Veronika Ruttkay

The rhetoric of feeling: S. T. Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare and the discourse of 'philosophical criticism'

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Supervisor: Professor Richard Cronin

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Abstract

My thesis explores what kind of work is performed by affective terms such as 'passion', 'excitement', or 'poetic feeling' in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare. While Coleridge might be regarded as a fore-runner of twentieth-century critical trends such as formalism and reader-response criticism, his interest in different forms of emotion in connection with poetry links his thought to theoretical concerns of his own and of the immediately preceding age. I situate Coleridge in the context of British 'philosophical criticism' in the second half of the eighteenth century, a critical discourse that had paid particular attention to problems related to the role of feeling in literary language. I argue that Coleridge's interpretations of Shakespeare and the critical stance they articulated both continued and challenged important aspects of this critical tradition.

The Introduction offers an overview of the problem of feeling and (poetic) language in Coleridge's thought, followed by a definition of 'philosophical criticism', its reliance on Shakespeare and the productive tensions between 'feeling' and 'philosophy' that characterise it. The Introduction ends with a survey of recent scholarship. I proceed in the first chapter with an analysis of Coleridge's lectures as 'performances', that is, as events grounded in the lecturer's performance of immediate thought and feeling in front of his audience, generated by his encounters with the Shakespearean text. I argue that Coleridge's rhetorical awareness in these situations reveals the influence of the New Rhetoric, developed in the second half of the eighteenth century by a number of philosophical critics, who recommended improvisation and argued for the decisive role of the passions in rhetorical persuasion. I end this chapter by suggesting that the ambivalent theatricality of Coleridge's lectures might be seen as expressing his understanding of the role of criticism and of the theatre in early-nineteenth-century Britain.

The second chapter deals with Coleridge's theory of Shakespearean poetry as expounded in the lectures, focussing especially on 'passionate' aspects of language and on the connections Coleridge establishes between these and bodily movement, gesture, tone, and rhythm, as well as 'embodied' or 'performative' uses of rhetoric. I attempt to show that in these speculations Coleridge is responding to the idea of 'passionate language' developed by a number of earlier British philosophical critics, who often demonstrated the work of passion in language through the example of King Lear's mad speeches. Coleridge's remarks on the same passages articulate his relationship to their thought, revealing a more complex understanding of the links between passion and imagination, nature and artifice.

In the third chapter I continue to explore the ways in which Coleridge extends the scope of the New Rhetorical concept of passionate language by pushing back its pre-established limits. On the one hand, philosophical critics endorsed the notion that the strongest passions were defined by the impossibility of expressing them in language (above all, in the case of grief), and criticised Shakespeare's Constance for 'unnatural' verbosity. On the other, they speculated about wordplay and the pun as verbal figures inconsistent with passion, and therefore as figures out of place in serious drama. Coleridge challenges both of these assumptions, as his comments on Constance's personifications and his repeated speculations on the pun reveal. In doing so he overturns the established hierarchies of the New Rhetoric and implies the inseparability

of passion and its expression through both verbal and bodily 'symptoms'. Meanwhile, he also re-fashions criticism as 'sympathetic' reading, an activity defying formulation, which is capable of responding to and analysing even the most subtle modifications of language and feeling.

The fourth chapter compares Coleridge's often dismissed character criticism with the 'philosophical analysis' of character developed by William Richardson, a Scottish philosophical critic whose latest publications appeared at the time of Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare. Here I aim to point out some of the philosophical and moral underpinnings of Richardson's and Coleridge's concept of 'character', and their respective stances towards passion and analysis. By reconstructing the 'character' Coleridge drew of Shakespeare, I show how his idea of the management of the passions is related to poetic 'embodiment' in the form of fictitious characters. By comparing Richardson's and Coleridge's analyses of Macbeth, I show how both critics stress the pathological aspects of the imagination, and how Coleridge adds to this a strong emphasis on imagination's healing power through reflection on fiction. While the differences between the two critics may be explained by their different views of the mind, they are also related to their different historical perspectives: Richardson wrote his analysis of *Macbeth* just before the French Revolution, while Coleridge returned to the play again and again to make sense of the events in France and of the rise and fall of Napoleon.

In my discussion, I will sometimes refer to Coleridge's play *Remorse*, staged in 1813, that is, in the middle of his lecturing career. Coleridge's interest in theatre can be recognised throughout his lectures in several of his statements on Shakespeare and passionate language, especially since he often thinks about the expression of feeling as inherently theatrical. In the last chapter I turn to *Remorse* in order to show how some major concerns of Coleridge's lectures – with the rhetoric of passion or the analysis of character – appear in his own play, and how his play casts a new light on those concerns. With *Remorse*, Coleridge crosses the divide between philosophical reading and poetical creation; however, the play also reveals the persistence of philosophy in Coleridge's work, not only in the form of his grounding assumptions, but also as a problem to be 'staged' in drama.

By reconstructing Coleridge's exchanges with earlier philosophical critics – most importantly, with Kames, William Richardson, Alexander Gerard, and Joseph Priestley – I intend to highlight aspects of his critical practice that have rarely received sustained attention. In doing so, I also offer an interpretation of the complicated and often ambivalent role of feeling in Coleridge's criticism.

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Acknowledgments

Abbreviations of S. T. Coleridge's Works

BL

Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions
(*Collected Works* viii), ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols (Princeton:
Princeton University Press, 1983)

BL 1997

Biographia Literaria, ed. by Nigel Leask (London: J. M. Dent, The Everyman Library,
1997)

CH

Coleridge: The Critical Heritage (Vol. 1), ed. by J. R. de J. Jackson (London: Routledge
and Kegan Paul, 1970)

CL

The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols
(Oxford, 1956-71)

CM

Marginalia (*Collected Works* xii), vols 1-2, ed. by George Whalley (Princeton:
Princeton University Press, 1980-84); vols 3-5, ed. by H. J. Jackson and George
Whalley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992-2000)

CN

The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, vols 1-3, ed. by Kathleen Coburn (1957-73);
vol 4, ed. Kathleen Coburn and Merton Christensen (1990)

EOT

Essays on his Times (*Collected Works* iii), ed. by David V. Erdman, 3 vols (Princeton:
Princeton University Press, 1969)

F

The Friend (*Collected Works* iv), ed. by Barbara E. Rooke, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton
University Press, 1969)

IR

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Interviews and Recollections, ed. by Seamus Perry
(Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000)

LL

Lectures 1808-1819 On Literature (*Collective Works* v), ed. by R. A. Foakes, 2 vols
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987)

LPR

Lectures 1795 On Politics and Religion (*Collected Works* i), ed. by Lewis Patton and
Peter Mann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971)

LS

Lay Sermons (*Collected Works* vi), ed. by R. J. White (Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1972)

NS

Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection, ed. by Seamus Perry (Oxford: Oxford University
Press, 2002)

PDW

The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 3 vols (London: Basil
Montagu Pickering, 1877)

PW

Poetical Works (*Collected Works* xvi), ed. by J. C. C. Mays, 3 vols (2 parts each),
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)

SW&F

Shorter Works and Fragments (*Collected Works* xi), ed. by H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J.
Jackson, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

TM

S. T. Coleridge's Treatise on Method, as published in The Encyclopædia Metropolitana,
ed. by Alice D. Snyder (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1934)

Introduction

Writing to John Murray in 1814, Coleridge looked back on his 'long habits of meditation on Language, as the symbolic medium of the connection of Thought with Thought, & of Thoughts, as affected and modified by Passion and Emotion' (*CL* 3: 522). He could assume that Murray knew what he was talking about, for even though he had not published any substantial work of criticism by that date, he was widely recognised as a public lecturer, and most of all, as the 'philosophical' interpreter of Shakespeare. In other words, I think that the short summary he offered to Murray of the subject of his meditations also described one of the main theoretical concerns of his lectures. I am of course not alone in suggesting that concerns with language, thought, and feeling were central to Coleridge's criticism. R. A. Fogle in 1971 went as far as to claim that possibly 'all his literary criticism is an attempt to explain the language of passion, or the "logic of passion," and its relations with and differences from the language of ordinary logic and exposition'.[1] This might be a little too general; Fogle himself has given a nuanced account of other areas of Coleridge's criticism. Moreover, I am not certain that the distinction between the 'logic of passion' and 'ordinary logic' would have been made quite as sharply by Coleridge himself. But in spite of these objections, I think that Fogle here identifies one of the most important aspects of Coleridge's critical thought that is still capable of challenging its interpreters.

In a series of articles David Miall has demonstrated that concepts like 'feeling', 'emotion', and 'passion' played a crucial role in the development of Colerdge's ideas about literature.[2] He has also suggested that in the *Biographia* Coleridge often omitted 'reference to the role of feeling, and in other statements its role

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[1] Fogle, 'Coleridge and Criticism: II. Critical Practice', in R. L. Brett, ed., *S. T. Coleridge (Writers and their Background)* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1971), 147-166, pp. 151-2.

[2] Miall, 'Coleridge on Emotion: Experience into Theory', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 22 (1991), 35-39, p. 35; see also '"I See It Feelingly": Coleridge's Debt to Hartley', in *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J. B. Beer*, ed. Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 151-163; 'The Body in Literature: Mark Johnson, Metaphor, and Feeling', *Journal of Literary Semantics*, 26 (1997), 191-210.

seems to be downplayed'.[3] I will argue that in Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare – corresponding to the 'middle years' of his career and constituting an important source for the *Biographia* – such affective concepts still play a central, albeit highly complicated, role. In other words, I believe that his 1796 declaration according to which 'My philosophical opinions are blended with, or deduced from, my feelings' (*CL* 1: 279) is still relevant to his critical activities between 1808 and 1818.[4] What I would like to investigate is not the dependence of Coleridge's philosophy or 'philosophical criticism' on his own feelings or personal experience, but what makes him think of philosophy and criticism as necessarily dependent upon feeling. In other words, I attempt to investigate what kind of work is performed by affective terms like 'feeling' in Coleridge's lectures; in trying to answer this question I will focus not only on his critical theory and practical criticism, but also on his praxis as a lecturer.

After a decade of public lecturing, *The Courier* described Coleridge as a man who had 'studied our great Bard with an intensity of the reasoning faculties, and at the same time with a fervor and sensibility of poetical feeling which rarely unite in the same person' (*LL* 2: 334). This combination of reason and 'poetical feeling' or 'sensibility' seems to have been thought of by several contemporaries as one of the hallmarks of Coleridge's lectures. Its most succinct expression is the 'philosophical *tact*' attributed to him by the *Bristol Gazette*, 'which perceives causes, and traces effects impalpable to the common apprehension' (*LL* 1:530). The metaphor is apt because 'tact' implies both conceptual 'grasp' and intuitive 'feeling', and Coleridge appears to have thought of the two as dynamically interrelated.[5] His representative example of this is Shakespeare, who had 'first studied, deeply meditated, understood minutely – the knowledge become habitual gradually wedded itself with his habitual feelings, & at length gave him that wonderful Power by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class, any where –' (*LL* 1: 244). Such synthesis of knowledge and feeling was, I think, also the quality Coleridge was aiming at as Shakespeare's

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[3] Miall, 'Coleridge on Emotion', p. 35.
[4] Paul Hamilton has explored this affective orientation in relation with Coleridge's idealism, see his 'Coleridge and the "Riffacciamento" of Philosophy: Communicating an Idealist Position in Philosophy', *European Romantic Review*, 14 (December 2003), 417-429.
[5] Raimonda Modiano, 'Coleridge's Views on Touch and Other Senses', *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, Vol 81 (1978), 28-41.

interpreter. His capacity for systematic thought and readiness to reach out for what is outside his already established systems (if 'feeling' might be thought of in that way) may also account for the fact that his criticism has been rediscovered and reinvented in so many different forms throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This unique combination of 'philosophy' and 'feeling', I would argue, can be thought of as the result of a sustained interaction between lecturer and his public, in which both parties contributed with their own views about what Coleridge was doing and what he was supposed to do. Coleridge 'the lecturer' (a public image, circulated in journals, letters, reminiscences, and in his own writings) was thus partly shaped by his audiences – as he was perfectly aware.[6] Having read a newspaper account of one of his own lectures, Coleridge 'the Philosopher' saw in it a 'proof of the effect of all *un-commonplace* Discourses on the commonplace minds'; however, he could not help admiring 't'other *me*, the Lecturer. The account is a compleat Lord's Prayer read backwards – of course a most *charming, bewitching* Account' (*CL* 3: 456). This is telling, because the report in question contains one of the warmest commendations of Coleridge's critical genius, written about the Bristol series where he seems to have felt most at home with his audience. If such accounts were 'charming', they must have charmed Coleridge in the first place. But while 'the lecturer' was thus shaped through interactions with his public, audiences themselves were partly Coleridge's creation. His display of 'feeling' was inseparable from the necessity of evoking feelings in his listeners; their sympathy was the 'genial Climate' (*LL* 2: 530), without which, he insisted, his critical ideas could not be discussed.

Coleridge also acknowledged 'feeling' as one of the means through which poetry could be approached. Shakespeare was to be read with both feeling and understanding, uniting what Coleridge thought of (like most of his contemporaries) as male and female strengths. If the understanding failed, feelings could still be relied on, but only if the reader was in a morally healthy state. As he once stated, on 'any subject

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[6] See also Peter J. Manning, 'Manufacturing the Romantic image: Hazlitt and Coleridge lecturing', in James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin eds., *Romantic Metropolis* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 227-245, esp. 325-240.

of taste, he would sooner appeal to the *tact* of an innocent woman than to the wisest man' (*LL* 1:594) – 'innocent' being crucial here.[7]

Coleridge never drew a sharp distinction between criticism and moral philosophy, and his lectures often explicitly engage with questions regarding the education of feelings. He devoted a number of lectures to education – in Bristol, for instance, he said that children should learn '*distinct truths, animated by sincere and vivid feelings*' (*LL* 1: 594) – and quite a few to the theme of love, which he regarded as the evidence of human 'perfectibility' (*LL* 1: 334). Henry Crabb Robinson thus accurately described one of his literary lectures as developing a 'moral philosophy', in which 'he shews himself to be a man who really thinks and feels for himself' (*LL* 1: 195). Moral education was also performed through Coleridge's analyses of Shakespeare's characters. Assessing the pathologies of tragic and sometimes even of comic figures, he repeatedly pointed out the consequences of separating the understanding from the feelings or from the moral sense – in other words, he rediscovered his own methodological and philosophical assumptions in the very plays he interpreted.[8] In conjunction with this, he also identified symptoms of passion in the characters' language – as he argues, figures of speech and effects of rhythm make language, like a living body, 'simple, sensuous, and passionate'– and, since these symptoms do not obey external rules, they can only be interpreted by a critic who unites intelligence with sensibility.

It would be impossible to discuss all these aspects of 'feeling' in Coleridge's lectures without some guiding idea, and I have chosen to think about them in connection with rhetoric. This is useful, I think, because rhetoric is a concept that connects characteristics of Coleridge's public discourse as a lecturer to his literary analyses and theoretical speculations; in other words, 'rhetoric' is relevant to both the 'manner' and the 'matter' of his lectures. Furthermore, the connection is suggested by Coleridge himself, for he almost always discusses language in terms of feeling and feeling in terms of language – this is what enables his readings of 'passion' in the first place. However, the connection is far from straightforward or symmetrical. His

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[7] Julie Ellison discusses the gender implications of 'feeling' and 'understanding', and compares Coleridge to Schleiermacher in *Delicate Subjects: Romanticism, Gender, and the Ethics of Understanding* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), esp. pp. 103-118.
[8] See Elinor S. Shaffer, 'Iago's Malignity Motivated: Coleridge's Unpublished "Opus Magnum"', in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 19 (1968), 195-203.

theoretical speculations are full of attempts at registering its complications as, for instance, a notebook entry from 1814 defining language as 'the medium of all Thoughts to *ourselves*, of all Feelings to others, & partly to ourselves' (*CN* 3: 4237). Coleridge here assumes the existence of feelings without language, that is, of feelings directly manifesting themselves to the self. However, he also identifies feelings that exist to others, and even to the self, through language. The rest of the notebook entry suggest that such feelings come to being in interaction with others, through which words are associated with a whole range of bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions (his example is a mother teaching a child '*prest to her warm* Bosom – Blood – Tact – Eye – all', an image recurring in his love poetry). Language immersed in feeling is intersubjective, that is, it is capable of conveying one's feelings to others, whether one likes it or not. This mechanism, occurring in everyday communication, also forms the basis of poetry, where consciously built associations of words and feelings create an illusory sense of immediacy. The idea of communicable feelings seems to have been also one of Coleridge's justifications for public lecturing, the medium in which his words were supplemented by the 'comment of looks and tones', which made his meaning more fully available to perceptive listeners.

Back in 1800, Coleridge mentioned to John Thelwall a projected 'metaphysical Investigation of the Laws, by which our Feelings form affinities with each other, with Ideas, & with words' (*CL* 1: 626). Two months later, he seems to have concluded that such an investigation had to begin with poetry, writing to Davy about his plan to '*concenter* my free mind to the affinities of the Feelings with Words & Ideas under the title of "Concerning Poetry & the nature of the Pleasures derived from it"' (*CL* 2: 671). I believe that what Coleridge was doing in his lectures was, to a considerable extent, a realisation of this plan. His philosophical views, of course, changed markedly, and his thinking about language became more sophisticated. But in his lectures he still continued to assume that feeling somehow left its mark on language, arguing, for instance, that '[t]he word was not to convey merely what a certain thing is, but the very passion & all the circumstances which were conceived as constituting the perception of a thing by the person who used the word' (*LL* 1: 273). This line of thought also found its way into the *Biographia*, where he states that 'language is framed to convey not the

object alone, but likewise the character, mood and intentions of the person who is representing it' (*BL* 2: 115-6).

One of the problems Coleridge had to face again and again concerned the limits of such an expressive view of language.[9] Words as 'half-embodiments' of thought could only articulate half, or less than half, of the self, and even that 'half' appeared to him as constantly shifting and variable. Moreover, the self articulated in language was in some sense also artificial, for its articulation necessarily relied on something external to itself, most crucially, language. The self represented in language was therefore both more and less than its 'real' counterpart, which, in turn, was by definition inaccessible; indeed, at times this 'visible' self seemed to come close to fiction. In 1811 Coleridge argued that style had to be 'cultivated in order to make the movement of words correspond with the thoughts & emotions they were to convey, so that the words themselves are part of the emotion'. When this is successfully accomplished, it is 'no ill compliment to call another, "a man of words"' (*LL* 1: 273). I take this to mean that associations with thoughts and feelings 'naturalise' words that otherwise would remain external or foreign to the self. A style in control of such associations can be understood as expressing the self. The question, however, remains how much of the 'man of feeling' is lost in such translations, and how much is in fact the product of verbal expression. Another question concerns the mode of expression: by what means are feelings conveyed through language? Are there any identifiable formal traits corresponding to them? In other words, how should one read a text to follow in it the intricate interplay of thought and feeling?

I am not suggesting that Coleridge gave a full and final answer to any of these question (this would be expecting the wrong thing of Coleridge). Rather, I am trying to indicate the nature of his fascination with feeling in language and what he regarded as its fullest manifestation, in the language of poetry. While evidently artificial, poetic language, and especially that of Shakespeare, is for Coleridge a medium in which interactions between words, thoughts, and feelings are staged in an exemplary fashion.

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[9] The classical discussion of the 'expressive' view and of Coleridge's relation to it is M. H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Norton, 1958 (1953)), esp. pp. 114-124. It has been discussed in various other studies, e.g. in A. C. Goodson's *Verbal Imagination: Coleridge and the Language of Modern Criticism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), esp. Chapter 4: 'Expressive Language and the Commitment of Poetry'.

Shakespearean language is artificial in the sense that it clearly distinguishes itself from everyday communication; it is language used self-consciously for the purposes of art. At the same time, it is the 'language of nature', capable of deeply affecting the reader due to its reliance on 'all the possible associations of Thought with Thought, Thought with Feelings, or with words, or of Feelings with Feelings, & words with words' (*LL* 1: 66). Due to this dense web of associations, Shakespeare's language conveys a sense of fullness; his characters are by definition men and women of words, but they can become 'living words', or 'absent friends' to the reader.[10] Most modern criticism is deeply suspicious of this way of thinking, arguing that such constructions of character are no more than private or communal fantasies.[11] In my reading of him Coleridge was aware of the illusory nature of such 'friends', but wanted to know how and why they were created, while he was also mindful of their moral consequences. If the self was accessible even to itself through its representations in language, as he seems to have thought, there was every reason to suppose that it could be affected by other representations. Coleridge returned to this question regularly; 'when he remembered how much our characters were formed from reading pourtrayed,' he remarked, 'he could not deem it a slight subject to [be] passed over as if it were a mere amusement like a game at Chess' (*LL* 1: 313). However, if poetry was a serious kind of game, what were the rules? For instance, to what extent did the reader experience his or her own feelings when reading a text, and in what sense were they the feelings of an 'other'? And was there a clear distinction between 'real' and 'imaginary' feelings?

Shakespeare himself was not so much a man of words as a 'man of works' – that is, an author made up of his several writings. However, Coleridge maintained that he *'lives* in and through the Play' (*LL* 2: 368). In *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, he explained this with the help of a rhetorical question. 'Would not every genial mind', he asks, recalling his lectures, 'understand by Shakespeare that unity

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[10] 'When you look upon a *portrait*, you must not compare it with the face when present, but with the recollection of the face. It refers not so much to the senses, as to the ideal sense of the friend not present.' (*LL* 1: 225)

[11] Deidre Lynch, for instance, argues that the invention of characters with an interiority was an effect of the bourgeois market economy, see Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For an ethical reading of 'character' see Christy Desmet, *Reading Shakespeare's Characters: Rhetoric, Ethic and Identity* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).

of total impression comprizing, and resulting from, the 1000fold several and particular emotions of delight, admiration, gratitude excited by his Works?' (*SW&F* 2: 1130) The implied answer, of course, is yes, which means that the 'genial' reader's Shakespeare is made up of all the affective responses generated in the appreciation of his works. We might think of Coleridge's lectures as exemplifying the process by which this 'Shakespeare' is being created. While Coleridge was thus 'constructing' both the audience and the subject matter of his criticism, he also continuously reflected on his own activity: looking through his notes, one finds him again and again trying to account for what it is in Shakespeare's plays, and what it is in the 'genial' (or ideal) reader, that enables such boundary-crossings between language and feeling.

I am going to approach this huge area of Coleridge's thought obliquely, by situating it in the context of the so-called 'new rhetoric', that is, in a critical discourse developed in the second half of the eighteenth century which had anticipated several of Coleridge's questions about feeling and language, and which overlapped with the tradition known as 'philosophical criticism'. Of course, no matter how close or how distant these critics are to Coleridge, any attempt to explain his criticism with reference to its predecessors has its own limitations. At best, such an inquiry can yield a partial view, while its greatest danger lies in short-circuiting Coleridge's thought by tracing it back to fixed 'origins'. However, I think such a method might still be justifiable exactly because of Coleridge's famous or infamous disruption of fixed origins in critical thinking. In almost all cases, that is, he can be thought of as 'annotating' other texts – sometimes by himself –, which is not to say that he is unoriginal but that his most interesting ideas are generated in response to 'others'. [12] But if his criticism is understood as something like an aggregate of several ongoing debates, it also has to be acknowledged that some of his critical terms are not entirely his own. Even if he 'naturalises' them to his own arguments, they at the same time belong to those

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[12] Christensen argues that this strategy (the 'marginal method') relieved Coleridge 'of the responsibility for systematic discourse', albeit at the cost of making him dependent on a series of authorities 'on which he obsessively relies and which he compulsively disrupts'. See Christensen, *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1981), pp. 108-9.

discourses with which he engages in dialogue. For this reason, I think it is necessary to look at the wider context in which his ideas were formulated and possibly understood. Taking a closer look at 'philosophical criticism' in the second half of the eighteenth century is especially important for my concerns, because some of the most challenging developments in this tradition evolved exactly around terms like 'feeling', 'passion', and 'excitement' – terms that Coleridge returned to again and again.

The 'new rhetoricians' or 'philosophical critics' of the later eighteenth century include, among others, Adam Smith, Lord Kames, George Campbell, Alexander Gerard, Hugh Blair, and Joseph Priestley; while William Richardson who was not strictly a rhetorician, can certainly be counted amongst the 'philosophical critics'. Most of these writers were associated with the Scottish Enlightenment and were moral philosophers, as well as being critics or rhetoricians. Their unique perspective follows from this: on the one hand, they aim at renewing classical rhetoric, while on the other, they are students of the mind, participating in the capacious project Hume had called the 'science of man'. As James Engell has persuasively argued, these critics were crucial in the evolution of Romantic poetics; moreover, they were 'the first British critics to mount a collective effort to explain literature and literary form in light of semiotics and the structure of language'.[13] Like Coleridge, they believed that language and thought were inseparable from each other (having learned this from Locke and Condillac), while they also laid an unusual emphasis on passion and feeling in their theories of language.[14] Moreover, they assumed that 'movements' of rhetoric performed movements of passion – I allude to 'performance' here not only because of its modern associations with speech act theory (a meaning that is relevant to the old view), but also because the term emphasises the 'embodied' aspect of feeling that was important for both Coleridge

[13] Engell, James, 'The New Rhetoric and Romantic Poetics', in Bialostosky, Don H. and Lawrence D. Needham eds, *Rhetorical Tradition and British Romantic Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 217-232, p. 217. The fullest account of the 'New Rhetoric' is to be found in W. S. Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 441-691. The 'new rhetoric' is related to Coleridge in James Mulvihill, *Upstart Talents: Rhetoric and the Career of Reason in English Romantic Discourse, 1790-1820* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 21-63.

[14] For Condillac's significance see Hans Aarsleff, 'Wordsworth, Language, and Romanticism', in *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (London: Athlone Press, 1982), 372-381. See also Nicholas Hudson, 'Theories of language', in Nisbet, H. B., and Claude Rawson, eds., *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume 4: The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 335-348.

and his predecessors.[15] Thus, notwithstanding Coleridge's antagonism towards 'Scotch Doctors', I think that in an important sense these critics set the stage on which Coleridge's lectures were performed. [16] I use the term 'philosophical criticism' to emphasise this connection, for the critics whom Engell calls 'new rhetoricians' tended to describe the activity in which they were engaged by using this Coleridgean-sounding term. One of the aims of my thesis is to show that this connection is not merely superficial, even if Coleridge rejected much of the philosophy of his predecessors. By way of introduction, however, a short explanation might be in order of what I take to be the discourse of 'philosophical criticism' and why I think that Coleridge can be regarded as one of its later proponents.[17]

James Harris in his posthumously published *Philological Inquiries* (London, 1781) distinguished 'philosophical criticism' from 'historical' and 'corrective criticism' (the latter two, he argued, were dominant in his age). He identified the philosophical critic's leading assumption as 'Nothing excellent in literary Performances happens from Chance' -- in other words, what *is* recognised as excellent can be explained on theoretical grounds:

> Effects indeed strike us, when we are not thinking about the cause; yet may we be assured, if we reflect, that a cause there is, and that too a cause intelligent and rational. Nothing would perhaps more contribute to give us a taste truly critical, than on every occasion to investigate this cause, and ask ourselves, upon feeling any uncommon effect, why we are thus delighted; why thus affected; why melted into pity; why made to shudder with horror?

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[15] The relationship between language and 'action' in 18th-century rhetoric is discussed in H. Lewis Ulman, *Things, Thoughts, Words, and Actions: The Problem of Language in Late Eighteenth-Century British Rhetorical Theory* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994). A recent attempt at relating Austinian speech act theory to the 'passions' is Stanley Cavell's 'Performative and Passionate Utterance', in *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* (Cambridge, Mass. And London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 155-191.

[16] For Coleridge's ambivalent engagement with the Scottish Enlightenment see Cairns Craig, 'Coleridge, Hume, and the chains of the Romantic imagination', in Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen, eds., *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 20-37. His reliance on Priestley's criticism is discussed in Jane Stabler, 'Space for Speculation: Coleridge, Barbauld, and the Poetics of Priestley', Nicholas Roe, ed., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Sciences of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 174-204.

[17] Angela Esterhammer identifies 'philosophical criticism' as one of Coleridge's critical legacies; what I am emphasising now is that it was also an inheritance; see Esterhammer, 'The Critic', in L. Newlyn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002, 142-155), 153-4.

Till this *why* is well answered, all is darkness; and our admiration, like that of the vulgar, founded upon ignorance.[18]

The philosophical critic, then, starts by registering the emotional effects of a given literary text, and proceeds by establishing the laws of nature which explain such reactions, and to which the text supposedly conforms. Based on natural laws, he formulates critical 'principles', in order to interpret what he regards as the data of literary experience. Even though Harris's view of the mind was essentially Platonist, his general definition of philosophical criticism was also accepted by thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, who had a rather different philosophical outlook. Alexander Fraser Tytler in his *Memoirs of Kames* (1807) quotes Harris's definition approvingly, even if he argues that the true 'inventor of [that] science' was Kames himself, Kames having been the first 'to trace the rules of criticism to their true principles in the constitution of the human mind, and the nature of the passions and affections'.[19] Tytler argues that the new 'science' of philosophical criticism was further developed by writers such as George Campbell, James Beattie, and William Richardson.

These critics, together with others not mentioned by Tytler, formed something like a recognisable critical school by the later eighteenth century.[20] Vicesimus Knox in an essay 'On Philosophical Criticism' finds the 'philosophical' approach 'particularly prevalent among our thoughtful neighbours in North Britain', that is, among thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment. Looking for a representative critic among them, he cites Kames as one who 'has penetrated deeply to discern the cause of those emotions, which literary compositions are found to produce', even if, as he argues, such

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[18] Reprinted in Vicesimus Knox, ed., *Elegant Extracts in Prose, Selected for the Improvement of Young Person*, Tenth edition (London: 1816), p. 419.

[19] Tytler, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames; Containing Sketches of the Progress of Literature and General Improvement in Scotland during the Greater Part of the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Creech; London. T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807), 1: 273. See also his assertion that philosophical criticism 'consists in founding the rules of judgment in the fine arts upon the principles of human nature', and thus it is 'that which draws its rules, not from authority, and the practice of eminent writers, but from its native and primary source, the structure of the human mind and the nature of the passions' (1: 277; 281).

[20] According to Andrew Hemingway, the Scottish Enlightenment 'initiated philosophical criticism as a form of systematic inquiry'. Hemingway, 'The "Sociology" of Taste in the Scottish Enlightenment', *The Oxford Art Journal* Vol 12, No 2 (1989), 3-35, p. 11.

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speculations have no practical value for writers.[21] Philosophical criticism, then, is based on the analysis of feelings, but it has its own limitations. In another essay 'On Modern Criticism', Knox goes further in criticising these critics, claiming that in their pursuit of 'science' they have intruded on the territory of 'polite and classical scholars', behaving like 'anatomists' who must 'examine the internal conformation', instead of simply appreciating beauty.[22]

These remarks reveal Knox's anxiety over what should count as criticism and who should be entitled to practice it. 'Philosophical criticism', seen in this light, played an important role not only in the evolution of certain key critical ideas, but also in the reconfiguration of disciplines that took place during the long eighteenth century, in which Coleridge's lectures still occupy a transitional place. According to a number of recent studies, this transformation, which ultimately led to the establishment of 'English Literature' as a university subject, started with the introduction of 'Rhetoric and Belles Lettres' at the Scottish universities.[23] The works of the Scottish critics had repercussions all over Britain, and not only through the influence of the Scottish reviewers. Knox, for instance, who chastised the 'philosophical critics' for undue specialisation, nevertheless reprinted a considerable portion of Hugh Blair's 'Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres' in his *Elegant Extracts*, with the explicit aim of making the 'current coin' of criticism available to a wider English audience, and primarily to students whose education had been focused on the 'golden medals of antiquity'.[24] Clearly, this meant that 'polite and classical' scholarship was no longer sufficient for modern critical 'exchange'.

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[21] Knox, 'On Philosophical Criticism, and on the little assistance it gives to genius', in *Essays Moral and Literary*, A New Edition in Two Volumes (London: Charles Dilly, 1782), 2: 10-14, p. 10.

[22] 'On Modern Criticism', in *Essays Moral and Literary*, 1: 128-132, pp. 129-130. See also Martin Kallich, *The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England: A History of a Psychological Method in English Criticism* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1970), p. 220. On 'anatomy' as a metaphor used by Hume for his own project, see Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p. 32.

[23] See Neil Rhodes, 'From Rhetoric to Criticism', in *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*, ed. Robert Crawford (Cambridge: CUP, 1998) 22-36, and also the other essays in this collection. See also Clifford Siskin's argument about the 'disciplinary displacement of Scottish philosophy by English Literature' in *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain 1700-1830* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), esp. p. 81.

[24] *Elegant Extracts: or, useful and entertaining Passages in Prose, Selected for the Improvement of Young Persons: being similar in Design to Elegant Extracts in Poetry*, 2 vols. (London, 1797), 1: ii.

Coleridge and Wordsworth were among the vast number of young people in England who read Knox's volumes, although a note by Coleridge suggests that he probably saw them as promoting a mildly amusing sort of classicism.[25] The cutting edge of eighteenth-century 'philosophical criticism', however, was defined by its difference from classical authorities. As James Engell writes, these critics 'invoke Aristotle, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Longinus, Cicero, and Quintilian, but they wish primarily to establish the "radical principles" of language and literature'.[26] In other words, they advocate the enlightened attitude of 'judging for oneself', as Tytler and others are glad to assert.[27] Interestingly, however, Tytler himself does not refrain from criticising Kames on this very ground: 'By teaching, that every judgment pronounced on any of the productions of the fine arts must rest on certain fixed principles of human nature,' philosophical criticism, he argues, 'has a tendency to substitute reason and argument in the room of feeling.'[28] This suggests that the idea of criticism as a specialized field of study could be disconcerting, not only to its opponents like Knox, but also to its own advocates. It seems that around the turn of the century several writers were afraid that in the pursuit of critical systems, the 'feeling' for poetry would be lost.[29] Ironically, literary 'feeling' was the very subject matter these 'scientific' critics dealt with, so the fear of a possible loss of feeling was perhaps an offshoot of their own specialised attention.[30] Characteristically, Coleridge in his 1814 letter to Murray referred to his own 'long habits of meditation on Language' and the connections between thoughts, words, and feelings, in order to explain why he had given up writing poetry. However, the achievement of his

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[25] In November 1799 Coleridge copies a passage from the *Elegant Extracts [...] in Prose* (1784), and writes: 'Spence, Blackwall & Blair, the Damon, Mopsus, & Menalcus of Criticism - Master Knox' etc. (*CN* 531, 532). The reference to Virgil's shepherds may have to do with these critics' interest in the 'primitive' origins of poetry.

[26] 'The New Rhetoric and Romantic Poetics', p. 218.

[27] Writing of *Elements of Criticism*, he states, 'But of the truth or rectitude of the theoretical principles, we have no other test than individual consciousness: every reader must judge by making the appeal to his own feelings, an appeal which indeed is the ultimate criterion of the truth or falsehood of all metaphysical opinions [...] It is the quality of a work of this nature, to make the reader judge for himself on every subject handled by the author'. Tytler, *Memoirs*, 1: 315.

[28] Tytler, *Memoirs*, 1: 317.

[29] David Simpson discusses the strong anti-theoretical bias of the age, but he does not refer to the Scottish 'philosophical critics'. See his *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt against Theory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

[30] Cf. George Campbell on effects of 'wit': 'there is a risk, that when we are most disposed to inquire into the cause, we are least capable of feeling the effect; as it is certain, that when the effect hath its full influence on us, we have little inclination for investigating the cause' (*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 2 vols [London and Edinburgh, 1776], 1: 48).

lectures was exactly to combine analysis with 'poetic feeling' – in other words, his unique lecturing style can be understood as responding to the very threats posed by the 'scientific' nature of his approach.[31]

Perhaps no other book could have afforded more ground for fears about the effects of rigorous philosophical inquiry than Joseph Priestley's *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777), consisting of the lectures he delivered at the Warrington Academy from 1762 onwards. Priestley 'dissects' literary compositions precisely in the manner that Knox found so alarming; in fact, he uses metaphors of anatomy to describe his own work.[32] Priestley is recognized by James Engell and W. S. Howell as an important figure in the development of the new rhetoric; his arguments often rely on Kames and Alexander Gerard, while they also show some similarities with those of George Campbell. As Vincent M. Bevilacqua explains, both Priestley and Campbell based their respective critical systems on a hierarchy of the mental faculties, studying what devices of style affect the passions, judgment, and imagination.[33] However, the principal aim of Priestley's lectures was not to establish a new 'philosophy' of rhetoric, but to offer an illustration of the philosophy he adhered to, that is, to Hartley's associationism. He himself looked back on what he called his '*Lectures on Philosophical Criticism*' by observing that 'the subjects of criticism admit of the happiest illustration from Dr. Hartley's principles', and that was why he finally decided to publish them.[34] Here, then, was a book of 'scientific' criticism written by a "Natural Philosopher", who carried Kames's approach to its logical conclusion. But whereas the theory of mind proposed by Kames had never quite amounted to a complete system, Priestley writes with a philosophy in mind that had already found its finished formulation.

By doing so, he resolves a productive tension between criticism and philosophy that had characterised most of the writings of earlier philosophical critics.

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[31] Cf. Julie Ellison on 'romantic anxieties against critical aggression' and Coleridge's response to them in *Delicate Subjects*, p. 103.

[32] 'We have hitherto examined what we may call the bones, muscles, and nerves of a composition; we now come to the covering of this body, to describe the external lineaments, the colour, the complexion, and graceful attitude of it.' Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent M. Bevilacqua and Richard Murphy (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p. 72.

[33] See the editors' introduction to Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, esp. pp. xxvi; xxxviiii.

[34] Priestley, *An Examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind* (London: J. Johnson, 1774), p. xii. See also Kallich, *The Association of Ideas*, p. 224.

Kames, Gerard, and William Richardson make use of literature in more than one way: as illustration of philosophical doctrine, as material to be criticised, and – most remarkably – as a heuristic tool in the pursuit of philosophical truth. In *Elements of Criticism* Kames asserts that '[t]he principles of the fine arts, appear in this view to open a direct avenue to the heart of man' – the heart of man being the 'black box' that philosophers like him ultimately wished to study.[35] Similarly, George Campbell regarded rhetoric as 'perhaps the surest and the shortest, as well as the pleasantest way of arriving at the science of the human mind'.[36] Such assertions show that for these authors literary texts (or, for Campbell, even non-literary ones) fulfilled a very important role: they made possible the 'experiment', which was thought to be essential for any 'scientific' investigation.

Kames in his Introduction states that he wishes 'to ascend gradually to principles, from facts and experiments; instead of beginning with the former, handled abstractedly, and descending to the latter'.[37] As it turns out, he means by 'experiments' passages of poetry, or rather, examples of the interaction between text and mind, which can be examined not only by the critic, but also by his reader. The reader's sympathetic response, his sense of pleasure or revulsion when reading a particular text, thus provides the data and the pledge for 'scientific' inquiry. The 'experiment' can be repeated and the results explained on the basis of general laws. But, as it sometimes happens in science, an experiment might also yield some unexpected result, which could only be explained by refining the original principles. In 'philosophical criticism' too, the analysis of certain texts could lead to new 'discoveries'. Reading the works of some philosophical critics, most notably Kames and William Richardson, one cannot avoid thinking that the mental 'laws' they described in connection with a given literary passage were in fact deduced from their reading of that very passage, instead of having been conceived previously. Literary criticism, then, did not simply illustrate philosophy (as Priestley intended), but generated philosophy. This is the reason why Kames's project could not be completed in a systematic manner: the 'laws' of passion he identified were almost as numerous as the passages he looked at.

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[35] Kames, *Elements of Criticism* (1762), 2 vols (London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1993), 1: 33.
[36] *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1: 16; see also Engell, 'The New Rhetoric', p. 220.
[37] *Elements of Criticism*, 1: 13.

Treating literature in this heuristic way lent a unique status to certain literary texts. While various works could be criticised on the basis of general principles, it was necessary to acknowledge that a few were beyond censure, since they were used as the source of general principles, in relation to which all other works could be criticised. It is hardly surprising that the author who offered most such passages was Shakespeare, whose reputation for representing 'human nature' was already well established. For the philosophical critics Shakespeare thus became the 'philosophical' poet, whose instinctive knowledge of the most hidden springs of human behaviour found embodiment in his plays. In other words, Shakespeare's writings were viewed as the crucial experiments in 'scientific' inquiry. To cite only one interesting example, Alexander Gerard in his *Essay on Genius*, wishing to study the influence of passion on association, writes:

> It may perhaps be thought most proper to draw these from our own experience in real life. But to be able to select examples from real life, and to set them in a striking light, would require no small degree of one of the highest and rarest kinds of poetical genius. It will therefore be both the fastest and the best way, to take our examples from such representations of the passions in poetry, as are confessedly natural to the taste of the reader. Such examples have as great authority as instances which a person himself observes in ordinary life. Shakespear alone will almost supply us with as many as are necessary. [38]

One of Gerard's arguments in this book is that devising scientific experiments is no less an act of genius than writing poetry. Here he ingeniously turns the tables on poetry, as it were prompting Shakespeare to stand in for a scientist, at least as regards the staging of experiments. This critical sleight-of-hand was not unique to Gerard, but one of the hallmarks of philosophical criticism in general. Kames's work, for instance, became widely influential precisely because of his extensive reliance on Shakespeare: even if his particular explanations were discarded by later critics, his illustrations were cited again and again to support other theories. In other words, philosophical criticism was both a

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[38] *An Essay on Genius* (London: W. Strathan, T. Cadell; Edinburgh: W. Creech, 1774), p. 150.

cause and a symptom of the 'Shakespeare idolatry' that – as R. W. Babcock demonstrated – Romantic critics inherited from their eighteenth-century predecessors.[39]

This, finally, explains why I have decided to study the role of feeling specifically in Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare, instead of looking at his literary criticism in general. It is in these lectures that he is closest to and most readily comparable with earlier philosophical critics, and consequently it is here that his differences from his predecessors in the critical uses of 'feeling' are clearly discernible. Like his predecessors, he relies on Shakespeare's authority to introduce principles of criticism and treats some of Shakespeare's characters as revealing elementary laws of the human mind. Hamlet, for instance, manifests for him 'Shakespeare's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy'; it is therefore 'essential to the understanding of Hamlet's character, that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds' (*LL* 1: 543). Kames and his followers relied on introspection in criticism in a very similar way.[40] With the other philosophical critics, Coleridge asserts that criticism should be based on the analysis of the mind: works of art 'must of necessity be referred to some known faculty or passion of our common hu Nature which they have pleased or satisfied' (*LL* 1: 126); this, he declares, is the only strictly 'scientific' method (*LL* 2: 47). However, his analysis is never quite complete; compared to Priestley, he gives relatively less attention to the finished system and more to the individual 'experiment'.[41] Shakespeare's works, which are introduced by both Coleridge and the earlier critics as 'illustrations' of critical principles, have a tendency to become, in his lectures, the main subject matter that needs explanation, while his tentative principles often merely hover in the background, although they are capable of moving centre stage at any moment.

All in all, there is a flexibility and even playfulness that distinguishes Coleridge's critical style from his predecessors, which, I think, follows from his tactical renunciation (or, perhaps, postponement) in his lectures of arriving at a fully coherent

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[39] See Babcock, *The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry, 1766-1799: A study in English criticism of the late eighteenth century* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964 (1931)).

[40] See B. I. Manolescu , 'Traditions of Rhetoric, Criticism, and Argument in Kames's *Elements of Criticism*', *Rhetoric Review*, 22 (2003), 225-242.

