for the Judeo-Christian theodicy, as it affects and informs the world and the individual. Coleridge begins his career confident that the theodicy of the private life and the larger theodicy of the world are informed by one energy, emanating from the same divine source and responsible for the same positive outcome. But personal setbacks fostered doubts. He grew uncertain as to whether the same energy informed the individual and the world alike; and if it were the same energy, he was no longer certain whether it emanated from a source above, or one below. Divine energy operating in the individual, the world, or both could bring about spiritual renovation of apocalyptic proportions; but satanic energy could bring about untold sorrow and, by displacing the indwelling token of a positive theodicy, could deepen that sorrow by removing the last vestige of hope and consigning world and individual alike to irremediable fragmentation and ruin. The issue—whether energy is on the side of the angels or on the other side—is a central one for Coleridge's poetry and prose alike.

No other topic in the Biographia has been more discussed and debated
than the plagiarism from Schelling in chapter 12. In spite of all the attention to identifying the passages from Schelling, none of the commentators has explained why Coleridge found it necessary to construct his borrowed argument from three separate sources, representing three different versions of Schelling’s attempts to posit self-perception. In “Perception and ‘the heaven-descended know-thyself,’” Frederick Burwick traces the philosophical problem from Hume’s declaration that there is only perception, no self-perception. Burwick then explains how Kant and Fichte accounted for the self as an object in the subjective act of perceiving and how Schelling successively altered his analysis of self-perception in the three works used by Coleridge. What Coleridge wanted from Schelling was the confirmation that “a principle of unity is contributed by the mind itself.” But he could find in Schelling no appreciation of the imagistic act in perception, no discrimination of perceptual modes (looking at trees, reading a book, solving a geometric problem), and no God in the absolute. Coleridge therefore freely added and adapted when he pieced his ten theses together from various parts of each of the three different versions he found in Schelling’s works. The matter is even more complex, for Coleridge himself changed and altered the organization of the theses in transforming the text from his notebooks into the Biographia, and he reshaped it once again in his chapter “On the Logical Acts” in the Logic.

Although Schelling’s Von der Weltseele (1798) led his contemporaries to anticipate an account of God, his System des transzendentalen Idealismus (1800) made it clear that Schelling was opposed to the kind of religiosity forwarded by Schleiermacher’s Reden über die Religion and Novalis’ Die Christenheit oder Europa. When Coleridge appropriates his theses from Schelling, he needs to demonstrate how self-consciousness enables us to participate in absolute consciousness. Quoting the theses in “Annotating the Annotations: a Philosophical Reading of the Primary and Secondary Imagination,” J. Fisher Solomon explains that Coleridge could not possibly wring a revelation of God out of the “philosophic imagination” because the ontological argument of the theses allowed for no reproductive or representative function. The passage on the “primary” and “secondary” imagination has baffled interpreters for so long because it has always been considered in the context of a representational epistemology, according to which the primary imagination would somehow have to re-present or “repeat” the “eternal act of creation” itself, which can finally only be understood as some kind of divine presence. The solution to the puzzle of
the primary and the secondary imagination is not in the proper balancing of "reason" and "understanding" by an esemplastic power, but neither is it to be found in a deconstruction of the "mind" whose faculties are so difficult to unify. Arguing that Coleridge's psychology cannot really stand so long as "the eternal act of creation" remains metaphysically unexplained, Solomon turns from psychology to ontology; he interprets Coleridge's distinction between the primary and the secondary imagination in the light of Aristotle's ontological distinction between primary and secondary being (ousia, substance) in the Categories. From Aristotle's argument that actuality (energeia), potentiality (dunamis), and the composition (synthesis) of form and matter are all ousia, Solomon shows that power-and-difference subsist in the ontic "this." Coleridge utilizes the same dialectical structure: the primary imagination constitutes the ontic "this" and the secondary imagination constitutes the "this" as aesthetic symbol—not as repetition or representation of being, but as being itself.

In the editors' introduction to the Biographia, Engell and Bate claim that "we do not face the need, as we so often do in the difficult earlier chapters, to turn to Coleridge's other writings for supplementary help" in reading the critique on Wordsworth. This is misleading advice. As Raimonda Modiano shows us, Coleridge is indeed relying on a hidden agenda drawn from previous writings. Reacting to the rift and rivalry with Wordsworth, Coleridge sought other models of poetic excellence in which he could reaffirm aspects of his own abilities and strengths. In his notebooks and his lectures on literature, the two principle models are Shakespeare and Milton. When he builds his case against Wordsworth in the Biographia, Coleridge deliberately sets Wordsworth up as "nearest" to Shakespeare and Milton in diction (ch. 20) and in imaginative power (ch. 22). This is not faint praise, but it is nevertheless damning. In contrast to mechanical constraints of mere "copy," Shakespeare is praised for the dramatic power of "imitation"; "the language of real life" is found in Milton, not among rustic cottagers (ch. 22). Raimonda Modiano turns our attention back to chapter 2 to show how the integrity of Milton, especially his morality and simplicity, are made to work against Wordsworth in chapters 17 through 22.