[41] For the importance of the 'experiment' in Coleridge's poetics see Jane Stabler, 'Space for Speculation'; Noel B. Jackson, 'Critical Conditions: Coleridge, "Common Sense", and the Literature of Self-Experiment', in *ELH*, 70: 1 (Spring 2003), 117-149.

philosophy, either of criticism or of the human mind. At the same time he uses every opportunity to draw sketches of such philosophies and, in turn, to test his own theories in the 'here and now' of the lecture theatre. This means that even when he records his own feelings in response to a particular text, he is never simply impressionistic: impressions, for him, are data to be explained, the results of experiments. The uniqueness of this stance becomes clearer if it is compared with the views of some of Coleridge's contemporaries. The *Blackwood's* critic John Wilson, for instance, in his 1818 'Letter' on the character of Hamlet, refers to the tradition of making use of literature for the purposes of philosophy only to define his own criticism in opposition to it:

> we cannot endure any long, regular, and continued criticism upon [Hamlet], for we know that there is an attitude of his soul which cannot be taken, and a depth that may not be fathomed. We wish rather to have some flashings of thought – some sudden streams of light thrown over partial regions of the mental scenery, – the veil of clouds here and there uplifted, – and the sound of the cataract to be unexpectedly brought upon the silence. We ask not for a picture of the whole landscape of the soul, nor for a guide who shall be able to point out all its wonders. But we are glad to listen to every one who has travelled through the kingdoms of Shakespeare.[42]

The discourse of philosophical criticism originated in the wish to possess a 'picture of the whole landscape of the soul', which Wilson here rejects. Philosophical critics conducted an analysis of language and poetry – especially of Shakespeare – in order to supply the missing details of such a map. Coleridge's notes can be rhapsodic, like Wilson's paragraph here, but he never renounces the ambition of constructing maps of the mind through literature – even though he seems to be more aware than any of his predecessors of the inevitable connection between such maps and works of fiction.

By engaging with questions of self-knowledge through a discussion of poetry, Coleridge participates in the larger epistemological debate that has been reconstructed by Adela Pinch in *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (1996). My work is greatly indebted to this brilliant study, which has investigated vital continuities between 'Romanticism' and the 'Age of Sensibility', demonstrating that a particular 'concern with the vagrancy of emotions persists from the

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[42] 'T.C.', 'Letters on Shakespeare. No. I – On Hamlet', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, II (February 1818), 504-12, pp. 504-5.

eighteenth century through the romantic period'.[43] Pinch introduces the central problems of that debate via a reading of Hume's *Treatise*, and proceeds by analysing a number of literary works in order to show 'how questions about our knowledge of feelings and the forms they take structure both literary and philosophical texts'.[44] Although one of her chapters deals with Wordsworth, she is curiously silent about Coleridge, who could have been doubly relevant to her argument, both as a poet and a critic-philosopher. Coleridge's concerns overlap with the problems studied by Pinch in a number of ways. She shows, for instance, how feelings in the philosophy and literature of the long eighteenth century often appear to be impersonal and transsubjective, quite frequently being represented as the feeling of an 'other'. I think that Coleridge's reflections on feeling as bound up with language and rhetoric brings this problem into especially sharp focus, while his speculations on how Shakespeare's drama mediates the reader's feelings to him- or herself is probably the most ingenious working-through of these matters. Moreover, Pinch's double point that 'a fascination with knowing feelings is closely coupled with a sense of their difficulty', and that in this period 'it *becomes* productive to see feelings as difficult to measure', is exemplified not only by Coleridge's careful distinctions between feelings within and beyond the scope of language, but also by the inherent contradictions of philosophical criticism itself, which again and again provoked the question of what might be lost, and what might be gained, by getting to know one's feelings.[45]

Apart from Pinch, a number of critics have established connections between sensibility and romanticism, most influentially perhaps Jerome McGann in *The Poetics of Sensibility*.[46] A resurgent interest in affect has led a number of Romantic new historicists to study issues related to 'feeling' on the grounds that conceptions of affect are especially sensitive to historical and social change. John Morillo describes critical engagement with feeling in the long eighteenth century as manifesting the 'half-articulate relationship of writers and readers to their own thoughts and prejudices, a

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[43] Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), p. 11.
[44] *Strange Fits of Passion*, p. 8
[45] *Strange Fits of Passion*, p. 164.
[46] McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

silent conversation best described as ideology'.[47] The thrust of his argument is that the discourse on passion was in this period a veiled discourse on class. Coleridge's criticism would offer ample opportunities for studying class and gender relations configured in terms of feeling; however, I have decided to bracket the ideological subtext for the sake of reconstructing Coleridge's theoretical contributions to the 'philosophical' criticism of feeling.[48] A number of other critics have dealt with the representation of feeling as an important subject for historical inquiry, amongst them Andrew M. Stauffer in *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism* and Thomas Pfau in his monumental *Romantic Moods*.[49] Jon Mee in his recent book focuses on 'enthusiasm' as a concept that 'serves to highlight the entangled historicity of affect', discussing Coleridge as representative of the Romantics' ambivalent attitude towards enthusiasm (a force to be checked as well as harnessed for poetic production).[50]

Critical interest in feeling has also been triggered by the careful attention to theoretical and cultural aspects of the age of sensibility in a number of recent studies. John Mullan's *Sentiment and Sociability* has been especially relevant to my work, in tracing how the body and its 'natural' signs were interpreted in the eighteenth century as manifesting a 'language of feeling', forming the – rather ambivalent – basis of concepts of sympathy and sociability.[51] Since then, other critics such as Paul Goring have investigated this 'natural' rhetoric, while several studies have been devoted to the role of the body and feeling in the science and literature of Sensibility.[52] In Coleridge studies, sensibility, feeling and the body have always been important topics, not least because of

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[47] John Morillo, *Uneasy Feelings: Literature, the Passions, and Class from Neoclassicism to Romanticism* (New York: AMS Press, 2001), p. 3.
[48] For gender implications, see Julie Ellison, *Delicate Subjects*.
[49] Andrew M. Stauffer, *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); Thomas Pfau, *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005).
[50] Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 3. See also Mee, 'Mopping Up Spilt Religion: The Problem of Enthusiasm', *Romanticism On the Net*, 25 (February 2002), http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/25mee.html
[51] John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).
[52] Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); Veronica Kelly and Dorothea E. Von Mücke eds., *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994); Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin, 2003); Barbara M. Stafford, *Body criticism: imagining the unseen in Enlightenment art and medicine* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1991); Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The senses in social context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

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Coleridge's interest in his own symptoms, which he always regarded as matter for theoretical speculation. This aspect of Coleridge has been given fresh attention by Neil Vickers, who in his study *Coleridge and the Doctors* reconstructs Coleridge's knowledge of 'philosophical medicine' (the works of John Brown and Thomas Beddoes, among others), and by Martin Wallen, who finds traces of a Brunonian 'embodied' imagination in Coleridge's critical thought.[53] Similarly, Alan Richardson has argued that an organic or 'embodied' concept of the mind is traceable in Coleridge's speculations.[54] Issues of contemporary medicine have also featured in Jennifer Ford's *Coleridge on Dreaming*, while Coleridge's psychological thought has been discussed by David Vallins in his comprehensive *Coleridge and the Psychology of Romanticism*.[55]

As Vallins asserts, a fascination with psychology dominates Coleridge's writings 'in diverse genres and on superficially unrelated topics', and therefore he looks at a number of different texts in order to identify the main patterns of his 'psychological' thought across the genres.[56] Much of Vallins's work is relevant to my concerns. He demonstrates, for instance, that the 'view that thought must satisfy an emotional condition, and that meaning consists in an expressive purpose rather than mere logical relations was among Coleridge's most enduring opinions' – something that my reading of his lectures confirms through and through.[57] But the scope of my thesis is considerably narrower: I am going to look at the role of feeling exclusively in Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare, and turn to other disciplines (for example, medicine) only in so far as they are evoked in them. My intention to situate Coleridge in the discourse of 'philosophical criticism' is a further difference: instead of tracing general patterns in his thought, I am going to select a few issues concerning 'feeling'

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[53] Vickers, *Coleridge and the Doctors 1795-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); Wallen, *City of Health, Fields of Disease: Revolutions in the Poetry, Medicine, and Philosophy of Romanticism* (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); see also G. S. Rousseau and David Boyd Haycock, 'Framing Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Gut: Genius, Digestion, Hypochondria', in G. S. Rousseau ed., *Framing and Imagining Disease in Cultural History* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 231-265.

[54] Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001)

[55] Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming: Romanticism, Dreams and the Medical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Vallins, *Coleridge and the Psychology of Romanticism: Feeling and Thought* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

[56] Vallins, p. 1.

[57] Vallins, p. 34.

and language in connection with which he seems to have developed, modified, or questioned the views of his predecessors.

By focusing on the British tradition, I am not implying that German ideas were not equally important for Coleridge's critical thought. However, I do think that the emphases are sometimes misplaced, and that British 'philosophical criticism' is rarely taken seriously enough in discussions of Coleridge.[58] René Wellek in *A History of Modern Criticism* regards Coleridge's 'emotionalism' as a vestige of the British tradition, to which he clung for irrational (probably sentimental) reasons, and contrasts it with his more advanced 'German' ideas concerning the symbol and the organic form.[59] This opposition, or something close to it, has been persistent in studies of Coleridge's criticism; however, it is based on rather too neat categories. On the one hand, German critics did not lack an interest in the emotional aspects of poetry, as recent studies on Schiller have made abundantly clear.[60] When Coleridge refers to A. W. Schlegel in his 'Treatise on Method' as a great foreign critic, he cites a remark by him that is perfectly in line with the concerns of British philosophical critics, discussing as it does the representation of the passions (*TM* 31). This might be regarded as a parallel interest in the two traditions, especially if we add that German criticism had not been hermetically sealed off from Britain. Kames's work, for instance, was translated and became popular in Germany, exerting a considerable influence. When Coleridge in his 'Essay on Method' quotes Mistress Quickly as the example of immethodical discourse, his direct

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[58] There are a number of exceptions, however, such as Paul Hamilton's *Coleridge's Poetics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) and Jerome Christensen's *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language*. Noel B. Jackson has recently argued that 'the emphasis on kinesthetic as well as affective feeling suggests a critical distinction between Kantian and British Romantic aesthetics – even among those British writers, such as Coleridge, most obviously influenced by Kant's thought. In fact, this distinction has just begun to be asserted by a number of critics investigating the embodied basis of imagination in British Romanticism.' Noel B. Jackson, 'Critical Conditions', p. 123.

[59] 'On the one hand we have his holistic arguments about structure and his symbolist view of the poet embodying "ideas," and on the other his pleasure principle and his emotionalism, which he tries to preserve in spite of everything.' *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*, Vol 2: The Romantic Age (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), p. 185. M. M. Badawi also argues that Coleridge used two sets of principles, one Hartelyan and one Kantian, which prevented him from reaching a synthesis, see his *Coleridge: Critic of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

[60] Lore Metzger, 'The Role of Feeling in the Formation of Romantic Ideology: The Poetics of Schiller and Wordsworth', in *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics. Essays in Honor of Jean H. Hagstrum*, ed. by Syndy McMillen Conger (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson UP; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990), 172-194; see also Michael John Kooy, *Coleridge, Schiller, and Aesthetic Education* (2002).

source is probably the German Johann Jakob Engel, but indirectly he is indebted to Kames, who used the same illustration in making a very similar point.[61]

On the other hand, although the principal interest of British criticism lay in the 'reality' represented in literature, it was also sensitive to matters of form, while it was also explicitly 'philosophical'. The new rhetoric investigated the passions through the study of figures of speech; moreover, Kames described dramatic illusion as a 'waking dream' (that is, as not continuous with the ordinary experience of reality), and Adam Smith argued that artistic imitation united difference with similarity. Having said that, there is a certain usefulness in bearing in mind Wellek's opposition, especially if it is not associated too strictly with 'Germany' and 'Britain'. I think we should not imagine that Coleridge entertained two separate sets of critical opinions, one focusing on 'content', the other on 'form', one 'emotional', the other 'objective', one 'practical', the other 'philosophical'. But tensions between a more 'formal' and a more 'psychological' approach do appear in his writings, as they are also implicit, in different ways, in both German and British philosophical criticism. Their contradictions are most fully articulated in Coleridge because of his tendency to think precisely in the tensions between contrasting positions. As Seamus Perry has argued, Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism is 'double-minded' in this sense, fractured by oppositions, but also capitalizing on them, setting up divisions that he in turn seeks to reconcile.[62] In studying Coleridge's dialogue with British 'philosophical criticism', I am going to look at this complex structure from only one possible angle. I hope, however, that a view from this partial perspective can still add something to Coleridge's critical profile, showing the ways in which he redirects previous lines of thought, giving them the characteristic Coleridgean bent.

Studying Coleridge's lectures is not an unproblematic enterprise, to put it mildly. R. A. Foakes's critical edition, which made such a study really viable for the first

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[61] For Coleridge's borrowing from Engel's *Anfangsgründe einer Theorie der Dichtungsarten*, see *F* 1: 370n; *F* 2: 451n. The relevant section of Engel's work is reprinted in Johann Jakob Engel, *Über Handlung, Gespräch und Erzählung*, ed. Ernst Theodor Voss (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964), pp. 150-151. Kames discusses Mistress Quickly in *Elements*, 1: 20-21; Jonathan Bate points out the recurrence of Kames's example in Shakespearean criticism in *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 17.
[62] Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 209-246.

time, has also made it clear that Coleridge's notes and the miscellaneous reports of his lectures do not amount to an authentic or even representative body of 'lecture' texts. A reconstruction based on such material cannot be objective in any sense – one simply needs to supply missing links much more often than in the case of more complete or finished texts. In what follows, I will inevitably 'idealise' the lectures by bracketing some of their important differences. Most importantly, I am not going to focus on the chronological development of Coleridge's ideas, but regard what is available of the lecture material as representing a more or less continuous (although not homogenous) process of thinking, roughly corresponding to Coleridge's 'middle years'. However, I am not going to disregard the lecturing scene in which these ideas evolved, nor the fact that my readings will be necessarily based on incomplete notes. In fact, I believe that the 'theatrical' medium of lecturing, defined as it was by its difference from print publication, was an essential component of what Coleridge's criticism was about. Julie Carlson in her study of Coleridge and the drama suggests that Coleridge's middle period might be thought of as 'the stage of theatre, the period in which he theorizes drama and theatre and mounts his one successful play'.[63] While Carlson shows how theatre is connected with issues of nationalism and gender in Coleridge's criticism, my analysis will often return to a theoretical link, apparent in Coleridge's writings, between theatre and feeling. As I will argue, 'feeling' was related to concepts of performance and theatricality throughout Coleridge's criticism, and therefore I shall start by taking a closer look at the ambiguous theatricality of the lectures themselves.

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[63] Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), p. 25

Chapter One

The performance of criticism

> 'The vanity of criticism, like all other vanities, except that of dress, (which so far has an involuntary philosophy in it) is always forgetting that we are at least half made up of body.'[1]

> 'O heaven! – words are wasted to those that feel and to those who do not feel the exquisite judgement of Sh[akespeare] –' (*LL* 2: 295)

For anyone wanting to collect evidence for Coleridge's anti-theatrical sentiment, his lectures on Shakespeare would be a good place to start. According to the *Bristol Gazette*, for instance, he asserted that 'he never saw any of Shakespeare's plays performed, but with a degree of pain, disgust, and indignation' (*LL* 1: 563). Coleridge went on to list external causes that he thought responsible for his discontent, such as 'the enormous size and monopoly of the theatres' which produced 'many bad and but few good actors'. On another occasion, he 'in the warmest language, censured those who had attempted to alter the works of Shakespeare, in order to accommodate him to modern ears' (*LL* 1: 254). The staging of adaptations was only the most obvious way of losing touch with the 'real' Shakespeare; similarly harmful was the practice of neglecting inferior characters, 'thro' which our poet shone no less conspicuously & brightly' (*LL* 1: 254), while concentrating wholly on the protagonists. According to Julie Carlson, the star system which was behind this phenomenon was especially disconcerting for Coleridge because it could lead to a few star actors and actresses outshining Shakespeare, their bodily presence becoming more emphatic than the text that was supposed to sustain

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[1] Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (London, 1828); cited in Ralph Pite, ed., *Lives of the Great Romantics, vol 2: Coleridge* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1997), p. 55.

them.[2] Coleridge ruefully remarked that 'those who went to the Theatre in our own day, when any of our poet's works were represented, went to see *Mr Kemble* in *Macbeth*, - or *Mrs Siddons' Isabel*' or, even worse, 'to hear speeches usurped by fellows who owed their very elevation to dexterity in snuffling candles' (*LL* 1: 254). In such circumstances Coleridge considered it fortunate that Shakespeare was not performed more often, for thus he could 'find his proper place, in the heart and in the closet' (*LL* 1: 563).

It is not difficult to recognise in such remarks a more general aversion to the predominance of what is public and external in matters poetical.[3] According to Coleridge, Shakespeare relied 'on his own imagination' when he created his characters, and spoke 'not to the senses as was now done, but to the mind. He found the stage as near as possible a closet, & in the closet only could it be fully & completely enjoyed.' (*LL* 1: 254) References to the private space of the 'closet', the inner recesses of the 'heart' and 'mind', coupled with the possessive tone of such utterances, seem to suggest that Coleridge, like other critics of his age, privileged a more or less stable and privatised Shakespeare, over a mutable or even mutilated public one. The 'private' Shakespeare found its proper embodiment in the book that one could own and read in solitude.[4] However, to adapt two terms used by Michael Fried in his study of eighteenth-century aesthetics, romantic 'absorption' was inseparable from certain forms of 'theatricality'.[5] Other critics have recently pointed out that Coleridge gave his most influential cues for 'closet' reading in situations that were recognisably theatrical.[6] His lectures were public performances of Shakespeare interpretation given by (as one

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[2] Carlson argues that this was especially problematic in the case of actresses: 'Bardolators' desire to closet Shakespeare saves him from psychological appropriation by women, even from his incarnation in the "incomparable," but undeniably female, Sarah Siddons.' *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), p. 20.

[3] The complexities of Coleridge's stance towards inwardness and externality are teased out in William H. Galperin, *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), pp. 156-204 ('Coleridge's Antitheatricality: The Quest for Community').

[4] For a recent discussion of this romantic attitude see Younglim Han, *Romantic Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, London: Associated University Presses, 2001).

[5] See Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980). Cf. Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite, 'Introducing Romantic Sociability', in Russell and Tuite, eds., *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 1-23, pp. 6-9.

[6] See Peter J. Manning, 'Manufacturing the Romantic image: Hazlitt and Coleridge lecturing', in James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin eds., *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 227-245; Gillian Russell, 'Spouters or washerwomen: the sociability of Romantic lecturing', in *Romantic Sociability*, 123-144.

contemporary put it) 'the celebrated Mr. Coleridge' whose 'intellectual exhibition' was 'altogether matchless' (*IR* 117) – even if the element of theatricality seems to have been obscured by its very success. In what follows, I am going to take a look at the ambiguous theatricality of Coleridge's lectures, by focusing on a few aspects which, I would contend, also have a bearing on elements of his critical approach. A recurrent theme will be the role of affective rhetoric in both the construction of his lecturing scenario and in the fashioning of his task as a critic of Shakespeare.

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'A Theatre, in its widest sense is the *general* Term for all places of amusement thro' the Eye or Ear, when people assemble in order to be entertained by others, all at the same time, & in common.' (*LL* I, 129) Coleridge's lectures seem to meet his own criteria with minor qualifications. In the lecture theatre, there is only one entertainer, himself, who demonstrates the *intellectual* pleasures of poetry in front of his audience. In other words, the entertainment is also, and primarily, a means of instruction. A newspaper report of his lecture on *Romeo and Juliet* emphasises this double purpose, suggesting that for some listeners entertainment might have come first: 'Mr. C. hence drew a moral equally salutary to our youths, and honourable to our maidens, were they but as ready to profit by his lessons as to enjoy the eloquence by which they are inculcated' (*LL* 1: 320). Reports and reminiscences suggest that audiences attended Coleridge's lectures as much for the sake of sociable entertainment as for the sake of self-improvement. Characteristically, commentators often divided teaching and delighting between male and female audiences. 'If the female part of his audience be sometimes disappointed', a reporter remarked, 'they are sometimes agreeably surprised. For a cross wind and current of thought and feeling, will frequently drive the lecturer from the most rugged and masculine philosophy, into the calm and captivating confines of the circle of the affections, and the influences of the heart.' (*IR* 153) As this passage suggests, a casual drifting between 'feeling' and 'philosophy' was one of the appeals of Coleridge's lectures, which – like most public lectures at the time – were designed to attract women as much as men.

In her essay on romantic lecturing Gillian Russell has argued that in private institutions like the Royal, the Philosophical and the Surrey, which had a mostly professional middle-class membership, the presence of women guaranteed the polite and quasi-domestic sociability that the proprietors sought to maintain.[7] For Coleridge, female auditors and the connection they represented between lecturing and the domestic sphere seem to have been especially important. His 1818 Prospectus declares that one of the aims of his course is to contribute 'to the entertainment of the social board, and the amusement of the circle at the fire-side' by offering 'rules and principles of sound judgement' in taste (*LL* 2: 39-40). This may sound more like a promise addressed to male audiences who wished to converse on literary topics in 'mixed society', as the Prospectus put it. But at other times Coleridge directly appealed to women's sensibilities. Henry Crabb Robinson recounts, for instance, how during a lecture on the origin of the fine arts he 'atoned for his metaphysics by his gallantry: he declared that the passion for dress in females has been the cause of the civilization of mankind' (*LL* 1: 114). Considering that women had been thought of, however controversially, as civilising agents by a number of Enlightenment philosophers (including Hume), it is possible that Coleridge's 'gallantry' might have had philosophical foundations.[8] But, as Robinson makes clear, such remarks were also sound social tactics. If Coleridge was to make a living as a lecturer, one of the first things he had to learn was to find a way to address women in the audience.

Katherine Thomson records an interesting example of the negotiations this involved. At the Royal Institution in 1808, Coleridge 'turned towards the fair and

[7] Russell, 'Spouters or washerwomen', esp. pp. 137-8; see also David Hadley, 'Public Lectures and Private Societies: Expounding Literature and the Arts in Romantic London', in Donald Schoonmaker and John A. Alford, eds., *English Romanticism: Preludes and Postludes (Essays in Honour of Edwin Graves Wilson)* (East Lansing, Mich.: Colleagues Press, 1993), 43-70.

[8] The role of women in Scottish Enlightenment thinking is discussed in Hemingway, 'The "Sociology" of Taste', p. 14. Hume in 'Of Essay Writing' advocates polite conversation (dominated by the 'fair sex') because '"men of letters" need to be engaged with society, and polite culture needs to be provided with serious materials for discussion'. This stance might be comparable to Coleridge's 1818 Prospectus. See also Leland E. Warren, 'The Conscious Speakers: Sensibility and the Art of Conversation Considered', in Syndy McMillen Conger, ed., *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics. Essays in Honor of Jean H. Hagstrum* (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson UP; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990), 25-42. Also, Marina Frasca-Spada, 'The Science and Conversation of Human Nature', in William Clark, Jan Golinski, and Simon Shaffer, eds., *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 218-245.

noble heads' in the lecture-room ('there were some hundreds of ladies present') to apologize for his previous lecture, adding 'that the Muses would not have been old maids, except for want of dowry.' As Thomson recalls, the 'witticism was received with as much applause as a refined audience could decorously manifest, and the harangue proceeded' (*IR* 120). In other words, Coleridge on this occasion managed to get away with some impertinence (and even to make a reference to the commercial side of his venture), thereby establishing a bond of implicit understanding between himself and his listeners. The anecdote, however, also calls attentions to the risks necessarily incurred in using this kind of familiar tone in front of a public that was not homogenous, either socially or in terms of gender and education. As Lucy Newlyn has argued, the strategy Coleridge developed to deal with this problem involved re-inventing his audience as a circle of friends, who were allowed a glimpse into his private thoughts because they were somehow already favourably predisposed towards him. Newlyn quotes Coleridge on his 1813 Clifton series – 'I have made Friends of them all' (*LL* 2: 3) – stating that '[s]ympathy and friendship were expected as part of the intimate bonding between speaker and listener which he wished to establish'.[9] But, as she also observes, Coleridge's notes attest to a constant struggle between a sought-for intimacy and the dread of self-exposure.

In a note written for the 1808 series at the Royal Institution, he addresses his (imaginary) listeners as 'affectionate Guardians' who 'see without disgust the awkwardness, and witness with sympathy the growing pains, of a youthful Endeavor' (*LL* 1: 75). In another, he scripts a long apology that is far less self-assured than the one recalled by Thomson, that includes a philosophical discussion of remorse and regret, and ending on a note of pathos:

> These reflections occurred to me from the exceeding depression, which I felt this morning previous to my appearing before [you], accompanied with [a] painful sense of self-dissatisfaction bordering on self-reproach. I could not but be conscious to how severe a Trial I had put your patience & candour in my last Lecture – and tho' it was thro' severe & still lingering bodily Indisposition [....] – yet I could not drive away the despondence of self-condemnation – and when during the time I have now been addressing you, my mind gradually regained its buoyancy,

[9] Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 87.

I felt an increasing Impulse, which I have thus yielded to, to attempt to remove from your feelings the disappointment from the Past by hopes of something less unworthy of your attention in my future Lectures. (*LL* 1: 65)

This is a dramatic monologue: a public confession to be spoken at the coming lecture in full earnest, envisioning and also conjuring for himself a moment of relief and inspiration.[10] Such notes strongly suggest that Coleridge's lectures ought to be thought of as performances which he sometimes rehearsed in writing, but which acquired their full significance only in the lecture theatre (hence their connection with performative genres such as the confession). The entire passage both enacts and theorises the emotional 'drama' of remorse, and is in this sense related to Coleridge's plays, *Osorio* and *Remorse*: analysis of feeling through self-dramatisation – with the possibility of spiritual renewal – is an important feature of both the plays and the lecture notes. This highlights the inherent theatricality of the Coleridgean lecture: a theatricality that depended on its pretensions to not being theatre at all.

Coleridge the lecturer was author, character and actor at the same time, even if he managed to convince most of his listeners to regard this composite being as Coleridge 'himself'.[11] To a large extent, his success depended on the air of spontaneous thinking and sincere self-expression, and he performed this so convincingly that his roles as 'author' and 'actor' went mostly unnoticed, while he established himself as one of the most important literary characters in London (a 'character' that lent itself for literary treatment remarkably well).[12] Henry Crabb Robison tellingly writes that, on one occasion, he was 'very eloquent and popular on the general character of Shakespeare: he is recovering lost character among the Saints.' (*LL* 1: 496) The repetition of 'character' here suggests how much Coleridge's public image depended on his interpretation of Shakespeare; audiences were as eager to draw Coleridge's portrait, as the critic who was

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[10] Cf. with Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism*, p. 87.

[11] Cf. with Richard Holmes's account: 'Coleridge only slowly realized he needed to be much more innovative and intimate – to be much more himself. [...] He needed in effect to create a new style of lecturing, dramatic and largely extempore, which took risks, changed moods, digressed and doubled back, and played with his own eccentricities. He needed, above all, to enact the imaginative process of the poet in his own person, to demonstrate a poet at work in the laboratory of his ideas.' *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), p. 118.

[12] Gillian Russell argues that in *The Blues* Byron portrays Coleridge as lecturer ('Spouters or Washerwomen', pp. 134-138); other portrayals include those by De Quincey and Henry Crabb Robinson.

sketching that of Shakespeare. Or, as Peter J. Manning writes, '[i]f readers saw Shakespeare through Coleridge, they also watched Coleridge create an image of himself: to lecture on the genius of Shakespeare, under these particular conditions, was an occasion for the performance of contemporary genius.'[13]

The rhetorical blending of the functions of author, actor and character can be witnessed in Chapter 10 of *Biographia Literaria*, where the lectures play a crucial role in a complicated apology for Coleridge's literary life. Wishing to prove that books are not 'the only channel through which the stream of intellectual usefulness can flow' (*BL* 1:220), Coleridge gives a memorable description of the opening night of *Remorse*, when he observed 'that the pit and the boxes were crowded with faces familiar to [him]' from his lectures (*BL* 1:221). By stating this, he tactically subordinates his status as an author to that of a lecturer, resulting in a series of mirroring effects: members of the audience are recognised by the author who, in turn, had been watched by them as a lecturer, and whose play is to be watched by both. Through these bonds of watching and familiarity, Coleridge's public success at the theatre is turned into private pleasure; 'the complete success of the REMORSE on the first night of its representation', he claims, did not give him 'as great or as heart-felt a pleasure' as his discovery of the familiar faces (*BL* 1:221). Timothy Webb has noted that Coleridge obscures the distinction between theatre and lecture theatre in his private writing as well,[14] reporting to his wife:

> I concluded my Lectures last night most triumphantly, with loud, long, & enthusiastic applauses at my Entrance, & ditto in yet fuller Chorus as and for some minutes after, I had retired. It was lucky, that (as I never once thought of the Lecture, till I had entered the Lecture Box) the two last were the most impressive, and really the best. I suppose that no dramatic Author ever had so large a number of unsolicited, unknown, yet *predetermined* Plauditors in the Theatre, as I had on Saturday Night. One of the malignant Papers asserted, that I had collected all the *Saints* from Mile End Turnpike to Tyburn Bar. With so many warm Friends it is impossible in the present state of human Nature, that I should not have many unprovoked & unknown Enemies. – You will

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[13] Manning, 'Manufacturing the Romantic image', p. 236. See also Klancher, 'Transmission Failure', in David Perkins, ed., *Theoretical Issues in Literary History* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 173-195.
[14] Webb, 'The Romantic Poet and the Stage: A Short, Sad History', in Richard Allen Cave, ed., *The Romantic Theatre: An International Symposium* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1986), p. 19.

have heard, that on my entering the Box on Saturday Night I was discovered by the Pit – & that they all turned their faces towards our Box, & gave a treble chear of Claps. (*CL* 3: 430-1)

Coleridge here juxtaposes images of himself as a lecturer and as the author of *Remorse*. Both figures are spectators as well as spectacles, being watched and applauded, while both keep their authorial isolation by staying in their respectable 'boxes'. Indeed, what is most spectacular in them is the privacy they exhibit in public: Coleridge improvising in front of an audience (the 'Saints' or Dissenters of the Surrey Institution) as if he were not lecturing at all but talking to his friends or thinking in private ('I never once thought of the Lecture'), and Coleridge the author having to be discovered in his private box. This passage also shows why Coleridge is so keen on blending the role of the author with that of the lecturer. Thanks to the work done by the lectures, the unknown and heterogeneous public can be represented as a community of 'warm Friends', in defiance of those proponents of anonymity, the 'malignant Papers'. Unavoidably, however, these are friends with faces but without names, for they are known to Coleridge from a more intimate, but similarly theatrical venue, that is, from the lecture theatre. Coleridge's lectures are thus presented here as bridging the gap between the public and the private spheres, offering a middle-ground which enables him to come forward as an author with (relative) self-assurance. As Lucy Newlyn has amply demonstrated, authorship posed especially strong challenges for Coleridge.[15] Even if lecturing was not without its own strains and tensions, the literary lecture, perhaps more than any other genre, seems to have offered him a way to successfully negotiate authorship in public. One of the reasons for this was that in the lecture theatre he could stage himself, emphatically, not as an author but as the person closest to him: the sympathetic reader-critic.

2

Philosophical criticism for Coleridge and for his eighteenth-century predecessors began with reflection on the reading experience. In a lecture note from 1808, Coleridge mentions the critical error of 'Judging of Books by books, instead of referring what we read to our own Experience or making it a motive for Observation –

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[15] Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism*, pp. 50-90.

one great use of Books' (*LL* 1: 86). In a later note, he contrasts relying on 'former notions and experience' to the immediate process of reading, suggesting that the true critic should disregard the former and concentrate on the latter: 'It is much easier to find fault with a writer merely by reference to former notions & experience than to sit down & read him and to connect the one feeling with the other & to judge of words & phrases in proportion as they convey those feelings together.' (*LL* 1: 367) Criticism, in other words, should be self-reflexive reading; as such it might reveal important truths not only about the text being read, but also about the mind reading. The question repeatedly asked by Coleridge in his lectures is what mental faculties and passions are activated by a given text. In 1811, for instance, he calls on his audience to determine

> whether it is one of those which tho' permanent in itself is perpetually varying the Objects that gratify it – such as Curiosity or which turns with the disgust of Satiety from the last Novel or Romance to ~~hurry-thro'~~ devour a new one; destined like the former to pass from a dainty into a nuisance – or a base passion, such as we ought, in that shape at least, to exterminate from our heart – such as Envy & its Mask, Scorn – or whether they are indeed the worthy & constituent Powers of our nobler Nature, not only permanent in themselves but always & solely to be gratified by the same outward excellencies, the same in essence, tho' infinitely varying in form, subject, and degree – Such are our Imagination, our Delight from the clear Perception of Truth, and our moral Sense (*LL* 1:185)

This is close to Joseph Priestley's mapping of the task of criticism in his *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, but with a characteristic difference. According to Priestley, criticism is meant to establish 'Whatever it be, in the sentiment or ideas, that makes a discourse to be read with pleasure, must either be *interesting*, by exciting those gross and more sensible feelings we call *passions*, or must awaken those more delicate sensations, which are generally called the *pleasures of the imagination*.'[16] It is important that Coleridge makes this more specific, adding to the list the 'moral Sense' and the 'Delight from the clear Perception of Truth'. For Priestley, who did not think that truth could be intuited through literature, it was enough to refer to the passions and the imagination. Coleridge was evidently of a different opinion, although he generally

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[16] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent M. Bevilacqua and Richard Murphy (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p. 72.

maintained with Priestley and other eighteenth-century critics that the direct aim of poetry is 'pleasure' – hence, perhaps, his reference to 'delight' in connection with the perception of truth. The similarities of the two critical stances, however, are no less important: for both critics, answering questions about the effects of reading leads to the understanding and right evaluation of a given text, while it also reveals certain features of the mind, including features of one's own.

One avowed aim of Coleridge's lectures was to cure harmful reading habits – especially the 'appetite' for novels – through critical reflection. The right way of reading (fostered by Shakespeare's plays, above all) is contrasted to what he calls a 'sort of beggarly Day-dreaming', when 'the mind furnishes for itself only laziness and a little mawkish sensibility, while the whole *Stuff* and Furniture of the Doze is supplied *ab extra* by a sort of Spiritual Camera Obscura' (*LL* 1:124). In other words, he particularly resents the lack of conscious intellectual exertion in reading; his metaphor of the Camera Obscura might be understood as a parody of Locke's description of the understanding as a dark chamber.[17] This may sound like one of Coleridge's attacks on empiricism. However, he was not alone in entertaining such worries at the time; the harmful effect of novel reading – especially on susceptible female minds – had been a much-discussed topic of criticism throughout the long eighteenth century. Richard Payne Knight, for instance, whose *Analytical Inquiry* was the main target of Coleridge's first lectures in 1808, states that novels promote a 'passive and solitary dissipation', 'vitiate and enervate' the public taste, and 'debase and destroy the intellect'.[18] As Neil Vickers has pointed out, Thomas Beddoes called attention to the same problem in his medical treatise on nervous disorders.[19] While in a general sense Coleridge might be understood as participating in this larger debate, it is worth comparing his attacks on novels to those

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[17] See Locke, *Essay*, II, xi, 17: 'For, methinks, the *Understanding* is not much unlike a Closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible Resemblances, or *Ideas* of things without; would the Picture coming into such a dark Room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the Understanding of a Man, in reference to all Objects of sight, and the *Ideas* of them.'

[18] Richard Payne Knight, review of J. Northcote's *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, in the *Edinburgh Review*, vol. XXIII, no. XLVI (Sept 1814), p. 263. Quoted in Hemingway, 'The Sociology of "Taste"', p. 23.

[19] Neil Vickers, *Coleridge and the Doctors 1795-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 70-1. Coleridge often adapts a neuro-physiological vocabulary in speaking about reading habits; the 1818 Prospectus for instance mentions 'the actual *mischief* of unconnected and promiscuous reading, and that it is sure, in a greater or less degree, to enervate even where it does not likewise inflate (*LL* 2: 40).

of Joseph Priestley in particular. Priestley, like Coleridge, advocates an active kind of reading, repudiating authors who 'have left nothing to the exercise of the active faculties of his readers'. '[I]n mere reading of this kind,' he writes, 'we are little more than passive. Trains of ideas pass before our minds, but no active powers of the soul are exerted.'[20] The 'trains of ideas' mentioned here correspond to what Coleridge, writing about novels, calls 'the moving phantasms of one man's Delirium' which 'people the barrenness of a hundred other trains' (*LL* 1:124). However, Priestley argues that not only novels, but to some extent all imaginative literature encourages passivity: 'Poetry and works of fiction make a high *entertainment*, when they are made nothing more of; but they make a very poor and insipid *employment*.' Intellectual activity in a strict sense belongs to philosophy and science alone, which Priestley contrasts with 'sleeping over history, romances, poetry, and plays'.[21] Coleridge, for his part, concurs with Priestley on novels, while he re-fashions the reading of Shakespeare (and a few other poets) as an activity equal in worth to Priestley's two ideals, the active pursuit of science and philosophy.

In one of his lectures Coleridge distinguishes between two kinds of readers of Shakespeare, 'Those who read with feeling and understanding' and 'Those who with<out> affecting to understand or criticize merely feel and are the recipients of the poet's power' (*LL* 1: 351-2). While the activity of those placed in the second category is similar to lazy novel reading (albeit probably not as harmful), the first kind unites passive and active components, combining affective response or 'feeling' with understanding. In other words, Coleridge here – as, I think, elsewhere – incorporates the philosophical or 'scientific' perspective of critics like Priestley and Kames into the reading experience itself. That is, while earlier philosophical criticism drew a clear distinction between the reader who feels and the critic who understands (in particular, who understands the reader's response), Coleridge tends to combine the two: his ideal reader is philosophical, and his ideal critic is sympathetic.

In the opening lecture of the 1811-12 series, Coleridge surveyed the 'Causes of false criticism', relying on a number of terms related to affect. He writes here

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[20] *Course of Lectures*, p. 141; 144.
[21] *Course of Lectures*, p. 144.

of the 'enormous *stimulant* power of Events making the *desire* to be strongly *stimulated* almost an *appetite*' – an 'appetite' being a passion which precedes its object, and, consequently, is in constant need of new objects.[22] He also mentions that recent (political) events and 'the unexampled Influence of Opinion' 'have made us a World of Readers': all men are '*anxious* to know what is going on in the world' (*LL* 1: 186, my italics). These are the radical effects of the emergence of print culture; Coleridge's language suggests how the 'World of Readers' is reading a new world into existence, importantly, driven by another passion, the anxiety to know. He also (ironically, for a lecturer) mentions the 'passion of public Speaking', and makes his habitual reference to novels and their dangers. All in all, it seems that 'false criticism' is describable, at least in part, as a confusion or dysfunction of affect. But apart from the so-called 'accidental' causes, he also mentions permanent ones, one of which is described as follows: 'The effort & at first the very painful Effort of really *thinking* – really referring to our own inward experiences – & the ease with which we accept as a substitute for this, which can alone operate a true conviction, the opinions of those about us – which we have heard or been accustomed to take for granted &c' (*LL* 1: 187).

Now, 'thinking for oneself' had been the main injunction of philosophical criticism for about fifty years. Anticipating Coleridge, the primary aim of Kames's critical project was to establish a new kind of criticism based on experience rather than authority. Kames, therefore, writes in the introduction to his *Elements of Criticism*:

> In later times, happily, reason hath obtained the ascendant: men now assert their native privilege of thinking for themselves; and disdain to be ranked in any sect, whatever be the science. I am forc'd to except criticism, which, by what fatality I know not, continues to be no less slavish in its principles nor less submissive to authority, than it was originally.23

While endorsing the Enlightenment injunction, *sapere aude*, Kames here admits that criticism had resisted the burden of freedom, and continued to be 'slavish' and

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[22] At least according to Kames: 'And there is a material difference between appetites and passions [...]: the latter have no existence till a proper object be presented; whereas the former exist first, and then are directed to an object: a passion comes after its object, an appetite goes before it, which is obvious in the appetites of hunger, thirst, and animal love, and is the same in the other appetites above mentioned.' Home, Henry (Lord Kames), *Elements of Criticism*, 2 vols (London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1993), 1: 44.
[23] *Elements of Criticism*, 1: 12.

'submissive', at least before his own project. I think what he terms here a mysterious 'fatality' (the obscurity in criticism that resists Enlightenment) is what Coleridge identifies as a permanent cause of 'False Criticism', that has its origin, paradoxically, in criticism itself. I take Coleridge to say that criticism as an activity may be a 'painful Effort', but criticism as a body of received knowledge (which would spare the pain) can be even worse: unreliable, misleading, or, quite simply, false. He implies that this is so not only because previous critics happened to make the wrong kinds of judgements, but because criticism conceived as the institution of making judgements on behalf of someone, of pre-empting the reader's effort at understanding his or her own response, is fundamentally misguided.

In his lectures, Coleridge fashions a criticism that approximates reading itself, but a reading that is inherently self-reflective and philosophically informed; a reading that appears to spill over effortlessly into 'philosophy'. That is to say, his criticism is also a hermeneutic – it is an 'art' of reading. He does not present a finished system, although his lectures are full of hints that might lead to one; his philosophical reflections are often derived from the passages he discusses (something that earlier philosophical critics tried to conceal). It is hardly accidental that Coleridge tends to introduce himself to his audiences as something like a professional reader rather than as a critic or author, stating in 1808, for instance, that he had 'never had any strong ambition of publishing, as or being known as an author': 'I have passed the far greater part of my life and employed almost all the powers which Providence has entrusted to me, in the acquirement of knowledge from Books reading & in conversation' (*LL* 1: 125). Importantly, his self-definition as a reader and talker does not mean that he positions himself on the same level as any other 'reader' in the lecture-room. If anything, Coleridge was a professional reader, not only because of the institutional backing he relied on (which was not very stable), but because of his professed 'employment' in life. His task in the lectures was to exhibit the art of reading for those willing to learn. His 1818 Prospectus stresses this point, stating that 'any important part of these Lectures could not be derived from books', or rather, 'the same information could not be so surely or conveniently acquired from such books as are of commonest occurrence, or with that

quantity of time and attention which can be reasonably expected, or even wisely desired, of men engaged in business and the active duties of the world' (*LL* 2: 39-40).

As this suggests, Coleridge not only 'thinks for himself' but offers his audience to think for them too. Although this implies that his listeners were inevitably passive compared to him, we might add that they were also called on to engage in reading of various kinds. In spite of the Prospectus's promises, that is, Coleridge's lectures did not present a compendium of 'information' which men of business could simply take home and use at leisure. The model of his lectures was not the book but the performance. This meant that in order to understand his reading of Shakespeare, audiences had to make sense of Coleridge's enactment of the process of reading and thinking. In 1812, he wrote another profile of himself emphasising that interrelatedness:

> O when I think of the inexhaustible Mine of virgin Treasure in our Shakespear, that I have been <almost> daily reading him since I was ten years old – that in the 30 intervening years have been not fruitlessly & intermittingly employed in the study of the Greek, Latin, <English,> Italian, Spanish & German ~~Poets~~ Bellettrists, & for the last 15 years even far more intensely to the analysis of the Laws of ~~rational~~ Life & Reason as they exist in man [...] and know that at every new accession of knowledge, after every Successful exercise of meditation, every fresh presentation of experience, I have unfailingly discovered a proportional increase of wisdom & intuition in Shakespeare (*LL* 1: 430)

Here Coleridge is presented as a reader with a vengeance; he has an intimate knowledge not only of 'our' poet but of both Classical and European literature.[24] As a philosophical analyst of the laws of 'Life and Reason', he is also supremely qualified to 'think for himself'. His philosophy informs his reading and his reading feeds into his philosophy. These qualifications might be extraordinary, but the task he devises for himself requires nothing short of that: he endeavours to measure the depths of poetry (or at least those of Shakespeare) in continuous interplay with his own mind. Coleridge, in other words, claims to explicate Shakespeare through the perspective of his own changing, growing intellectual life, or even, *as* his own intellectual life. In this sense, the lectures are public

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[24] Taking up Clifford Siskin's suggestion that Wordsworth's *Prelude* might be read as a résumé in question form ('Was it for this..?'), reviewing 'what had qualified him for such employment', this note might be read as Coleridge's professional *Curriculum Vitae* in the form of an adverbial meditation ('O when I think of...'). See Siskin, *The Work of Writing*, 112.

rehearsals for the *Biographia Literaria*, displaying all the tentativeness and excitement of discovery that rehearsals share with scientific experiments.[25]

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A criticism that depended so heavily on the immediacy of the reading experience and on spontaneous thought had to be performed and not delivered as a set of propositions. What the editor William Jerdan wrote of Coleridge's 'little stories' must be relevant to his lectures as well: 'no idea can be formed' of them, 'divorced from the accessories of person, emphasis, and playful action'.[26] The unforeseeable turns of Coleridge's discourse – that prevented the shorthand-writer Gurney from writing it down, since 'the conclusion of every one of Coleridge's sentences was a *surprise* upon him' (*LL* 1: lxxxiii) – promised his listeners an unexpected insight into Shakespeare's genius or into the laws of the mind in any moment of the lectures. Meanwhile, such turns allowed glimpses into the mind that was meant to mediate between them, that is, into the mind of Coleridge himself. Records of the lectures suggest that the complex personality he 'performed' through various verbal and non-verbal means was centre-stage for many listeners. In 1812, for instance, *The Rifleman* reported that during one lecture 'Shakespeare himself disappeared in the ocean of human nature. But all these things are rather a proof of Mr. Coleridge's powers of mind than any thing else' (*IR* 153). The poet and dramatist Edward Jerningham was more critical, stating that Coleridge 'too often Interwove Himself into the Texture of his lecture' (*IR* 121). In other words, Coleridge as a lecturer was liable to the very charge he himself brought up against star-actors: his presence sometimes overshadowed the Shakespearean text he was meant to interpret.

At the same time, his words and expressive gestures were perceived as signifiers for an essence beyond them. A recurrent theme in accounts of his lectures is

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[25] Coleridge sometimes juxtaposes his lectures with Davy's chemical demonstrations; e.g.: 'I gave them at the Royal Institution, before from six to seven hundred Auditors of rank and eminence, in the spring of the same year in which Sir H. Davy, a fellow-lecturer, made his great revolutionary Discoveries in Chemistry.' (*LL* 2: 293-4) He writes this in connection with the debate on his originality as a critic; I think he mentions Davy to imply that in the sphere of criticism he made an analogous 'great revolutionary Discovery', which he demonstrated in public – a procedure that might be equivalent to publishing his findings (*LL* 2: 293-4).

[26] Pite, *Lives of the Great Romantics*, p. 346.

that his speech somehow could not be written down. [27] But failure to do so generally strengthened the wish for a written version. A remark made in a newspaper report is symptomatic: 'Many of his positions, though striking, and probably just, were of so novel a cast that they were rather more fit for contemplation in the closet, than to afford matter for a report on a cursory hearing in a public assembly.' (*LL* 1: 431) This suggests that Coleridge's thought, like Shakespeare's work, is best contemplated in book form – in the private space of the closet (opposed to the newspaper report and the lecture-room) that would allow patient reflection on its 'striking' originality. But, paradoxically, it was Coleridge's reliance on devices known from the theatre and from public oratory that generated such a wish for a 'closet' version of his speech – that is, for a volume he never published.

By the late eighteenth century, the task of the orator had come to be regarded as in some ways similar to that of the actor. Both were required to move the passions by displaying them in a 'natural' manner. Elocutionists, like actors, gave detailed instructions as to how this could be done. But passions played an important role in other areas of rhetoric too. George Campbell in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* writes: 'If it is fancy which bestows brilliancy on our ideas, if it is memory which gives them stability, passion doth more, it animates them. Hence they derive spirit and energy.'[28] He states, in particular, that if one's aim is persuasion, the 'affecting lineaments' of pathetic discourse must be 'interwoven with our argument', which results in a quality he calls the 'vehement' or 'impassioned'.[29] If an orator knows how to command the passions through verbal means, he becomes all-powerful:

> Thus we have seen in what manner passion to an absent object may be excited by eloquence, which, by enlivening and invigorating the ideas of imagination, makes them resemble the impressions of sense and the traces of memory; and in this respect hath an effect on the mind similar to that produced by a telescope on the sight: things remote are brought near, things obscure rendered conspicuous. We have seen also in what manner a passion already excited may

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[27] Accounts of Coleridge's speech as unrecordable and sublime are discussed in Perry, 'The talker', pp. 105-107.

[28] Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 2 vols (London and Edinburgh, 1776), 1: 199.

[29] *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1: 36.

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be calmed; how by the oratorical magic, as by inverting the telescope, the object may be again removed and diminished.[30]

Campbell's metaphor of the telescope points towards the 'scientific' grounding he sought to give to the art of rhetoric. His reference to 'magic', however, acknowledges his awareness of a more risky aspect of its manipulative power. James Mulvihill in his study of romantic rhetoric shows that Coleridge was deeply suspicious of the new rhetorical appeal to the passions, seeing in it 'a real possibility of regression to conditioned response.'[31] This is particularly noticeable in his reactions to political oratory (a genre inseparably linked to the French Revolution). But, as I would argue, Coleridge's own early successes as a preacher and orator, and later as a literary lecturer, depended to a large extent on his skill at manipulating Campbell's 'telescope'.[32]

As a sympathetic critic, Coleridge is eager to engage his listeners' passions on behalf of Shakespeare through various explicit and implicit means. This, as he himself suggests, contributes to the overall effect: that of making Shakespeare 'present' in the lecture-room. Sometimes he even uses optical metaphors comparable to Campbell's 'telescope'. According to Charles Tomalin's report, he once stated that 'tho' too much love for an author was like a mist which magnified unduly, it brought forward objects that would otherwise have passed unnoticed' (*LL* 1: 268). Coleridge here claims to devise a mode of reading that relies on the magnifying power of affection, rather than on the belittling perspective of modern criticism. This is related to his philosophical views on love and its role in understanding and aesthetic appreciation.[33] But it also

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[30] *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1: 237-8.

[31] Mulvihill, *Upstart Talents: Rhetoric and the Career of Reason in English Romantic Discourse, 1790-1820* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), p. 29. See also David Sebberson, 'Practical Reasoning, Rhetoric, and Wordsworth's "Preface"', in G. A. Rosso and Daniel Watkins eds., *Spirits of Fire: English Romantic Writers and Contemporary Historical Methods* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 95-111.

[32] I agree with Rex L. Veeder that 'throughout his works, [Coleridge] not only demonstrates a substantial understanding of the history of rhetoric but also includes well-known principles of rhetoric in his method'. Rex L. Veeder, 'Romantic Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Tradition', in *Rhetoric Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Spring 1997), 300-320, p. 300. Cf. also Douglas Kneale's point that 'the "other" that Romanticism at once turns to and away from is what I designate as the classical rhetorical tradition', in *Romantic Aversion: Aftermaths of Classicism in Wordsworth and Coleridge* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 4.

[33] See David S. Miall, 'The Aesthetics of Love in Coleridge', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 23 (1983), 18-24; Anthony John Harding, *Coleridge and the Idea of Love: Aspects of Relationship in Coleridge's Thought and Writing* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

serves the purpose of rhetorical persuasion. He tends to rely on the rhetoric of feeling especially in encomia, when he speaks of Shakespeare in near-religious terms: 'That such a mind evolved itself in the narrow bounds of a human form is a Problem indeed – Powers tenfold greater than mine would be incommensurate to its Solution, which in its nearest and most adventurous Approach must still leave a wide chasm which our Love and Admiration alone can fill up.' (*LL* 2: 114) However, he displays an opposite tendency as well, a tendency to 'humanise' Shakespeare by bringing him nearer to his audience. The *Bristol Gazette* reports one such instance:

> If a man speak injuriously of a friend, our vindication of him is naturally warm; Shakespear had been accused of profaneness, he (Mr. C.) from the perusal of him, had acquired a habit of looking into his own heart, and perceived the goings on of his nature, and confident he was, Shakespear was a writer of all others the most calculated to make his readers better as well as wiser. (*LL* 1: 522)

Coleridge here appears to 'defend' Shakespeare as he would take responsibility for a friend. He claims to know him from experience: in fact, he knows him as he knows himself, for he had studied his works in conjunction with the 'goings on of his [own?] nature' and each half of this knowledge validates the other. 'His own heart' is offered as a testimony for Shakespeare's power to make readers 'better as well as wiser'.

As this suggests, Coleridge first had to engage audiences on his own behalf, if he was to move their passions in Shakespeare's favour. In classical terms, a discourse had to be validated by the moral and intellectual 'character' of the orator; in terms of the new rhetoric, this meant that the speaker had to convince his listeners of his sincerity. Accounts of his first series at the Royal Institution (where he was required to read out a written manuscript) suggest that he was not always successful. 'There was but little animation', J. C. Hall remembered of one lecture, 'his theme did not seem to stir him into life; the ordinary repose of his countenance was rarely broken up; he used little or no action; and his voice, though mellifluous, was monotonous. He lacked, indeed, the earnestness without which no man is truly eloquent.' (*IR* 123) This suggests (if Hall's memory is correct) that Coleridge needed to learn how to use the devices of oratory in the lecture theatre; he had to use 'action' and facial expression, or any other rhetorical

device that conveyed 'earnestness'. The best method of all was to speak extempore. Hugh Blair and a number of eighteenth-century rhetoricians recommended this (or at least the appearance of it), most of all to preachers.[34] For these writers, extempore speech stood for true enthusiasm or inspiration; moreover, it afforded ample opportunities to express feelings, and this was the surest way of engaging hearers' passions. Joseph Priestley states that whatever has 'the appearance of *present thought*, and *extempore* unprepared address, contributes not a little to make a person seem to be in earnest. He then seems to speak from his *real feelings*, without having recourse to artificial helps.' His chief example is St. Paul, whose epistles approximate live speech:

> they have not the least appearance of *design* in them, they show that he wrote from his heart, and dictated his real thoughts and sentiments at the time of their composition. They likewise throw considerable light upon the *natural temper* of that great apostle. We see that he was a warm man, of a quick apprehension, of great ardour and vehemence in whatever he engaged in, and that he was inclined to be hasty.

He also mentions the early Christians, the first Protestants, the Methodists and the Quakers as examples of the power of extemporaneous speech. Apart from the sincerity conveyed by this mode of speaking, it also evokes 'a continued *wonder*' in the audience, which naturally works towards persuasion.[35]

Jane Stabler has recently called attention to Coleridge's indebtedness to Priestley's rhetorical theory, arguing that the 'elements of "fancy" and playfulness in Coleridge's speculation are related to Priestley's advocacy of extempore speech and possible contradiction as valuable intellectual stimuli'.[36] If Coleridge knew that improvisation was commendable in science, as a Unitarian preacher he must have been

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[34] See Scott Harshbarger, 'Robert Lowth's *Sacred Hebrew Poetry* and the Oral Dimension of Romantic Rhetoric', in *Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature*, ed. by Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence D. Needham (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995) pp.199-214; Fiona Stafford, 'Hugh Blair's Ossian, Romanticism and the teaching of Literature', in Robert Crawford, ed, *The Scottish Invention of English Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 68-88; Rex L. Veeder, 'Romantic Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Tradition'; Timothy Clark, *The Theory of Inspiration: Composition as a Crisis of Subjectivity in Romantic and Post-Romantic Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 76-83.
[35] Priestley, *Course of Lectures*, p. 111; p. 112.
[36] Jane Stabler, 'Space for Speculation: Coleridge, Barbauld, and the Poetics of Priestley', in Nicholas Roe, ed., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Sciences of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 174-204, p. 181.

aware of its uses in pulpit oratory as well. It is arguable that even in writing – namely in the *Biographia* – he relies on the effects of spontaneity and 'presence' that Priestley identified in St. Paul. But in the lectures extempore speech was Coleridge's hallmark, distinguishing him from other popular lecturers of the day. It is important to note that this does not mean that he always spoke without the aid of notes or preparation. James Gillman's account of an 1818 performance is revealing: 'He lectured from notes, which he had carefully made; yet it was obvious, that his audience was more delighted when, putting his notes aside, he spoke extempore [...] In his lectures he was brilliant, fluent, and rapid; his words seemed to flow as from a person repeating with grace and energy some delightful poem'.[37] This suggests that the notes provided a firm basis for Coleridge's lecture, but they acquired their full significance only when they were brushed aside – a gesture often recorded by his listeners. At that point, writing gave way to 'poetry', reflection to inspiration.

Coleridge, of course, was fully aware of the importance of that gesture; in 1818 he wrote confidently to H. C. Robinson: 'I shall have *written* every Lecture, just as if I h[ad intend]ed to [read the]m; but shall deliver them without book – which plan will, I trust, answer all purposes – that of order in the matter, and of animation in the manner.' (*CL* IV, 812) Sometimes he called attention to his own mode of delivery in the lecture-room as well. In 1812, for instance, he confessed to his (imaginary) audience the failure of his first written lectures in 1808, and his subsequent decision

> not to elaborate my materials, not to consider too nicely the expressions I should employ, but to trust mainly to the extemporaneous ebullition of my thoughts. In this conviction I have ventured to come before you here; and may I add a hope, that what I offer will be received in a similar spirit? It is true that my matter may not be so accurately arranged: it may not dovetail and fit at all times as nicely as could be wished; but you shall have my thoughts warm from my heart, and fresh from my understanding. (Raysor 2:82)

Just as Priestley had said, extempore speech guarantees that thoughts come 'warm from [the] heart' and 'fresh from [the] understanding', and therefore it is bound to be met with

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[37] Richard W. Armour and Raymond F. Howes, eds., *Coleridge the Talker: a series of contemporary descriptions and comments* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 420.

sympathy. His very inconsistencies, Coleridge suggests, are to be counted in his favour. As Jane Stabler has shown, Priestley had also recommended retracting one's own arguments, staging debates with oneself and formulating propositions in different versions, in order to involve audiences in the process of thinking. It might be said that Coleridge was over-zealous in following this advice when, for instance, he offered so many versions of his definition of poetry that audiences were at a loss to determine whether any one of them was meant to be definitive.

While he might have had to convince his listeners to accept such apparent faults as his virtues, there was an aspect of improvisation on which he could not possibly reflect: the expressive language of gesture and voice. In eighteenth-century new rhetoric and elocutionary theory these provided the key to effective speaking; however, while several hints were given as to the right use of rhetorical 'action', the consensus was that these features could not be feigned. As Priestley writes,

> The external expressions of passion, with all their variations, corresponding to the different degrees of their emotions, are too complex for any person in the circumstances of a public speaker to be able to attend to them. Or, were it possible, the difference between a *genuine automatic* and a *voluntary* motion, is sufficiently apparent. All motions that are automatic have a quickness and vigour which are lost when they become voluntary.[38]

Coleridge could not call attention to his own inspired gestures, because they were supposedly beyond his conscious will. But reminiscences suggest that audiences did not need to be reminded of that – they were sufficiently aware of the meaning of body language to interpret Coleridge's performance. Unable to record his inspired discourse, they tried to record the *bodily* signs of inspiration. Their ears recognised the melody of Coleridge's speech; their eyes saw the outward traces of absorption. J. P. Collier, with his near-idolatry of the lecturer, provides a fine, detailed, example:

> I always thought his mouth beautiful: the lips were full, and a little drawn down at the corners, and when he was speaking the attention (at least my attention) was quite as much directed to his mouth as to his eyes, the expression of it was so eloquent. In the energy of talking, 'the rose-leaves' were at times 'a little bedewed,' but his words seemed to flow the easier for the additional

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[38] *A Course of Lectures*, p. 115.

> lubricity. I did not especially admire Coleridge's 'large grey eyes,' for, now and then, they
> assumed a dead, dull look, almost as if he were not seeing out of them; and I doubt if external
> objects made much impression upon his sight, when he was animated in discourse. (*IR* 144)

Here, the whole iconography of Coleridge the Lecturer can be followed. Focusing on the (sensual) mouth, Collier emphasises inspired and seductive speech. The 'blindness' of the eyes, however disconcerting, is a figure for the 'inner light', which at the same time blinds him to the external world. Concentrating on the ideal 'inner world' of Coleridge's lectures can easily make one blind to such emphatically bodily aspects. But the effectiveness of the lecture scene depended on the interplay of the two, just as in the case of reciting a poem, 'in which the enkindling Reciter, by perpetual comment of looks and tones, lends his own will and apprehensive faculty to his Auditors' (*BL* ii. 239-40).

A description by Joseph Farrington shows how masterfully Coleridge staged his own 'drama' of thought:

> When Coleridge came into the Box there were several Books laying. He opened two or three of
> them silently and shut them again after a short inspection. He then paused and leaned His head on
> His hand, and at last said, He had been thinking for a word to express the distinct character of
> Milton as a Poet, but not finding one that wd. express it, He should make one '*Ideality*'. He spoke
> extempore. (*IR*, 122)

Coleridge's distracted, Hamlet-like meditation, together with the immediacy of his address, form an eloquent interpretation of the theme of his lecture on Milton. The 'stage business' stresses the private and reflexive nature of Coleridge's inspiration; he generally seems to have preferred devices that contradicted the appearance of oratory. His tone was conversational and meditative, which made audiences feel that they had been admitted to his private circle of friends. His flights of enthusiasm were checked by reflection.[39] A remark made to Mrs. Morgan on one of his improvised lectures is telling: it was 'quite in my fire-side way, & pleased more than any' (*CL* III 457). This kind of quasi-domestic 'fire-side' lecture might well have been Coleridge's own invention;

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[39] Gillian Russell points out that after the 1790s, enthusiastic oratory was politically suspect; see 'Spouters and Washerwomen', p. 124. The romantic stance towards enthusiasm is discussed in Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

however, it conforms to a general movement in rhetoric towards effects of intimacy, as opposed to 'ranting' oratory. John Walker in his *Elements of Elocution*, for instance, writes that it is more important to learn how to lower the voice than how to raise it, adding that 'Nothing will so powerfully work on the voice, as supposing ourselves conversing at different intervals with different parts of the auditory.' He also recommends the theatrical practice of the 'aside', for it gives 'the idea of [actors] speaking to themselves in such a manner as not to be heard by the person with them on the stage, and yet must necessarily be heard by the whole theatre.'[40]

Asides, together with their extended version, the digression, are not simply characteristic of Coleridge's lectures; they are as good as their organising principle. Accompanied by other devices, such as the abrupt break and the weighty silence, they constitute the verbal equivalents of expressive body language.[41] Priestley also recommends speakers to make '*parentheses* in sentences, and to *digress* from the principal subject or argument, and return to it again' – advice that Coleridge followed assiduously.[42] There is a specific kind of Coleridgean digression, however, which is not aimed at providing intellectual stimulation, but is directly identified as a symptom of feeling. This kind, I would argue, is crucial to his lectures. After referring to Davy's illness, for instance, he reflects: 'I have been seduced into a Digression – a digression indeed of the Head only; for with me while I stand here, it must needs be in the strait road of the Heart' (*LL* 1: 64). Similar passages can be found everywhere in the lecture notes and even in reports like the following: 'He trusted that what he had thus said in the ardour of his feelings would not be entirely lost, but would awaken in his audience those sympathies without which it was vain to proceed in his criticism of Shakespeare. (*LL* 1: 278) Digressions like these are important, I think, because they are meant to manifest the

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[40] John Walker, *Elements of Elocution. Being the Substance of a Course of Lectures on the Art of Reading; Delivered at several Colleges in the University of Oxford*, 2 vols. (London, 1781), 2: 234; 248-9.
[41] Cf. Lucy Newlyn: 'Just as the body was an expressive signifier of feelings – a "supplement" to the speaking voice – so it was in the gaps and fissures of spoken discourse that genuine eloquence was to be found. This is why extempore utterance was thought to be more appropriate to the communication of powerful feeling than finished prose; and why there was a long-established association in the eighteenth century between extemporality, eloquence, and enthusiasm.' *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism*, p. 348. Newlyn opposes the valorisation of body language by Priestley and Hazlitt to Coleridge's preference for musicality; however, I think the opposition is not as categorical as she asserts.
[42] *A Course of Lectures*, p. 111.

surplus of emotion which sustains Coleridge's 'philosophical' analysis of Shakespeare.[43] His proneness to be 'seduced' into digression, in other words, clearly indicates that his criticism is not a mere 'anatomy', but one that is grounded in, and perpetually generates, feeling.

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Coleridge wrote the prototype of all such digressions in a lecture note for his 1808 course, which also displays an element of conscious theatricality:

> As the main Object, for which I have undertaken these Lectures, is to enforce at various times & by various arguments & instances the close and reciprocal connections of Just Taste with pure Morality, I cannot permit myself to consider this as a Digression; especially, as without that acquaintance with the heart of man, or that docility & childlike gladness to be acquainted with it, which those only can have, who dare look at their own <hearts,> <that (N.b. in a *low quiet voice*)> with a steadiness which Religion only has the power of reconciling with sincere Humility – I am deeply convinced, that no man, however wide his Erudition, however patient his antiquarian researches, can possibly understand, or be worthy of understanding, the writings of Shakespeare – (*LL* 1: 78)

The staged intimacy of this passage (to be spoken, Coleridge reminds himself, 'in a *low quiet voice*'), leaves no doubt about the public function of his criticism. The lectures were meant to educate his audiences' feelings, as much as their intellect; their ambiguous theatricality is subservient to this purpose. In eighteenth-century moral philosophy, the theatre had been an important metaphor for moral education, something that is also traceable in romantic drama.[44] For Coleridge, the state of the theatres was an

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[43] See also *The Sun* in Nov 1811: 'The occasional digressions concerning modern Education, and the true views of Poetry, as implying in man an instinct after perfection unattainable in this life, but which yet, like all other instincts of nature, must somewhere, and at some period, meet their appropriate object, were exceedingly beautiful, and evidently dictated by the feeling of the moment.' (*LL* 1: 196)

[44] See John Dwyer, 'Enlightened Spectators and Classical Moralists: Sympathetic Relations in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', in John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher, eds., *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 96-118; also Diane Long Hoeveler, '"Humanizing the Heart," or Romantic Drama and the Civilizing Process', *European Romantic Review*, Vol. 14 (2003), pp. 1-5; Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite, 'Introducing Romantic Sociability', p. 6.

index of the nation's moral health.[45] He explains this in detail in a long note written for the opening lecture of one of his 1812 series, discussing the decline of tragedy and the tragic theatre, listing 'forms of disease most preclusive of tragic worth' (*LL* 1: 427). These boil down to what he calls the 'dead Palsy of the public mind' (*LL* 1: 429). His diagnosis resembles what Wordsworth says in his 1800 'Preface' about the 'almost savage torpor' to which the modern mind is reduced, however, while Wordsworth only mentions the theatre in passing, Coleridge in this note contemplates it not only as a site of the 'epidemic', but also as a possible remedy.[46]

It is very likely that at the time of writing this note, Coleridge was already involved with the theatre, or was at least starting to pay close attention to theatrical matters (*Remorse* premiered in January 1813 at Drury Lane, and Coleridge fully participated in the rehearsals). At any rate, the example he gives to illustrate the 'diseased sensibility' of the audience is taken from his own play.[47] The expression 'hanging woods' in *Remorse* (4.3.1) is intended to refer to 'Trees rising above each other, as the Spectators in an ancient Theatre' – Coleridge, it seems, would have liked to produce the effect of theatre within the theatre. However, he proceeds, the owner of a real or imaginary 'slang voice' in the audience (the notes are rather garbled here) might think of associating the phrase with 'the Gallows', and 'a peal of Laughter would damn the Play' (*LL* 1: 428). This sounds like a scenario furnished either by experience or by a stage manager's expertise. Coleridge complains that such an attitude in the audience fosters a climate of mediocrity, in which 'so many dull pieces' have a 'decent run, only because nothing unusual above, or absurd below mediocrity furnished an occasion, a spark for the explosive materials collected behind the orchestra' (*LL* 1: 428).

He also draws out the political implications behind what he defines as 'the necessary growth of a sense & love of the Ludicrous' (*LL* 1: 427). He refers to the recent 'History of Paris & of the French (i.e.) Parisian Literature' (*LL* 1: 428). The

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[45] Cf. Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism*, p. 33ff. Her discussion overlaps with mine in the following paragraphs.

[46] Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones, second edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 249.

[47] This suggests that Coleridge's note was perhaps not written for the opening lecture (in May) of the first 1812 series at Willis's Room, as Foakes proposes, but for the second series starting in November 1812 at the Surrey Institution. The opening lecture of this latter course was, according to H. C. Robinson, 'a repetition of former lectures, and dull' (*LL* 1: 487), and there are no notes or reports relating to it.

disease of 'the public & national Mind', manifested in France and to some extent in England, is related to changes in 'domestic life & individual Deportment', and together they have an overwhelming effect 'upon the whole moral, intellectual, & even physical character of a People' (*LL* 1: 428). Coleridge does not offer a more comprehensive anatomy of this change; the deeper causes are merely suggested by his metaphor, 'inflammation from cold & weakness', although we might recall here an observation he makes elsewhere, that a turn to the 'Ludicrous' is very often a natural reaction to 'Terror' (*LL* 1: 541).

Coleridge also mentions a more beneficial change, which delights 'the Philanthropist & Philosopher' and disappoints only 'Poets, Painters, Statuaryies', namely, 'the security, comparative equability, and ever-increasing sameness of human Life' (*LL* 1: 428). As a result of growing security, people's capacity to experience strong passions diminishes, together with their ability to appreciate tragedy. Coleridge here seems to say that theatre might still be able to arouse a slumbering understanding of tragic passion. Towards the end of his note, he raises the possibility, or rather, indulges in the fancy, of what would happen if Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature could be made accessible to people through theatrical performance:

> by a conceivable too & possible tho' hardly to be expected, arrangement of the British Theatres to so large – not all indeed – but so large a proportion of this indefinite *All* (which no Comprehension has yet drawn the line of circumscription so as to say to itself, I have seen *the whole,*) might be sent into the very Heads & Hearts, into the very souls, of the Mass of Mankind to whom except by this living Comment & Interpretation it must remain for ever a sealed up Book Volume, a deep Well without a Wheel or windlace – I may be pardoned if I it seems to me a pardonable enthusiasm to steal away from sober probability Likelihood to share and even in a dream of honest Enthusiasm at such so share so rich a feast in the faery-world of Possibility! (*LL* 1: 430)

Theatre's 'living Comment & Interpretation', its very bodily and sensuous nature, might make it possible to bring home Shakespeare's spiritual wisdom to the 'souls' of the 'Mass of Mankind'. The implication is, of course, that the 'Mass of Mankind' are dependent on their senses, and theatre could mitigate this dependence paradoxically through its own reliance on the sensory. This is hardly the straightforwardly

'antitheatrical' position with which Coleridge is sometimes credited, but it still establishes the empirical as a lower, though necessary, order, to which the theatre of the mind is superior. Moreover, Coleridge's fantasy about staging Shakespeare for the people is admittedly no more than that, a fantasy, and he continues to assert that the unfathomable '*whole*' of Shakespeare could not be presented in any theatre.

Even if theatrical production is, ultimately, discredited, one possibility still remains, namely the possibility of lecturing. I think it is hardly accidental that Coleridge wrote this note as a preamble for an opening lecture, for it implies a justification for the very genre in which he is engaged. The lecturer, who has presented himself as something like a professional reader of Shakespeare, takes over the task of providing 'living Comment & Interpretation' in both literal *and* figurative sense in the lecture theatre, and thereby conveys Shakespeare's knowledge to the 'Heads and Hearts' of his listeners. Importantly, he is performing before a select audience, so there is no need to fear that any 'slang voice' might 'call out "the Gallows"' in *this* theatre. And finally, the desultory, rambling nature of Coleridge's lectures almost flaunts his inability to cover '*All*' of Shakespeare, while he never stops suggesting Shakespeare's unreachable totality. The lecturer's task is impossible and therefore interminable.

Chapter Two

The impassioned text:

The rhetoric of feeling and Coleridge's reading of *King Lear*

> 'Look at Lear, look at Richard, look in short at every Moral picture of
> this mighty Moralist! Whoso does not rise from their attentive perusal
> 'a sadder and a wiser man' – let him never dream that he knows
> anything of Philosophical Method.'   (*TM* 33)

> 'A certain quantity of laudanum would poison me, a less degree cure
> me of pain.'[1]   (*CM* 3: 410)

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      One of Coleridge's most frequently cited theoretical discussions on
language was written as part of a lecture note for his 1812 course on European drama.
Although he does not engage here with any particular Shakespearean text, he does
mention *King Lear* as an example of the 'language of nature', one of the central
concepts of his criticism. The note encapsulates virtually all the main threads of
Coleridge's thinking on poetic language, and makes explicit connections between theatre,
language and civilisation, which are otherwise often merely implied in his shorter and
often disconnected remarks. It is therefore worth considering at length:

> Men are now so seldom thrown into wild ex circumstances, & violences of excitement, that the
> language of such states, the laws of association of Feeling with Thought, the starts & strange far-
> flights of the assimilative power on the slightest & least obvious likenesses presented by
> Thoughts, Words, & Objects, & even by this very power the after as strange but always certain

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[1] Marginal note in Wordsworth's hand to Richard Payne Knight's observation that the sublime was
incompatible with fear (made in his *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*).

return to the dominant Idea – these are judged of by *authority*, not by actual experience – What they have been accustomed to regard as symbols of this state, not the natural symbols – i.e. the self-manifestations of it – (Even so in the language of man & that of nature). ~~The t~~ The sound, Sun, or the figures S U N, are purely arbitrary [modes of] recalling the Object, & for visual mere objects not [only sufficien]t, but have infinite advantages from their [very nothingn]ess per se; but the Language of Nature is a subordinate Logos, that was in the beginning, and was with the Thing, <it> represented, & it was the Thing represented. – Now the language of Shakespear (in his Lear, for instance) is a something intermediate, or rather it is the former blended with the latter, the arbitrary not merely recalling the cold notion of the Thing but expressing the reality of it, & as arbitrary Language is an Heir-loom of <the> Human Race, being itself a part of that which it manifests./ – What shall I deduce from this? Even from this the appropriate, the never-to-be-valued advantage of the Theatre, if only the Actors were what, we know, they have been – a delightful yet most effectual Remedy for this Dead Palsy of the public mind – What would appear mad or ludicrous in a book, presented to the senses under the form of reality & with the truth of Nature, supplies a species of actual Experience – This indeed is the grand Privilege of a great Actor above a great Poet – No part was ever played in perfection, but that Nature justified herself in the hearts of all her Children, in whatever State they were, short of ~~States~~ absolute moral Exhaustion or downright Stupidity – / There is no time given to ask questions, or pass judgements. He takes us by storm, & tho' <, in the histrionic art> many a clumsy Counterfeit by caricature exaggeration of one or two Features may gain applause, as a fine Likeness, yet never ~~did~~ was the *very Thing* rejected as a Counterfeit. (*LL* 1: 428-9)

This text is so dense, and reaches out in so many directions, that the present chapter is best understood as a running commentary on it. In what follows I will focus on Coleridge's discussion of the 'embodied' aspects of Shakespearean language, including gestural and sound patters as well as figures of speech. The last section is going to deal with his habitual turn to *King Lear* (above all, to Lear's 'apostrophe to the elements') at crucial points in his lectures and in the *Biographia*, in order to illustrate his theory of how passion works in poetry. I will end with reflections on the question of theatrical representation, which *Lear* raised with particular urgency. However, before embarking on these matters, I would like to show in what sense passion and 'embodiment' are relevant to Coleridge's theory of poetry. In order to do this, it is necessary to take a closer look at the above text and its possible theoretical contexts.

At the beginning of the note, Coleridge suggests that in order to truly appreciate Shakespeare – one might say, 'philosophically', in the sense of 'judging for

oneself' – one must know how the mind works in 'wild circumstances, & violences of excitement'. He describes such states using the vocabulary of associationist psychology, although he refers to the 'laws of association of Feeling with Thought', instead of speaking merely of the association of ideas. Before going any further it is worth remarking that, as a number of critics have demonstrated, Coleridge in literary criticism never quite abandoned the vocabulary of associationism, but usually inflected it towards emphasising the role of feeling, which, however, was not unheard of in the writings of more dogmatic associationists.[2] Hume himself discussed the association of emotions in his 'Dissertation on the Passions', arguing that it resembled music made by a string instrument, 'where, after each stroke, the vibrations still retain some sound, which gradually and insensibly decays'.[3] For philosophers after Hume, emotions offered an alternative model of mental functioning which was free from the atomism that characterised the 'classical' doctrine of the association of ideas and allowed a more creative role to the mind in the construction of experience; as Adela Pinch has argued, in the second half of the eighteenth century 'the passions both extend and demarcate the limits of empiricism'.[4]

One of the features of emotions that had become crucial for eighteenth-century philosophers was their unique temporality, which Hume expressed by the metaphor of music made by a string instrument. Ideas were generally thought of as either present or absent in the consciousness, but feelings – as this metaphor suggests – could also be somewhere in between, neither quite present, nor quite absent, with a temporal orientation of their own. Such an understanding of emotions allowed post-Humean 'philosophical critics', for example Kames, to discuss blendings and gradual

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[2] Cf. David Miall's view that Coleridge's theory of the imagination was indebted to Hartley's associationism, especially because of the latter's emphasis on feeling, in '"I See It Feelingly" Coleridge's Debt to Hartley', in *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J. B. Beer*, ed. Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 151-163. Neil Vickers shows that Thomas Beddoes also believed that association was governed by feeling in *Coleridge and the Doctors 1795-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 151-2. The point that Coleridge had not quite 'overthrown' associationism by 1803 has also been made by Jerome Christensen, in *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1981), pp. 82-3.

[3] Hume, 'A Dissertation on the Passions', in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, 4 vols (Boston: Little Brown and Company; Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1854), 1: 189-226, p. 191.

[4] Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), p. 164. A similar point is made by Paul Hamilton when he states that Hume's psychology 'is used by succeeding aestheticians in a way that suggests alternatives to, rather than extensions of, his basic empiricism', in *Coleridge's Poetics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 30.

fadings of feelings in particular literary texts, and quite frequently to assume that slower undercurrents of emotion governed the quick association of ideas that took place on the 'surface'.[5] This mode of thinking about feeling as something like a deep structure, informing the conscious workings of the mind, is still traceable in Coleridge; in fact, it appears in some of his best-known statements on association. We might recall, for instance, that when in 1803 he questioned the validity of Hartley's system, his argument against it was that 'association depends in a much greater degree on the recurrence of resembling states of Feeling, than on Trains of Idea' (*CL* 2: 961). This suggests that he did not quite reject associationism at this point, but rather carried on the exploration of the role of feeling in association that had been studied from various angles in the writings of a number of earlier critics and philosophers. As his lecture notes reveal, even in his middle period he paid considerable attention to the manifold associations between words, thoughts and feelings that characterise poetic texts, while at the same time he firmly rejected the belief that association explained all mental phenomena. His 'Preliminary Essay' on the 'Principles of Genial Criticism' (1814) is instructive on this point. 'Association in philosophy', Coleridge writes, 'is like the term *stimulus* in medicine; explaining every thing it explains nothing; and above all, leaves itself unexplained.' (*SW&F* 1: 359-60)

The comparison between association and stimulation seems to be dropped here more or less casually, but it is worth pursuing slightly further. In particular, it might be developed into a fuller analogy if one assumed – as John Brown did – that passion itself was a kind of stimulant.[6] I admit that this way of thinking about passion is somewhat perplexing, almost as if one were claiming that the feeling of being stimulated is a stimulant. However, it is only one of the more unusual versions of that late-eighteenth-century mode of thinking about the passions which perceived them as alien forces – in Joanna Baillie's words, 'unquiet inmates', expressing themselves in

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[5] Since Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, a discussion of how passion modifies association had been one of the set pieces of philosophical criticism. To cite one example, Alexander Gerard specifies habit and passion as connectives in the process of association: 'habit, or a present passion, often suggests trains of ideas which derive their connexion, not from their relation to one another, but chiefly from their congruity to the habit or the passion', in *An Essay on Genius* (London, Edinburgh: 1774), p. 126.

[6] In Thomas Beddoes's summary of Brown's system, 'Exciting powers may be referred to two classes. 1. External, as heat, food, wine, poisons, contagions, the blood, secreted fluids, and air. 2. Internal, as the functions of the body itself, muscular exertion, thinking, emotion and passion.' Tim Fulford, ed., *Romanticism and Science 1773-1833*, 5 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 1: 82.

unforeseeable ways, possessing a degree of independence and externality to the self.[7] Brown's system emphasises the physical dimension of the passions, mentioning them (and 'thinking') in the same category of stimulants as 'the functions of the body itself'. Importantly, writers who did not share Brown's strict materialism also established a strong connection between passion and the body, describing ways in which the former might lead to reactions of the latter. Brown's translator Thomas Beddoes – whom Neil Vickers has called a 'medical mentalist' – thought it necessary to set up 'a safe set of rules, for the medicinal employment of the passions'.[8] Coleridge too writes about the passions as offering a link between body and mind, or as expressing their inherent unity.[9] In poetry, passion connects the 'body' of writing with the reading or creative mind. In this context, it occupies a similar position to the one occupied by 'spirit' in Coleridge's religious writings: it appears in the 'letter', without being quite reducible to it. But as opposed to 'spirit', 'passion' might have nothing to do with spiritual insight; indeed, at times it might be more similar to 'spirit' in the sense of 'alcohol'. 'Passion' is strongly associated with the body and the material world: it is most observable in involuntary bodily symptoms of 'agitation'. As opposed to the higher faculty of reason, it is characterised by an irreducible moral ambivalence, which also links it to the irrational body.

I think that the analogy between passions and stimulants offers a good point of entry into this area of Coleridge's thinking precisely because it signals the inherent tensions of his attitude. The analogy itself can be traced in a number of his

[7] Joanna Baillie, *A Selection of Plays and Poems*, ed. Amanda Gilroy and Keith Hanley (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002) p. 35. Adela Pinch offers an extensive account of eighteenth-century perceptions of the passions as 'alien' forces in *Strange Fits of Passion*.

[8] Beddoes, *Hygeia: or, Essays Moral and Medical on the Cases Affecting the Personal State of our Middling and Affluent Classes*, 3 vols. (Bristol: J. Mills, 1802-3), vol 3, p. 15. Quoted and discussed in Neil Vickers, *Coleridge and the Doctors*, p. 146.

[9] He gives a 'mentalist' explanation of the connection in the following lecture note: 'our hearts leap with joy, on hearing of the victories of our country, or the rescue of the unhappy from the hands of an oppressor, or when a parent was transported at the restoration of a beloved child from /a deadly/ sickness; when the heart beat and the pulse quickened, do we therefore pretend, because *the body interprets the emotions of the mind* & as far as it can still strives to maintain its claim to sympathy, that therefore joy is not mental? or that joy is not moral? Do we say that it was owing to a particular degree of fullness of blood that our heart leaped & our pulse beat? or do we not rather say *that the regent the mind being glad, its slave the body, its willing slave obeyed it*. – Or if we are operated upon by a feeling of having done wrong or by a sense of having had a wrong done to us, & it excites the blush of shame, or the glow of anger on our cheek do we pretend to say that by some accident the blood suffused itself into veins unusually small & therefore the guilty seemed ashamed or the indignant patriot recoiled from a charge against his honour.' (*LL* 1: 331, italics added)

writings, for instance, in a note from 1808 stating that 'Strong Passions commend figurative Language & act as stimulants' (*LL* 1: 86). A similar idea might be lurking in his 1812 lecture note as well. This note asserts that in 'violences of excitement' (the latter term had been important for both Brunonians and for associationists), the 'assimilative power' is capable of 'starts & strange far-flights', which culminate in 'the after as strange but always certain return to the dominant Idea'.[10] Coleridge was deeply interested in the pathological effects of strong feeling (as much as in those of stimulants), and here he offers an early version of his diagnosis of 'mania', which in the *Biographia* would have an important role in establishing the distinction between fancy and the imagination, and which is here already associated with *King Lear*.[11] What interests me most, however, is that in this note he is discussing the psychological condition with reference to language. The central point in the first movement of the text is that 'the language of such states' is no longer readily understood by the public, and Coleridge suggests that the reasons for this might lie in the progress of civilisation, that is, in the fact that such 'wild circumstances' and the accompanying 'violences' have become increasingly rare. The often-cited linguistic theory of the second movement is developed from this proposition, via a distinction between two different modes of interpretation: interpreting a text as a succession of 'symbols', or alternatively, as composed of 'natural symbols', where the first term denotes arbitrary signs, while the second implies, I think, something closer to our notion of symptoms, the 'self-manifestations' of a psychological state. Evidently, the two approaches produce markedly different readings; the first cannot work without the support of critical authority, while readings of the second kind might lead, Coleridge supposes, to the reader's recognition of an inevitable connection between the signs and the underlying passionate 'state'.

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[10] On the Brunonian meaning of 'excitement' see Martin Wallen, 'A Secret Excitement: Coleridge, John Brown, and the Chance for a Physical Imagination', in *City of Health, Fields of Disease: Revolutions in the Poetry, Medicine, and Philosophy of Romanticism* (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 102-119. See also Neil Vickers, 'Coleridge, Thomas Beddoes, and Brunonian Medicine', *European Romantic Review* 8 (1997), 47-94.

[11] The significance of mania in Coleridge's criticism is discussed by McKusick in *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 103-5. Miall observes that in 1803 Coleridge read Thomas Beddoes's *Hygeia* (London, 1802-3) which included an essay on mania; see his "'I see it feelingly'", p. 158.

Read from this vantage point, his subsequent discussion of the three kinds of language becomes less cryptic than when taken in isolation. Previous commentaries on Coleridge's linguistic theories have all pointed out that, according to this passage, ordinary human language – 'the language of man' – is essentially arbitrary. Neither the phonetic shape of a word, nor its graphic notation, has the slightest 'natural' or necessary connection with the thing (or idea) denoted. It is worth remarking that here Coleridge does not find arbitrariness a problem, and even notes the 'advantages' of the 'very nothingness' of the sign, anticipating his later comparisons between the linguistic sign and symbolic money.[12] So far, he is firmly in the tradition of Locke and Condillac on language. What he describes as the second and third types of language, however, seems hard to reconcile with this general picture. As opposed to 'the language of man', he refers to what he calls the 'Language of Nature' in Biblical terms, as original ('was in the beginning') and non-arbitrary ('was with the Thing, <it> represented, & it was the Thing represented'). However, this language is clearly not identical with the divine Word to which he (perhaps even playfully) alludes: it is a 'subordinate Logos', one that is natural and not supernatural. According to James C. McKusick, it is nature perceived as language; in other words, Coleridge is apparently evoking Berkeley's notion of the 'divine visual language', although with an important difference: whereas Berkeley considered even this language as necessarily arbitrary (precisely because it *is* language), Coleridge insists on its 'natural' qualities.[13] The context, however, suggests another possible interpretation, one that takes into account Coleridge's speculations on the natural symbols of passion in the previous and subsequent lines. According to this reading, the 'Language of Nature' would be a language that is supposed to have preceded artificial human speech, and that has ever since continued to be the expression of passion. In other words, it might as well refer to the 'subordinate Logos' of facial expression, gesture and tone of voice, which had also been called the 'language of

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[12] Cf. Coleridge on John Taylor's *An Essay on Money* (1830): 'The perfection of Money is ideality – or where the Medium, the circulating *Word*, is in itself, like the Air of which the Word *materially* consists, below any calculable value.' (*CM* IV: 687) Money and words are also compared in the *Biographia* (*BL* 2:122).