Because Coleridge's theological and political views direct his philosophy of criticism, the reader of the Biographia is well-advised to be alert to the implicit motives of Coleridge's rhetoric. In examining the politics of Coleridge's criticism, Jerome Christensen shows not only the applicability of the deconstructive method, but the propriety of deconstruction in Cole-
Christensen opens this chapter, "Like a Guilty Thing Surprised: Coleridge, Deconstruction, and the Apostasy of Criticism," by repeating Frank Lentricchia’s charges against Paul de Man and the deconstructionists. Lentricchia asserts that "the deconstruction of deconstruction will reveal, against apparent intention, a tacit political agenda after all, one that can only embarrass deconstruction, particularly its younger proponents whose activist experiences, within the socially wrenching upheavals of the 1960s and early 1970s will surely not permit them easily to relax, without guilt and self-hatred, into resignation and ivory tower despair." Christensen answers that deconstructing deconstruction is the task assumed by Jacques Derrida, who taught that embarrassing hidden intentions is constitutive of the deconstructionist method. The problem is not that deconstruction has "a tacit political agenda," rather that deconstruction leads to apostasy. Is apostasy, Christensen inquires, a necessary or contingent consequence? Then he turns the inquiry around. Coleridge, he repeats Hazlitt’s phrase, was "always an apostate," or in the Heideggerian formula, "always already an apostate." And his apostasy leads to deconstruction. Coleridge is ever reacting against stasis, detaching himself from all forms. The apostasy that is the inevitable fall from divinity is reenacted in the continuing polemic of his philosophical criticism. His apostate polemics are not only addressed in rebuttal, refutation, correction, and amendment of this or that philosopher, poet, or politician, but Coleridge is his own "man from Porlock." He interrupts and repudiates his own texts.

In discussing Coleridge’s abiding commitment to the organic reciprocity of church and state, Thomas McFarland would have us avoid the solipsistic implications of Jerome Christiansen’s account of Coleridge’s apostasy. If Coleridge was, personally, repeatedly falling away from his divine ideal, he was ever returning to it, reconfirming its social and cultural manifestations. When the *Biographia* was first published, Thelwall objected to its anti-Jacobin statements and rebuked Coleridge as a turncoat. Hazlitt, too, scoffed at Coleridge’s "recollection" of his politics. In chapter 10, Coleridge claimed that his principles had always been "opposite... to those of jacobinism or even of democracy." Granting that such an assertion "admits of a convenient latitude of interpretation," Hazlitt replied that Coleridge’s politics were certainly "still more opposite to those of the Anti-Jacobins, a party to which he admits he has gone over" (*Edinburgh Review*, August 28, 1817). More recently, E. P. Thompson has renewed the charge of Coleridge’s apostasy. McFarland’s purpose in “Coleridge and the Charge
of Political Apostasy” is to explain why Coleridge could endorse neither Jacobin nor anti-Jacobin politics. By documenting the response to the French Revolution and the highly charged reaction to the “Bloody Reign of Terror,” McFarland is able to show the complexity and ambiguity of the political issues. He also shows how Coleridge’s habit of “mirroring” an auditor’s ideals resulted in contradictory interpretations of his political convictions. Not a desire simply to please, to say what his listener wanted to hear, but a dialectical habit of thinking—to reconcile extremes, to restate and synthesize a contrary position—is persistently evident in Coleridge’s writings. Because Coleridge interpreted political movements in terms of his organic theory, he responded to the Revolution in terms far more sophisticated and probing than either Wordsworth or Southey. Long after they had changed their minds, and their politics, Coleridge continued the same mode of analysis. Prone to vacillation in personal matters, Coleridge was nevertheless, McFarland stresses, constant in his intellectual views.

Jerome J. McGann, in “The Biographia Literaria and the Contentions of English Romanticism,” also examines Coleridge’s polemics and his studied attack on “Opinions in fashion.” It is for his literary criticism, not for his critique of empiricism nor for his political views and religious convictions that we read the Biographia.