[13] 'But the language of nature, manifested in the perception of external objects, is not, *pace* Berkeley, composed of arbitrary signs; our perception of an object conveys its real properties to us. This is Coleridge's "true and original realism" (*BL* I:262), which appeals to the concept of natural language in order to refute Kant's skeptical objections to the possibility of our knowing the *Ding an Sich*.' McKusick, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 110.

nature' by eighteenth-century theorists, and which had been regarded as human language 'in the beginning' by some of them.[14]

McKusick notes that one important proponent of this latter theory in the second half of the eighteenth century was Thomas Reid – a philosopher whose influence on Coleridge in other respects has been discussed by Paul Hamilton and Noel B. Jackson, among others.[15] According to Reid, the *natural language of mankind*,[16] which involves modulation of tone, gesture, and facial expression, has four main characteristics: 1) it is non-arbitrary, and therefore instinctively understood by everyone 2) it is more ancient than arbitrary language, and was in fact a condition of its development 3) civilization and the 'perfection of language' has corrupted and obscured it 4) its expressive power can be regained through art. Three of these points are summarised in a chapter 'Of Passions' in Reid's *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (1788) as follows:

> The involuntary signs of the passions and dispositions of the mind, in the voice, features, and action, are a part of the human constitution, which deserves admiration. The signification of those signs is known to all men by nature, and previous to all experience.
>
> They are so many openings into the souls of our fellow-men, by which their sentiments become visible to the eye. They are a natural language common to mankind, without which it would have been impossible to have invented any artificial language.
>
> It is from the natural signs of the passions and dispositions of the mind that the human form derives its beauty; that painting, poetry and music derive their *expression*; that eloquence derives its greatest force, and conversation its greatest charm.[17]

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[14] The two interpretations do not necessarily exclude each other, for Coleridge often wrote of the quasi-Berkeleyan 'language of nature' by referring to a divine face. E.g.: 'To the philanthropic Physiognomist a Face is beautiful because its Features are the symbols and visible signs of the inward Benevolence or Wisdom – to the pious man all Nature is thus beautiful because its every Feature is the Symbol and all its Parts the written Language of infinite Goodness and all powerful Intelligence.' (*LPR*, p. 158)

[15] Noel B. Jackson, 'Critical Conditions: Coleridge, "Common Sense", and the Literature of Self-Experiment', in *ELH*, Vol 70, No 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 117-149. Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge's Poetics*, pp. 35-41. Reid on language is also discussed by Alan Richardson, in *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), pp. 75-6.

[16] Quoted in McKusick, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language*, p. 11. Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, ed. Timothy Duggan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), ch. 5, sec. 3, p. 65.

[17] Quoted and discussed in Roger D. Gallie, *Thomas Reid: Ethics, Aesthetics and the Anatomy of the Self* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), p. 174. *The Works of Thomas Reid, D. D.*, Seventh edition, ed. by Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh: McLachlan and Stewart, London: Longman, Green, Roberts and Green, 1872), p. 574b.

The fourth point about the effects of civilization and the development of language leads to a characteristic paradox which is also found in Coleridge: due to this development, 'natural' language has become difficult to understand, and must be learnt anew through the exercise of taste. According to Reid, the arts of the musician, the painter, the actor, and the orator

> are natural as far as they are expressive; although the knowledge of them requires in us a delicate taste, a nice judgement, and much study and practice; yet they are nothing else but the language of nature, which we brought into the world with us, but have unlearnt by disuse, and so find the greatest difficulty in recovering it. [18]

Coleridge in his note on the 'Language of Nature' also alludes to this process of 'unlearning' when he claims that the natural expressions of passion 'are judged of by *authority*, not by actual experience', a fact that, in his view, has led to the decline of drama. Theatre, however, might still make up for the lack of experience, and by teaching the audience the 'language' they have forgotten, might also teach them, at least in theory, to recognise its movements even as they are recreated in the more subtle medium of the written text ('the one worsted, the other silk' [*CN* 2: 2274], to adapt a phrase from an earlier notebook entry).

This form of theatrical representation would be Coleridge's remedy for the 'Dead Palsy of the public mind': a cure by controlled stimulation. Echoing Lear's words to Edgar – 'thou art the thing itself' (3.4.104) – Coleridge claims that theatre is capable of presenting 'the *very Thing*' to the spectators. Ironies apply in both cases: Edgar wears his near-nakedness as a disguise, while theatre creates a sense of reality in the medium of fiction. However, should this exclude the possibility that the play-acting Edgar, or the actor playing him, *is* in some sense the 'thing itself'? Coleridge seems to think that it shouldn't. 'What would appear mad or ludicrous in a book,' he writes, 'presented to the senses under the form of reality & with the truth of Nature, supplies a species of actual Experience'. Good theatre is thus capable of teaching spectators what is 'real' or 'natural' despite its artificial medium, because its effects are validated by each

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[18] Quoted in McKusick, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language*, pp. 11-12; from Reid, *Inquiry*, ch. 4, sec. 2, p. 57.

spectator's instinctive response (a form of recognition Reid had called 'reminiscence'). This response occurs regardless of the fictitious nature of theatrical representation. 'No part was ever played in perfection,' writes Coleridge, 'but that Nature justified herself in the hearts of all her Children'.[19]

This appears to be a universally applicable, not to say democratic, conception of the theatre, although Coleridge immediately makes exception for people 'of absolute moral Exhaustion or downright Stupidity'. With respect to plays read, however, he is even less optimistic, echoing doubts voiced in earlier philosophical criticism. In a discussion of Hamlet's 'apostrophe' ('My father!... Methinks I see my father'), William Richardson had asked: 'Are we confident, if there was exhibited to us a genuine representation of human passions and manners, conveyed in artless unaffected language, that we would comply with the admonitions of nature, and applaud as our feelings dictate?'[20] Coleridge, it seems, thinks that 'we' would not; that is, readers in general would be unable to recognise Shakespeare's language for what it is, 'the *very Thing*' itself. In his note, he identifies in this 'the grand Privilege of a great Actor above a great Poet', suggesting that the language of passion aided by gesture, facial expression and voice has a stronger and more immediate effect on the audience than poetic language on its own. For most people, passion in writing is less immediately persuasive than passion on stage – as we shall see, some of the strengths Coleridge attributes to poetry follow precisely from this initial weakness.

That the bodily expressions of passion were 'natural' and universally understood was a basic assumption of most eighteenth-century philosophical critics. Lord Kames (who was influenced by Reid) wrote that 'The natural signs of emotion, voluntary and involuntary, being nearly the same in all men, form an universal language; which no difference of place, no difference of tribe, no diversity of tongue, can darken

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[19] See also a marginal note to Richard Payne Knight, in which Coleridge (or possibly Wordsworth) argues that the sense of disparity between what is represented on stage and the means of representing it, e.g. in the case of a storm, prevents 'delusion' in adult spectators. 'But by in the looks the gestures, and tones of a genuine actor, aided by the knowledge of Nature displayed <in the words> by the Poet, there is no such disproportion or unfitness; and the representation I confess appears to me not only to approach to reality but often for a short while to be wholly merged or lost in it.' (*CM* 3: 406) See also Frederick Burwick, *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp. 203-4.

[20] William Richardson, *A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters* (Edinburgh, 1774), p. 115.

or render doubtful.'[21] It followed that poetry, as far as it aimed at the expression of feeling, also had to aspire to the immediacy of the 'language of nature'. But how exactly this could be achieved had still to be worked out. It seems that in Coleridge's view, poetry – at least, Shakespearean poetry – was able to evoke effects of 'recognition' analogous to those produced by bodily signs of passion, but through more complicated means. That is, poetry had to combine the non-arbitrary features of the 'language of nature' with the arbitrary signs of ordinary human language – this is why in his 1812 note he defines Shakespearean language as 'something intermediate' between the two. It is slightly confusing that he sometimes refers to poetic language also as the 'language of nature', but it is clear that in this context he means a secondary naturalness, achieved through a blending of arbitrary and 'natural' expression. The nature of this 'blending' is not easy to define; however, what I would like to suggest is that Coleridge's speculations on the multiple modes of association (between words, thoughts, and feelings) might give us a clue here. In my view, that is, he implies the existence of a 'deeper' level of mental functioning, which in certain states (in extreme suffering, for instance) structures – or shows through, we might say – arbitrary speech. Thus, even if the words themselves are arbitrary, the movement of words – the 'starts and strange far-flights of the assimilative power' – may be regarded as fundamentally natural.

Needless to say, this 'natural' language is not identical with the 'language really used by men', for, as we have seen, Coleridge regarded ordinary human language as by definition arbitrary. Tomalin reports him saying in a lecture that he 'never dreamed that Lear could think what he said according to Shakespeare – but it was the language of nature, & such language that while we wept it mingled wisdom with our tears' (*LL* 1: 227). Lear's speech, in other words, could never be mistaken for the language of a real person, but it could nevertheless be recognised and understood through its emotional

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[21] Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Elements of Criticism* (1762), 2 vols (London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1993), 1: 434. Priestley was the only new rhetorician who did not subscribe to this innatism, arguing that the expressive force of gestures and facial expressions was due to early associations. See Priestley, *An Examination of Dr. Reid's* Inquiry into the Human Mind (London: J. Johnson, 1774), pp. 89-92. However, he also affirmed that 'The *tone of voice*, the *gesture*, and a variety of other *circumstances*, may sufficiently indicate a man's real meaning, without regard to words', in *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent M. Bevilacqua and Richard Murphy (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p. 218.

impact as 'natural' in the sense I have been delineating.[22] Paradoxically, the highly artificial language of poetry might in this sense be closer to 'nature' than the real language of everyday communication. The tears and understanding ('wisdom') that Coleridge attributes to readers of the play are the proof of Lear's grasp of their imagination; his words hold them fast like the eyes of the Ancient Mariner, making them sadder and wiser. In the sphere of the theatre or the scene of recital, such imaginative 'grasp' is aided, or even enabled, by the eyes and the voice of the reciter. How exactly the same effect is achieved in poetry, when the actor is not physically present, is one of the main questions Coleridge tries to answer in his literary criticism. In this chapter I would like to show that the rhetorical concept of the 'language of passion' as expounded by earlier philosophical critics, most notably Kames and Joseph Priestley, provided some of the most important starting-points for Coleridge in this investigation. These critics habitually illustrated 'passionate' language with Lear's speeches on the heath, returning again and again to the same examples that Coleridge himself adduced not only in his discussion of mania, but whenever he tried to define what made poetic language uniquely effective.

The idea of passionate language we find in Reid had its antecedents in the wide-ranging discourse of Enlightenment linguistics. As Hans Aarsleff has shown, the theory of a 'natural' (non-arbitrary) proto-language had been most influentially proposed in the middle of the eighteenth century by Condillac, who was also an important exponent of linguistic arbitrariness. In his *Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines* (1746; English translation 1756), Condillac states that gestures and natural cries 'form the only "language" that is natural to man; it is the immediate expression of the passions'.[23] This language is not the specifically human language that is the product of reflection and the faculty of reason: 'natural language' consists mainly of involuntary bodily reactions, and therefore it is possessed by animals as well as humans. Condillac

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[22] Coleridge frequently reiterated this in his lectures, for example: 'Each speech is what every man feels to be latent in his nature – what he would have said in that situation if he had had the ability & readiness to do it – and these are multiplied and individualized with the most extraordinary minuteness & truth – ' (*LL* 2: 122)

[23] Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (London: Athlone, 1982), p. 163.

assumes that these involuntary gestures suggested to man the possibility of voluntary signs; these signs, on the one hand, 'insensibly enlarged and improved the operations of the mind, and on the other hand these [operations] having acquired such improvement, perfected the signs, and rendered the use of them more familiar'.[24] Reflection and the use of signs, thus mutually aiding each other, resulted in the most unique human creation, language. This account influenced virtually all subsequent discussions of the origin of language, from Rousseau to Michaëlis (whose legacy was very much alive in Göttingen at the time of Coleridge's visit) and Herder (whose *Über den Ursprung der Sprache* Coleridge probably read in Germany).[25] Condillac also exerted a strong influence in England and Scotland, all the more so because he was himself indebted to Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses* (1737-41) – a work also known to the young Coleridge – for the doctrine of the 'language of action' (that is, gesture) and its connection with hieroglyphics. According to Aarsleff, the debates generated by Condillac reached Scotland and England in the works of Adam Smith ('Considerations concerning the first Formation of Languages', 1761), Lord Monboddo (*Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, 1773), and Joseph Priestley (*Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language, and Universal Grammar*, 1762).[26] Among other related works, Aarsleff lists Robert Lowth's *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1753), a text of primary significance for the 'new rhetoric' developed in the late eighteenth century, and certainly known to Coleridge.[27] Influences and cross-influences on the theme of natural language formed a close web indeed; a good example is the English edition of Lowth's *Lectures* (1787), published with the scholarly notes of Michaëlis and of the translator George Gregory, who at a crucial point cites Priestley's discussion of the figures of passion, which, in turn, owed its philosophical underpinnings to Hartley's associationism. The significance of all these thinkers in the formation of Coleridge's philosophical thought is well established, and it is virtually impossible that the discussion on 'natural language' in which they all participated in one way or another could have been unfamiliar to him.

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[24] Condillac, *An Essay On the Origin of Human Knowledge, Being a Supplement to Mr. Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, trans. Thomas Nugent (London, 1756), pp. 173-4 (II.1.1).

[25] McKusick, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language*, p. 56. McKusick discusses Michaëlis as the 'most important influence' on Coleridge at the time; see pp. 58-60.

[26] Aarsleff, p. 148.

[27] James Engell, 'Robert Lowth, Unacknowledged Legislator', in *The Committed Word: Literature and Public Values* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State UP, 1999), 119-140, p. 137.

Given this state of affairs, there is not much point in assigning a specific origin to Coleridge's concept of the 'language of nature'. One of its formulations, however, is worth considering more closely, for it brings into relief a basic tension also inherent in Coleridge's thinking about 'passion' in poetry. William Godwin, to whom he addressed some of his early letters on linguistic theory, gave a summary account of the origin of language in Book I, Chapter VIII of the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), roughly along the lines set by Condillac:

> Its beginning was probably from those involuntary cries, which infants, for example, are found to utter in the earliest stages of their existence, and which, previously to the idea of exciting pity or procuring assistance, spontaneously arise from the operation of pain upon our animal frame. These cries, when actually uttered, become a subject of perception to him by whom they are uttered; and being observed to be constantly associated with certain antecedent impressions and to excite the idea of those impressions in the hearer, may afterwards be repeated from reflection and the desire of relief. Eager desire to communicate any information to another will also prompt us to utter some simple sound for the purpose of exciting attention: this sound will probably frequently recur to organs unpractised to variety, and will at length stand as it were by convention for the information intended to be conveyed. But the distance is extreme from those simple modes of communication, which we possess in common with some of the inferior animals, to all the analysis, and abstraction which languages require.[28]

Godwin's discussion ends with his insistence on the central role of abstraction 'which was necessary to the first existence of language, [and] is again assisted in its operations by language'.[29] Abstraction, the primary activity of human reason, is 'in some sort coeval with and inseparable from the existence of mind' – in other words, it closely resembles Condillac's notion of reflection, which distinguishes man from animals, and which is responsible for the development of language. For Godwin, language is inherently abstract, just like ideas themselves (as he states in a note, 'the human mind is perhaps incapable of entertaining any but general ideas').[30] According to him, then, abstract words supplant natural signs arising from passion or sensation (primarily, from

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[28] Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (facsimile of the third edition), 3 vols, ed. by F. E. L. Priestley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), 1: 112. For Rousseau, Tooke, Monboddo and Smith as parallels to Godwin's account, see 3: 119-20.
[29] Godwin, 1: 115.
[30] Godwin, 1: 112, 113.

pain), and substitute for their immediate affective content abstract 'information intended to be conveyed'.

Theories of the origin of language usually imply value judgments about the relative worth of the mental faculties involved. In Godwin's case, the theory highlights his preference for the rational as opposed to the sense-driven and the passionate.[31] That Coleridge understood – or, perhaps, guessed – the thrust of Godwin's argument in more or less these terms is suggested by his enthusiastic sonnet 'To William Godwin, author of *Political Justice*'.[32] 'Passion' is one of the keywords of this poem. In line 8, it is evoked through a quotation from Collins's ode, *The Passions*, while in the last stanza it becomes part of the central image, the storm of passion dispersed by a glorious abstraction:

> Nor will I not thy holy guidance bless,
>> And hymn thee, GODWIN! with an ardent Lay;
> For that thy voice, in Passion's stormy day,
> When wild I roam'd the bleak Heath of Distress,
>> Bade the bright form of JUSTICE meet my way
> And told me that her name was HAPPINESS. (*PW* I.1: 166)

The poet who has roamed in 'Passion's stormy day', on the 'heath' of distress, is rescued by the figure of Godwinian 'Justice' – in stark contrast with the play that the poem evokes. In *King Lear*, what is painfully lacking is exactly justice, from Lear's first offence against Cordelia, to the 'houseless poverty' that pervades the country, and the conclusion, which brings no poetical justice (so much so that Doctor Johnson was famously unable to read it, while theatre audiences enjoyed Nahum Tate's version with a happy ending).

Coleridge's sonnet expresses a hope that Godwin's benevolent reason might be able to relieve social injustice and the consequent suffering. However, he soon became suspicious of Godwin's system, as well as of all other systems based on the

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[31] From 1798 onwards, Godwin allowed a more significant role to the affections; for this and his general stance towards the passions, see F. E. L. Priestley's editorial remarks in *Political Justice*, 3: 12 (n34); 3: 87-92.

[32] Coleridge later claimed to have written the poem at Southey's recommendation, before actually reading Godwin's work. See *PW* I: 166 and *CL* III: 315 where Coleridge admits this to Godwin himself.

superiority of abstraction.[33] In 'Fears in Solitude', he characteristically linked 'abstraction' with the 'empty sounds' of language, and opposed it to feeling: 'Like mere abstractions, empty sounds to which / We join no feeling and attach no form! / As if the soldier died without a wound' (*PW* I.1:473). Abstract words have no connection with the pain they denote and which they might even help bring about. Coleridge seems to suggest that, because of this, such language may be used especially effectively for purposes of war. Perhaps it was the same fear of the destructive power of abstraction that made him urge Godwin in a famous letter to 'write a book on the power of words, and the processes by which human feelings form affinities with them' (*CL* 1:625-6). A book offering such a theory would be invaluable, for it could account for the capacity of words to evoke feelings, that is, for their capacity immediately to affect the mind.

By the time of the lectures, Coleridge seems to have realised that what he had proposed to Godwin was a theory of poetry, more than anything else. Through the complex web of associations between words, thoughts, and feelings, the effect of poetry was to 'mingle wisdom with our tears', in other words, it enabled readers to experience, and at the same time to reflect upon, states of strong feeling. Seen in this light, the study of literature could become a crucial element in the 'culture of the heart', which – as Godwin later conceded – was 'the true school of humanity'.[34] But whereas Godwin was gradually persuaded to regard feeling and fiction as central to mankind's improvement, Coleridge, in spite of his alleged 'emotionalism', was far from unambivalent towards (fictitious) feeling. It might even be argued that in his literary criticism he replicated something of the basic tensions inherent in the Enlightenment stance towards passion and feeling in general. As we have seen, the school of Condillac affirmed that language could not have been invented without 'natural signs' of passion, but also that it was invented precisely at the moment when they ceased to be natural – when cries of pain, for instance, were repeated by someone actually not in pain. In other words, these thinkers accorded passion an originating role in the development of language only to show that it was immediately supplanted by reason and abstraction. Coleridge seems to

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[33] It has to be added that Coleridge later recanted his animosity against Godwin, and explained it as an error caused by his own proneness to abstract thinking: 'my unfelt and harmless Blows [were] aimed at an abstraction, I had christen'd with your name' (*CL* III: 315).

[34] Godwin writes this in the preface to *St. Leon* (1798), see *Political Justice*, 3: 89.

have repeated this structure of thought when he defined poetry in terms of an artificially re-created and controlled passion. But whereas in ordinary speech the passionate origins of language were all but erased,[35] poetry could be characterised as a somewhat unstable mode: a reflexive language energised by the pre-rational or passionate, which could reveal itself at any moment, thereby both securing and threatening the ideal poetic effect.

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Affinities between words and feelings are discussed by Coleridge throughout his lectures, but instead of presenting a full-fledged philosophical account of the subject, he tended to study it through individual examples: he analysed passages in which language seemed to move beyond abstraction and become 'simple, sensuous, and passionate' (*LL* 1: 515). This transformation in poetic language could occur through the interplay of a number of different elements, but the ones most resembling an original 'natural language' were the extra-semantic or pre-symbolic features, which Coleridge found foregrounded in poetic texts. He spent considerable time in his lectures studying how such features were interwoven in Shakespeare's language; he observed, for instance, that bodily gestures were lurking even in the early narrative poems. When Shakespeare wrote *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Coleridge argued, the dramatic instinct was already 'secretly working in him', and prompted him

> to provide a substitute for that visual language, that constant interruption & running Comment by Tone, Look, and Gesture which in his Dramatic Works he had expected to derive from the Actors. – His Venus and Adonis seem at once the characters themselves, and the whole representation of those Characters by the most consummate Actors. You seem to be *told* nothing; but to see & hear every thing. (*LL* 1: 242)

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[35] See Coleridge's discussion of this, as recorded by Tomalin: 'It was known that all deviations from ordinary language (by which the Lecturer meant, such language as is used, by a man speaking without emotion, to express anything simply – not that he was quite correct in using the last phrase, because all language arose out of passion) the only difference was in the figure that was employed, old or new; – thus – we said, the tops of trees, or the heads of mountains, which expressions, with innumerable others in common use, were figurative, and originally used in a state of emotion – but they were now worn out. Passion was the true parent of every word in existence in every language.' (*LL* 1: 271)

This means that Shakespeare from the start managed to recreate the effects of bodily eloquence in the medium of language. When speaking about the plays, Coleridge often made explicit suggestions for how a particular passage should be delivered, claiming that Shakespeare's text contained 'involved instructions to the actors how to pronounce the line'.[36] A telling instance is one of his marginal comments on *Twelfth Night*, the scene in which the Duke asks Viola/Cesario about her/his 'sister': 'And what's her history?'. The reply is: 'A blank, my lord. She never told her love, / But let concealment like a worm i' th' bud / Feed on her damask cheek...' (2.4.106-8).[37] Coleridge in his note comments: 'After the first line (of which the last 5 words should be spoken with & drop down in, a deep sigh) the Speaker should make a pause & then start afresh, from the activity of thought born of suppressed Feelings, which thoughts had accumulated during the brief interval, as vital Heat under the skin during a dip in cold water' (*CM* 4:704). Coleridge here gives precise instructions to the actress, based on a quasi-scientific analysis of the influence of suppressed passion on the mind and on the body. This is especially important in a passage like this, which is itself about concealment of passion, so the actress playing Viola playing Cesario enacts, but also subtly counteracts, what she is saying, through the 'Comment by Tone, Look, and Gesture'. The 'blank' in the history of the fictitious sister (and of the true Viola) is analogous to the paleness of 'her' 'damask cheek' and to Viola's 'sigh' and 'pause'. The subsequent conceit, however, signals a surplus activity of her mind, as Coleridge argues, brought about by suppressed passion, which, like a blush, betrays Viola's true feelings for the Duke – at least to the perceptive reader or spectator. The 'nothingness' of arbitrary language is thus able to reveal the 'true' nature of passion, so that readers as well as spectators 'seem to be *told* nothing', but 'hear and see every thing'.

In such remarks, Coleridge comes very close to contemporary theatre critics such as Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, who painstakingly recorded gestures and modulations of tone on the stage which could be interpreted as elements of a 'language',

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[36] He quotes Prospero's 'Twelve years since, Miranda! twelve years since' (*Tempest* 1.2.53) as an example (*LL* 2: 284).

[37] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night Or What You Will*, ed. by Elizabeth Story Donno, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, gen. ed. Philip Brockbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 2003), pp. 97-8.

that is, as meaningful and 'natural' signs of passion.[38] Indeed, in the above-cited case Coleridge's apparent prescription for actors is in fact more a description of a real theatrical event: according to the editors' note in the *Marginalia*, he is recalling Dora Jordan's performance. On the back of an admission ticket for one of his own 1812 lectures, he wrote: 'Never can I forget Mrs Jordan's recitation of [her] lines [as] Viola – She never told her Love. – It was absolute perfection - & during that speech you might literally have heard a pin drop in the Theatre – their very breathing was suspended' (*SW&F* 290). This note represents almost with symbolic density the strong ties between Coleridge's lecturing and the world of the theatre; moreover, it reveals his fondness of, or even nostalgia for, the stage, while it also attests to his keen eye for observation. Characteristically, he notices how the audience responds to 'perfect' acting immediately and instinctively, by repeating the pregnant 'pause' of the actress. This observation was useful not only for the lecturer and the theorist ('No part was ever played in perfection, but that Nature justified herself in the hearts of all her Children'), but also for the playwright, who in this period carefully followed the staging process of his own play *Remorse*. His 'instructions' for the actors are, in this sense, given by the insider. Theatrical scripts of the age often recorded symptoms of passion appropriate to each passage; sequences of stage action had been handed down with especial care from one production of Shakespeare to the next.[39] But, as Jane Moody has shown, 'natural' signs of passion achieved their greatest importance in the so-called 'illegitimate theatre', where, due to the monopoly of the two patent theatres, speech was limited or completely displaced by music and spectacle.[40]

The assumption behind 'illegitimate' productions was something very close to the theory of 'natural language' formulated by eighteenth-century philosophers.

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[38] See Joel Haefner, '"The Soul Speaking in the Face": Hazlitt's Concept of Character', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 24 (1984), 655-670

[39] See George Taylor, '"The Just Delineation of the Passions": Theories of Acting in the Age of Garrick', Kenneth Richards and Peter Thomson eds., *Essays on the Eighteenth-Century Stage* (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 51-72.

[40] With regard to Coleridge Jane Moody argues that even though he participated in the 'Romantic disavowal of illegitimate theatre', this 'jars uneasily against [his] own dramatic practice, not to mention his desire to produce a number of illegitimate plays, including "Laugh till you lose him" (a dramatic romance), an oriental entertainment, a speaking ballet, and a pantomime based on the Tartarian tales. (*CL* IV: 606).' Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 61.

According to both, movement, facial expression and modulation of voice constituted a language readily understandable for everyone. While philosophers habitually rewrote the conjectural history of how early men invented language, illegitimate productions were particularly fond of stories about monsters, savages or idiots who were unable to speak, but expressed feelings through music and dance. 'Legitimate' playwrights like Joanna Baillie also shared a belief in the 'universal language' of passion. In her 'Introductory Discourse' (1798) to the *Plays on the Passions* Baillie referred to 'the language of the agitated soul, which every age and nation understand'.[41] According to her, this 'language', or rather our wish to observe it, formed the basis of a number of social phenomena, including the theatre. 'No man wishes to see the Ghost himself', she argues, 'but every man wishes to see one who believes that he sees it, in all the agitation and wildness of that species of terror' – hence our interest in ghost-scenes like the one in *Hamlet*.[42] As this example suggests, a crucial attraction of the 'language of passion' resided in the fact that it could not be codified or observed in itself – it was only accessible through fictitious constructions, like poetry and the theatre.[43] It was in this sense an enabling fiction, which generated much writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Among others, the elusive content of bodily gestures produced a large amount of work by elocutionists, aimed at codifying what by definition eluded codification. The most important representative of this movement, Thomas Sheridan (a former actor) argued that Locke's account of language was flawed because it focused solely on the arbitrary 'language of ideas'. As opposed to this, the 'language of emotions' was natural, and universally understood: 'there is not an act of the mind, an exertion of the fancy, or emotion of the heart, which have not annexed to them their peculiar tone and notes of the voice, by which they are to be expressed; and which, when properly used, excite in the minds of others, tuned invariably by the hand of nature in

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[41] Joanna Baillie, *A Selection of Plays and Poems*, ed. by Amanda Gilroy and Keith Hanley (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), p. 13.

[42] *A Selection of Plays and Poems*, p. 12.

[43] Compare this with Coleridge's account of his use of the supernatural in the 'Ancient Mariner': 'the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real' (*BL* 1997, p. 179).

unison of those notes, analogous emotions.'[44] Sheridan proceeds by arguing that with the progress of civilization and especially with the invention of writing and the spread of literacy (more specifically, 'the very defective and erroneous method in which all are trained in the art of reading'), the 'expressive language of nature' has been corrupted.[45] We might recall Reid's analogous trope of 'unlearning' at this point. While Reid thought that 'unlearning' might be counteracted by the arts in general (including oratory), Sheridan proposes to remedy it by teaching a method of public reading and delivery, based on the theatrical practice of expressing emotions. This might be regarded as a prominent case of what Timothy Clark, following Walter J. Ong, calls 'residual orality', the survival of oral models of communication in a culture that is immersed in writing.[46] Clark writes about this in connection with concepts of inspiration and enthusiasm, and also notes problems 'of translating an oral model of composition into a written one' in Hugh Blair's rhetoric.[47] However, Sheridan's success should remind us that these were very often productive difficulties, precisely because they allowed so much room for performative 'interpretation'. The rules laid down by Sheridan in his publications could, by definition, only roughly correspond to the 'real' language of the passions – hence the great success of his lecturing tours, where such a language could be directly displayed and observed.

Gesture, voice and facial expression were thus habitually perceived as constituting a 'natural language', both inside and outside the theatre, and Coleridge was keen to find the counterparts of such signs in Shakespeare's plays. But he devoted far more attention to another component of the 'natural' language of passion: to rhythm, the *sine qua non* of poetry.[48] That rhythm was closely connected with passion was another

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[44] Thomas Sheridan, *A Rhetorical Grammar of the English Language. Calculated solely for the Purpose of Teaching Propriety of Pronunciation, and Justness of Delivery, in that Tongue, by the Organs of Speech* (Dublin, 1781), p. 101. Cf. G. P. Mohrmann, 'The Language of Nature and Elocutionary Theory', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 52 (April 1966), pp. 116-24.
[45] Sheridan, *A Rhetorical Grammar* p. 101.
[46] Timothy Clark, *The Theory of Inspiration: Composition as a Crisis of Subjectivity in Romantic and Post-Romantic Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 10.
[47] Clark, p. 80.
[48] Coleridge's ideas on passion and metre are discussed in Emerson R. Marks, *Coleridge on the Language of Verse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981) pp. 79-89; Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge's Poetics*, pp. 146-156. See also M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Norton, 1958 (1953)), pp. 120-123.

leading assumption of eighteenth-century criticism, but different critics voiced different opinions about the exact nature of their relationship. For some, strong passions were manifested in the irregularities of rhythm, that is, through divergence from ordinary metre. Others, like Adam Smith, thought that certain passions, which he called 'musical', naturally expressed themselves in regular cadences, so passion was conveyed not through a divergence from regular rhythm, but through measured verse itself.[49] An extension of this theory held that passions in general led to rhythmical expression – a view most memorably expressed in Robert Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*. Finally, Lowth and several others also asserted that rhythm was born together with song and dance, and that poetry had its origins in this elemental, strongly physical expression of passion.

Coleridge in his lecture notes evokes practically all these theories in one version or another, backing them up with the careful rhythmical analyses that make his contribution truly unique. His overall opinion seems to have coincided with the 'extended' theory that argued for a causal link between passion and rhythm in general:

> Physicians asserted that each passion has its proper pulse – So it was with metre when rightly used. A state of excitement produced is, in truth, an analogy of the language of strong passion – not that strong passion always speaks in metre, but it has a language more measured than is employed in common speaking. (*LL* 1: 222)

This passage claims that some kind of rhythm (if not regular metre) is a natural consequence of heightened emotional states. Rhythm here appears as almost identical with bodily symptoms of passion which can be scientifically ascertained. However, Coleridge also makes a subtle distinction between 'strong passion' and 'excitement', in

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[49] Musical passions 'naturally express themselves in a language which is distinguished by pauses at regular, and almost equal, intervals; and which, upon that account, can more easily be adapted to the regular returns of the correspondent periods of a tune'. (Adam Smith, *Of the Imitative Arts*, in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, ed. by W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce, The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, Vol III, gen. ed. D. D. Raphael and A. S. Skinner (Indianapolis: Liberty Press/Liberty Classics, 1982), 176-213, p. 192) In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Smith again distinguishes between passions which lend themselves to 'uniform and regular cadence' in writing (like joy or grief) and those that preclude regularity (like anger and indignation). Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. by J. C. Bryce, The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, Vol IV, gen. ed. A. S. Skinner (Indianapolis: Liberty Press/Liberty Classics, 1985), p. 22.

which the latter seems to be identical with a voluntarily-induced 'poetic feeling', while the former implies unasked-for and directly personal emotion. This is an important difference, pointing towards the crucial dividing line between poetic imitation and the immediate personal experience of feeling that Coleridge wanted to maintain at all costs.[50] While 'strong passion' naturally produces 'more measured' expression, poetic 'excitement' is something like artificial stimulation, leading to analogous results. This also works the other way round: metre in a particular text may also be regarded as a sort of stimulant, capable of inducing 'excitement' – this is why Coleridge likened its effects to those of wine, and (perhaps recalling his own experiments with nitrous oxide) to 'a medicated atmosphere' (*BL* 2: 66).

In his lectures, Coleridge discussed the 'pulse' of passion in a context that clearly indicated the provenance of the idea. He made his 'scientific' point through evoking the Old Testament, that is, the text in which the interplay of rhythm and passion had been so influentially demonstrated by Robert Lowth. The kind of rhythm Coleridge identified in these passages, however, was not that of parallelism or repetition, as Lowth had suggested, but something closer to classical verse. Coleridge states that 'taking the first chapter of Isaiah, without more than four or five transpositions & no alteration of words, he had reduced it to complete Hexameters – so true it is that wherever passion was, the language became a sort of metre' (*LL* 1: 223). Of course, he is writing here of the King James Bible and not the Hebrew original; the 'passion' of the translator, and not of the author. The way he develops this connection is also different from Lowth, who had merely stated that religious passion or 'enthusiasm' informed the poetry of the Old Testament. Coleridge, by contrast, also wished to prove his points experimentally. It is because of this quasi-scientific ambition that he registers the *effects* of certain passages on the reader, which (supposedly) call attention to 'hidden' rhythmical patterns in the prose text. As Tomalin reported,

> he found that in almost every passage brought before him, as having produced a particular effect,
> there was metre & very often poetry – not indeed, regular – not such as could be scanned on the

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[50] This difference with respect to metre is discussed by Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge's Poetics*, p. 137. See also p. 148: 'The poetic passion is different from ordinary passion in the way that poetic language engineers an artificially finished unity, "a severer keeping", within the open-ended and still growing medium of language.'

fingers – but in some cases fragments of hexameter verses, not like the line of Pope [...] – but regularly, of dactyls, spondees, forming sometimes a complete Hexameter verse – e.g.

$$\_ \ \_ \ / \ \_ \ \smile \ \smile / \ \_ \ \_ /$$

God went up with a shout, our

$$\_ \ \smile \ \smile / \ \_ \ \smile \ \smile / \ \_ \ \_$$

Lord with the sound of the trumpet

forming a line exactly similar with the first of Homer & Virgil. (*LL* 1: 223)[51]

The form of this argument highlights one of the most interesting and characteristic features of Coleridge's criticism: the fact that he tends to deal with poetic production and reception simultaneously. In this case he provides an explanation not so much for the origins of metrical composition, as for the readers' response to the (translated) text. His careful attention to the process of reading can also be witnessed in comments like the following: 'The very assumption that we are reading the works of a Poet supposes that he is in a continuous state of excitement and thereby arises a language, in prose unnatural but in poetry natural - ' (*LL* 1: 206). This suggests that poetic 'excitement' can also be thought of as an 'assumption' on the reader's part, which may be verified when it turns out to be 'reality', that is, when the reader recognises its signs in the language of the poem. This shows, I think, that the historical accuracy of the link between passion and metre is ultimately less important in Coleridge's criticism than the reader's self-realising assumption about it. The point seems to be that such an assumption should be borne out by the reading experience – it is needless to ascertain from any other source what the poet had felt while composing the text. For this reason, translations might be studied in the same way as original compositions.

Apart from the general connection between passion and metre, Coleridge as a reader seems to have 'assumed' other things as well. For instance, he adapted something like the divergence theory in order to account for the idiosyncrasies of metre in dramatic speeches. Kames had formulated this theory as follows: 'As no passion hath any long uninterrupted existence, nor beats always with an equal pulse, the language suggested by passion is not only unequal but frequently interrupted'.[52] Passion,

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[51] See also *SW&F* 202, 206; *CL* VI 945; *CM* V 690.
[52] *Elements*, 1: 496.

according to this, is manifested not so much in poetic metre as in the irregularities of actual rhythm ('we are only disposed to express the strongest pulses of passion, especially when it returns with impetuosity after interruption', writes Kames).[53] Interestingly, Lowth had endorsed this view as well, arguing that 'the most violent affections of the heart', to which the origin of poetry 'must be attributed', are expressed through sudden changes in rhythm and pace: 'they burst forth in sentences pointed, earnest, rapid, and tremulous; in some degree the style as well as the modulation is adapted to the emotions and habits of the mind.' Paradoxically, passionate language thus appears to be self-interrupting – 'these affections break and interrupt the enunciation of their impetuosity' – which means that the relationship between passion and its expression is inherently dynamic, where passion both triggers and interrupts its own 'enunciation'.[54]

The subtlety of this argument anticipates Coleridge, who describes the dynamism of verse with great accuracy, keenly aware of instances when irregularity may be seen as regular, and vice versa. In one of his marginalia, for instance, he discusses how the plays of Massinger 'might be reduced to a rich yet regular metre', if the reader observed 'Accent, then 2^{ndly} emphasis, and lastly, retardation & acceleration of the Times of Syllables according to the meaning of the words, the passion that accompanies them, and even the Character of the Person that uses them' (*CM* 1: 337). This, of course, is no easy task, and requires the kind of creative reading which is ready to grant certain assumptions about what the author was capable of, even before starting to read the text. Admittedly, Coleridge was not always as charitable as that, but with regard to Shakespeare he entertained no doubts. The general rule with Shakespeare seems to have been an 'involution of metre natural to the expression of passion' (*LL* 2: 122). 'Impetuosity of thought' is another key term, denoting a Shakespearean effect which Coleridge usually associates with *enjambment*:

> To distinguish what is *legitimate* in Shakespeare from what does not belong to him, we must observe his varied images symbolical of moral truth, thrusting by and seeming to trip up each other, from an impetuosity of thought, producing a metre which is always flowing from one verse into the other, and

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[53] *Elements*, 1: 496.
[54] Lowth, *Lectures*, 30.

seldom closing with the tenth syllable of the line – an instance of which may be found in the play of *Pericles*, written a century before, but which Shakespeare altered, and where his alteration may be recognized even to half a line; this was the case not merely in his later plays, but in his early dramas, such as *Love's Labour Lost*, the same perfection in the flowing continuity of interchangeable metrical pauses is constantly perceptible. (*LL* 1: 521)

While *enjambment* remains Shakespeare's signature way of conveying passion, the lack of it (what Coleridge calls 'intercurrent verse'), can also indicate certain states of feelings. Of *Richard II*, for instance, he observes:

The six opening Lines of this Play, each closing at the tenth syllable, to be compared with the rhythmless Metre of the verse in Henry 6th and Titus Andronicus [...] Here the weight of each *word* supplies all the relief afforded by intercurrent verse: while the whole represents the *Mood*. (*LL* 2:284)

In each play, the rhythm of the opening lines foreshadows the emotional tone of the whole. Similarly, each speaker's state of mind is revealed in the rhythm of his or her speech, as when the 'very rhythm expresses the conscious over-much in Lady M[acbeth]'s Answer to the King' (*LL* 2: 309), or in the 'impassioned continuity' of Hamlet's words, 'instantly directed to the Ghost' (*LL* 2:299). Coleridge's analysis of rhythm thus involves much more than metrical feet; it includes *enjambments*, breaks, caesuras, the distribution of words in lines, the interplay of all these, and more.[55] His discussions of transpositions, moreover, are closely related to the metrical analyses.[56] The basic assumption behind all these investigations is that subtle features of rhythm convey passion, and that in this respect they are analogous to involuntary gestures of the

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[55] One attempt to give a comprehensive account from the notebooks: "To understand fully the mechanism in order fully to feel the incomparable Excellence of Milton's Metre, we must make four Tables, or a fourfold Compartment: the first for the Feet, single & composite, for which the whole 26 feet of the Ancients will be found necessary; the second, to note the construction of the Feet, whether from different or from single words [...]. – The Third, of the strength and position, the concentration or diffusion of the *Emphasis*. Fourth, the Length and Position of the Pauses. – Then compare his Narrative with the Harangues. – I have not noticed the Ellipses, because they either do not affect the Rhythm, or are not Ellipses but comprehended in the Feet.' (*CN* III: 4190)

[56] See for instance his critique of Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*: 'the original ground of the metathesis of words is *passion* suggesting one idea before others [–] in Greek and Latin where there are cases, mere logic is sufficient [–] but with us where there are no cases (i.e. in all instances but pronouns) there must be a *passion* / and in such phrases passion must be supposed to have place for this purpose – because if there be any passion, it is that very passion which brought to the mind the trivial instead of a thought-created sentence – thus Othello – ["]Not a Jot! Not a Jot!["]' (*NS*: 118).

body. Lady Macbeth may be able to mislead the king, but the rhythm of her speech betrays her play-acting, like Viola's 'pause' or her subsequent 'conceit'.

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A connection between figures of speech and natural bodily gestures was suggested by the term 'figure' itself, a name 'to be applied to certain attitudes, or I might say gestures of language', as Quintilian put it.[57] But this connection became especially important for critics after Condillac who argued, on new philosophical grounds, that figures in poetry retained something of the immediacy of the bodily expressions of passion. This 'affective' rhetoric – as Tzvetan Todorov has called it – had its British counterpart in the new rhetoric of Kames and his followers, who assumed that passions 'justified' figurative language.[58] A closely analogous stance is also traceable in Coleridge, for instance in the following discussion from 1811, reported by Tomalin:

> all deviations from ordinary language must be justified by some passion which renders it natural. How ridiculous w^d it seem in a state of comparative insensibility to employ a figure used only by a person, only under the highest emotion – Such as the impersonation of an abstract being, and an apostrophe to it as it were not only in existence, but actually present (*LL* 1:271)

Following the Longinian tradition, Lowth and the new rhetoricians associated personification and the apostrophe with the highest states of passion. Apostrophe especially was the figure of enthusiasm and the sublime, often treated as the pledge of authentic passion, which was somehow beyond human capacity to imitate (at least in a convincing way). Joseph Priestley in his *Course of Lectures* wrote:

> Let no person venture to exclaim and apostrophize, unless the importance, as well as the goodness of his cause will justify it. These strong natural emotions are not to be counterfeited. To these *arcana of nature* it is hardly possible that *artifice* should have access; and if the circumstances and occasions of the address will not justify such vehemence of style, a man makes himself ridiculous by attempting the imposition. Besides, direct exclamations and apostrophes to

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[57] *Institutio Oratoria* IX, i, 13. See Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, pp. 66ff.
[58] *Theories of the Symbol*, p. 108. M. H. Abrams discusses the eighteenth-century connection between figures and passion in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, pp. 72-78.

persons not present, or to things inanimate, though ever so just, ought to be used very sparingly; since, if they produce their natural and full effect, they raise the attention to such a degree as cannot be kept up long.[59]

Priestley here, like Coleridge in 1811, appeals to a notion of 'justification' by passion, which legitimises the use of figurative language, identifying the apostrophe as a key rhetorical figure. His admonitions against using it without such justification, or in order to support morally questionable causes, are made in the context of pulpit oratory. Interestingly enough, Coleridge evokes the same context when he continues the 1811 lecture by mentioning a Methodist minister who 'in his prayer, at a loss for an idea, & when there seemed to be no natural connection, [...] would unite his thoughts by a new string of epithets applied to the Supreme Being – thus degrading the highest exertion of the human faculties to a mere art to give a pretence of connection where none exists (*LL* 1: 272).

In other writings too Coleridge refers to the use of apostrophe as a test case for judging poetic language, as in the *Biographia*, where he opposes John Donne's apostrophe to the Sun ('the legitimate language of poetic fervor self-impassioned') to the 'startling *hysteric* of weakness over-exerting itself [...] in sundry odes and apostrophes to abstract terms' (*BL* 1997, pp. 232-3). In an earlier note of Wordsworth, written possibly in joint preparation for Coleridge's first lecture series, we find a discussion of apostrophe in response to Hugh Blair, that is, to the most widely-read representative of the Scottish new rhetoric. Blair is quoted by Richard Payne Knight in his *Analytical Inquiry*, criticising a couplet from Pope's 'Eloisa to Abelard' ('O write it not, my hand – the name appears / Already written – wash it out my tears'). According to Blair, this is 'forced and unnatural': 'a personified hand is low, and not in the style of true passion; and the figure becomes still worse when, in the last place, she exhorts her tears to wash out what her hand had written'. Wordsworth (and/or possibly Coleridge) responds fiercely, condemning the 'stupid Scotch Doctor' who does not know that a hand might be 'apostrophized with dignity and genuine passion'. The argument from decorum (which would exclude 'lowness') is thus discarded. However, the rest of the note

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[59] *Lectures*, p. 113.

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expresses an opinion of Pope's lines quite close to that of Blair, not only in its judgment but also in the grounds on which it is made:

> The meanness of the passage lies in this that the <several> apostrophes are arise not from the impulse of passion; <they are not> abrupt, interrupted and revolutionary but formal, and mechanically accumulated. — The versification is also wretched in the Extreme, the pauses being exactly in the middle of the lines, utterly unsuited to the perturbed state of feeling intended to be express'd, and producing a see saw or balance of sound which could not have existed if the Author had written from genuine feeling passion, but which well accords with the adulterate spurious stud here substituted for it.' (*CM* 3: 404)

If anything, this comment expands and refines the critical theory that underlay Blair's remark. The annotator claims that passion may justify any kind of apostrophe, if only it is supported by other 'passionate' features of the text, above all, by its rhythm. It seems as if Blair's opponents here were pulling together numerous threads of eighteenth-century criticism, in order to produce a fuller and more coherent account of passion's poetic embodiment.

The example from Pope's 'Eloisa' is interesting because the text itself deals with bodily signs of passion, staging an extreme version of involuntariness where the body becomes as good as independent of the mind, while the mind still registers its movements. What is more, writing is claimed to be one of the involuntary activities (something that Coleridge might have found problematic), while the stylistic properties of the 'letter' itself display all the signs of voluntary control. In other words, the poem performs something other than what it states. It is typical of philosophical critics and of Coleridge in particular to spot such contradictions. As I have been suggesting, these critics were capable of dealing with 'performativity' through metaphors of bodily action; for them, it was perfectly intelligible to say that a certain text 'did' something, while it might have 'said' something else. What enabled them to do so was their assumption that the 'natural' movements of passion could be translated to the realm of arbitrary language. As Priestley stated, figurative speech indicated a person's state of mind

> not by means of the words it consists of, considered as *signs of separate ideas*, and interpreted according to their common acceptation; but as *circumstances* naturally attending those feelings

which compose any state of mind. Those figurative expressions, therefore, are scarce considered and attended to as *words*, but are viewed in the same light as *attitudes, gestures*, and *looks*, which are infinitely more expressive of *sentiments* and *feelings* than words can possibly be.[60]

I think it is safe enough to say that Coleridge advocated the 'naturalness' of figures in much the same manner as Priestley, stating that even the seemingly trivial figure of wordplay should be 'justified' by

> that Law of Passion which inducing in the mind an unusual activity seeks for means to waste its superfluity – in the highest & most lyric kind, in passionate repetition of a sublime Tautology (as in the Song of Debora) – and in lower degrees, in making the words themselves the subjects & materials of that surplus action, the same cause that agitates our very limbs & makes our very gestures tempestuous in states of high excitement/ (*LL* 1: 267).

This passage describes repetition (or tautology) and the pun as strictly analogous to bodily gestures expressive of passion. Coleridge's choice of example is again telling; as James Engell has pointed out, the new rhetorician Thomas Gibbon cited Deborah in a similar context, inspired by Robert Lowth's account of Biblical poetry.[61] According to Lowth, Hebrew poetry originated in the strong passions, above all, in religious enthusiasm, which led to such verbal effects as 'sudden exclamations, frequent interrogations, apostrophes even to inanimate objects; for, to those who are violently agitated themselves, the universal nature of things seems under a necessity of being affected by similar emotions'. But passion also led to simultaneous bodily effects; for, according to Lowth, every 'impulse of the mind' has 'a certain tone of voice, and a certain gesture of the body adapted to it'. For this reason, passion produces song and dance, as well as poetry: 'we may possibly be indebted to them [to song and dance] for the accurately admeasured verses and feet, to the end that the modulation of the language might accord with the music of the voice and the motion of the body'.[62]

In other words, poetry in its 'original' form might be considered as the 'natural' – and in part bodily – enactment of passion. Something like this is implied in Coleridge's remark on Deborah, in which he draws a parallel between bodily agitation

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[60] *Lectures*, p. 77.
[61] 'The New Rhetoric and Romantic Poetics', p. 224.
[62] 50-1.

and poetic figures. However, he is also keen to distinguish 'modern' poetry from its hypothetical ancient origins. While ancient poetry could be traced back to involuntary bodily action, modern poetry could, at most, be analogous to the self-conscious imitation of such action, for instance to the conventionalised body-language of the ballet or the pantomime. This might have been considered as a loss by some critics, but for Coleridge, it was a very important gain, because it loosened the ties between poetry and direct personal experience.

Coleridge's tendency to distinguish 'poetic Passion' from the immediate expression of feeling is most observable in passages where he is closest to his Enlightenment predecessors, that is, when he engages in conjectural history. He does not do so very often, but it is always significant when he does, as in the following passage from 1818:

> The (so called) Music of Savage Tribes as little deserves the name of Art to the Understanding, as the Ear warrants it for Music – . Its lowest step is a mere expression of Passion by the sounds, which the Passion itself necessitates – its highest, a voluntary re-production of those Sounds, in the absence of the occasioning Causes, so as to give the pleasure of *Contrast* – ex. gr. the various outcries of Battle in the song of Triumph, & Security.
>
> Poetry likewise is purely *human* – all its materials are *from* the mind, and all the products are *for* the mind. It is the Apotheosis of the former state – viz. Order and Passion – *N.b.* how by excitement of the Associative Power Passion itself imitates Order, and the *order* resulting produces a pleasurable *Passion* (whence Metre) and thus elevates the Mind by making its feelings the Objects of its reflection/ and how recalling the Sights and Sounds that had accompanied the occasions of the original passion it impregnates them with an interest not their own by means of the Passions, yet tempers the passion by the calming power which all *distinct* images exert on the human soul. (*LL* 2: 217-8)

Coleridge here takes for granted that 'savage music' and poetry were both born of the 'expression of Passion'; however, he also argues that the involuntary sounds of passion were superseded by their conscious re-production. It is worth noting the similarities of this account with Condillac, Herder, and even Godwin on language. According to them, arbitrary language evolved from the conscious, self-reflexive repetition of involuntary expressions of passion; in other words, man created signs out of mere symptoms. In Coleridge's opinion, savage poetry and music also *repeat* an original expression of

passion, 'in the absence of the occasioning Causes', and thus offer an opportunity for conscious reflection on it. But the gain secured by this transition is not merely intellectual. Passion, according to Coleridge, itself 'imitates Order', and 'by excitement of the Associative Power' (note the Brunonian and/or associationist vocabulary) produces metre, which, in turn, results in 'a pleasurable *Passion*'. In other words, what he describes is not the gradual disappearance of passion, but a 'calming' and 'tempering' of it through poetry and music: a modulation from the strongly personal towards the less personal, from the potentially painful towards the pleasurable.

It is clear from another note that Coleridge regarded Deborah's song as an example of the earlier 'savage' kind of poetry: 'There are men who can write most eloquently, and passages of deepest pathos & even Sublimity, on circumstances personal & deeply exciting their own passions; but not therefore poets – Mothers – Deborah's Song – Nature is the Poet here' (*LL* 1: 69). As this suggests, Coleridge's ultimate ideal of a poet is one who is not personally affected, but can still *imagine* the passions arising in deeply moving circumstances, and thus imaginatively recreate the 'language of nature'. In 1812, he contrasted Shakespeare who 'became Othello and spoke as Othello would have spoken' with Deborah, whose song

> was poetry in the highest sense; but he had no reason to suppose that if she had not been agitated by the same passion she ~~so~~ would have been able to talk in the same way – or that if she ~~were~~ had been placed under different circumstances, which she was not likely to be placed in she would still have spoken the language of truth. (*LL* 1: 310)

It is highly probable that Coleridge here is tacitly correcting Wordsworth, who cited Deborah's song in his note on 'The Thorn' – a lyrical ballad in which, as Alan Bewell has demonstrated, he uses 'Hebrew poetry as a model for writing an experimental primitive ballad aimed at dramatizing the primitive origins of poetry'.[63] 'Poetry is passion', Wordsworth wrote in the note, and it is as if Coleridge were eager to qualify this claim.[64] According to him, a poet must create a distance between him- or herself and

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[63] Alan Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1989), p. 171.
[64] He might also have wished to complement Wordsworth's account in the 1802 Appendix to the *Preface*:

the feelings represented – that is, poets must recreate the passion of an imagined 'other' (or of themselves, 'othered by time'). It is interesting, however, that while Coleridge denied Deborah the name of a poet, he was ready to call her song 'poetry in the highest sense', and to cite it again at the end of Chapter 17 of the *Biographia* as such. If this is not a simple instance of Coleridge changing his mind, we might conclude that, according to him, the historical Deborah was ultimately irrelevant to the reader whose aim was the appreciation of poetry, or rather, that she was relevant only in so far as her feelings could be imaginatively recreated from the text. The song was poetry, even if she was not a poet.[65] Some time around 1799 Coleridge himself had translated passages from Deborah's song, and it is intriguing to imagine that he might have considered translation in this case as a more truly 'poetic' – because more imaginative – activity than original composition.[66]

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The fault-lines and continuities that Coleridge established between passion and the self-conscious poetic imagination are nowhere so clearly discernible as in his comments on *King Lear*. Like a number of romantic critics, he evoked *Lear* repeatedly at crucial points of his literary criticism in order to illustrate the power of the imagination.[67] As James C. McKusick has noted, both in the lectures and in the *Biographia*, 'Coleridge's touchstone of imaginative discourse' is a passage from the

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'The earliest poets of all nations generally wrote from passion excited by real events ... feeling powerfully as they did, their language was daring, and figurative. In succeeding times, Poets ... perceiving the influence of such language, and desirous of producing the same effect without being animated by the same passion, set themselves to the mechanical adoption of these figures of speech...' *The Prose Works*, ed. by W. J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 1: 160.

[65] I suspect that this paradox followed from Coleridge's tendency to read the Bible both as literature and as a collection of inspired texts. For the second mode of reading, it was necessary to assume that the books recorded the spiritual experiences of flesh and blood people, according to their different characters, the conventions of their age and their social positions. At least this is what he argues for in the *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*.

[66] On the translation see McKusick, 'A new poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge', in *Modern Philology*, 84:4 (May 1987), 407-415.

[67] For an account of Hazlitt's interpretation of the play and a survey of other romantic critics, see W. P. Albrecht, 'Hazlitt, Passion, and *King Lear*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 18: 4 (Autumn, 1978), 611-624. Lamb's response to *Lear* is discussed in relation to the ideology of the sublime by Jonathan Arac in 'The Media of Sublimity: Johnson and Lamb on *King Lear*', *SiR*, 26: 2 (1987), 209-220.

play.[68] In the latter, he cites the second storm scene – 'What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?' – as well as Lear's 'preceding apostrophe to the elements', in the context of his discussion of the two binary pairs of imagination/fancy, mania/delirium (*BL* I 84-85). In a lecture note of 1808, the first storm scene of *Lear* had already exemplified Imagination:

> the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others, & by a sort of *fusion to force many into one* – that which after shewed itself in such might and energy in *Lear*, where the deep anguish of a Father spreads the feeling of Ingratitude & Cruelty over the very Elements of Heaven – . (*LL* I 81)

Read carefully, this passage offers more than a general assertion of imagination's blending power. In the sentence, power is distributed between two agents: imagination, which 'modifies' and 'forces many into one', and Lear's 'anguish', which 'spreads' human feeling onto natural phenomena. Similarly, it is either an 'image', or a 'feeling' which modifies all others, and in the case of Lear, it is – at least, directly – the latter that brings about the fusion. It seems that Coleridge is using two, vaguely parallel terminologies: imagination – feeling, images – feelings. In a lecture note of 1811, he writes of Passion in conjunction with Imagination, and mentions *Lear* once again:

> I have said before that Images tho' taken immediately from Nature & most accurately represented in words, do yet not characterize the Poet. – In order to do this, they must either be blended with or merged in, other images, the offering of the Poet's Imagination, by the Passion, by the specific modification of pleasurable Feelings which the contemplation of the Image had awakened in the Poet himself – [quotes from Sonnet 33] or by blending it with some deeper emotion, arising out of and consonant with the state or circumstances of the Person describing it – an effect which how true it is to Nature, Shakespeare himself has finely enforced in the instance of Love (113 Sonnet) – and of which we shall hereafter so many occasions to point out in his Lear &c, or at least with the poetic feeling itself, so that the pleasure of the Reader as well as the vividness of the Description is in part derived from the force and fervor of the Describer. (*LL* I: 243)

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[68] James C. McKusick, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language*, p. 103.

Imagination, here, has a complicated function that is evidently related to Passion, and to affect in general. Coleridge seems to say that the various natural images are blended either by the 'pleasurable Feelings' of the Poet himself, or by 'some deeper emotion' of the speaker, or 'at least' by 'the poetic feeling itself'. Paul Hamilton and others have rightly stressed the importance of the 'poetic feeling', that is, the fundamentally autonomous, 'self-impassioned' nature of poetry, so often asserted in Coleridge's criticism.[69] Unlike Deborah's passion, the 'poetic feeling' is 'pleasure' or 'excitement' that has no object or cause other than poetry itself; in this respect it resembles Kant's disinterested experience of beauty. However, in the lecture note Coleridge calls this 'latter excellence', taken by itself, 'the lowest indeed of a great Poet, but yet an excellence, characteristic & indispensible' (*LL* 1: 243). He rates those instances higher in which the feeling belongs to a speaker in the text who is either the poetic persona, or one of his characters. In other words, Coleridge in this note privileges a dramatic mode of representation, in which the general 'poetic feeling' is turned to the expression of a particular (albeit fictitious) 'passion'.

Coleridge's claim that 'the vividness of the Description' derives, in part, 'from the force and fervor of the Describer' resonates with much eighteenth-century philosophical writing. Specifically, it is close to Priestley, who had developed a critical theory with Hartley's associationism in mind.[70] His lectures establish a strong connection between vividness and passion, stating that our passions 'are engaged, and we feel ourselves interested, in proportion to the *vividness of our ideas* of those objects and circumstances which contribute to excite them'.[71] From this he concludes that poets who would like to affect their readers should supply as many particulars as possible, for passions, being 'blind and mechanical principles, [...] can only be connected with the view of suitable circumstances; so that, whenever these are presented, whether the passion would, in fact, be useful or not, it cannot fail to be excited, and to rise to its

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[69] Writing of the *Biographia*, Hamilton states: 'Poetry lets us feel the extent of our resources, but only gives us an ideal, imagined sense of these powers: what Kant describes as an aesthetic idea. [...] Poetry preserves its own identity, its own self, in its imagined integrity, distinct from nature, science or anything else.' Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge's Poetics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 62.

[70] David Miall connects Coleridge's concept of 'vividness' to Hartley (mentor of Priestley as well as Coleridge), in '"I see it feelingly"', pp. 159-60. He quotes Coleridge's note to Hartley: 'Ideas may become ... as vivid & distinct, & the feelings accompanying them as vivid, as original Impressions – And this may finally make a man independent of his Senses. – one use of poetry'. (*CM* 2: 959)

[71] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, p. 79.

usual height'.[72] Moreover, this connection works in both ways: on the one hand, vivid descriptions lead to a reality effect, which is necessary to excite the passions, and on the other, strong passions 'generate belief' in the reality of the related circumstances. '*Vivid ideas* and *strong emotions*, therefore, having been, through life, associated with *reality*, it is easy to imagine that, upon the perception of the proper feelings, the associated idea of reality will likewise recur'.[73]

Priestley emphasises the 'realistic' implications of this twofold connection: the necessity of supplying particular circumstances in order to evoke feeling. Coleridge in the above note stresses the other side of the equation: the way the describer's 'force and fervor' contributes to 'vividness'. The two nevertheless agree that 'poetic fervour' or passion does not merely enliven the described scene; its more important function is to transform the disparate elements and unite them in a newly coherent whole. This, of course, has been widely recognised as a key aspect of Coleridge's definitions of the imagination. It is perhaps less well-known that Priestley and other critics had described similar 'shaping' and 'blending' effects when they discussed how passion modified perception or cognition. In my view Coleridge's awareness of this tradition is unmistakeable. His example in the above quoted note is the passion of love, illustrated with Shakespeare's Sonnet 113:

> Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,
> And that which governs me to go about
> Doth part his function and is partly blind,
> Seems seeing, but effectually is out;
>
> [...]
>
> For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
> The most sweet favor or deformèd'st creature,
> The mountain or the sea, the day or night,
> The crow or dove, it shapes them to your feature.[74]

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[72] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, p. 80.
[73] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, p. 89.
[74] William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, ed. by Stephen Orgel (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 116.

Coleridge's reference to these Shakespearean lines as illustrating a law of 'Nature' – the 'shaping' power of passion, which the poem itself is a reflection on – is akin to Priestley's reference to 'the captivated lover', whose eyes transform the outside world. He mentions this after a philosophical description of the perceptual and cognitive errors caused by passion:

> This connexion of vivid ideas and emotions with reality, will easily furnish the mind with pretences for justifying the extravagance of such passions as love, gratitude, anger, revenge, and envy. If these passions be raised, though ever so unreasonably, they are often able, by this means, to adjust the object to their gratification. Besides, since, in consequence of almost constant joint impressions, all ideas are associated with other ideas similar to themselves, these passions, while the mind is under their influence, and as it were wholly occupied by them, will excite, in abundance, all such ideas as conspire with themselves, and preclude all attention to objects and circumstances connected with, and which would tend to introduce, an opposite state of mind.[75]

This argument is twofold: first, Priestley claims that strong passions are able to 'adjust the object to their gratification', in other words, they distort perception. Second, they 'excite' the kind of associations that support their tendency, and make the mind virtually blind to anything that would contradict it.

After having referred to what he calls the 'everyday fact of love' (which Coleridge found so worthy of examination in his private notebooks), Priestley, with a gesture characteristic of philosophical criticism, turns to literary examples, mostly from Shakespeare. One of his important illustrations is King Lear in the storm scenes. This is hardly surprising considering that in the discourse of philosophical criticism, Lear had been one of the most frequently discussed literary 'cases', which was thought to offer a rare insight into the workings of the mind. The storm scenes had been cited in Kames's *Elements of Criticism* to illustrate passion's irrational influence on thinking.[76] Following him, Alexander Gerard quotes Lear to show that 'under the influence of any passion, the difficulty is not to recollect the objects closely connected with it, but to

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[75] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, p. 92.
[76] 'Shakespear exhibits beautiful examples of the irregular influence of the passion in making us believe things to be otherwise than they are. King Lear, in his distress, personifies the rain, wind, and thunder; and in order to justify his resentment, believes them to be taking part with his daughters'. (*Elements of Criticism*, 1: 160) In a later chapter 'On Sentiments', *Lear* 3.5 is 'the first example [...] of sentiments dictated by a violent and perturbed passion'. (*Elements of Criticism*, 1: 456-7)

prevent their haunting him continually' – a close-enough description of what Coleridge calls mania.[77] James Beattie also evoked one of the storm scenes in order to show how ideas could be connected by a predominant feeling, claiming that Lear 'naturally breaks forth' into a 'violent exclamation against the crimes of mankind, in which almost every word is figurative'.[78]

Hugh Blair evokes *Lear* in his *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1765) with a similar rhetorical interest in mind. Discussing personifications and apostrophes in the poems (figures that 'have been, in all ages, the language of passion'), he notes a resemblance between an address to the moon and Lear's words to Edgar. He explains it by observing that the 'mind under the dominion of any strong passion, tinctures with its own disposition, every object which it beholds'.[79] Thus, instead of suggesting conscious imitation by Macpherson, he regards the analogy between the two passages as a proof of the 'naturalness' – and implicitly, of the authenticity – of *Ossian*. Indeed, *Lear* is a perfect example for the 'primitivist' Blair, set in a less civilised age or, in Doctor Johnson's words, an age of 'barbarity and ignorance', and based on a story which 'would be yet credible, if told of a petty prince of Guinea or Madagascar'.[80] Like Johnson, a number of eighteenth-century critics thought that the world of *King Lear* was dominated by primitive fears and superstitions.[81] For Blair, this meant that the play

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[77] *An Essay on Genius*, p. 151. See also p. 154: 'When any passion prevails in the soul, ideas strictly connected with that passion are in a continual readiness to rush into the thoughts on even the slightest occasion. Hence it is commonly observed that the most distant hint is sufficient to direct the imagination to an object which is congruous to the present disposition of the mind. We have a very natural and strong representation of this in Lear's grief and indignation on account of the unkindness of his daughters.'

[78] 'The fancy of a very angry man, for example, presents to his view a train of disagreeable ideas connected with the passion of anger, and tending to encourage it; and if he speak without restraint during the paroxysm of his rage, those ideas will force themselves upon him, and compel him to give them utterance. [...] Lear, driven out of doors by his unnatural daughters, in the midst of darkness, thunder, tempest, naturally breaks forth (for his indignation is raised to the very highest pitch) into the following violent exclamation against the crimes of mankind, in which almost every word is figurative.' James Beattie, *Essays: On Poetry and Music* (1779), (London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1996), pp. 245-6.

[79] In James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, ed. by Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996), 345-408, p. 393.

[80] Johnson's comment was reprinted in Isaac Reed's variorum edition of the play which Coleridge used for his 1811-12 series. *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Isaac Reed, 21 vols (London, 1813), vol 17, p. 611n.

[81] Reed's edition cites Warburton's extensive notes on Gloucester's superstition ('The persons in the drama are all Pagans ... [Shakespeare] with great judgement, makes these Pagans fatalists') and the arguments for and against Edmund's 'atheism'. (Reed, vol 17, pp. 343-4n; 332n, 334n) Coleridge takes up the latter issue in his notes on *Lear*, arguing that 'Both individuals and Nations may be free from superstitions by being below it as well as by rising above it.' (*LL* 2: 329)

offered (fictitious) evidence of a state of mind prior to the development of civilisation, displaying a language that abounded in figures, and especially in apostrophes, the figures of the most elemental passions.

Priestley does not associate Lear with pre-history; however, he does note that the irrational transfer of passions to inanimate objects is characteristic of young children, that is, of the savages of a civilised society.[82] Lear, 'exposed to a violent tempest, with his mind full of the ingratitude of his daughters, to justify his vexation and impatience, conceives [the elements] to have taken part with his daughters'.[83] His ridding himself of the 'lendings' of civilisation might thus be perceived as a regression to childhood, and certainly as a loss of rational control. Priestley is quick to point out the rhetorical consequences attending on such delusion, that is, the use of personification, which, in this case, is no artificial ornament but a symptom: 'This [speech] is perfectly natural, provided we can suppose his mind to have been so violently agitated as to personify, and feel real indignation against things inanimate, which [...] is perhaps oftener the real case than is commonly imagined.'[84] In his next lecture, he returns to *King Lear* to illustrate how passion can lead to faulty reasoning:

> It is a direct consequence of the association of ideas, that, when a person hath suffered greatly on any account, he connects the idea of the same cause with any great distress. This shews with what propriety Shakespeare makes King Lear, whose sufferings were owing to his daughters, speak of Edgar, disguised like a lunatic, in the following manner:
>
> What, have his *daughters* brought him to this pass?
> Could'st thou save nothing? Did'st thou give them all?[85]

Coleridge in the *Biographia* quotes the same passage to illustrate mania, the pathological state in which the mind connects all its perceptions with one obsessive thought.

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[82] *Course of Lectures*, p. 96. Cf. this with Wordsworth's note in Payne's *Analytical Inquiry*: 'What means all this parade about the Savage, when the deduction as far as just made may be made at our own fire sides, from the sounds words gesticulations looks &c which a child makes use of when learning to talk. But a Scotch Professor cannot write three minutes together upon the Nature of Man, but he must be dabbling with his savage state with his agricultural state, his Hunter state &c &c.' (*CM* 3: 402-3)
[83] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, p. 93.
[84] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, p. 93-4.
[85] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, p. 103.

Finally, Priestley returns once more to *Lear* when he discusses rhetorical devices that give the greatest pleasure to readers. As he explains, people are most interested in '*human sentiments, human passions*, and *human actions*', therefore he recommends authors to personify inanimate objects as often as possible. Personification, here, is discussed in the domain of the imagination and not in that of passion, that is, in the realm of art and not in that of nature – a distinction of consequence for Priestley. He argues that 'the relish for this figure must depend upon the liveliness of the imagination, which is extremely various in different persons, and indeed very variable in the same person'. From this he concludes that there are no precise rules as to the use of personifications: 'All that can be done is to note, by a regard to the general state and feelings of the human mind, the circumstances in which we imagine they will be generally judged proper or improper.'[86] The writer, then, should *imagine* the circumstances of proper use, which involves, above all, imagining the psychological assumptions of the reader. This suggests an intricate interplay between imagination and feeling or passion, which, however, turns into rivalry when Priestley once again cites *King Lear* for illustration:

> One observation, I think, is pretty obvious, that a long-continued personification is more natural when it is supposed to be the work of a lively imagination, than the mechanical effect of a strong and serious passion; and that it is of importance to preserve a distinction between these two kinds of personification. To some it may, perhaps, appear hardly probable, that a man who preserves the use of his senses should be really angry with a *tempest* so long, as was necessary to make the following speech, which Shakespeare hath put into the mouth of King Lear upon that occasion:

> > Rumble thy belly-full; spit fire, spout rain;
> > > Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters.
> > > I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness,
> > I never gave you kingdoms, call'd you children;
> > > You owe me no subscription. Then let fall
> > > Your horrible pleasure. – Here I stand your brave,
> > > A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.
> > But yet I call you servile ministers,
> > > That have with two pernicious daughters join'd

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[86] Together with previous quotation: Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, p. 251.

Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. Oh! Oh! 'tis foul.

<div align="right">Act II. Scene 3.</div>

It lessens the improbability (if there be any) of a man's being serious all the while, that the tempest, and consequently the provocation, was continued through the whole of it.[87]

The windings of Priestley's thought here point to a basic uncertainty at the heart of his reading of the play. I think that what he wants to say is that Lear's series of addresses to the elements are figures of passion ('mechanical' and 'blind'), rather than figures of the 'lively' imagination. The distinction is important for him, because it is meant to sustain the difference between voluntary and involuntary features of style, where the involuntary features are also dubbed as necessarily 'sincere'. Lear's personifications are figures of passion, in other words, they are unpremeditated, 'natural' consequences of his mental agitation. However, as Priestley argues, the rhetorical elaboration of passionate figures should not be carried on for too long, otherwise the whole speech would become mad, which would mean that the distinction between what is literal and what is figural would be irrecoverable. It seems that he does not want to allow this, which is why he insists that Lear's passionate apostrophes are to be read as a series of distinct reactions to repeated stimuli, during which Lear supposedly 'preserves the use of his senses'. Priestley's tone, however, betrays hesitation; I suspect that he cannot decide how far Lear actually has gone into delusion at this point of the drama, and therefore concludes that the interpretation depends on the reader's sense of probability.[88]

As this example reveals, in the discourse of philosophical criticism feeling or passion is in a characteristic double-bind. On the one hand, it is considered essential for poetry as it 'justifies' the use of figures, which otherwise would be deemed mere affectation. On the other, there is a constant sense that passion in poetry should be held in check by the conscious faculties, otherwise it might fail to excite sympathy and, by upsetting the distinction between literal and figurative language, might even threaten

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[87] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, pp. 251-2.

[88] An *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on 'Passion' also discusses the problem of delusion with respect to angry reactions, also quoting Lear in the storm (via Kames). See *Encyclopaedia Britannica; or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (Edinburgh, 1797), vol XIV, pp. 2-3 and 9-10.

representation as such.[89] The strong distinction between figures of passion and of imagination was Priestley's way of safeguarding the territory of passion (spontaneous, sincere) from that of the imagination (playful, self-conscious), and – on another level – the realm of sense and sanity from that of potential derangement. The Lear of the storm-scene, 'on the point of distraction', as Blair put it, is a figure marking out the boundary between those territories, while he also remains the most powerful, albeit paradoxical, figure of passion in this tradition. For Coleridge, Lear is 'the open and ample Play-Room of *Nature*'s Passions' (*LL* 2:330), exhibiting a Mariner-like lack of individual agency, while his speech is also a paradigmatic example of the conscious and voluntary power of poetic imagination.

This already suggests why Coleridge offers *Lear* as the chief example at once of pathological excess and of the imagination. Throughout his lectures, he refers to passion as the cause of figurative language (especially apostrophe) and of poetic metre, but it is not therefore the sufficient cause of poetry. As we have seen, his general view is that poetry recreates the effects of passion in the realm of the imagination. Lear's apostrophe is therefore neither simply a figure of passion, nor simply a figure of the imagination, but both at once: a figure of imagined passion. In other words, what Coleridge calls passions's 'stimulant' is used self-consciously by Shakespeare; its blind mechanism is harnessed for the purposes of art, and made observable as poetry. Since *Lear* represents for Coleridge the ultimate depths of passion, it must also represent the ultimate heights of the poetic imagination, which can both recreate and control passion's excess. Priestley could not arrive at this conclusion because he did not renounce his requirement of 'real' feeling, which alone could justify the use of the most sublime figures. He regarded the self-conscious reliance on 'fictitious' passion as essentially

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[89] Cf. Horace Walpole's comments on *Lear*, reprinted in Reed's *Variorum* edition: 'When madness has taken possession of a person, such character ceases to be fit for the stage, or at least should appear there but for a short time; it being the business of the theatre to exhibit passions, not distempers. The finest picture ever drawn, of a head discomposed by misfortune, is that of *King Lear*. His thoughts dwell on the ingratitude of his daughters, and every sentence that falls from his wildness excites reflection and pity. Had frenzy entirely seized him, our compassion would abate: we should conclude that he no longer felt unhappiness.' Quoted in Reed, vol 17, p. 477n. The same extract contains a comparison between Otway and Shakespeare, which, I think, was the direct source of Coleridge's examples of delirium and mania. Walpole writes that when '*Belvidera* talks of "*Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of Amber,*" she is not mad, but light-headed', which shows that 'Shakespeare wrote as a philosopher, Otway as a poet' (ibid). See Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto: A gothic story* and *The Mysterious Mother: A tragedy*, ed. Frederick S. Frank (Broadview Press, 2003), p. 254.

inauthentic: 'The effect of a real personification is a real passion; but an ideal, or *rhetorical personification*, presents only the *ideas* of thought, sense, and passion; which can never reach the *heart*. Those emotions can hardly be called real passions, which a person works himself into by the force of his own imagination.'[90] Coleridge's insistence that poetry should be 'self-impassioned' flies in the face of this assertion, establishing the fluid continuity, and not the separation, of the realms of passion and of the imagination. However, even as he develops the notion of poetry as founded on imagined passion, he is not oblivious to the disturbing implications of this. In an early notebook entry he wrote, 'Poetry – excites us to artificial feelings – makes us callous to real ones.' (*CN* 1: 87) From his comments on *Lear*, we might reconstruct another complication, namely that the effects of artificial 'stimulants' were not confined to the well-maintained realm of art, but had a tendency to become a threatening reality. In one sense, fictitious passion was also 'real', at least for Coleridge's reader of great sensibility, even though it had little to do with everyday life and experience.

A sense that fictitious passion might lead to actual fear or pain is written all over Coleridge's comments on *Lear*, suggesting that the distinction between 'artificial' and 'real' feeling might prove a tenuous one, after all. This might be seen as the result of a conscious rhetorical strategy on Coleridge's part to recreate the effects of the terrible sublime, which by definition threatened to erase the distinction between 'real' and 'imaginary' effects. But he also went a long way towards showing that he considered the threat serious enough. In one of his letters he referred to his lecture on *King Lear* in words that left no doubt about its importance: 'On Thursday the LEAR, the Δειvóτης, *La Terribilità* of Shakespeare's tragic Might – ! / Lie, great Tragedian, Shakespeare! lie alone.' (*CL* 4: 915) This is a strange advertisement for a lecture, performing as it does a gesture of laying the ghost of Shakespeare, rather than invoking it. The lecture it advertised, however, had to be postponed due to Coleridge's illness, which he called (in a letter to Southey) 'a sort of *ague-fit*' (*CL* 4: 916). The phrase must have been recognised by both Coleridge and Southey as a conscious echo from the same play of which Coleridge did *not* lecture, as if he had caught the disease in order to prove

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[90] Priestley, *A Course of Lectures*, p. 254.

Lear's dictum about not being 'ague-proof' (4.6.105).[91] This reference might well have been made with a hint of irony (although Coleridge's self-irony could also produce sublime effects), but there are other instances of his manoeuvring that single out *King Lear* as somehow beyond what a critic might hope to deal with. It is telling, for instance, that while he often returned to the play as a great example of Shakespeare's imaginative power, he never devoted an entire lecture to it except once, after which he declared that it was 'not a good subject for a whole lecture, *in my style*' (*CL* 4: 925). To my mind this suggests that *Lear* was best confronted in glimpses, that is, in a way that was most appropriate to the sublime.

In this sense, Coleridge's turning to the play was symptomatic of his lectures in general, which Peter J. Manning has associated with the effects of the sublime due to their famed intensity, but also to their breakdowns and fragment-like qualities.[92] It is perhaps inevitable that the most sublime play had to be, in Coleridge's reading, uneven and fragmentary. In a review of *The Monk*, written in 1796, he had asserted that poetry should 'trace the nice boundaries', as if from the inside, 'beyond which terror and sympathy are deserted by the pleasurable emotions' (*SW&F* 1: 59). In the 'Treatise on Method', he still maintained that Poetical Method 'requires above all things the preponderance of pleasurable feeling', and therefore it should overrule 'Psychological Method' wherever 'the interest of the events and characters and passions is too strong to be continuous without becoming painful' (*TM* 32). In the lectures, he had plenty of opportunity to emphasise that the origin and object of poetry was 'Pleasurable excitement', and therefore 'pleasure formed the magic circle out of which the Poet never dare attempt to tread' (*LL* 1: 207). But in the case of *Lear*, he suspected Shakespeare himself of breaking the rule. As he parenthetically remarked, in connection with Gloucester's sufferings: '(for I will not disguise my conviction, that in this one point the Tragic has been urged beyond the outermost Mark and Ne plus Ultra of the Dramatic)' (*LL* 2: 327) – an effect of tragedy loosened on the audience 'at large', leaving behind the

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[91] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by Kenneth Muir, The Arden Shakespeare, general editors Howard Jenkins and Brian Morris (London: Methuen & Co, 1972), p. 164.

[92] Manning, 'Manufacturing the Romantic image: Hazlitt and Coleridge lecturing', in James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin eds., *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 227-245, pp. 238-9. See also Seamus Perry, 'The Talker', in Lucy Newlyn, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to S. T. Coleridge* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 103-25, p. 107.

bounds of the dramatic form. More specifically, Coleridge wrote of the blinding scene: 'What can I say of this scene? My reluctance to think Sh. wrong – and yet – necessary to harmonise their cruelty to their father' (*LL* 2: 333). Coleridge again and again tried to justify this episode, but his revulsion was hard to silence.[93] He even stated that the excess of feeling to which the blinding scene contributed influenced the play's overall structure, in a manner that was not entirely to its advantage: 'In the three first acts [Shakespeare] carried human feelings to the utmost height; therefore, in the 2 following they seem to sink and become feeble: As after the bursting of the storm we behold the scattered clouds dispersed over the heavens.' (*LL* 2: 118) As if to counter this imbalance, Coleridge pays generally more attention to the second plotline (especially to Edmund's character) and to the distancing qualities of the play: the ways in which Lear's suffering is dispersed through repetitions and imitations in 'Edgar's false Madness', which takes off 'part of the Shock from the true, as well as displaying the profound difference' (*LL* 2:332), or 'the mimicry of the fool' (*LL* 1:212), which, however, both distracts from, and exacerbates, Lear's suffering ('as vinegar poured upon wounds' [*LL* 1:520]).

In all this we can recognise a strategy to draw a frame, as carefully as possible, in which to view the storm scenes, considered, no doubt, as the centre of the play. Characteristically, even when Coleridge writes directly of one of these scenes (Lear's encounter with Gloucester and Edgar on the heath), he still retains a distancing 'frame', by describing it as a picture or, generally, as a work of art. The effect of this strategy is that of infinite depths opening up within the play:

> What a World's *Convention* of Agonies – surely, never was such a scene conceived before or since – Take it but as a picture, for the eye only, it is more terrific than any a Michael Angelo inspired by a Dante could have conceived, and which none but a Michael Angelo could have executed – Or let it have been uttered to the Blind, the howlings of <convulsed> Nature would seem concerted in the voice of conscious Humanity – (*LL* 2: 333)

The 'language of nature' which lurks behind so much of Coleridge's criticism, emerges here at its most elemental: literally, as the 'cries of pain' which Condillac (or Godwin,

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[93] In an early note he has no doubts: 'Not to bring too horrid things like Gloucester's eyes on the stage [–] reprobate this notion – hysterical Humanité' (*NS*, p. 3); but later he considers 'the trampling out of Gloster's eyes' a scene 'of insupportable atrocity' (*LL* 1: 527-8).

for that matter) conceived as the source of all human language. What makes the scene especially 'terrific', that is, terrible, is its evocation of inarticulate, animal-like 'howlings' (to be compared with Lear's later 'Howl, howl, howl, howl!' [5.3.256], but also with his 'kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill' [4.6.185] and 'Never, never, never, never, never' [5.3. 307]).[94] Through these effects 'Nature' itself seems to speak in the play, in a language that harks back to the unaccommodated and the pre-verbal, although its voice is 'concerted' into the language of consciousness – a metaphor that collects all the main threads of Coleridge's speculations on passionate language in poetry.[95] I find it highly suggestive that the poem Coleridge seems to have associated with *Lear* – the *Ancient Mariner* – works with comparable effects of repetition ('Alone, alone, all all alone / Alone on a wide wide Sea'), and even with sheer 'noise' ('It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd') to recreate what he called the 'dramatic truth' of emotions evoked by the terrible sublime.[96]

Of course, one of the things the 'Rime' is famous for is its structure of frames. In the present context this structure can be understood as an example of Coleridge's characteristic treatment of the sublime, which is both intensified and circumscribed or regulated by the use of distancing devices. It is hardly accidental that one of his most suggestive comments on *Lear* as a sublime drama appears in a lecture note focusing on another play (*Troilus and Cressida*), in comparison with a third one (*Timon of Athens*). At this double remove, he offers a description of the play's effects wholly in the negative:

> But where shall we class the Timon of Athens? Immediately, below Lear. It is a Lear of the
> satirical Drama, a Lear of domestic or ordinary Life – a local Eddy of Passion on the High Road

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[94] Shakespeare, *King Lear*, p. 202; p. 170; p. 205.

[95] As a strange instance of textual instability, the word 'concerted' is reprinted in the *Marginalia* as 'concentered' (*CM* IV 824), whereas in Raysor's old edition of the lectures we find 'converted' (*ShC* [1960] I 59). What is even stranger is that all three readings might be supported from Coleridge's speculations, even though all of them have distinctly different implications. While 'converted' would point towards the process by which the language of passion is superseded by conscious repetition and turned into articulate speech, 'concentered' hints at the concentration that is essential to this process. 'Concerted', which I find most convincing, suggests that the sounds of passion are not eliminated from the language of the play, nor are they 'translated' into articulate speech without something left behind.

[96] This point was suggested to me by Andrew Bennett's description of the ways 'in which his poetry works against itself to privilege the very *noise* (that which cannot survive in writing) of a poetic voice'; see his *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1999), p. 117.

of Society while all around is the week-day Goings on of Wind and Weather – a Lear therefore without its soul-scorching flashes, its ear-cleaving Thunder Claps, its meteoric splendors, without the contagion & fearful sympathies of Nature, the Fates, the Furies the frenzied Elements dance in and out, now breaking thro' and scattering, now hand in hand, with the fierce or fantastic group of Human Passions, Crimes and Anguishes, reeling <on the unsteady ground> in a wild harmony to the Swell and Sink of the Earthquake. (*LL* 2: 376)

The long sentence which makes up most of this passage loses its way in a quintessentially sublime manner, overstepping the boundaries of the neat comparison it seems to establish. Through this remarkable rhetorical performance Coleridge manages to solve what appears as his own private paradox: a need to speak of *King Lear* while also somehow remaining silent about it. His solution is to turn to *Lear* by turning away from his declared subject matter, in a manner that is analogous to Lear's own apostrophe, the sublime instance of language born of passion. If Coleridge did perform this text (or something resembling its 'wild harmony') in front of an audience, he probably managed to convey the ultimate effect the rhetoric of passion was capable of: the illusion that it was not Coleridge the critic, but 'passion' itself that spoke to the audience. Charles Lamb asserted that of all Shakespeare's plays, *Lear* above all should not be performed on stage. In the twilight zone of the lecture theatre, in between the stage and the page, Coleridge might have found the only way to perform it in a way that Lamb himself might have found acceptable.