But Coleridge engages the questions of literature in contexts that are emphatically political, social, and moral. We need not endorse his reactionary views, says McGann, to appreciate Coleridge’s commitment to a holistic humanism; we must, however, ascertain the polemical set of ideas at work in his theoretical and practical criticism. Modiano studies Coleridge’s critique of Wordsworth in terms of his appeal to a Miltonic authority that she traces back through the notebooks and Coleridge’s lectures and that she sees covertly anticipated in the opening chapters of the Biographia. McGann emphasizes, instead, the ideological ground of Coleridge’s polemic against Wordsworth’s materialism and associationism. Although both believed in the mind-nature dialectic, Coleridge emphasized a subjective and intellectual aesthetic, while Wordsworth, in Coleridge’s opinion, was far too attentive to the details of the material world and far too sympathetic to the rustic’s language and experience. Coleridge writes poetry of “revelation via mediations,” while Wordsworth’s purpose is to free his subjects from the very mediations which convey them. Coleridge engages the subject-object dialectic to reveal the ordering process of mind, Wordsworth to “see into the life of things.” In the concluding
section of this chapter, McGann traces the influence of the *Biographia* on Byron's theory and practice. Giving close attention to Coleridge's critique of Maturin's *Bertram* in chapter 23, McGann shows that Byron conceived his *Don Juan* in direct response to the *Biographia*.

Although it had already appeared in the *Courier*, the critique of *Bertram* (along with Satyrane's *Letters* which had appeared in *The Friend*) provided necessary bulk to round out the second volume of the *Biographia*. What had started out as counter-Wordsworthian Preface to *Sybilline Leaves* had become a separate entity, a book. Even before it spilled over into a second volume, Coleridge felt misgivings about his book as public merchandise. In the final chapter, "Poetry and Barrel-Organs: The Text in the Book of the *Biographia Literaria*," Robert Maniquis examines Coleridge's response to the metamorphosis of his "literary life" into a commodity in the marketplace. Maniquis finds the chary attitudes about commercial contamination, the scornful derision of the "Reading Public," important to an ideological analysis of Coleridge's Christian politics. From the first volume of the *Biographia* Maniquis excerpts a number of Coleridge's references to the commodification of a text as book. In one such passage from chapter 2, Coleridge declares that language is taken away from the "constructors," who "alone could elicit strains of music," and given over to the "press-room," where "language, mechanized as it were into a barrel-organ, supplies at once both instrument and tune." Coleridge distinguishes between the "property" of the poet, and the mass-produced commodities of the marketplace. Coleridge does not address the "Reading Public," but a "literary republic," whose members share his republican and Christian ideals. To these readers Coleridge raises his warning against a commodification of art which dictates the opinions of the vast "Reading Public" and threatens to undermine the constitutional republic. Maniquis has said that his study of Coleridge's "Text in the Book" was intended to engage recent ideological criticism, such as McGann's *The Romantic Ideology*. He does not merely engage, he extends.

Every student of literary criticism knows that the *Biographia* is a seminal text: both for its epistemological analysis of the imagination and for its exposition of organic form. Every student also knows that it is a tainted text. For the non-Coleridgean scholar, it should be pointed out that the work has a surprisingly limited editorial history. After the first edition of 1817, a revised version was edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge and Sara Coleridge in 1847. Subsequent editions have largely relied on the 1817 edition:
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John Shawcross used a conflation of the two texts in his edition for Oxford University Press in 1907; George Sampson for Cambridge, 1920; and George Watson for Dent/Dutton, 1956 and 1965, tended to follow Shawcross. With extensive annotation, James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate recently completed an edition for the Bollingen Collected Coleridge, 1983, but relied wholly on the 1817 version. The Shawcross edition, long privileged as the standard "critical edition," had at last been replaced. Having seen that their edition would be superceded by the Engell-Bate edition, Oxford did not have to deliberate long on how to answer the competition. For their new edition, Fruman bases his text not on the original edition of 1817 but on the edition of 1847, which, as he argues, incorporates Coleridge's own corrections and also has the benefit of Sara Coleridge's meticulous scholarship. Because Fruman in his Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel (1971) radically altered the way in which Romantic scholars deal with the problems of Coleridge's sources, the Oxford University Press no doubt felt that Fruman was just the editor needed to counter the Engell-Bate authority.

In confronting the problems of editing the Biographia, Fruman raises more than the question of "reliable" text. Whose text is this? In lengthy footnotes, the Engell-Bate edition provides a subtext of Coleridge's sources and verbatim borrowings that offer scholarly reliability while they cover up authorial unreliability. The topics addressed in the ensuing essays concern Coleridge's strategies of editing his own text and manipulating his language and the ideological traps which he created for himself and his readers. In order to provide a thorough examination of the issues in the contemporary critical debate over Coleridge's complex and devious text, the essays address the following in logical succession: editing the text and the self-edited text; language and metaphorical strategies; criticism and philosophy; criticism and ideology. These concerns reflect, of course, the issues being raised virtually everywhere in recent literary studies. Because it contains antecedents to so much of modern criticism, Coleridge's Biographia provides a central battlefield for defining and redefining the grounds of interpretation.