Chapter Three

Interrogating the rhetoric of passion:
Personification and the pun in Coleridge and the 'new rhetoricians'

> 'Il y a encore une certaine dignité manierée dans le geste et dans le
> propos, qui ne permet jamais à la passion de parler exactement son
> language, ni à l'auteur de revetir son personage, et de se transporter au
> lieu de la scene; mais le tient toujours enchainé sur le théatre, et sous
> les yeux des spectateurs.'
>
> (Rousseau)[1]

Both the new rhetoricians and Coleridge grounded their criticism of
Shakespeare's style in the assumption that there is some kind of correspondence
between states of passion and figures of speech. But what exactly is the nature of this
connection? The longer one looks at it, the more complicated it gets. Surely, there is no
one-to-one correspondence between figures and feelings, since neither rhetoric nor the
matrix of feelings is an unambiguous system. In what sense can we say that passions are
the 'cause' of rhetorical figures, and how far are they rather the effects of them? And,
supposing that we accepted that passion *is* in some way constituted by language, what
becomes of the model of expression, which so straightforwardly claims that there is a
pre-existing passion on the one hand, and its manifestation in language on the other?
What becomes of the notion of expression if it has to accommodate that of suppression
and concealment as well? These are some of the major concerns that Coleridge's
reworking of the criticism of the new rhetoricians makes us consider. In 1802, he echoed
their fundamental assumption when in a letter he wrote that 'every metaphor, every

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[1] Quoted in Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 2: 386n. 'Further, there is a certain affected dignity in gesture
and diction, which never allows passion to speak exactly its language, nor the author to enter his character
and transport himself to the scene of action, but keeps him ever in chains on the stage and under the eyes
of the Spectators.' Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or, The new Heloise*, transl. Philip Stewart and Jean
Vaché (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), p. 208.

personification, should have its justifying cause in some *passion* either of the Poet's mind, or of the Characters described by the poet.' (*CL* II 812) In his lectures on Shakespeare, he teases out some of the implications of this thesis, and arrives at conclusions quite different from his predecessors.

In the present chapter I am going to focus on these differences: I would like to trace how and why Coleridge transformed the new rhetoricians' notions of rhetoric and passion, and how he built his own philosophical criticism from what he found and what he could not find in their work. In this process of transformation, Coleridge calls into question many of their conclusions, especially when it comes to the criticism of a given passage in Shakespeare, while still retaining the main assumption of correspondence between figures and passion. His attempt is not to challenge the system of new rhetoric from without, but to make it more coherent, more true to the Shakespearean text and to 'human nature'. However, his proposed method of sympathetic reading, which judges of a given text according to the reader's 'actual experience' and not according to pre-established rules of rhetoric or the passions, led to an overall re-working of the previous system, which resulted not only in the elimination of contradictions, but also (somewhat more radically) in the overturning of pre-existing rhetorical categories. Clearly, Coleridge had something new to say about both rhetoric and passion; the chapter is intended to show how his insights into these two areas are related to each other, and what follows from their connectedness in his reading of Shakespeare.

In a lecture of 1811, Coleridge expressed his 'intention not to pass any of the important conceits in Shakespeare' (*LL* 1: 312). In the work of Kames and other new rhetoricians, we find a treatment of the most important rhetorical figures one by one (metaphor, simile, etc.), defining the conditions of their appropriate use, and discussing examples of each – very often from Shakespeare. Coleridge generally does the reverse: he discusses a play, and stops in order to call attention to a characteristic rhetorical figure, and to 'philosophize' it. But sometimes a particular figure is associated by him not only with a state of passion, but also with a figure in the sense of 'character'. Moreover, it seems as if these figures (like Lear and apostrophe) were 'figuring' some fundamental questions or dilemmas related to what he thought of as the language of

passion. Such figures therefore offer a way to tackle the questions concerning passion and expression I have mentioned above. In what follows, I am going to focus on two of these, each of which marks out a limit of the new rhetorical concept of passionate language. The first is the figure of Grief represented by Constance in Shakespeare's *King John* – the rhetorical figure related to her is personification, which has a special relevance to any discussion of the passions. The question posed by her speech for the new rhetoricians as well as for Coleridge concerns the limits of expression: are there passions beyond expression? The second figure is the pun, a side-issue for former critics, but central for Coleridge. It is most of all associated with Hamlet (although, as Coleridge is quick to point out, it is ubiquitous in Shakespeare) and the passions related to it are mixed and various: sometimes it is the sign, quite simply, of suppressed passion. The question raised by the pun concerns the limits of passion. In earlier criticism this figure had been treated as an anomaly, something like expression without feeling, but Coleridge reads it rather as the paradigmatic figure of passionate language, capable of accounting for feeling suppressed or even concealed by its linguistic sign.

Importantly, both personification and the pun are figures connoting materiality and embodiment, a feature that is crucial to the way they are perceived and theorized by Coleridge. In this respect, they bring into relief the capacity of language to give an 'outness' to thought, while at the same time still remaining its vital 'organ'. Throughout the lectures, Coleridge works from a conviction that 'words are the living products of the living mind' (*LL* 1: 273), and therefore they are inextricably linked with all mental operations, including passions and emotions. 'The word was not to convey merely what a certain thing is, but the very passion & all the circumstances which were conceived as constituting the perception of a thing by the person who used the word' (*LL* 1: 273) – he asserts, adapting a classical rhetorical formula ('passion' and 'circumstances') to the ends of his psychological concept of language.[2] In this context,

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[2] As Klaus Dockhorn states, Aristotle couples πάθη and ἦθη 'as the two means through which the speaker does not convince by reason but touches and moves the emotions'. This formula was translated and interpreted as 'passion' and 'mores', 'characters' or 'manners', among others. 'Circumstances' is a technical term related to the elusive ἦθος, and – as Dockhorn persuasively argues – is evoked together with *passion* in Wordsworth's *The Borderers* among others. Cf. Klaus Dockhorn, 'Wordsworth and the Rhetorical Tradition in England' (1944), transl. Heidi I. Saur-Stull, in Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence C. Needham, eds., *Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis:

rhetoric may be viewed in two distinct ways: on the one hand, as a system of conventional expression, which is external to the 'real' movements of thought, but on the other, as a producer of figures that are 'natural' to the mind, giving form to those very movements in speech. Both views are present in Coleridge's criticism: he makes references to conventional forms of expression (for instance, to the fashionable use of conceits in Shakespeare's time), but he is also very alert to the 'naturalness', in some cases even the 'inevitability', of rhetorical embodiment. Figures of rhetoric, passion, and the body, will be the main concepts of this chapter, therefore I begin by introducing the relationship between them as it emerges in Coleridge's criticism.

1

In his lectures, Coleridge simultaneously paid tribute to Shakespeare and criticised modern poetry on grounds very similar to those of Kames and other new rhetoricians. As he asserted in 1811, 'all deviations from ordinary language must be justified by some passion which renders it natural' (*LL* 1: 271). Modern poets cannot achieve naturalness because they fail to observe this rule, whereas the earlier English authors were well aware of it. Apart from Shakespeare, Milton too managed to naturalize 'deviations' of rhetoric into fine poetry, since he was willing to observe the 'law of passion'. This latter phrase of Coleridge's has scientific connotations, some of which were already spelt out by earlier critics who treated the principle of association (underlying the mechanism of passionate language) as corresponding to the 'laws of nature' and likened it to gravitation. At the same time, phrases like 'justification' and the observing of 'laws', so prominent in the new rhetoricians, also evoke a legal discourse. In Coleridge, this can be detected almost everywhere, from his early remark to Sotheby to his 1812 lecture on Milton. Milton, he said,

> subjected his style to the passions -- bending and accommodating itself alternately from the slow
> thinking and reflecting movement, to the hurrying step of revenge, the stately proclamation of
> pride, and the equal course of immovable courage (*LL* 1: 402).

Indiana UP, 1995) 265-280, p. 267; 270. In the lines quoted above, Coleridge seems to use 'passion' and 'circumstances' as complementary aspects of emotional perception.

Here, the passions are represented as law-givers to which Milton's style is 'subjected', but interestingly, this process also produces the 'subjects' of Milton's poem. These poetical subjects, in turn, are reinterpreted by Coleridge as the passions themselves: 'revenge' and 'pride' and 'courage'. Passions, then, both govern Milton's style, his rhetoric, and evolve from it as agents represented in his poetry. Indeed, the two are hard to disentangle; Milton's style is subjected to its subject: passion. Coleridge himself participates in the rhetorical 'figuring' of passions when he refers to their physical attributes ('hurrying step', 'stately proclamation', etc.), with recourse to personification. This technique, which makes passion the subject of poetry, while also making it a 'subject' by personifying it, is familiar from the eighteenth-century poetic tradition, and is the master trope of poems like Collins's ode 'The Passions'.[3] What can be witnessed in both Collins and Coleridge is the intention of depicting inner psychological processes, together with the necessity of having recourse to images of the body, of movement and of rhythm, while doing so. Passion is as strongly bound up with the body, as it is with rhetoric.

The conjunction between passion and embodiment can also be detected in Milton's famous dictum that poetry is 'simple, sensuous, and passionate', a phrase which in Coleridge's hands was turned into a prescription and a touchstone whenever he spoke of good and bad poetry. In the above-quoted tribute to Milton, for instance, he clearly applied these very criteria to the poetry of their inventor: he emphasised both the 'passionate' and the 'sensuous' – what I simply call the 'embodied' – aspect of Milton's style. On other occasions, he glossed the three adjectives more extensively.[4] In 1813, the *Bristol Gazette* reported the following:

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[3] 'The Passions oft; to hear her shell, / Throng'd around her magic cell, / Exulting, trembling, raging, fainting / Possest beyond the Muse's painting'. (Collins: 'The Passions: An Ode to Music', 3-6) The poem is very important for Coleridge, as can be seen from the echoes of it in 'Kubla Khan'.

[4] Milton's phrase was cited in lectures of 1808, 1811-12, 1813 and in the 1814 essay 'On the Principles of Genial Criticism'. A note from 1808 highlights its importance: 'Speaking of Poetry, he [Milton] says (as in a parenthesis) which is – "simple, sensuous, passionate." – how awful is the power of Words! – fearful often in their consequences when merely felt not understood! but most aweful when both felt and understood! Had these three words only been properly understood, and present in the minds of general Readers, not only almost a Library of false Poetry would have been either precluded or still-born, but what is of more consequence, works truly excellent, and capable of enlarging the understanding, warming & purifying the heart, and placing in the centre of the whole Being the Germs of noble & manlike Actions, would have been the common Diet of the Intellect instead.' (*LL* 1: 139)

> To judge with fairness of an Author's works, we must observe firstly, what is essential, and
> secondly, what arises from circumstances. It is essential, as Milton defines it, that poetry be
> *simple, sensuous,* and *impassionate – Simple,* that it may appeal to the elements and the primary
> laws of our nature: *sensuous,* since it is only by sensuous images that we can elicit truth as at a
> flash: *impassionate,* since images must be vivid, in order to move our passions and awaken our
> affections. (*LL* 1:515)

Coleridge here uses an entirely psychological framework to define criticism, focusing on the psyche of the reader. The aim of poetry is to make readers perceive truth 'as at a flash' (i.e. not analytically) and to 'move our passions and awaken our affections.' Both can be achieved by an appeal to the senses, to the passive and receptive in human nature (in the *Biographia,* the 'sensuous' is associated with passivity).[5] Sensuous 'vivid images' awaken passions, and themselves may be the products of passion, as eighteenth-century moral philosophy asserted. eighteenth-century new rhetoricians like Priestley, in turn, claimed that the power of creating 'vivid images' in language belongs to rhetoric. Their stance, however, had its own ambivalence, since their endeavour sprang from a need to move beyond traditional rules and concepts of rhetoric.

As noted by literary historians, the work of the new rhetoricians fits into a larger pattern of moving away from rhetoric towards poetics, even in their very attempt to 'justify' rhetorical figures on a psychological basis.[6] Coleridge's criticism takes one step further in this direction, but he does not efface rhetoric altogether. His attitude might be described in the words of J. Douglas Kneale as that of 'romantic aversion': a simultaneous turning away from and turning towards rhetoric, in order to make it work in new ways.[7] Coleridge's extensive reliance on Milton's three words from 'Of Education' is significant in this context too: in the treatise, Milton proposes poetry to be the final, crowning achievement of education, preceded only by the study of rhetoric (the

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[5] See Coleridge's discussion of 'sensuous' as opposed to 'sensual', 'sensitive', and 'sensible' in *BL* 1: 171-2.

[6] Ian Thomson diagnoses 'a confusion between rhetoric and poetic' in their work, see his 'Rhetoric and the Passions, 1760-1800', in *Rhetoric Revalued: Papers from the International Society for the History of Rhetoric,* ed. by Brian Vickers (Binghamton, New York: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), 143-148, p. 145. Cf. also Neil Rhodes, 'From Rhetoric to Criticism', *The Scottish Invention of English Literature,* ed. Robert Crawford (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 22-36.

[7] See Douglas Kneale, *Romantic Aversion: Aftermaths of Classicism in Wordsworth and Coleridge* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1999), p. 4.

easier subject of the two), '[t]o which Poetry would be made subsequent, or indeed rather precedent, as being lesse suttle and fine, but more simple, sensuous and passionate'.[8] On the one hand, Milton here clearly establishes the worth of poetry by comparison with the 'suttle and fine' (i.e., *thin*) rhetoric: poetry is of a higher value because it is fuller, one might say, more embodied. On the other hand, however, he asserts that its teaching must rely on a previous familiarity with rhetoric, hence the hesitation between 'subsequent' and 'precedent'. As I would like to show, Coleridge inherits from Milton not only the privileging of poetry but also the reliance on rhetoric in his lectures. He transforms or even displaces rhetorical conventions, but their traces are preserved throughout his criticism.

'Strong Passions commend figurative Language & act as stimulants' (*LL* 1: 86), Coleridge wrote in 1808. At this point in his notes, we find a series of epigrammatic statements about criticism and poetic language, all of which will be developed later on in the lectures. Following the quoted remark, there is a reminder: 'German bad Tragedies ridiculed – in which the Dramatist becomes a Novellist *in his directions to the actors*, & degrades Tragedy to Pantomime.' (*LL* 1: 86) The link with the preceding note is, very probably, that in bad tragedies (e.g. in Kotzebue), the strong passions are not expressed through adequate figurative language, the dramatist instead – in the manner of the sentimental novelist – 'tells' the actor how (s)he is supposed to feel, so the actors, through lack of any other means, convey the feeling through movements. These are the plays Coleridge ridicules in 1811, which are 'so well acted & so ill written that if the auditor could have produced an artificial deafness he would have been much pleased with the performance as a pantomime.' (*LL* 1: 351) This is clearly sarcastic, but remarks made elsewhere reveal that Coleridge accepted the possibility that movement – and especially dance – can produce the highest pleasure and *move* the spectator (to echo a rhetorical term, *movere*). Discussing different degrees of stage illusion, he mentions the 'mere dance at an Opera which is yet capable of giving us the highest pleasure, & which, with music & harmonious motions of the body, can, by thus explaining some tale, deeply affect and delight an audience' (*LL* 1: 227). In this respect Coleridge goes

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[8] Milton, 'Of Education' in Ernest Sirluck, ed., *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Vol 2 (1643-1648), (New Haven: Yale UP, London: OUP, 1959), 362-415, p. 403.

along with the spirit of the age in which such non-verbal forms as the pantomime, the ballet, or the melodrama (initially, musical drama with little or no speech) rose to prominence in the theatres.[9] Nevertheless, he believed that the artistry of the poet requires that he be able to re-create such 'movements' in language, through the dance of figures of speech. The rules of the figures are provided by the 'strong Passions', which are here (as elsewhere) regarded as a cause of sorts, though not necessarily a sufficient cause: they merely 'commend' the use of figurative language. The nature of this causation is made even more problematic by Coleridge's other word, 'stimulants', which – as I have attempted to show in the previous chapter – was linked in his thinking to both an involuntary, visceral reaction and to the possibility of conscious artistic control.

2

In his opening lecture of 1811, Coleridge returned to the theme of modern drama and its emphasis on movement, and contrasted it with Shakespeare's figurative language. In his notes for the lecture, he mentions a specific example: 'Shakespeare's Constance/ & a Mother in real life – yet how many have declared the first unnatural - & admired the remote Silence of a German Tragedy, consisting of directions to the *actors* – ' (*LL* 1: 187). From these few lines, it is not quite clear why Coleridge refers to the character in *King John*, or indeed why this has anything to do with rhetoric, but luckily the full argument is recorded in Collier's report of the lecture. Speaking of the 'Causes of False Criticism', Coleridge mentioned readers who 'did not exert their own abilities' but 'took for granted the opinions of others', and told the following anecdote:

> This had been the case with a friend of his who observed to him that he did not think Shakespeare had made Constance in King John speak the language of nature where she said on the loss of Prince Arthur
>
> Grief fills the room [up] of my absent child
> Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me
> Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words

[9] Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004) pp. 79-80.

> Remembers me of all his gracious parts
>
> Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;
>
> Then have I reason to be fond of grief?

> Within three months after he had made this remark the friend died. Coleridge went to see his mother an ignorant tho' amiable woman who had scarcely heard the name of Shakespeare much less read him. Coleridge like King Philip in the Play alluded to, attempted to Console her & in reply in the bitter anguish of her grief she uttered almost a parody on the language of Shakespeare employing the same thoughts & a little varied in the phraseology. (*LL* 1: 192-3)

Coleridge here translates a critical debate into the private sphere of friendship and domesticity, as he often does when he wishes to project himself as a 'critic of feeling'. But this does not diminish the theoretical importance of his comment, for Constance's speech (*King John*, 3.4.93ff) had been a matter of critical discussion for decades. Coleridge, in fact, might have assumed that some members of his audience were aware of this. In his *Elements of Criticism*, Lord Kames cites the same passage from *King John* as especially artificial, unnatural – and therefore faulty. Like another speech in *Richard III* (4.4.9ff), it was 'undoubtedly in a bad taste'. This was so not simply because of the rhetorical devices used by Shakespeare, but because of the discrepancy between his rhetoric and the passion that was to be conveyed. For Kames, in both of these texts, '[i]magery and figurative expression are discordant, in the highest degree, with the agony of a mother'; the characters employ 'language too light or airy for a severe passion'.[10]

Coleridge's 'friend', then, might be imagined as having read some Kames. But he might as well have read any of a number of critics influenced by Kames, including the author of the article on 'Passion' in the 1797 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, who quoted Kames's opinion in full.[11] As we have seen, Joseph Priestley reiterated several of Kames's points in his *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, and he repeated this example too. As for Kames, Priestley's main criterion of judgement is the correspondence between passion and style. Writers who do not really feel the passions

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[10] Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Elements of Criticism*, 2 vols (London: Routledge, Thoemmes Press, 1993) 1: 513-4 (Chapter XVII on the 'Language of Passion').

[11] *Encyclopaedia Britannica; or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (Edinburgh, 1797), vol XIV, 13 B. Cf. *SW&F* 2: 1451n.

they describe, cannot be 'masters of the natural expression of them', so they often make characters 'under the influence of a strong emotion or passion, speak in a manner that is very unsuitable to it.'[12] Sometimes, instead of expressing a passion, they seem rather to be describing it. This 'impropriety', as Priestley calls it, is most characteristic of French dramatists. Yet,

> Even our Shakespeare himself, though no writer whatever hath succeeded so well in the language of the passions, is sometimes deserving of censure in this respect; as when Constance, in King John, says to the messenger that brought her a piece of disagreeable news,

> > Fellow, be gone, I cannot brook thy sight:
> > This news hath made thee a most ugly man.

> The sentiment and expression in the former line is perfectly natural, but that in the latter resembles too much the comment of a cool observer. Of the same kind, but much more extravagant, is the following passage, which is part of the speech of Constance, giving her reasons why she indulged her grief for the loss of her son.[13]

And Priestley goes on to quote the same lines as Kames, and as Coleridge in his lecture.

Coleridge, then, could be thinking of Priestley, Kames, or some other critic influenced by them, when he offered the anecdote. But he repudiated their critical mistake in an odd manner. Did he expect his audience to really believe his story? Or was it a cautionary fable, devised to illustrate the fate of 'false criticism' which involved nothing less than the death of its practitioner? At any rate, it offers a rhetorical solution to a theoretical problem: Coleridge strengthens his point by telling a story, supposedly from real life, with a strong emotional impact. He offers thereby something like experimental proof of his theoretical thesis, a gesture that may be seen as emphasising the strong link he forges between reading and lived experience. Like other philosophical critics', however, Coleridge's 'experiment' consists of a fictitious narrative. It is notable, moreover, that he usually resorts to such solutions, and especially to stories about some 'friend', when he has reasoned himself into a paradoxical position. The most famous

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[12] Lecture XIV ('Of the Influence of the Passions on each other, and other Circumstances relating to strong Emotions of Mind'), Joseph Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent M. Bevilacqua and Richard Murphy (Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1965), p. 103.
[13] Priestley, *Lectures*, p. 104.

example is the letter in Chapter 13 of the *Biographia*, but there are other instances as well.[14] In this early case too, the 'friend' is a figure covering but also calling attention to contradictory tendencies in Coleridge's critical discourse. The general question he addresses here is, on what authority the reader can decide whether a specific passage is the 'true' language of passion or not. His answer involves the rejection of previous critical authority, more specifically, that of Kames and Priestley. But what he proposes instead is not without its own contradictions.

In *Elements of Criticism*, Kames's method was first to define the main characteristics of the passions (through introspection), followed by the main features of each major rhetorical figure, and then to compare the two in a given passage to see whether they coincide or not.[15] As opposed to this, Coleridge suggests a more direct method in the same lecture: readers should be 'really *thinking* – really referring to [their] own inward experiences' (*LL* 1: 187). This approach is much more flexible: it enables the reader to differentiate between infinitely subtle shades of feeling, while Kames's method required him to focus on a few major types of passion (grief, terror, etc.). Coleridge also manages to eliminate a fundamental circularity in Kames's critical practice: his reader had to identify first the 'passion' expressed in a certain text from the evidence of the text itself, and then (s)he had to judge whether or not the text is an adequate expression of the passion. Coleridge shortcuts this by recasting the reader not only as a critic who 'understands' but also as someone who 'experiences'. If readers refer the text directly to their 'own inward experience', then the passage evokes a subjective response simultaneously with the unfolding of its verbal structure. This makes the question of critical judgement so straightforward that it becomes almost superfluous; this is why 'sympathetic criticism' in Coleridge supplants the 'beauties and faults' approach of Kames and his colleagues.

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[14] In the *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, for instance, there are more 'friends' representing different critical stances to the Bible, which are all important for Coleridge, but from all of which he wants to distance himself.

[15] B. I. Manolescu argues that the 'practice of criticism in *Elements*, in contrast, involves making arguments based upon so-called universal principles of human nature [...]; these principles validate critical judgement. One would only need an acquaintance with the principles of human nature to practice this criticism. Given that for Kames these principles are discovered primarily through introspection, one may need not go far to acquire the requisite knowledge.' Manolescu, 'Traditions of Rhetoric, Criticism, and Argument in Kames's *Elements of Criticism*', *Rhetoric Review*, Vol 22, No 3 (2003), 225-242, p. 236.

So far, Coleridge's critical strategy appears to be straightforward and consistent. However, problems begin if we consider how direct 'inward experience' can be used in making public critical judgements, for instance, in the lecture theatre. In the very passage where Coleridge recommends grounding criticism in interiority, he offers as evidence an anecdote which is nothing if not external. Instead of referring to his own *inward* experience, he provides a story of a supposedly real mother in real grief, who repeats Constance's words. Through this fiction, Coleridge revives Constance as the dead friend's mother, in order to make her bear witness to Shakespeare's mastery, as if in an imagined courtroom. My argument is that this rhetorical 'trick' is inevitable. It is the same strategy that we have witnessed in Coleridge's praise for Milton: in order to speak of passion as a principle that governs language, he needs to personify it, to clothe it in flesh and blood, which is the work of rhetoric. The moment Constance is effaced and substituted by an impersonal force behind language, a second 'Constance' must appear to utter her words. 'Passion is speaking': this prosopopeia – so powerful in the case of Coleridge's *King Lear* – lurks everywhere in the criticism of the new rhetoricians, making it (to use a term revived by recent criticism), a *pathopoeia*.[16] Through the example of Constance I would like to show that Coleridge acknowledges the voice of passion even where earlier critics had considered it to be silent. This means that even though he might appear at times to collapse rhetoric into the notion of sympathetic reading, what he does in fact is to expand the scope of the 'rhetoric of passion' beyond the rules of the new rhetoric.

Kames's system contained an inherent contradiction, characteristic of late-eighteenth-century rhetoric in general. It is summed up conveniently by Ian Thomson in his article 'Rhetoric and the Passions, 1760-1800': 'rhetoric is, according to one major definition, the art of persuasion, and one of its resources is to move its audience, and figurative speech assists this end: on the other hand, genuine passion is

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[16] The term has been used by Adam Potkay in connection with Hume's personification of the passions in the *Natural History of Religion*. See Potkay, *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 174.

supposed *not* to resort to figures, which are now seen as artifice'.[17] This contradiction – which will haunt Romantic thinking as well – appears in Kames's criticism in the form of a characteristic asymmetry. He believes that there are basically two kinds of passion: those that are favourable to (figurative) expression, and those that are not. In other words, there is a natural rule or limit determining what feelings can and what feelings cannot be expressed. The terrain of inexpressible emotion is reigned over by grief: 'A man immoderately grieved seeks to afflict himself, rejecting all consolation: immoderate grief accordingly is mute'.[18] But there are other mute feelings too: 'Surprise and terror are silent passions for a different reason: they agitate the mind so violently as for a time to suspend the exercise of its faculties, and among others the faculty of speech'. After all, it seems that Kames considers all excessive feeling as tongue-tied: 'Love and revenge, when immoderate, are not more loquacious than immoderate grief'.[19] But not quite. The dividing-line is drawn according to the strength of the passion, but also according to its general tendency, whether it is a positive or a negative feeling. The two criteria are not entirely separate, for excessively strong passions are bound to be unpleasant. Therefore, 'figures are not equally the language of every passion: pleasant emotions, which elevate or swell the mind, vent themselves in strong epithets and figurative expression; but humbling and dispiriting passions affect to speak plain'. And again, figurative language 'cannot be the language of anguish and distress'.[20]

The division between figuratively expressible and mute feeling had been established by earlier rhetoricians and moral philosophers. Seventy years before Kames, in 1692, John Dennis had claimed that 'no sort of imagery can be the language of Grief'.[21] As Martin Kallich explains, Dennis believed that '[g]rief constricts the mind and fixes it upon a single object; therefore figures of speech would be entirely unnatural

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[17] Thomson, 'Rhetoric and the Passions, 1760-1800', in Brian Vickers, ed., *Rhetoric Revalued: Papers from the International Society for the History of Rhetoric* (Binghamton, New York: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), p. 144.
[18] *Elements of Criticism*, 1: 494.
[19] *Elements of Criticism*, 1: 495.
[20] *Elements of Criticism*, 1: 497; 498.
[21] *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. E. N. Hooker (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939-43), 1: 424. Quoted in Martin Kallich, *The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England: A History of a Psychological Method in English Criticism* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1970), p. 38.

because they show the mind in motion'.[22] Hobbes in his 'Preface to the *Passion of Byblis*' rejects, more specifically, simile as the natural expression of distress (Kallich suggests that Dennis borrowed the idea from him). Kames and Priestley still consider simile, like allegory, unnatural in the highest states of passion, for the same reasons outlined by Hobbes. That is,

> allegories, in common with comparisons, imply a considerable excursion of the mind from the principal object of its thoughts; and therefore, though a man in the greatest agitation of mind would not refuse a metaphor, he may easily be supposed to have his thoughts so much engaged as not to be at liberty to attend so particularly to a foreign object, as is necessary in order to note *many points of resemblance*, and make an allegory. Allegories, therefore, as well as comparisons, are the language of men tolerably composed, or only moderately elevated.[23]

Priestley here is more generous than Dennis, allowing metaphor to 'slip by' as natural to states of the highest passions. The new rhetoric, after all, was based on the notion that the natural language of passion was figurative. But we can also see why Constance's speech on her Grief was doomed to be considered a 'blemish' even by the new rhetoricians.

The speech contains an extended metaphor, that is, an allegory, in which 'many points of resemblance' are indeed established between Grief and Constance's absent son. Grief first merely 'fills the room up', like a formless presence, but soon it starts to acquire a human form: it behaves like a human being ('Lies in his bed'; 'walks up and down'), acquires the face of the son ('Puts on his pretty looks'), and, completing the prosopopeia, it speaks ('repeats his words'). In the end, Grief is fully 'embodied' as the absent figure of the son ('Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form'). This string of rhetorical manoeuvres is based on the representation of Grief as an agent. As we have seen, personification of the passions was widespread, if not stale, by the eighteenth century; Priestley, for one, saw 'no difficulty in the personification of passions, qualities, and other things of an abstract nature'. In fact, he believed that this was inevitable, for 'we can hardly select a sentence but a lively imagination might find in it some hint for

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[22] Kallich, p. 38. (He also notes that the idea is present in Dryden and Boileau, among others).
[23] Priestley, *Lectures*, p. 195.

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personification'.[24] But these are 'slight and momentary' figures; by contrast, a character in a state of strong passion (like *Lear*), can only use 'serious' personifications; if the figure is to be accepted, he or she should be so deluded as really to believe that (s)he is talking about, or addressing, something animate. In other words, personification must be meant *literally*, otherwise it can only occur as 'the exercise, or rather the *play*, of a mind at ease'.[25] 'Play' (and, as we shall see, play on words) is for the new rhetoricians incompatible with tragic language. There are a number of reasons, then, why Constance's speech had to be condemned as 'unnatural'. The figures are extended and too elaborate, the main personification is not 'serious' but self-consciously figurative. Beyond all these reasons, there is the deeply-rooted conviction that grief involves stasis in the mind and silence in rhetoric. In those moments, association stops. The true language of grief is silence.

When Coleridge proposes that Constance's speech is 'natural', he pushes back the limits of rhetoric and revises earlier psychology at the same time. As for rhetoric, he does away with the pre-established classifications and rules of the figures, which constricted Kames and Priestley. He no longer views personification (or allegory, simile, etc.) as an artifice that can be used only by the tranquil, rational mind – but as a figure that can be recognized as natural even in the most extreme states.[26] He is enabled to make these changes by a revised concept of criticism, which he perceives no longer as an application of rules (even if those rules have been derived from psychological speculation), but as progressive 'reading': a reflection on the experience of the text. Chapter 18 of *Biographia Literaria* elaborates on this point from the poet's perspective:

> By what *rule* that does not leave the reader at the poet's mercy, and the poet at his own, is the latter to distinguish between the language suitable to *suppressed*, and the language, which is characteristic of *indulged*, anger? Or, between that of rage and of jealousy? Is it obtained by

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[24] Priestley, *Lectures*, p. 249; 250.

[25] Priestley, *Lectures*, 254.

[26] In his *Treatise on Method*, he again answers the 'purblind critics' who find fault with Shakespeare's expression of passion: 'There are two answers applicable to most of such remarks. First, that Shakespeare understood the true language and external workings of Passion better than his critics. He had a higher, and a more Ideal, and consequently a more Methodical sense of harmony than they.' (*TM* 32) The other answer is that Shakespeare followed not only the 'Psychological' method, but also the 'Poetical' one, which 'requires above all things a preponderance of pleasurable feeling' (*TM* 32). In his comments of Constance this second important consideration does not appear.

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wandering about in search of angry or jealous people in uncultivated society, in order to copy
their words? Or not far rather by the power of imagination proceeding upon the *all in each* of
human nature? By *meditation*, rather than by *observation*? And by the latter in consequence of
the former? (*BL* 1997, p. 231)

This is clearly a critique of the new rhetoric, as Coleridge's reference to 'uncultivated
society', a favourite theme of the Scottish school, also suggests. As a critique of Kames,
however, it is not entirely just, since Kames also identified the method of introspection
(and not observation) as the main process of establishing elementary laws of the mind;
however, he did attempt to produce a set of critical rules based on these, which might be
applied to each literary passage that one wished to judge. Coleridge straightforwardly
rejects that option: 'Could a rule be given from *without*, poetry would cease to be poetry,
and sink into a mechanical art' (*BL* 1997, p. 232). It follows that if the reader threw
himself 'at the poet's mercy' (as he clearly should, according to Coleridge), reading
itself would become a non-mechanical form of art, fundamentally dependent on the
imagination.

As for passion, Coleridge seems no longer to believe that it can result in
absolute stasis, even if it is at its most excessive. He was perhaps encouraged to make
these revisions by Wordsworth, who, as a poet, had comparable aims. In the Preface to
the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth writes that his intention was to trace intense emotions
like 'the maternal passion through many of its more subtile windings, as in the poems of
the IDIOT BOY and the MAD MOTHER', or 'the last struggles of a human being, at the
approach of death, cleaving in solitude to life and society, as in the Poem of the
FORSAKEN INDIAN'.[27] Kames would have considered such feelings excessive and too
painful, and therefore necessarily mute, or at least only appropriately represented in a
language free from figures. For Coleridge, by contrast, the 'Mad Mother' was the best
modern example of 'the blending, *fusing* power of Imagination and Passion',
comparable to King Lear's manic speeches. Whereas in associationist thought the
strongest passions were thought to be unable to 'focus' on anything external to
themselves, Coleridge shows that in fact they make everything internal. As he writes

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[27] *Wordsworth's Literary Criticism*, ed. W. J. B. Owen (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul,
1974), p. 72.

about the 'Mad Mother': 'the alien object to which [the attention] had been so abruptly diverted, no longer an alien but an ally and an inmate' (*BL* 2: 150-1). In his lecture of 1812 he quotes a favourite couplet from the same poem ('The Breeze I see is in yon tree / It comes to cool my babe & me') with its subtle personification of the wind, and asks, perhaps with a final sense of triumph over Kames: 'This was an instance of that abruptness of thought so natural to grief and if it be admired in images can we say that it is unnatural in words which are in fact a part of our life and existence?' (*LL* 1: 380)

Coleridge, then, by reconsidering the 'language of grief' in Constance's speech, lifts a ban that had been placed on the figurative expression of states of strong passion. Meanwhile, a more general insight can also be discerned from, or rather *in*, his critical discourse. If words are 'part of our life and existence', then they are inseparable from feelings; as I have argued in the introduction, Coleridge thought of language as 'the medium of all Thoughts to *ourselves*, of all Feelings to others, & partly to ourselves' (*CN* 3: 4237), implying that a significant part even of one's own feelings exist through language. It makes therefore little sense to speak of a passion without some kind of expression. Or rather, 'expression' itself has to be reconsidered, not as the utterance of a pre-existing feeling, but as something that constitutes or even 'performs' feeling.[28] If passion does not find expression in language, it is 'performed' in violent action, as in the case of the brooding sailor of Coleridge's Apologetic Preface to 'Fire, Famine and Slaughter'.[29] Rhetorical 'performance' of feeling, compared to action, might be considered a waste of breath, but while it offers a relief from strong passion, it also (like other 'symptoms') embodies it. An example from Shakespeare might make this point clearer.[30] In a scene in *Richard II*, the Queen recounts an inexplicable presentiment, representing grief again as a child; not an absent son, as for Constance, but an unborn child. She complains: 'Some unborn sorrow ripe in Fortune's womb / Is coming towards

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[28] This point is close to William M. Reddy's concept of 'emotional speech acts' in *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 63 ff.

[29] John Barrell interprets this text in *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford, OUP, 2000), pp. 646-51.

[30] On comparable Renaissance views about the rhetoric of passion see Jacqueline T. Miller, 'The passion signified: imitation and the construction of emotions in Sidney and Wroth', *Criticism*, 43: 4, (Fall 2001), 407-42. Also, Brian Vickers, 'On the Practicalities of Renaissance Rhetoric', in *Rhetoric Revalued*, 133-141.

me, and my inward soul / With nothing trembles' (2.2.10-12).[31] Bushy replies: ''Tis nothing but conceit, my gracious lady.' (2.2.33) In her answer, the Queen takes up the themes of grief, figurative language and silence in a way that must have been instructive for Coleridge:

> 'Tis nothing less: conceit is still deriv'd
> From some forefather grief; mine is not so,
> For nothing hath begot my something grief,
> Or something hath the nothing that I grieve –
> 'Tis in reversion that I do possess –
> But what it is that is not yet known what,
> I cannot name: 'tis nameless woe, I wot. (2. 2. 34-40)[32]

The Queen's grief here is nothing more – but also nothing less – than conceit, both in the sense that it is a fiction or fancy, and that it is a rhetorical figure. The self-reflexive conceit she devises plays on the analogy between 'conceit' and 'conception'; her unborn grief is like a child of nothing – like a figure of speech. As in the case of Constance's grief, passion appears here through rhetoric; however, this does not mean that it is empty, 'mere words'. Or rather, the very emptiness of the words (their content of 'nothing') functions as a symptom, which both gives expression to, and constitutes, an unnameable passion. In his notes to the scene in *Richard II*, Coleridge wrote: 'Terra incognita of the Human Mind' (*LL* 2:287).

In 1828 Coleridge returned to problems of passion and expression in an essay 'On the Passions', which (among other things) elaborates on the bodily symptomatology of the passions. In the words of Alan Richardson, this fragment 'works towards a physiological psychology that gives primacy to mind and makes the body its expression'.[33] Though Coleridge uses a much more technical vocabulary in this text (it was meant for J.H. Green, surgeon and medical lecturer), it also exhibits remarkable connections with his discussions of passion in the lectures. Coleridge's attention is now focused on the body and not on rhetoric: he assigns each appetite and each passion an

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[31] William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. by Peter Ure, The Arden Shakespeare, gen. ed. Richard Proudfoot (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1961, 1983), p. 70.
[32] *King Richard II*, p. 72.
[33] Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 43.

organ appropriate to it, connecting, for instance, the stomach with Grief as well as with Hunger. But in spite of its medical and anthropological orientation, the essay ends up looking very much like the lectures on literature, especially when it comes to the 'figure' of Grief:

> The *wanting*, the *craving* of Grief (Here quote from Shakespeare's Constance in King John, and from the Greek Tragedians – & in all the passions I purpose to make free use of illustration from the Poets, especially Dante, Chaucer, Shakespear and Ben Johnson) the characteristic Supersession of the Appetite of Hunger – the equally characteristic wasting and marasmus of Grief – all these & there are many more, prove Grief to be a Hunger of the Soul. (*SW&F* 2:1451)

Grief, here, is literally embodied: it inhabits the body as much as hunger does, which it displaces. Nevertheless, it does not cease to be elusive. Alan Richardson emphasises the primacy of the mind in this account, that is, the fact that it describes how mental processes influence the body, and not the other way round. However, Coleridge starts his discussion by stating his wish to move beyond the Cartesian dualism of body and mind; the passage on grief makes clear that the 'mental' passion is accessible in no other way than through a train of symptoms that are both mental and physical, which express it in an indirect, metaphorical way.

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Is there a passion beyond expression? Is there a rhetorical figure that falls outside the 'Law of Passion'? Since Coleridge's analyses are based on the premise of the inseparability of feeling and language, those two questions are bound up with each other throughout his lectures. The passion supposedly beyond the scope of expression – extreme grief – is, for him, capable of being embodied in poetical language. The figure supposedly the least capable of expressing feeling – the 'merely verbal' pun – becomes a central concern, manifesting all the characteristics of the 'language of passion' *a*

fortiori.[34] Both of these issues were addressed in Coleridge's twelfth lecture in 1812 (from which I have already cited a passage), as Collier's notes attest:

> Who, said Coleridge who knows the state of deep passion must know that it approaches to that state of madness which is not frenzy or delirium, but which models all things to the one reigning idea: still to stray in complaining from the main subject of complaint and still to return to it again by a sort of irresistible impulse. The abruptness of thought is true to nature – In a modern poem called the Mad Mother she exclaims –
>
> > The Breeze I see is in yon tree
> > It comes to cool my babe & me.
>
> This ~~was~~ is an instance of that abruptness of thought so natural to grief and if it be admired in images can we say that it is unnatural in words which are in fact a part of our life and existence? In the Scriptures themselves these plays upon words were to be found; as well as in the best works of the ancients and <in> the most beautiful parts of Shakespeare and because this additional grace had been in some instances converted into a deformity, because it had been used in improper places, should we include it in one general censure? When we find it disgusts we sho.[d] enquire whether ~~the~~ it has been rightly or wrongly used: whether it is in its right or wrong place: it was necessary in order to form a correct opinion to consider the state of passion of the person using this play upon words: ~~a p~~ it might be condemned not because it was a play upon words but because it was a play in a wrong place. (*LL* 1:380)

What is most surprising here, is that Coleridge refers to Wordsworth's 'The Mad Mother' in the context of 'plays upon words'. The connection is not quite clear, but it is perhaps not impossible to work out. The language of the Mad Mother manifests the 'abruptness of thought so natural to grief' (as we have seen, this is a revision of earlier notions of grief as static): her thoughts stray 'from the main subject of complaint' to notice the breeze, but they 'return to it again by a sort of irresistible impulse'. An object of perception is thus turned into a figure of thought – this is significant because it gives an indication of the mental state of the speaker, and proves the force of her 'one reigning idea'. Plays upon words manifest a similar movement: whoever uses them, must pay

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[34] Emerson P. Marks discusses Coleridge on puns in *Coleridge on the Language of Verse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981), pp. 18-27. See also Tim Fulford, *Coleridge's Figurative Language* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 117-123.

attention to 'external' features of words (most obviously, to similarity of sound with other words), and turn these into an 'internal' connection of meaning. For Coleridge, such figures are not the exclusive product of self-conscious artifice; or rather, they can be, simultaneously, signs of an 'irresistible impulse' in the mind, symptomatic of 'states of deep passion' approaching the derangement of the Mad Mother.

Coleridge in this lecture quotes the 'Mad Mother' in order to throw some light on how the pun functions in a specific case, in Old Gaunt's death-bed speech in *Richard II.* As R. A. Foakes notes, Coleridge here relies on A. W. Schlegel, who in *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* referred to the same scene in connection with puns.[35] Coleridge's examples of wordplay in the Scriptures and 'the best works of the ancients' in the above passage are probably also borrowed from Schlegel.[36] However, there is a characteristic difference between the two critics' approach, which goes beyond the more obvious connections. Schlegel, together with Coleridge, emphasises the universality of the play on words in poetry, moreover, his defence is embedded in a discussion of passionate language: 'energetical passions electrify the whole of the mental powers,' he states, 'and will consequently, in highly favoured natures, express themselves in an ingenious and figurative manner'.[37] But Coleridge pays a much closer attention to the particulars of the mental and linguistic activity which accompanies punning. His immersion in associationist psychology and its connections with rhetoric, as well as his subsequent revisions of it, are unmistakable in the way he approaches the figure. Schlegel is content with observing that there is an innate desire in man 'that language should exhibit the object which it denotes in a sensible manner by sound'. Coleridge too acknowledges this, but he is more interested in the nature of this desire, and in the anatomy of the forms it takes in special cases. This is a 'pathological' interest, which he shares with eighteenth-century British moralists. His defence of the pun, in other words, is worth considering in the context of the new rhetoric, although it also has strong ties with Schlegel's parallel endeavour. As I would

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[35] See Foakes's note in *LL* 1: 379n. But the pun had long been an important issue for Coleridge, as the 1810 'intended Essay in defence of Punning' attests, cf. *CN* III: 3762. See also McKusick, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 42.

[36] A. W. Schlegel, *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature,* 2 vols, trans. John Black (London, Edinburgh, Dublin, 1815), 2: 135-6.

[37] Schlegel, 2: 133.

like to argue, it can be understood as part of Coleridge's attempt to revise both the psychology and the rhetoric of the new rhetoricians on the basis of his notion of sympathetic reading, while still sharing their main assumption of correspondence between passions and rhetorical figures.

The unconscious movement of thought Coleridge describes in connection with 'The Mad Mother' and *King Lear* is something he returns to again and again; quite clearly he sees it as one of the fundamental principles behind the workings of passion in poetic language. In 1813, speaking again of *Richard II*, he defines 'a natural tendency in the human mind, when suffering under some great affliction, to associate everything around it with the obtrusive feeling, to connect and absorb all into the predominant sensation' (*LL* 1: 564). He goes on to quote Gaunt's puns:

> 'O! how that name befits my composition!
> Old Gaunt, indeed; and Gaunt in being old.
> [...]
> Gaunt am I for the grave, Gaunt as a grave,' &c.

> Shakespear, as if he anticipated the hollow sneers of critics, makes Richard reply –
> 'Can sick men play so nicely with their names?'
> To which the answer of Gaunt presents a confutation of this idle criticism,
> 'No, misery makes sport to mock itself.' (*LL* 1: 564)

Coleridge reads this scene as reflecting on its own language: as if Gaunt, while quarrelling with Richard, were also addressing the 'idle' critics to prove, in Shakespeare's name, the propriety of punning in 'serious' scenes. With this gesture, Coleridge makes Shakespeare himself refute his adversaries – another instance of his strategy to re-invent criticism as sympathetic *reading*. It is as if he were asking, do critics object to Gaunt's wordplay? Well, it is not Gaunt himself who 'plays', but misery 'mocks itself': passion, again, is turned into an agent, indeed, an agent which turns against itself. The figure suggests that Gaunt does not have full control over his speech; his words, like his 'wounded' name, are the playthings of forces beyond him. The 'language of passion' is language beyond conscious command – this is the ultimate meaning of the new rhetoricians' term, and Coleridge, with his life-long interest in

unconscious mental operations, is ready to tackle the way rhetorical figures embody and give voice to that language. His interest in the pun, therefore, is by no means accidental: as we have seen, this figure manifests the same obsessive movement of thought that he pointed out in 'The Mad Mother'. Indeed, it is the very figure of turning the 'external', material element of the word into the bearer of 'internal' meaning, which makes it a key symptom of strong passion. What is more, the pun had been connected to 'irresistible impulses' long before Coleridge's time.

In order 'to meet and defeat the popular objections' against puns (*LL* 1: 379), Coleridge quotes Doctor Johnson according to whom 'Shakespeare loses the world for a toy and can no more withstand a pun <or a play upon words> than his Anthony could Cleopatra' (*LL* 1: 380-1). This well-known remark, though hostile to punning, still sets the terms that would recur in other more sympathetic accounts of the figure: the inherent playfulness of puns that Johnson expresses by the metaphor of the 'toy', and the connection with irresistible passion expressed through the reference to Anthony. The Shakespeare Johnson describes here is the ultimate passionate poet who succumbs to the temptations of a 'figure' instead of minding his more manly business. Seduction, play, and the body (the materiality of words) are contrasted with the seriousness of man's duty. As we have seen, the new rhetoricians generally treat figures as expressions of passion; however, the pun challenges this general rule and poses a problem for their criticism. Quite simply, it is too much of an artifice to be included in their naturalistic rhetoric. Kames therefore, similarly to Johnson, opposes wordplay to serious 'labour':

> This sort of wit depends for the most part upon chusing a word that hath different significations: by that artifice hocus-pocus tricks are play'd in language, and thoughts plain and simple take on a very different appearance. Play is necessary for man, in order to refresh him after labour; and accordingly man loves play even so much as to relish a play of words, and it is happy for us that words can be employ'd not only for useful purposes but also for our amusement. This amusement, tho' humble and low, unbends the mind, and is relished by some at all times and by all at some times.[38]

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[38] Brian Vickers, ed., *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Vol 4, 1753-1765, (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 473.

Kames here admits that the labourer's mind must be 'unbended' sometimes. Wordplay is a recreational activity of well-deserved leisure, like playing sports: it is 'a mark of a mind at ease and disposed to any sort of amusement'.[39] However, in spite of his generally more positive tone, Kames still considers wordplay as a 'low species of wit', which would mar 'any serious performance'. It is something additional, legitimated by proper 'labour', but under no circumstances can it be allowed to take its place. What is more, punning – a marked case of the play upon words – has a notably dubious pedigree: it is a 'species of bastard wit', being 'an assertion that bears a double meaning, one right one wrong, but so introduced as to direct us to the wrong meaning'.[40] It is perhaps not totally by accident that this misleading figure is again connected to feminine seduction. Kames quotes Paris from *Troilus and Cressida* (3.1.142ff) to illustrate:

> *Paris.*   Sweet Helen, I must woo you,
> To help unarm our Hector: his stubborn buckles,
> With these your white enchanting fingers touch'd,
> Shall more obey, than to the edge of steel,
> Or force of Greekish sinews; you shall do more
> Than all the island kings, disarm great Hector.

According to Kames, the pun is in the last line, where 'disarm' has two meanings: 'it signifies to take off a man's armour and also to subdue him in fight'. The pun capitalizes on this ambiguity: '[w]e are directed to the latter sense by the context, but with regard to Helen the word holds only true in the former sense'.[41] Of course, the point is that Helen's disarming of Hector in one sense could be the best means of disarming him in a more military sense as well. Punning is dangerous and slippery language that purposely confuses meanings and inverts hierarchies (that of the feminine and the masculine). It ensnares the mind while seducing the body. Since antiquity, Helen had been treated as a figure calling attention to the dangers of excessive sensuality as well as of rhetoric,[42] so

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[39] Vickers, *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Vol 4, p. 475.

[40] Vickers, *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Vol 4, p. 474.

[41] Vickers, *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Vol 4, pp. 474-5.

[42] According to Aristotle, men's best interest is to 'bid pleasure be gone' as the old Trojans wanted with Helen. *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 9, 1109a. Gorgias in his *Encomium of Helen* praises rhetoric as an irresistible force: 'Speech is a powerful lord, which by means of the finest and most invisible body effects the divinest works'. Quoted in James L. Kastely, 'Rhetoric and Emotion', in Walter Jost and Wendy

it is only too appropriate that she should be evoked in connection with the pun. Another example Kames cites is Shakespeare's greatest word-player Falstaff, an example that again connects word-play with deviousness and the body. Kames quotes two of his puns on 'waste' and 'waist', which refer to Falstaff's own corpulence as well as to his lack of control in financial matters.[43]

Understandably, Kames wants to keep puns within close confines: 'A thought that turns upon the expression instead of the subject, commonly called *a play of words*, being low and childish, is unworthy of any composition, whether gay or serious, that pretends to any degree of elevation'.[44] Legitimate leisure becomes infantile when out of place; the 'elevated' should not mix with the 'low'.[45] Priestley, following Kames, is quick to alert his readers whenever the figure occurs illegitimately. Constance in *King John*, for example, is guilty of improper punning, besides her 'faulty' personification of grief. These faults are both present in her 'merely verbal' statement that her grief is so heavy '[t]hat no support but the huge firm earth / Can bear it up'. 'Grief is said to be supported in a figurative sense, but the earth supports things in a literal sense', comments Priestley, dismissing what the text otherwise suggests, that grief is materialized through this very figure of speech.[46] For Kames, such things are 'artifice' and 'hocus pocus' not worthy of elevated discourse. Priestley claims that punning is an '*affectation*' characteristic of the Roman writers and their followers (presumably the French) – which is the strongest possible charge from a critic who uses passion or *affect* as his main criterion. Punning is empty of real emotion, even when it masquerades as its authentic expression. What is more, the unnatural figure knows no national boundaries:

Olmsted, eds, *A Companion to Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2004), 221-237, p. 222. (Gorgias, 'Encomium of Helen', trans. G. Kennedy in R. Sprague ed., *The Older Sophists* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), p. 52.)

[43] See *Elements of Criticism*, 1: 396: '*Falstaff.* My honest lads, I will tell you what I am about. *Pistol.* Two yards and more. *Falstaff.* No quips now, Pistol: indeed, I am in the waste two yards about; but I am now about no waste; I am about thrift.' (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1.3.36ff) '*Chief Justice.* Well! the truth is, Sir John, you live in great infamy. *Falstaff.* He that buckles him in my belt cannot live in less. *Chief Justice.* Your means are very slender, and your waste is great. *Falstaff.* I would it were otherwise: I would my means were greater, and my waste slenderer.' (*2 Henry IV*, 1.2.129ff).

[44] *Elements of Criticism*, 1: 514.

[45] Morillo has claimed that throughout the 18th century the 'discourse on the passions' was a way to speak about class. The example of the pun proves that the discourse on the rhetoric of passion is no exception. See John D. Morillo, *Uneasy Feelings: Literature, the Passions, and Class from Neoclassicism to Romanticism* (New York: AMS Press, 2001).

[46] Priestley, *Course of Lectures*, p. 194.

> Shakespeare himself, notwithstanding the strong bent of his genius to *natural propriety*, abounds with misplaced wit. In some of the gravest passages in his works, we meet with strokes which tend to raise a laugh, instead of corresponding with the more serious emotions that arise from the scene with which he presents us.[47]

That it is ridiculous in the wrong place is the most often levelled charge against punning. But surely, there is something to mitigate Shakespeare's fault. Priestley like Kames finds that 'this palpably ridiculous extravagance' was still a respectable figure in Shakespeare's time. Since then, however, it has become as common as literacy itself. In the early stages it was a cultural refinement, contributing 'to the establishment of the good taste that seems to prevail at present', but by now it has lost its natural force, and therefore in this 'pretty advanced state of literature', there is no other 'fault in composition which there is so much danger of falling into'.[48] Kames in a similar analysis gives a specific reason for this change: he notes that puns depend on 'the double meaning of some words', however, 'as language ripens and the meaning of words is more and more ascertained, words held to be synonymous diminish daily, and when those that remain have been more than once employ'd the pleasure vanisheth with the novelty.'[49]

The progress of language through desynonymisation is an idea familiar from Coleridge. In his lectures, he went along with such speculations about the pun, and even proposed a lecture to 'state the history of conceits & the wise use that had been made of them & besides (which he hoped would be received with favour) he would attempt a defence of conceits & puns.' (*LL* 1: 293) He never quite completed either task,

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[47] Priestley, *Course of Lectures*, p. 228.

[48] This and previous quotation: Priestley, *Course of Lectures*, p. 228.

[49] 'It is remarkable that this low species of wit has among all nations been a favourite entertainment in a certain stage of their progress toward refinement of taste and manners, and has gradually gone into disrepute. As soon as language is formed into a system and the meaning of words is ascertained with tolerable accuracy, opportunity is afforded for expressions that, by the double meaning of some words, give a familiar thought the appearance of being new; and the penetration of the reader or hearer is gratified in detecting the true sense disguised under the double meaning. That this sort of wit was in England deemed a reputable amusement during the reigns of Elizabeth and James 1 is vouched by the works of Shakespeare, and even by the writings of grave divines. But it cannot have any long endurance: for as language ripens and the meaning of words is more and more ascertained words held to be synonymous diminish daily, and when those that remain have been more than once employ'd the pleasure vanisheth with the novelty.' (Vickers, *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Vol 4, p. 474)

but the main lines are discernible of an argument which, in fact, is a version of the account he characteristically offers of the development of the 'language of passion', of which the pun starts to appear as the representative example. A figure which was 'originally' a natural expression of passion became stale and conventional (this is what Kames and Priestley also hypothesised), but that (and here is Coleridge's own point) should not blind us to its natural force when legitimately used. For '[w]hat has become the reigning fault of an age must at some time or other have referred to something beautiful in the human mind'; and, 'because this additional grace had been in some instances converted into a deformity, because it had been used in improper places, should we include it in one general censure?' (*LL* 1: 379-380)

Coleridge's contention is that a good reader is still able to recognise the difference between a proper and a 'disfiguring' pun that is a mere 'deformity'.[50] Although his arguments imply that familiarity with the traditions and conventions of poetry is essential, what he emphasises even more is the *sympathy* of the reader. 'If people could throw themselves several centuries back in idea they would find not only that conceits but even Puns were natural.' (*LL* 1: 292) Coleridge suggests that the sympathetic reader, not blinded by others' opinion, can still *recognize* the naturalness, or even the inevitability of the pun, similarly to the way the 'language of passion' can be recognized as such. Puns, like other conceits, 'had become ridiculous only in the excess – but great geniuses having used them with the truth of nature & the force of passion, have extorted from all mankind praise, or rather won it by their instant sympathy [instinctive sympathy?]' (*LL* 1: 271).[51] This sympathy, instant or even *instinctive*, is the grounding assumption of all criticism based on 'passionate language'; it is an expression

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[50] Coleridge, in a half-Kamesian remark, admits that puns are 'sometimes too *disfiguring* his [Shakespeare's] graver scenes' (italics mine). However, he is quick to add: 'more often doubling the natural connection or order of <logical> consequence in the thoughts by introducing an artificial & sought for resemblance in words' (*LL* 1: 267)

[51] Here Coleridge first speaks of figures in general, and then, specifically, of the pun as something like a test case. This can be seen from the sentences that follow that one quoted above: 'Men afterwards [...] have mechanically, and devoid of that spirit of Life, employed the terms. They enquired what pleased or struck us? It was this or that – and they imitated it without knowing what it was that made them excellent – or, that, excellent as they were, they would be ridiculous in another form. Such was the nature of metaphors, apostrophes and what were called conceits.

He would venture to say, though it might excite a smile – *Punning*. There were states in all passions when even *punning* is no longer ridiculous – but is strictly, in a philosophical sense, a natural expression of natural emotion.' (*LL* 1: 271)

of a common humanity. These terms are spelt out very clearly by Coleridge (in Collier's notes):

> He could point out Puns in Shakespeare where they seemed as it were the first openings of the mouth of nature: where nothing else could properly be said: they were like most other sentences in his works; for when you read Shakespeare you not only feel that what he puts into the mouths of his characters might have been said but must have been said. (*LL* 1: 293)

Coleridge here again evokes the sympathetic reader who experiences the text directly (immediacy is emphasised through references to orality and the 'mouth') and who becomes convinced of the truth of the text by this experience. The by-now familiar figure 'passion is speaking' is adapted here to describe puns as 'the first openings of the mouth of nature'. According to this, what the reader recognizes as passionate speech is beyond the individual's control: 'nature' speaks through the characters and the same 'nature' justifies itself in the reader's experience. The mystery is how Shakespeare can be so much one with nature as to 'put into the mouths of his characters' a language which is its authentic speech.

'There were states in all passions when even *punning* is no longer ridiculous – but it is strictly, in a philosophical sense, a natural expression of natural emotion – ' (*LL* 1: 271), Coleridge writes. As we have seen, the 'duplicitous' nature of puns, as well as their materiality, have been key elements both in earlier objections to the figure and in Coleridge's account of it as central to the 'language of passion'. The disagreement has its source in Coleridge's concept of sympathetic reading as well as in his belief that words are not merely external, but are (or can become) part and parcel of the passions themselves. They have a life of their own in the human mind, a life which is in many ways beyond the grasp of reason or the conscious will. Significantly, in a 'philosophical sense' – that is, in the sense of the philosophy of the human mind – what guarantees 'natural expression' is precisely 'involuntariness'; the unnatural is, most of all, premeditated. At this point it might be useful to take a look at Kames's chapter on the 'External Signs of Emotion and Passion', where he offers a whole system of differences to deal with the problem of 'naturalness'. He distinguishes between natural

and arbitrary signs on the one hand, and voluntary and involuntary signs on the other. All involuntary signs are natural but not all natural signs are involuntary. Bodily expressions of passion can be either voluntary or involuntary, but they are overwhelmingly natural: they form 'a language understood by all, by the young as well as the old, by the ignorant as well as the learned'. By contrast, words, i.e. linguistic signs, are voluntary and arbitrary, except for a few sounds and 'unpremeditated tones'[52]. Language, therefore, is doomed to be arbitrary. However, as the new rhetoricians started to suggest, and as Coleridge was convinced, even arbitrary words can be used in a way that is 'natural' in a second sense – it is the *connection* between the arbitrary signs, then, that is felt as true to nature. According to Coleridge, puns are 'doubling the natural connection or order of <logical> consequence in the thoughts by introducing an artificial & sought for resemblance in words' (*LL* 1: 267) – that is, the resemblance of 'artificial' signs starts to signal a 'natural connection'. Coleridge is here tacitly using an associationist framework: connections between ideas and/or feelings that arise inevitably due to some inherent features of the mind (for example, but not exclusively, logic) are 'natural'. Punning therefore 'might be the necessary consequence of association' (*LL* 1: 312).

This is how the seemingly gratuitous figure can be 'a natural expression of natural emotion' in a strictly 'philosophical sense'. The logic of the whole argument (and of Kames's system) makes it inevitable that Coleridge should bring punning as close to bodily signs as possible (for, as we have seen, these are almost always 'natural'), and at the same time emphasise their involuntary nature (which guarantees naturalness). In his defence of puns, Coleridge usually stresses both of these qualities, stating in 1818, for instance, that a speech by Bolingbroke in *Richard II* exemplifies the 'passion that carries off its excess by play on words as naturally and therefore as appropriately to drama as by gesticulations, looks or tones. This belonging to human nature as *human*, independent of associations and habits from any particular rank of Life or mode of employment' (*LL* 2: 284). Earlier he called the pun 'a figure which often has its force & propriety, as justified by that Law of Passion' which also operates in 'the sublime Tautology' of the Song of Deborah, making it analogous to gestures 'of high

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[52] *Elements of Criticism*, 1: 427; 428.

excitement'(*LL* 1: 267). This means that the pun has a much wider application than in earlier criticism: it is not the exception but much rather the rule of the language of passion. It is no wonder that Coleridge returns to it again and again, and even though he still associates it with 'superfluity', like Kames, he considers it (exactly because it is superfluous and 'additional') as an essential model for how passion is conveyed in language. It follows that he does not rely on metaphors of feminine seduction to describe the pun: what used to be peripheral (and therefore often figured as feminine) for earlier critics like Johnson or Kames, is central for Coleridge, who is keen on demonstrating how Shakespeare's plays are permeated with punning language. However, there is one dramatic figure primarily associated with the pun, Hamlet, who is also perhaps the *single most* important Shakespearean character in Coleridge's criticism.

'He begins with that Play of words', Coleridge says of Hamlet in 1813 (*LL* 1: 540), and in more than one sense, Hamlet really 'begins' there for Coleridge. His intimacy with words is a main characteristic, and fits well into a general diagnosis: 'the aversion to externals, the betrayed Habit of brooding over the world within him, the prodigality of beautiful words, which are as it were the half embodyings of Thought, that make them more than Thought, give them an outness, a reality sui generis and yet retain their correspondence and shadowy approach to the images and movements within – ' (*LL* 1: 540). Puns thrive on this borderland between inside and outside, where words 'half embody' thoughts and 'movements within'. Kames has a highly resonant sentence about puns which comes to full force here: 'Words are so intimately connected with thought that if the subject be really grave it will not appear ludicrous even in that fantastic dress.'[53] Puns are like the melancholy prince in his 'fantastic dress'; they *are* Hamlet's fantastic dress, his madness, which is – according to Coleridge – 'but half-false' (*LL* 1: 541). Puns can appear either as dress, or as body, depending on one's point of view. Coleridge, who tends to read them as symptoms of 'movements within', and wants readers 'to consider the state of passion of the person using this play upon words' (*LL* 1: 380), often employs physical analogies. Hamlet's punning corresponds to 'what is highly characteristic of superfluous activity of mind a sort of playing with a thread or watch chain, or snuff box.' (*LL* 1: 540) Such gestures are involuntary – so much so that

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[53] Vickers, Vol. 4., p. 475.

ordinarily they are taken as signs of absent-mindedness – and therefore 'natural'. To some extent they indeed resemble the natural bodily signs listed by Kames – for instance, the 'expressions of the hands' which 'by different attitudes and motions, [...] express desire, hope, fear; they assist us in promising, in inviting, in keeping one at a distance; they are made instruments of threatening, of supplication, of praise, and of horror; they are employ'd in approving, in refusing, in questioning; in showing our joy, our sorrow, our doubts, our regret, our admiration.'[54] However, the gestures of absent-minded play seem to express nothing, or rather, their expressive force depends on a mechanism more oblique than in the case of gestures which, as Kames writes, 'are what a passion suggests in order to its gratification'. Gestures occurring 'without any view to an ultimate gratification', Kames proceeds, are still highly characteristic of passion, as the example of Hamlet attest.[55] But where does their expressive force derive from?

Coleridge very often refers to puns as figures of *antagonistic* passions: most frequently, he associates them with anger, contempt and a sense of injury.[56] Speaking of Hamlet's first reply, for instance, he comments: 'No one can have heard quarrels among the vulgar but must have noticed the close connection of Punning with angry contempt' (*LL* 1: 540). Interestingly, Coleridge here and elsewhere retains Kames's connection between the pun and the 'low' in a social sense; however, this link gains a new significance because for him the pun is the 'natural' language of feelings like anger and contempt, which appear, then, to be more typical of these orders, or at least more 'naturally' expressed by them. However, contempt is not the only possible meaning of puns. For his 1818 lecture on *Hamlet*, Coleridge draws up a whole list of states and feelings that they can be symptoms of:

> A little more than kin yet less than kind – Play upon words – either [due] to 1. exuberant activity of mind, as in Shakespear's higher Comedy. 2. Imitation of it as a fashion which has this to say for it – why is not this now better than groaning? – or 3 contemptuous Exultation in minds vulgarized and overset by their success – Milton's Devils – Or 4 as the language of resentment, in order to express Contempt – most common among the lower orders, & origin of Nick-names – or lastly as the language of suppressed passion, especially of hardly smothered dislike. – 3 of these

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[54] *Elements of Criticism*, I:430.
[55] *Elements of Criticism*, 1:435n
[56] See e.g. *CL* I: 292-3; 312.

combine in the present instance. - and doubtless Farmer is right in supposing the equivocation carried on into too much in the *Son*. (*LL* 2: 297)

This medley of a list (which contains references to *Romeo and Juliet* and *Paradise Lost*, apart from *Hamlet*)[57] indicates that puns can accompany quite different states of emotion, possibly more than one at the same time. Indeed, they tend to express a 'mingled feeling' (*LL* 2: 293) – as psychoanalysts would say, they are over-determined. Hamlet's pun is taken by Coleridge most probably as a sign of 'exuberant activity of mind', 'resentment', as well as of 'suppressed passion' or 'hardy-smothered dislike'. It is, then, a charged figure, bespeaking inner conflict and high emotional voltage. And it is the category added 'lastly' by Coleridge – 'suppressed passion' – that most decisively opens the door for all kinds of emotional intensity; all the more so if we note that according to a consensus among moral philosophers, passions tend to become stronger by encountering opposition. The pun, with its inherent ambivalence, is the very figure of such mental conflict. We are far from the earlier view that considered puns as merely ridiculous. Even if they do retain an element of laughter, they are rather like Hamlet's jokes and 'wild' language after seeing the ghost (as Coleridge explains it): 'the necessary alternation, when one muscle long strained is relaxed the Antagonist comes into Action of itself. Terror closely connected with the Ludicrous, the latter the common mode by which the mind tries to emancipate itself from Terror – The Laugh is rendered by nature itself the Language of Extremes – even as Tears are' (*LL* 1: 541). This remark looks backwards to Kames on punning (his notion of 'unbending' the mind appears here as the straining and relaxation of muscles) while it also looks forward anticipating Freud on jokes, or even on neurosis.

Coleridge's suggestion that passion can be conveyed through signs of its suppression leads to a remarkable complication of the straightforward expressivist model of passionate language advocated by the new rhetoricians. According to Coleridge's account, passion can be expressed in rhetoric in spite of itself, for the mind's attempt at concealing it gives the passion away, as in the Freudian notion of reaction

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[57] As Foakes notes, Coleridge alludes to Mercutio's remark that wordplay is better than 'groaning for love' (2.4.88-9), and to the 'ambiguous words' of Satan and Belial in *PL* VI 558-629. Cf. *LL* 2: 297n.

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formation. The figure of speech as 'symptom' constitutes the very passion that it is supposed to cover; it is like the activities of a neurotic body – ultimately, both are triggered by the patterns of the unconscious, or, in Coleridge's terms, the 'law of passion'. This structure is not limited to the puns in Coleridge's criticism: it appears whenever he finds that passion and rhetoric are in conflict with each other – and the solution is found in the involuntary motions of the body, or 'embodied' language. With this in mind, it is perhaps possible to define the relationship between our initial concepts – the body, rhetoric, and passion – somewhat more accurately than before. I would like to illustrate this final point with one of Coleridge's letters to Allsop, in which he famously expressed his reservations about the sincerity of rhetoric:

> The most eminent Tragedians, Garrick for instance, are known to have had their emotions as much at command, and almost as much on the surface, as the muscles of their countenances; and the French, who are all Actors, are proverbially heartless. Is it that it is a false and feverous state for the Centre to live in the Circumference? The vital warmth seldom rises to the surface in the form of sensible Heat, without becoming hectic and inimical to the Life within, the only source of real sensibility. Eloquence itself – I speak of it as habitual and at call – too often is, and is always like to engender, a species of histrionism. (*CL* V: 1309)

Rhetoric or habitual 'eloquence' here is aligned with the surface, theatre, the body and acting – and Coleridge opposes to it the heart and its 'vital warmth'. How can true feeling be expressed, if expression itself makes it appear as inauthentic? Coleridge's solution in this letter is the same as in his lectures, in connection with the pun: the passion is conveyed through attempts at its concealment and suppression. As he explains, he discovered that strategy incidentally in one of his juvenile poems: 'Lines on a Friend, Who Died of a Frenzy Fever' (1794): 'my eloquence was most commonly excited by the desire of running away and hiding myself from my personal & inward feelings, and not for the expression of them, while doubtless this very effort of feeling gave a passion & a glow to my Thoughts and Language on subjects of a general nature, that they would not otherwise have had' (*CL* V: 1309).

As Coleridge's poem attest, this resulted in a rhetorical 'frenzy fever' analogous to that of the friend evoked in the text: the defence mechanism supposed to protect against an illness, became itself the surest symptom of it. 'I fled in a circle, still

overtaken by the Feelings, from which I was evermore fleeing, with my back turned towards them' (*CL* V: 1309) – this compulsion (which Coleridge also describes in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*) drives the spiralling movement of passionate language. Its mechanism depends on the initial denial of the passion, so that it can always appear, like an uncanny ghost, from behind 'my back'. In the poem, such im-proper Feelings abound in the form of a series of personifications, like 'Fear', 'Remorse', 'Anguish', and 'Frenzy', which gather around the friends' grave, but which also threaten to engulf the speaker. Finally, the dead friend himself becomes a figure of Feeling, pre-figuring the speaker, who echoes the words of Hamlet: 'Rest, injured Shade!', only to become more aware of its dangerous influence ('With introverted Eye I contemplate / Similitude of Soul – perhaps of Fate!'). For Coleridge, such effects of 'suppressed passion' constitute a rhetoric that can be authentic and highly theatrical at the same time. It is a telling coincidence that around the time when he was re-thinking the rhetorical model of the expression of passion, Mrs. Siddons also perfected a new device to create the illusion of suppressed feeling on stage: instead of giving full vent to her passion, she dropped her voice and spoke 'in a harsh whisper that could be heard in the last row of the auditorium'.[58] It seems that the privileging of sentiment and sincerity led to the notion, in the romanticism of Coleridge and Siddons, that feeling is best expressed through concealment, with an all-important 'additional' symptom which gives it away. The unexpected drop in Siddons's voice, the seemingly incongruous tone of Hamlet's puns, or the ghostly personifications in Coleridge's own poem, create the illusion of a modern interiority which is in conflict with itself and with the world around it.

Since puns are understood as symptoms of 'suppressed passion', most things Coleridge says about passionate language in general are true of puns *a fortiori*. The 'play upon words' is a rhetorical category so loose and flexible that it can function as a convenient model for all 'figures of passion'. Indeed, in his lectures Coleridge pays more explicit attention to the pun than to all the other 'reputable' figures taken together. What is more, he is ready to subsume other figures under it as sub-categories (we have seen the example of repetition and 'sublime Tautology' as homologous with puns). With Schlegel, he identifies wordplay in the Scriptures, in Shakespeare, and in Homer. If we

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[58] Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. L. A. Beaurline (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), p. 10.

read his lectures as a treatise on rhetoric, we might say without hesitation that by making the peripheral central, he overturns the hierarchy of previous systems. What is even more interesting is that in spite of all the attention he pays to puns, he preserves the notion that they are something 'additional', 'superfluous', related to 'exuberance' and play. But while Kames saw the playfulness of the pun as a reason to dismiss it when compared to serious discourse, for Coleridge, it is exactly because of its playfulness, that it is to be taken seriously. As a figure of inherent incongruity, it is capable of suggesting tensions beneath the surface. This means that the play and 'work' of rhetoric are not necessarily opposed to each other, just as theatricality and authenticity are not mutually exclusive: both binaries are synthesised in an account of puns as symptoms of suppressed passion. The grand and calculatedly theatrical gestures Kames described give way, in Coleridge's critical thought, to the psychological realism of minute, seemingly superfluous nervous movements: 'a sort of playing with a thread or watch chain, or snuff box'.

Chapter Four

Framing Symptoms:

Treatments of Character by Coleridge and William Richardson

> 'That celebrated *Delphick* Inscription, RECOGNIZE YOUR-SELF, was as much as
> to say *Divide your-self*, or *BE* TWO. For if the Division were rightly made, all
> *within* would of course, they thought be rightly understood, and prudently
> managed.'[1]

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One of Coleridge's preoccupations throughout his lectures, which also
found its way into the *Biographia*, was the attempt to draw a character of Shakespeare.
Scholars had been working on this project for at least a century, with a zeal that had
become more and more methodical; evidence was sifted, unreliable facts about
Shakespeare's life were eliminated, just as texts of questionable origin were brought to
trial.[2] But even as the publication of an 'authentic' edition became conceivable, the
portrait of the author remained incomplete, a fact that made Francis Gentleman remark
in 1773: 'As to his character, it must be fished out of his writings; from whence, though
abundant outlines offer, it is very critical to ascertain a strict likeness.'[3] Gentleman,
perhaps daunted by the difficulties, did not perform the textual 'fishing', and suggested
instead that Shakespeare must have resembled David Garrick, at least in some respects.
Faced with the same difficulties and as impatient with the scanty historical data as

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[1] Earl of Shaftesbury (Ashley Cooper), *Characteristics of Men, Manners, and Opinions*, 3 vols, ed. John
M. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 1: 113.

[2] See Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim : The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790
Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

[3] *Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays* (9 vols, 1773-4), in Brian Vickers, ed., *Shakespeare: The Critical
Heritage*, Vol 6, 1774-1801 (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 110.

Gentleman, Coleridge refrained from drawing a parallel between Shakespeare and any other human being (although he did observe a similarity between his physiognomy and that of Cervantes, which he found revealing).[4] Instead, he again and again surveyed Shakespeare's works in order to draw up an inventory of his 'characteristics', paying particular attention to what he termed the 'symptoms' of his genius, which presented themselves in his earliest writings.

It was not by accident that Coleridge spent so much time on *Venus and Adonis* in nearly all his lecture courses, and that he chose to include this material in the *Biographia*. It was for the same reason that he paid particular attention to *Love's Labour's Lost*, which he thought to have been Shakespeare's first drama. As he wrote in a later note: 'how many of S's characteristic Features might we not discover' by studying this play, 'tho' as in a portrait taken of him in his Boyhood' (*CM* 4: 783). As this remark suggests, Coleridge studied the early works because he wanted to draw Shakespeare's character from them, true to the manner that he believed Shakespeare himself had discovered: by tracing the character's development or 'philosophical history'.[5] This approach prevented him from understanding character as something 'given': on the contrary, its essence was in *becoming*. Moreover, character was not visible on the surface: it had to be 'fished out' from the depths of texts, by reading signs that only the philosophical critic knew how to interpret or even how to notice. In short, Coleridge attempted a 'Philosophical Analysis' of Shakespeare's poetical character, following the lead of William Richardson, who published his first book under that title in 1774 followed by a number of further volumes of character criticism until the 1812 collected *Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters*.[6]

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[4] 'The resemblance in their physiognomies is striking, but with a predominance of acuteness in Cervantes, and of reflection in Shakespeare, which is the specific difference between the Spanish and English characters of mind.' (*LL* 2: 159)

[5] Cf. the definition of 'philosophical history', which aims at 'knowing how such a man became acted upon by that particular passion' (*LL* 1: 304). The point is developed in several ways, e.g. speaking of *Richard III*: 'the character is drawn by the Poet with the greatest fulness and perfection, & he has not only given the character but actually shown its source & generation' (*LL* 1: 377).

[6] The connection between Coleridge and Richardson was first pointed out by Richard Babcock, who wrote: 'Coleridge's original lecture prospectus [for the 1811-12 series, V. R.] contained the announcement: "a philosophical Analysis and Explanation of all the principal *Characters* of our great Dramatist". Compare this with the title of Richardson's first series of essays: *A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters*.' R. W. Babcock, 'The Direct Influence of Late Eighteenth

Richardson's usual procedure was to start by diagnosing a change in the given figure's behaviour, which he then attributed to a change in his or her 'inner constitution'. This could be explained, for instance, as a result of a change in the direction of the 'ruling passion', which affected the operation of faculties like the understanding or the imagination, or of the moral sense, so that the character became almost a different person. Richardson took great care to detect the earliest symptoms of the transformation, in order to explain what happened and why, and usually found the most telling signs in the characters' language. Like Kames, he identified rhetorical figures signalling strong passion and noted the syntax of the soliloquies (and especially where it broke down). Generally, he practised – to borrow a term from Paul Ricoeur – a hermeneutics of suspicion: what a character said was not necessarily what he or she meant, or, even more importantly, what he or she felt. A familiar example of this is his defence of Hamlet's apparent inconsistencies: his 'jocularity', his (real or fake) madness and, above all, his 'inhuman' response to Claudius's prayer. Richardson provides an explanation for all these by establishing a moral principle crucial to his readings: 'we deceive ourselves' justifying his consistent strategy of reading character against the grain[7]. In a similar vein, he also deduces that the bloodshed committed by Macbeth after killing the king did not attest to his cruelty but – paradoxically – to the persistent strength of his conscience or moral sense, which he tried to assuage through the series of murders.

Coleridge was an even shrewder character critic than Richardson, as we can see not only from his lectures on literature, but also from the comparative analyses of *The Friend* (most importantly, 'Luther' and 'Rousseau'), and from a number of other writings. The weight character-drawing carried with respect to his own self-image can be estimated from a (probably self-created) legend according to which Napoleon himself waited anxiously for the 'character' Coleridge announced he would give of him in the

Century Shakespeare Criticism on Hazlitt and Coleridge', in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol 45 No 6 (Jun 1930), 377-387, p. 383.
[7] *Essays on Some of Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters* (London: 1797), p. 132. With this, Richardson was probably developing earlier philosophical accounts of passion that emphasised its connection with 'dissembling'. See e.g. Kames: 'It is [...] against the order of nature, that passion in any case should take the lead in contradiction to reason and conscience: such a state of mind is a sort of anarchy, which every one is ashamed of, and endeavours to hide and dissemble. [...] Hence a capital rule in the representation of immoderate passions, that they ought to be hid or dissembled as much as possible.' (*Elements of Criticism*, 1: 468)

Morning Post. Even if he never produced a finished character of Shakespeare (or, for that matter, of Bonaparte), he kept collecting traits that might contribute to one.

In 1808, his first lecture series, he drew up his first list based on *Venus and Adonis*, starting with a general observation: 'An endless activity of Thought, in all the possible associations of Thought with Thought, Thought with Feelings, or with words, or of Feelings with Feelings, & words with words' (*LL* 1: 66). As I have been arguing, the associations between thought, word and feeling were crucial, in Coleridge's view, for the proper functioning of language as a medium between the subject's interiority and the external world. They also justify Coleridge's reading of character through his or her language: rhetoric, in this view, both conceals and reveals subjectivity. In the 'Character of Pitt' (1800), which he meant to accompany that of Napoleon, Coleridge argues that Pitt lacks a proper internal character because in his earliest childhood he failed to associate feelings with feelings and associated words with feelings only in a limited sense; his very dexterity with words bears witness to an atrophy of feeling.[8] Coleridge's Pitt, then, is a 'man of words' in the worst possible sense, and his very words betray his hollowness. Shakespeare's first poem, by contrast, reveals the poet to be the direct opposite, employing 'all the possible associations' and thus displays an 'endlessly active' intellect.

Coleridge subsequently calls attention to the power of Shakespeare's Imagination (as something that can 'produce and reproduce' the effects of passion and of the 'poetic feeling'), and then lists, with quotations from the poem, a number of other traits, like the 'Sense of Beauty', 'Love of natural Objects', 'Fancy, or the aggregative Power', 'Imagination' ('modifying one image or feeling by the precedent or following one'), and Shakespeare's capacity to describe 'natural objects by clothing them appropriately with human passions' (*LL* 1: 66-8). Most of these are related to the affective component in Shakespeare's art. With the final point, however, Coleridge returns to his first observation:

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[8] His 'premature dexterity in the combination of words [...] obscured his impressions, and deadened his genuine feelings'; 'he associated all the operations of his faculties with words, and his pleasures with the surprise excited by them' (*EOT* 219). 'One character pervades his whole being. Words on words, finely arranged, and so dexterously consequent, that the whole bears the semblance of argument...' (*EOT* 224). The 'Character of Pitt' is discussed in connection with Coleridge's views on language in Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge's Poetics*, pp. 109-111.

8. Energy, depth, and activity of Thought without which a man may be a pleasing and affecting Poet; but never a great one. Here introduce Dennis's - - enthuse: & vulgar pass: - - & from the excess of this in Shakespere be grateful that circumstances probably originating in choice led him to the Drama, the subject of my next lecture -- (*LL* 1: 68).

The reference to John Dennis's criticism is significant here. Dennis, whom Coleridge had already cited in the previous lecture, was among the first to base his view of poetry on the principle of passion and the association of ideas.[9] He also revived Milton's definition of poetry as 'simple, sensuous, and passionate' stating that 'Poetry is Poetry, because it is more Passionate and Sensual than Prose.'[10] As Dennis's editor E. N. Hooker pointed out, both Wordsworth and Coleridge were avid readers of Dennis in their early years.[11] However, while Dennis's importance for Wordsworth has been studied in depth and from various perspectives, the nature of Coleridge's reliance on his theories has been rarely treated.[12]

What did Coleridge mean by referring to Dennis's distinction between the 'enthusiastic' and the 'vulgar' passions in poetry, and which of the two informed Shakespeare's work according to him? At first sight, the predominance of the 'vulgar' seems more likely – this is indeed what R. A. Foakes suggests in his note (*LL* 1: 68n) – especially because Dennis states that this passion, which is attached to objects in ordinary life and to everyday conversation, informs the writing of dramatic dialogues. Moreover, Dennis also writes that vulgar passion 'is preferable [to the enthusiastic],

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[9] Cf. Martin Kallich, *The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England: A History of a Psychological Method in English Criticism* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1970), pp. 35-45. Timothy Clark has discussed Dennis's concept of passion and enthusiasm in *The Theory of Inspiration: Composition as a Crisis of Subjectivity in Romantic and Post-Romantic Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 67-8.
[10] *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701), in *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. E. N. Hooker, 2 vols (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939),1: 197-278, p. 215.
[11] *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, 2: lxxiii.
[12] John D. Morillo has discussed Wordsworth and Dennis on enthusiasm in the context of the ideology of class. See Morillo, *Uneasy Feelings: Literature, the Passions, and Class from Neoclassicism to Romanticism* (New York: AMS Press, 2001), pp. 16-97. Cf. also Jon Mee, 'Mopping Up Spilt Religion: The Problem of Enthusiasm', *Romanticism On the Net*, 25 (February 2002), http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/25mee.html and Mee, 'Anxieties of Enthusiasm: Coleridge, Prophecy, and Popular Politics in the 1790s', in *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850*, Ed. Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. la Vopa (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1998), 179-203.

because all Men are capable of being moved by the Vulgar, and a Poet writes to all'.[13] The enthusiastic passion, on the other hand, takes pleasure in the indefinite and the half-comprehended; it belongs to the higher sphere of religious and moral sentiment.[14] However, this is also the passion which Dennis links to thought and meditation, and this should give us pause, because meditation is one of the key-words in all versions of Coleridge's account of Shakespeare. Dennis writes: 'Enthusiastick Passion, or Enthusiasm, is a Passion which is moved by Ideas in Contemplation, or the Meditation of things that belong not to common Life. Most of our Thoughts in Meditation are naturally attended with some sort and some degree of Passion; and this Passion, if it is strong, I call Enthusiasm.'[15] Is it possible that Shakespeare's great 'activity of thought' in *Venus and Adonis* betrays his propensity for this more sublime, but also potentially dangerous passion?

Coleridge certainly claims that Shakespeare does not participate in the 'vulgar' passion of the lovers which he so masterfully describes in *Venus and Adonis*. But if we accept that, according to Coleridge, Shakespeare's inspiration is enthusiastic in its origin (in the sense that it derives from contemplation as opposed to ordinary life), then his subsequent turn to the drama must be explained as occurring not because, but in spite of, this original tendency. Such a reading is supported by a note Coleridge made for his following lecture, where he reiterated Shakespeare's characteristics:

> Lastly, he – previously to his Drama – gave proof of a most profound, energetic & philosophical mind, without which he might have been a very delightful Poet, but not the great dramatic Poet/ but this he possessed in so eminent a degree that it is to be feared &c &c – if –
>
> But Chance & his powerful Instinct combined to lead him to his proper province – in the conquest of which we are to consider both the difficulties that opposed him, & the advantages
>
> (*LL* 1: 82)

What Coleridge suggests is that Shakespeare's excessively philosophical mind could have led him into some danger, although he does not spell out what kind of danger he

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[13] In *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704), in *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, 1: 339.
[14] Morillo argues that in the *Grounds of Criticism* Dennis is keen to disentangle enthusiasm from its associations with radical dissent and its great communal appeal by redefining enthusiasm as the privilege of the few. See *Uneasy Feelings*, 38-9. Cf. also Timothy Clark, *Theories of Inspiration*, p. 68.
[15] *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, 1: 338.

means. We might recall that philosophy (or metaphysics) appears in his own poems as a cause for anxiety, as in 'The Eolian Harp' or in 'Dejection', where the 'habit' of abstract thinking is presented as potentially deadly. Jon Mee has recently argued that 'Enthusiasm in Romantic poetics provided both poison and cure'; in other words, that Romantic poetics were defined in contradistinction to enthusiasm (which had been long theorised as a form of mental disease), while retaining some of its key elements.[16] Coleridge's Shakespeare is certainly not enthusiastic in the sense of being driven by a religious ardour, with its potentially radical implications. But he might have been conceived as enthusiastic due to the predominantly philosophical and meditative passion which Coleridge attributes to him. Moreover, Coleridge seems to say that this passion – perhaps akin to what he calls the '*thinking* disease' in his notebooks (*CN* III: 4012) – in itself might have led him astray, had he not found his 'proper province' on the stage.

Shakespeare escaped from the consequences of his own original passion thanks to 'chance' and a 'powerful instinct' that made him turn into a new direction. With the same move, he discovered his own 'character' as a dramatist. To translate this into Dennis's terms: Shakespeare's antidote to his own enthusiasm was precisely the artistic cultivation of 'vulgar passion' which is necessary for stagecraft. Coleridge's account of this transformation seems to be related to an argument he made repeatedly, according to which an overabundance of ideas 'naturally' seeks relief in definite forms. As we have seen, Hamlet's passion for thought leads to his love for words, the 'half-embodyings' of ideas which give them 'outness'. Coleridge seems to have intimated that something similar happened, on a larger scale, to Shakespeare, namely that his meditative mind turned to the opposite principle of dramatic embodiment as a way of averting its own penchant for the indefinite. According to Tomalin's report of a lecture from 1811, Coleridge described the process by which Shakespeare found his 'proper' self as a kind of psychomachia between the poet and the abstract philosopher:

> With regard to his education, it was little more than might be expected from his character.
> Conceive a profound metaphysician & a great poet, intensely occupied in thinking on all subjects,
> on the least as well as the greatest – on all the operations of nature & of man, & feeling the
> importance of all the subjects presented to him – conceive this philosophical part of his character

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[16] 'Mee, 'Mopping Up Spilt Religion', Paragraph 1.

combined with the poetic – the twofold energy constantly acting; the Poet, and the philosopher embracing, but, as it were, in a warm embrace, when if both had not been equal one or the other must have been strangled. [...]

His education was the combination of the Poet & the Philosopher – a rapid mind, impatient that the means of communication were so few and defective compared with what he possessed to be communicated.

From this cause his images followed upon each other & if his genius had not guided him to the stage Shakespeare would by them have been rendered a writer rather to be wondered at than admired.

Therefore it was, that in all the great characters, it was still Shakespeare, – now imitating this, now imitating that – now displaying the operations of a mind under the influence of strong intellect –, sometimes without, & sometimes against the moral feeling. (*LL* 1: 230)

This is Coleridge's myth of the origin of Shakespeare's character and, simultaneously, of the characters of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's excessive passion for abstract thought could have produced something not quite human: 'to be wondered at' rather than 'admired' (otherworldliness is also suggested by another comment on *Venus and Adonis*: 'he writes exactly as if of an other planet' [*LL* 1: 70]). Shakespeare's very style, the way 'his images followed upon each other', betrays a dangerous potential. As Coleridge stated earlier:

Even the very diction evidencing a mind that proceeding from some one great conception finds its only difficulty in arranging & disciplining the crowd of Thoughts which from that Matrix rush in to enlist themselves – no looking outward by wit or Book-memory –

Characters – others so characteristic (i.e. psychological portraiture) as to be characterless, quoad the Poet – How wonderfully is Shakespeare the living Balance! (1: 126)

Shakespeare's characters give embodiment to the poet's passion for thought; that is why they are 'characteristic' in themselves and at the same time 'characteristic' of the poet. This means that even the metrical traits Coleridge observed in their speech – the 'involution of metre' expressive of 'Impetuosity of Thought' – are in fact doubly motivated: first, by the character's state of passion, and secondly, by Shakespeare's own intellectual energy, which is channelled through them. Furthermore, that is why the most significant ('favourite') characters display 'the operations of a mind under the influence of strong intellect' – and the tragedies bear witness to the potentially fatal consequences

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of such excess. But they are also the means by which Shakespeare emancipates his own mind from his (supposed) dominant passion. As one by one he 'assumes' the different characters, he becomes more and more securely preserved from anything that is potentially fearful or enthusiastic. His philosophical passion disappears in the perfect finish of his characters, and yet it is present in all of them; in their overpowering intellectualism, in the philosophical accuracy of the portraiture, and – in the case of the minor characters – in their occasional surplus of brilliance which is 'not naturally their own'.[17]

According to this narrative (which is submerged, but still traceable throughout Coleridge's criticism) Shakespeare's plays can be read as connected stages in a process of self-healing. Perhaps this is why Coleridge, speaking of them, proposes 'to pursue a psychological, rather than a historical mode of reasoning. He should take them as they seemed naturally to flow from the progress & order of his mind.' (*LL* 1: 253) This is not the cool logical 'order' of scientific inquiry, although it is in a sense also scientific, since, according to Coleridge, Shakespeare performs something like a 'philosophical analysis' of the powers of the mind through writing his characters. But even more fundamentally, it is an order that serves to regulate Shakespeare's own passion, resulting in

> the balancing & reconciling of opposite or discordant qualities, sameness with difference, a sense of novelty and freshness with old or customary Objects, *a more than usual State of Emotion with more than usual Order, Self-possession & Judgment with Enthusiasm and vehement Feeling*, and which while it blends and harmonizes the Natural and the Artificial still subordinates Art to Nature, the manner to the matter, and our admiration of the Poet to our sympathy with the Images, Passions, Characters and Incidents of the Poem. (*LL* 1: 245, emphasis added)

Coleridge's implicit account of how Shakespeare 'treated' himself by regulating his potentially dangerous passion is comparable to other powerful narratives of imaginative self-healing of the period, most importantly perhaps, to Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Recently, Martin Wallen has written about the importance of the analysis of symptoms with

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[17] These themes are elaborated throughout the lectures, e.g.: 'The wonder was how he should thus disguise himself & have such miraculous powers of conveying the Poet without even raising in us the consciousness of him.' (*LL* 1: 290)

respect to Coleridge's self-fashioning as a critic, while G. S. Rousseau and D. B. Haycock have provided an overall diagnosis of Coleridge in which his obsession with self-diagnostics plays a central role.[18] Writing his own 'character' through recording his own symptoms is one of the activities Coleridge pursues in his notebooks, with a belief that the 'outness' gained through the medium of writing might have a healing influence on his own precarious mental state.[19] What I am suggesting here is that in Coleridge's criticism, Shakespeare's works as 'fragments of his mind' are perceived as analogous to symptoms that both reveal a pathological tendency, and secure the mind's emancipation from it, by giving a distinct shape to something chaotic. The 'natural flow' of the plays is thus partly understandable as a flow of symptoms, offering a seemingly endless task for the critic who interprets them.

2

In this chapter I am going to look at the connections between passion, analysis, and imagination as they are elaborated in the character criticism of Coleridge and his 'philosophical critic' predecessor, William Richardson. Together with Maurice Morgann's *Essay on the dramatic character of Sir John Falstaff* (1777), Richardson's *Philosophical Analysis* (1774) is usually recognized as the founding text of eighteenth-century character criticism. But whereas Morgann's witty defence of Sir John's 'courage' is presented more or less as a gentlemanly pastime, Richardson's aims are overtly philosophical: they share the professed aims of moral philosophy as defined in the second half of the century. Hume in his seminal essay 'Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion' asserts that 'nothing is so proper to cure us of [...] delicacy of passion, as the

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[18] Wallen states that 'Coleridge's efforts to cure himself are [...] synonymous with his creation of a public role for himself as an author.' Martin Wallen, *City of Health, Fields of Disease: Revolutions in the Poetry, Medicine, and Philosophy of Romanticism* (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), p. 52. Rousseau and Haycock diagnose Coleridge as a hypochondriac, which involves over-interpretation of his own symptoms. See G. S. Rousseau and David Boyd Haycock, 'Framing Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Gut: Genius, Digestion, Hypochondria', in G. S. Rousseau ed., *Framing and Imagining Disease in Cultural History* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) pp. 231-265.

[19] For instance, he writes of recording one of 'the strangest and most painful Peculiarities' of his own nature, 'and my Motive or rather Impulse to do this seems to myself an effort to eloign and abalienate it from the dark Adyt of my own Being by a *visual* Outness – & not the wish for others to see it – ' (*CN* III: 4167) Neil Vickers argues that the therapeutic effect of journal-keeping was proposed by Thomas Beddoes, see *Coleridge and the Doctors 1795-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 159.

cultivating of that higher and more refined taste, which enables us to judge of the characters of men, of the compositions of genius, and of the productions of the nobler arts.'[20] Criticism, together with the study of character, is construed here as a 'cure' for excessive passion, or – in a later paragraph – as a practice that channels the violent passions and diverts them into more amiable ones.[21] Lord Kames and the other new rhetoricians seem to have accepted this educatory role for criticism, however, they also noted a further advantage, which made their critical stance truly 'rational' or 'philosophical'.[22] Kames in his Introduction writes: 'he will not disown, that all along it has been his view, to explain the nature of man, considered as a sensitive being capable of pleasure and pain'.[23] What is here almost casually acknowledged is a concern that unites his efforts with those of Campbell, Smith, Priestley, Richardson – and Coleridge. Namely, that criticism is not only directed to the cultivation of the passions, the refinement of taste and sensibility, and so on, but also to the philosophical analysis of these powers. Philosophical criticism thus assumes the role of 'a kind of applied epistemology', as James Mulvihill writes of Campbell's work.[24]

Conceived in this way, philosophical criticism produces a useful knowledge of exactly those aspects of the mind that had been regarded as the most mysterious, but also the most important to understand in the tradition of moral philosophy: the passions and their interaction with the faculties. Hugh Blair gives voice to a basic consensus among philosophical critics when he states:

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[20] David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), p. 5.

[21] 'But perhaps I have gone too far, in saying that a cultivated taste for the polite arts extinguishes the passions, and renders us indifferent to those objects which are so fondly pursued by the rest of mankind. On further reflection, I find, that it rather improves our sensibility for all the tender and agreeable passions; at the same time that it renders the mind incapable of the rougher and more boisterous emotions.' *Essays*, pp. 5-6.

[22] See Kames: 'The science of rational criticism tends to improve the heart no less than the understanding. It tends, in the first place, to moderate the selfish affections: by sweetening and harmonizing the temper, it is a strong antidote to the turbulence of passion and violence of pursuit' etc. (*Elements*, 1: 9) Richardson states that examining Shakespeare's characters is 'an exercise no less adopted to improve the heart, than to inform the understanding.' (*A Philosophical Analysis*, p. 42) See also Blair's second lecture: 'A cultivated taste increases sensibility to all the tender and humane passions, by giving them frequent exercise; while it tends to weaken the more violent and fierce emotions.' (Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* [London, 1824], p. 802)

[23] *Elements*, 1: 14.

[24] Mulvihill, *Upstart Talents: Rhetoric and the Career of Reason in English Romantic Discourse, 1790-1820* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), p. 37.

taste and sound criticism [...] improve us not a little in the most valuable part of all philosophy, the philosophy of human nature. For such disquisitions are very intimately connected with the knowledge of ourselves. They necessarily lead us to reflect on operations of the imagination, and the movements of the heart; and increase our acquaintance with some of the most refined feelings which belong to our frame.[25]

Blair here implies that, strangely enough, normally we are not 'acquainted' with our own feelings, and therefore need *belles lettres* and criticism to assist us. This assumption about a hidden self-to-be-revealed is what justifies the project of 'philosophical criticism', and it is also what makes it such an influential discourse in articulating the subject through the long eighteenth century. Analysing the self through criticism is a mode of self-refinement, because it involves a reflection on the most 'refined feelings' of the self. Or, to put it differently, in order to cure or to channel the passions (as Hume had proposed), the reader must first be taught to see and understand them through literature. In short, readers must be taught to read passion, and it is the philosophical critic who is entitled to teach them how to do this. With the help of polite writing, Blair argues, criticism and *belles lettres* can 'bring to light various springs of action, which, without their aid, might have passed unobserved; and which, though of a delicate nature, frequently exert a powerful influence on several departments of human life'.[26] Criticism, therefore, is a quasi-scientific inquiry into the mind which is, at the same time, necessarily moral, because it works towards producing a moral subject. Arguably, it is this moral surplus which is figured as the 'pleasantness' attending on this type of inquiry, which is emphasised in the writings of all philosophical critics. George Campbell, for instance, states that a philosophical rhetoric 'leads directly to an acquaintance with ourselves; it not only traces the operations of the intellect and imagination, but discloses the lurking springs of action in the heart. In this view it is perhaps the surest and the shortest, as well as the pleasantest way of arriving at the science of the human mind.'[27]

Criticism in all these different manifestations – as 'rhetoric', *'belles lettres'* or 'criticism' proper – has mutated from being a beneficial entertainment for

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[25] Blair, *Lectures,* p. 801.

[26] Blair, *Lectures,* p. 801.

[27] Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,* 1-2 (London and Edinburgh, 1776), 1: 16. See also Richardson's claim that poets 'rectify and enlarge the sentiments of the philosopher [...] conducting us to the temple of truth, by an easier and more agreeable path than that of mere metaphysics'. (*Philosophical Analysis,* p. 26)

polite readers into a powerful (though 'pleasant') philosophical tool, one that can bring to light the most important hidden knowledge, that of ourselves. For Coleridge, too, 'know thyself' was the crucial critical injunction throughout his lectures. Speaking about literature, he consistently relied on images of visibility, of bringing to light; as in 1811, when he reportedly said of Shakespeare:

> he availed himself of his psychological genius to develop all the minutiae of the human heart; – that he shewing us the thing makes visible what we should otherwise not have seen: just as after looking at distant objects through a Telescope when we behold them afterwards with the naked eye ~~only~~ we see them with greater distinctness than we should otherwise have done (*LL* 1: 306)

This is very close to the image of poetry constructed by 'philosophical criticism' in the preceding decades. Poetry teaches readers to discern things that are hardly visible otherwise – either because they are too distant, or because they are too close to the self. The latter is suggested by a number of images about poetry's power to magnify, and thus to make visible, the 'minutiae' of the heart. Richardson, for instance, claims for poetry the power to disclose the secrets of other minds, which also means that it can indirectly reveal 'feeble and decaying principles' in one's own. Therefore, 'by considering the copy and portrait of minds different from our own, and by reflecting on these latent and unexerted principles, augmented and promoted by imagination, we may discover many new tints, and uncommon features.'[28] Coleridge's much-used metaphor of the Brocken spectre is a variation on this theme:

> In the plays of Shakespeare every man sees himself without knowing that he sees himself as in the phenomena of nature, in the mist of the mountain a traveller beholds his own figure but the glory round the head distinguishes it from a mere vulgar copy; or as a man traversing the Brocken in the north of Germany at sunrise when the glorious beams are shot ascance the mountain: he sees before him a figure of gigantic proportions; & of such elevated dignity, that ~~they~~ he only knows it to be himself by the similarity of action (*LL* 1: 352)

The important difference between this view and that of Richardson is that here the textual 'figure' is projected by the reader, albeit unconsciously, while in Richardson the

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[28] *Philosophical Analysis*, 25.

'augmenting' imagination is presumably that of the poet. However – and this is implied by both Richardson and Coleridge – literature as an 'augmenting' and distancing medium, which renders the self legible, has to be first interpreted by the philosophical critic. If he does not establish what to look for, when reading a character, the reader may never recognise himself or herself in their own textual image.

In 1811, just before referring to Humphry Davy ('who had reduced the art of Chemistry to a science') Coleridge described his own critical project as a species of enlightenment and thus as comparable to that of Davy. His stance in lecturing 'was not as a man carrying furniture into an empty house but as a man entering a well furnished dwelling and exhibiting light – which enabled a man to see what was in his own mind' (*LL* 1: 286). Admittedly, what Coleridge wanted his audience to 'see' was quite different from what previous critics like Kames had suggested, not to mention Locke whose image of the mind as a dark room might ultimately lurk behind Coleridge's figure.[29] However, the strategy of making use of literature in this way had its origins in moral philosophy, or rather in the philosophical criticism which developed from it.[30] It is worth noting that this was also recognised by members of Coleridge's audience. In 1811, for instance, H. C. Robinson (in *The Times*, 19 Nov) referred to Coleridge's lectures as 'his moral philosophy', claiming that unlike most critics, 'his great object appears to be to exhibit in poetry the principles of moral wisdom, and the laws of our intellectual nature, which form the basis of social existence' (*LL* 1: 194). In 1813, the *Bristol Gazette* wrote that their aim in publishing a report of one of Coleridge's lectures was '[t]o gain an insight into human nature, to enjoy the writings and genius of the first Dramatic poet of any age, and above all to obtain that knowledge of ourselves which the lectures of Mr. Coleridge, rich in imagery, language, and wisdom, were calculated to produce' (*LL* 1: 576).

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[29] Locke, *Essay*, II, xi, 17. According to Locke, the 'furniture' of the mind is acquired gradually through empirical experience, whereas Coleridge stresses with Kant that it is the structure of the mind which enables empirical experience in the first place. But Locke's enlightenment stance – 'I pretend not to teach, but to enquire' (ibid.) – also describes Coleridge's position in the above passage.

[30] Paul Hamilton observes about Richardson's *Philosophical Analysis*: 'Philosophical method is in this case inferior, and must give place to poetical insight. This way of thinking presages the Romantic claims for the philosophical status of the poet, and for the importance of the poet's language as irreplaceable philosophical evidence.' (*Coleridge's Poetics*, p. 34) See also Stanley Stewart, '"Philosophy" in Richardson's *Philosophical Analysis* of Shakespeare', *Cythara*, 43 (2004), 18-34.

However, the attempt to 'know ourselves' – and specifically, our *hidden selves* – through literature raises a number of issues that had to be tackled by Coleridge as well as by earlier philosophical critics. Even if they all agreed that language provided a unique insight into the operations of the mind (since words were understood as bound up with feeling no less than with thought), the analysis of figures of passion was neither comprehensive, nor scientific enough in itself. That is, there was no theoretical limit either to the discrimination of passions or to that of rhetorical figures. Adam Smith, who was above all interested in the analysis of 'mechanisms' (indeed, he described language as one), was famously impatient with lists of figures, as well as with traditional catalogues of passion.[31] And even Lord Kames, who most carefully pursued passions in all their shades and variants, could express exasperation. Where did one passion end, and where did another begin? Why was a passion with different objects still identified as the 'same', and at what point did a passion with the same object become different? In the section 'On Emotions and Passions' – after about a hundred pages of analysis – Kames admits that the 'growth and decay of passions and emotions traced through all their mazes, is a subject too extensive for an undertaking like the present', although he goes on to give a 'cursory view' for almost another hundred pages. As Adela Pinch has remarked, Kames's work could be read by his contemporaries as simply a collection of affecting quotations, mostly from Shakespeare, rather than the coherent philosophical 'system' it aspired to be.[32] It is symptomatic, then, that in John Walker's *Elements of Elocution* (a work indebted to Kames, among others), we find an inventory of 'passions' ranging from 'Delight on viewing a statue' to 'Refusing to lend money', with matching

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[31] After describing a few passions, Smith asserts: 'The different passions all proceed in like manner from different states of mind and outward circumstances. But it would be both endless and useless to go through all these different affections and passions in this manner.' *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J. C. Bryce, *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, 6 vols, gen. ed. A. S. Skinner, vol IV (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985 [originally published by Oxford University Press, 1983]), p. 69.

[32] Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), p. 165. But cf. Coleridge's remark in *The Friend* (Dec. 7 1809): 'How often are not the Moralist and the Metaphysician obliged for the happiest illustrations of general truths and the subordinate laws of human thought and action to quotations not only from the tragic characters but equally from the Jacques, Falstaff, and even from the Fools and Clowns of Shakespeare, or from the Miser, Hypochondriast and Hypocrite of Moliere.' (*F* 2: 31).

Shakespearean passages, which Walker supposed to be helpful in inducing, studying, or practising the expression of any given passion, as occasion required.[33]

What one sometimes suspects with Kames is quite clear with Walker: that the list and description of the passions is deduced from Shakespeare, without prior analysis of the passions themselves. Could the passions of the mind be distinguished from each other without the aid of literature? Interestingly enough, this problem is glanced at in one of Coleridge's remarks on the 'miracle' of Shakespeare:

> I would try Shakespear compared with any other writer by this criterion – Make out your amplest Catalogue of all the Human Faculties – as Reason or the Moral Law, the Will, the *feeling* of the coincidence of the two (a feeling sui generis, & demonstratio demonstrationum) called the Conscience, the Understanding or Prudence, Wit, Fancy, Imagination, Judgement/ – and then the Objects on which these can be employed, as the Beauties of Nature, the terrors or seeming Caprices of Nature, the Realities & the Capabilities, i.e. the actual & the Ideal of the Human Mind, conceived as Individual, or as Social Being – as in Innocence, or in guilt, in a Play-Paradise or a War-field of Temptation/ & then compare with him under each of these Heads – I abhor Beauties & Selections in general – & even here if the effect of the Poetry were considered – but as Proof Positive of unrivalled Excellence I should like to see it – . (*LL* 1: 127-8)

What Coleridge wishes to see 'as Proof Positive' of Shakespeare's genius is something quite similar to what already existed, at least in sections of works like those of Walker or Kames. He proposes a rather loose 'Catalogue' of mental faculties (Reason, Understanding, Fancy, etc.) and feelings (Conscience), together with their respective objects (beauties and terrors of Nature), and of general dispositions or affective states ('Innocence', 'Play-Paradise', Temptation, etc.). This catalogue, in turn, could be furnished with passages from Shakespeare, displaying or addressing the same mental phenomena. Clearly, Coleridge's suggestion is that the two would necessarily match. But it is a characteristically half-hearted suggestion, and one that Coleridge could never have realized, not only because it was impossible (it is hard to imagine how all 'the actual and the Ideal of the Human Mind' as 'Individual or as Social Being' could be

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[33] John Walker, *Elements of Elocution. Being the Substance of a Course of Lectures on the Art of Reading*, 2 vols (London, 1781). Coleridge was familiar with Walker's rhyming *Dictionary of the English Language* (1775) and he might have seen this work too. On Walker cf. Paul C. Edwards, 'Elocution and Shakespeare: An Episode in the History of Literary Taste', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 1984, pp. 305-314.

turned into a list) but also because the drawing up of such a catalogue was not in accord with his most important critical insights and assumptions. The mind, for Coleridge, is a system – and a highly hierarchical one at that – and this means that the individual faculties and feelings cannot be studied independently of all the rest. On an even more fundamental level, Coleridge seems to imply that they cannot be studied without relying on the 'outness' of literature. Throughout his lectures, Shakespeare's text functions as the 'other' through which the mind can be grasped, which means, by implication, that even the terms of such an imaginary catalogue would be necessarily traceable to literary representation in one way or another. Writing of the philosophy informing Coleridge's character criticism, Elinor S. Shaffer observed that according to Coleridge, the self can only be grasped through its representations.[34] Evidently, he regarded Shakespeare's plays as offering the most sophisticated representations that not only supplemented, but enabled philosophical analysis.

Moral philosophy had been manifestly dependent on literature and especially on Shakespeare for at least half a century, even if it lacked Coleridge's insight to recognise this as inevitable. After Kames and his followers had analysed the habits of passion through a taxonomy of (Shakespeare's) passionate rhetoric, William Richardson proposed 'character' as a new primary framework for analysis. 'Character' supported a more 'scientific', and more 'methodical' treatment of the passions and their influences, in so far as it implied a hierarchical, structural understanding of the mind, foreshadowing that of Coleridge. Of course, Richardson at this point had at his disposal a rich discourse on 'character' that had been evolving in the preceding decades in criticism, philosophy, and fiction.[35] Most pertinently, the New Rhetoric adapted from its classical sources a number of ways in which 'character' could be construed.[36] Adam Smith whose 'Lectures

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[34]Elinor S. Shaffer, 'Iago's Malignity Motivated: Coleridge's Unpublished "Opus Magnum"', in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 19 (1968), 195-203.

[35] Cf. Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Lynch shows that the reading for 'inner' character which emerged from the second half of the 18th century was a means for acquiring 'deep' and complex selves for middle-class readers, which had a market value in the new (cultural) economy. A historical survey of the emergence of 'character' in dramatic criticism is provided by Joseph W. Donohue Jr. in his *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

[36] J. C. Bryce points out Smith's interest in *ethologia* (a tradition stemming from Quintillian) and Character (from Theophrastus to La Bruyère) and notes: 'It is significant that the first critic to publish a series of studies of Shakespeare's characters, William Richardson, the Glasgow Professor of Humanity from 1773, was a student of Adam Smith's' (Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, p. 17).

on Rhetoric and *Belles Lettres*' Richardson probably attended, drew a strong connection between 'character' and 'style'. Thus, instead of studying individual rhetorical figures, he paid more attention to the *configuration* of rhetorical devices which constituted a mode of expression unique to the given person or the 'assumed' character. Keeping one's style thus came to be understood as staying in character, and Smith was unforgiving if he detected symptoms of 'affectation', that is, of feigning character.[37] He required, above all, sincerity, but this did not prevent him from dealing with sincerity as a rhetorical effect.

Kames also assumed that character appears in language, albeit at some remove. He stated, for instance, that 'Passions receive a tincture from every peculiarity of character [...]. Hence the following rule concerning dramatic and epic compositions, That a passion be adjusted to the character, the sentiments to the passion, and the language to the sentiments.'[38] (Compare this with one of Coleridge's early notes: 'We may divide a dramatic poet's characteristics [...] into Language, Passion, and Character – always bearing in mind, that these must act and react on each other/ the Language inspired by the Passion, the Language & Passion modified & differenced by the Character' [*LL* 1: 85]). However, Kames took little real interest in the analysis of character, apart from observing that the gift of creating credible ones belonged almost exclusively to Shakespeare. Indeed, character drawing required such an intimate knowledge of the mind's hidden operations that it could be compared to the painter's necessary anatomical skills: 'A painter, in order to represent the various attitudes of the body, ought to be intimately acquainted with muscular motion: no less intimately acquainted with emotions and characters ought a writer to be, in order to represent various attitudes of the mind' (– compare this with Coleridge's assertion that in *Venus and Adonis* Shakespeare was 'at once the Painter & Analyst' of the passions [*LL* 1: 242]).[39]

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[37] Cf. Smith's definition of what is agreeable in style: 'It is when all the thoughts are justly and properly expressed in such a manner as shews the passion they affected the author with, and so that all seems naturall and easy. He never seems to act out of character but speaks in a manner not only suitable to the Subject but to the character he naturally inclines to.' (*Lectures*, 55)

[38] *Elements of Criticism* 1: 451.

[39] *Elements of Criticism* 1: 1: 451-2.

Smith's student, Richardson, also took for granted the importance of structure and mechanism with respect to character. At the same time, he opened up a new area of investigation, which, he hoped, would prove as useful for moral philosophy as for criticism. He started to 'treat' Shakespeare's fictitious characters as analogous to medical cases, displaying disorders that could be explained with reference to the character's general 'constitution', or to a particular configuration (usually an imbalance) in the operation of the faculties, the ruling passion and the moral sense. In short, he assumed that literature could provide clues towards an anatomy of the mind by providing, more directly, evidence of its possible pathologies. Earlier, Kames had stated that tragedy displays 'disorder in the internal constitution'.[40] Richardson, for his part, turned to disorder to demonstrate order. This is comparable with Coleridge's well-known method of character analysis; the *Bristol Gazette*'s report of a lecture in 1813 highlights all the necessary components:

> He has shewn that the intricacies of Hamlet's character may be traced to Shakespeare's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy. [...] He thought it essential to the understanding of Hamlet's character, that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds. [...] if there was an overbalance in the contemplative faculty, man becomes the creature of meditation, and loses the power of action. (*LL* 1: 543)

It is possible that members of the Bristol audience (like the journalist here) recognised the philosophical underpinnings of Coleridge's method more readily than the miscellaneous London audience. In London, his habit of discussing character within the wider context of 'human nature' was sometimes perceived as utterly idiosyncratic.[41] Nevertheless, around 1819 Coleridge could identify the genesis of his own criticism by stating, famously: 'Hamlet was the Play, or rather Hamlet himself was the Character, in the intuition and exposition of which I first made my turn for Philosophical criticism, and especially for the insight into the genius of Shakespeare, *noticed* first among my

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[40] *Elements of Criticism*, 2: 380.
[41] Cf. James Amphlett's description of the lecture on *Romeo and Juliet*: 'If he begins on any particular passion or principle, he commonly works about, from some strange and incomprehensible impetus, till he involves himself in a mass of nebulous matter that is as remote from the text as possible! [...] He pursued his mining enquiry till love was lost in the boundless wilds of thought; and Shakespeare himself disappeared in the ocean of human nature.' (*LL* 1: 321)

Acquaintances' (*LL* 2: 293). Much has been written about this claim and its significance with respect to Coleridge's critical originality. What I mean to emphasize, however, is one of its possible implications, namely that Coleridge's interpretation of Hamlet could be immediately recognised ('*noticed*') as 'Philosophical criticism' by his friends. If this is so, it can only be explained by assuming that philosophical analysis of character (especially of Hamlet, to whom Richardson returned again and again) was a framework readily available for members of Coleridge's circle.[42]

The fact that the characters studied by Richardson and Coleridge were fictitious was not a hindrance for the exposition of their moral philosophy, but rather a key advantage. They both aimed at knowing the self, and went about it by studying imaginary ones. Richardson in his 'Introduction' explains that in real life the mind could never be so minutely analysed, either through introspection or through observation; moreover the analysis itself could never be objective: we are as biased with respect to others as with respect to ourselves.[43] Characteristically, Richardson's account of the dilemma of moral philosophy (the '[d]ifficulty of making just experiments') intersects with the discourse of Romanticism exactly at this point.[44] He acknowledges the need for knowing our feelings and at the same time the theoretical impossibility of it in a passage strangely reminiscent of Wordsworth:

> Or by what powerful spell can the abstracted philosopher, whose passions are all chastened and subdued, whose heart never throbs with desire, prevail on the amorous affections to visit the ungenial clime of his breast, and submit their features to the rigour of his unrelenting scrutiny!

[42] In February 1804, Coleridge wrote to Sir George Beaumont: 'Thus I shall exhibit the characteristics of the Plays – & of the mind – of Shakespeare – and of every character at greater or less Length a philosophical Analysis & Justification, in the spirit of that analysis of the character of Hamlet with which you were much pleased...' (*CL* 2: 1054) As John Beer argues, this letter supports Coleridge's claim about the origins of his criticism. See Beer, 'Coleridge's Originality as a Critic of Shakespeare', in *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 19:2 (Fall 1986), 51-69, p. 58.

[43] 'We can know no more of the internal feelings of another than he expresses by outward signs or language; and consequently he may feel many emotions that we are unable easily to conceive. Nor can we consider human characters and affections as altogether indifferent to us: They are not mere objects of curiosity; they excite love or hatred, approbation or dislike. But, when the mind is influenced by these affections, and by others that often attend them, the judgement is apt to be biassed, and the force of the principle we contemplate is increased or diminished accordingly.' (*Philosophical Analysis*, 22)

[44] Noel B. Jackson argues that the problem of the *experimentum crucis*, at the heart of 18th-century moral philosophy, is related to the 'experimental' projects of the early Romantics. Jackson, 'Critical Conditions: Coleridge, "Common Sense", and the Literature of Self-Experiment', in *ELH*, 70: 1 (Spring 2003), 117-149.

> The philosopher, accustomed to moderate his passions, rather than indulge them, is of all men least able to provoke their violence; and in order to succeed in his researches, he must recal the idea of feelings perceived at some former period; or he must seize their impression, and mark their operations at the very moment they are accidentally excited.[45]

As Richardson goes on – rather eloquently – to argue, both methods mentioned here are strictly speaking impossible. In a state of passion, one cannot observe and analyse the passion's progress, and recollection cannot evoke what had not been registered at the time of its first occurrence.[46] Something rather similar is formulated in Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', where the 'chastened and subdued' mind has no access to its former passionate state ('I cannot paint what then I was').

   One finds Wordsworth trying out different solutions to this dilemma throughout his early writings, from observing the self's passion in the other (in the case of 'Tintern Abbey', in his sister's eyes), to the paradoxical idea of emotion 'recollected in tranquillity'. Generally, he seems to have believed that knowing the passions is possible only through the imaginative medium of poetry.[47] This position is also implicit in Joanna Baillie's 'experimental' project, the *Plays on the Passions*, in which she undertakes a quasi-scientific anatomy of the mind through fiction.[48] The concept of anatomy also appears in Wordsworth, for instance in Oswald's exclamation in *The Borderers*: 'We dissect / The senseless body, and why not the mind?' The violence implied in this proposition conveys Wordsworth's disapproval of the *hybris* of moral philosophy (and specifically of Godwin) in objectifying the mind. But the play itself is

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[45] *Philosophical Analysis*, 16-7.

[46] 'Seizing' the passion is impossible: 'The passions are swift and evanescent: We cannot arrest their celerity, nor suspend them in the mind during pleasure. You are moved by strong affection: Seize the opportunity, let none of its motions escape you, and observe every sentiment it excites. You cannot. While the passion prevails, you have no leisure for speculation; and be assured it hath suffered abatement, if you have time to philosophize.' (18) Retrospective analysis is also impossible: 'To be acquainted with the nature of any passion, we must know by what combination of feelings it is excited; to what temperament it is allied; in what proportion it gathers force and swiftness; what propensities, and what associations of ideas either retard or accelerate its impetuosity; and how it may be opposed, weakened, or suppressed. But, if these circumstances escape the most vigilant and abstracted attention, when the mind is actually agitated, how can they be recollected when the passion is entirely quieted?' (18-9)

[47] Cf. his [*Essay on Morals*] and Alan Bewell's comments in his *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 11.

[48] According to Dorothy McMillan, 'the dramatic anatomy of the human passions formed the foundation on which she built her [...] plays, her *Metrical Legends*, 1812, and her *Fugitive Verses*, 1840'. See her '"Dr" Baillie', in *1798: The Year of the* Lyrical Ballads, 68-92, p. 79.

no less an attempt at 'dissecting' minds, even if in a less violent manner, through fiction. Wordsworth in his prefatory essay even explicates the diagnosis offered in the play itself, by what is clearly a 'philosophical analysis' of the character of Rivers/Oswald.[49] Twenty years later, Coleridge praises Shakespeare's unique method of constructing character by calling him 'a comparative Anatomist' (*LL* 2: 151), but throughout his lectures he bears witness to his power of laying bare the self's inner structure through fiction.

In his 'Introduction' Richardson justifies the analysis of fictitious characters as a last resort, in the face of the theoretical impossibility of getting to know the passions.[50] For this reason, it is not quite correct to say that he analyzes literary characters as if they were real people; rather, he analyzes them as he would like to analyze real people, if he could. He uses imaginative writing as a heuristic tool for mapping aspects of the mind, which otherwise would be inaccessible. An important advantage of this method is that Shakespeare's pathologies are fully drawn; they run their full course in the plays, which is never the case when one examines living 'patients'. Richardson's sketches might indeed be compared to a particular type of medical case-history, which became popular during the same period.[51] John Haslam, in 1798, offered a retrospective diagnosis of twenty inmates of the Bethlem Hospital (ranging from the melancholy and the manic to the deluded), by analysing their respective diseases after their death. As Allan Ingram writes, '[i]t is precisely because they are dead that he has been able to perform post-mortem examinations on them all, opening each skull and describing its contents, searching for abnormalities, finding

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[49] Coleridge mentions a plan to publish *Osorio* and *The Borderers* in one volume, with 'small prefaces containing an analysis of our principal characters' in *CL* 1: 400.

[50] Richardson signals his turn to literature in the following passage: 'Were it possible, during the continuance of a violent passion, to seize a faithful impression of its features, and an exact delineation of the images it creates in us, such a valuable copy would guide the philosopher in tracing the perplexed and intricate mazes of metaphysical inquiry.' (*Philosophical Analysis*, 23)

[51] On the appearance of the 'case history' in Germany in the same period see Andreas Gailus, 'A Case of Individuality: Karl Philipp Moritz and the Magazine for Empirical Psychology', *New German Critique*, 79 (Winter 2000), 67-105. See also Frederick Burwick on the 'more detailed literary attention to the "case history" of madness' which 'followed a new medical interest in nervous disorders and the rise of psychology as a scientific discipline', in *Poetic Madness and the Romantic Imagination* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), p. 11. Neil Vickers writes about the importance of case study in Thomas Beddoes's 'Essay on the Nature and Prevention of Some of the Disorders Commonly Called Nervous' (in volume 3 of *Hygeia*), in *Coleridge and the Doctors*, pp. 146-7.

none.'[52] Richardson was confronted with the same problem of how to observe mental events as they are experienced by the living, but tackled it on the plane of literary criticism. He chose to analyse written 'closed' cases instead of real ones. But in spite of his dependence on fiction, his all-important critical assumption is that the characters he analysed had been drawn, as it were 'originally', in strict accordance with the laws of nature. Analysing the melancholy of Jacques, for instance, he offers advice about how to control an illness which he thought widespread among his contemporaries.[53] Shakespeare, obviously, fully knew and 'displayed' the causes, although it took a moral philosopher to read them and thus frame the diagnosis. All in all, by establishing the parameters of his 'philosophical analysis', Richardson accomplished a remarkable feat: he made criticism appear more 'scientific' than before, but at the same time he made the science of the mind more fully immersed in fiction than ever.

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Richardson's philosophical diagnostics serve a double purpose, in which the attempt to 'read' the operation of the passions is ultimately subordinated to a higher moral end. He believes that to know the passions is essential for regulating them, insofar as they are capable of being regulated at all. Understanding their mechanism, seeing what he calls 'the labyrinths of the heart' as if from above, is the only conceivable way to become a free moral agent.[54] Throughout his interpretations of Shakespeare's characters we can trace a consistent strategy of inscribing a moral perspective – that of the impartial spectator, to use Adam Smith's highly relevant terminology – simultaneously into Shakespeare's text, his own readings, and his implied readers' minds. A remarkable instance is when, writing about Hamlet, Richardson identifies delicacy of moral sentiment as the character's ruling impulse, and turns subsequently to discuss human nature in general: 'there is in human nature, a supreme, and, in many

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[52] Allan Ingram with Michelle Faubert, *Cultural Constructions of Madness in Eighteenth Century Writing* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 6.
[53] Richardson writes: 'how happens it that a temper disposed to beneficence, and addicted to social enjoyment, becomes solitary and morose? Changes of this kind are not unfrequent: And, if researches into the origin or cause of a distemper can direct us in the discovery of an antidote or of a remedy, our present inquiry is of importance.' (*Philosophical Analysis*, p. 156)
[54] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 199

cases, a powerful principle that pronounces sentence on the conduct of mankind...' – offering a precise rendering of Smith's theory of moral judgement.[55] This is followed by an endorsing use of the first person plural ('our nature') and finally, of 'you', both as a general subject embracing Hamlet, the critic and mankind, and as a specific address, almost as an instruction, to the reader: 'So delicate is your affection, and so refined your sense of moral excellence, when the moral faculty is softened into a tender attachment, that the sanctity and purity of the heart you love must appear to you without a stain.'[56] Richardson is constructing the 'moral sense' of Shakespeare in this way, and continuously invites his readers to make it their own. According to this scheme, adopting the perspective of the moral spectator corresponds to being able to understand and to judge the morality of the other, even if this rehearsal of moral spectatorship is played out with imaginary characters, in the theatre of the mind.

Richardson does not make a secret out of the moral intentions of his own criticism. On the first pages of his book, he introduces the significance of 'knowing oneself' in a passage that sounds more preacherly than critical:

> By reducing it to practice, we learn the dignity of human nature: Our emulation is excited by contemplating our divine original: And, by discovering the capacity and extent of our faculties, we become desirous of higher improvement. Nor would the practice of this apophthegm enable us merely to elevate and enlarge our desires, but also to purify and refine them; to withstand the sollicitations of grovelling appetites, and subdue their violence: For improvement in virtue consists in duly regulating our inferior appetites, no less than in cultivating the principles of benevolence and magnanimity.[57]

To know the self, and especially its hidden and potentially dangerous inclinations, is the prerequisite for transcending its imperfections. Knowledge leads to freedom and improvement – this belief informs Richardson's enquiry. Characteristically, his moral subject has a double way of looking 'inside': it sees and, by implication, controls what is 'inferior' in itself, and at the same time it 'discovers' the power of its own faculties and 'contemplates' its own future perfection. Coleridge's lectures are shot through and

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[55] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 98.
[56] *Philosophical Analysis*, 102.
[57] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 4.

through with a very similar conviction about the role of literature in 'perfecting' the self. Indeed, Richardson's ambition of 'contemplating our divine original' through an analysis of Shakespeare might very well describe what Coleridge professed to do in his lectures. It is symptomatic that this crucial element of his criticism has been rarely discussed, and was treated either as empty rhetoric compared to the 'substance' of his interpretations, or as another burst of Coleridge's (German) idealism, which required no further explanation. But the fact is that a number of – indeed, highly rhetorical – passages on moral perfectibility, which are so alien to most readers today, were received, by his contemporaries, as the high points of his lectures.[58] In 1811, Tomalin reported him speaking of poetry to the London Philosophical Society:

> We take the purest parts & combine it with our own minds, with our own hopes, with our own inward yearnings after perfection, and being frail & imperfect, we wish to have a shadow, a sort of prophetic existence present to us, which tells us what we are not, but yet, blending in us, much that we are, promises great things of what we may be. It is the Truth (& poetry results from that instinct the effort of perfecting ourselves) – the conceiving that which is imperfect to be perfect & blending the nobler mind with the meaner object. (*LL* 1:224)

Coleridge had a far more developed theory than Richardson about how the 'divine original' could be intuited through studying literature. Engaging with poetry, and especially with Shakespeare, exercised the higher faculties of the mind instead of the 'lower appetites' (which, in literature, he usually associated with novels). Reflecting on the activity of the higher faculties in reading could thus serve as something like experimental proof of mankind's potential for perfection. 'By the cultivation of our highest faculties we are alone superior to everything around us', he claims, 'and by the power of imagination (of which there was both intellectual and moral) in our present imperfect state, are we enabled to anticipate the glories and honors of a future existence; without these we are inferior to the beast that perishes.' (*LL* 1: 587) In ideal circumstances, then, the reading experience was in itself morally educative. At the same

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[58] See for instance Collier's enthusiasm: 'The Lecturer delivered one of the [most] beautiful passages in his whole discourse whether we consider the matter or the manner. I have not the eloquent words he employed but the effect of them was to impress upon the mind that as Poetry might in some sort be considered the language of Heaven, so the enjoyment of it, that exquisite delight we received from it was a sort of type or prophecy of a future happy & blissful existence.' (*LL* 1: 191)

time, Coleridge also believed that in his characters Shakespeare displayed the inherent potentials of the different faculties and passions: 'He has as it were prophesied what each man in his different passions would have produced' (*LL* 2: 121). Moral education through literature therefore had two components (this is somewhat similar to Richardson's double introspection): on the one had, it was based on reflection on the reader's own mental activity, and on the other, on reflection on the 'minds' which Shakespeare so truly represented. One of Coleridge's main critical insights was that these two modes of reflection were interdependent. The characters could not be interpreted without the active contribution of the reader's imagination, feeling, and understanding. Moreover, they 'called forth' the higher faculties precisely because, as Coleridge insisted, they were the products of Shakespeare's imaginative self-analysis.

Coleridge's much-discussed insistence on Shakespeare's method of meditation as opposed to observation can be viewed in the context of the epistemological dilemma of moral philosophy I have outlined above. As we have seen, Richardson's conclusion was that the mind could not be directly observed, unless through fiction. Imagining the mind, Coleridge's Shakespeare is indeed a moral philosopher, an expert in the 'science of mental philosophy'. Being the results of his imaginative 'analysis', Shakespeare's important characters all embody a 'philosophical problem'; they are the products of intellectual enquiry and, at least theoretically, they manifest a fully intelligible inner structure.[59] Thanks to this assumption of underlying structure (which he shared with Richardson), Coleridge could regard each character as a uniquely configured 'case' manifesting, at the same time, universal laws of the mind: each character is 'individualized' by 'the different combinations and subordinations' of the mental powers.[60]

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[59]This is one of Coleridge's grand themes; he states e.g. that Shakespearean meditation 'looked at every character with interest – only as it contains in it something generally true and such as might be expressed in a philosophical Problem' (*LL* 1: 289); Mercutio was created by 'the observation of that mind which having formed a theory & a system of its in its own nature has remarked all things as examples of the truth and confirming him in that truth and above all enabling him to convey the truths of philosophy as mere effects derived from the outward watchings of life' (*LL* 1: 306). In his Critique of Bertram, Coleridge writes that '*Don Juan* is, from beginning to end, an *intelligible* character. As much so as the *Satan* of Milton.' (*BL* 2: 264) Shakespeare's characters are also prominently 'intelligible' in this sense.
[60] 'Sh. had virtually surveyed all the great component powers & Impulses of Human Nature – seen that the different combinations and subordinations were the individualizers of Men and shared their harmony by the effects of disproportion, wither of excess or deficiency. Scarcely a change which he has not exhibited

However, this structure could not become apparent without the reader's active engagement with the text, an activity that is at once imaginative, intellectual, and affective. Shakespeare's characters 'have to be *inferred* by the reader' (*LL* 1: 118), from the comments of other characters, from the character's own self-representations (which have to be taken with a pinch of salt) and from the design of the whole play.[61] Moreover, characters are 'representing Passions which no man appropriates to himself & yet acknowl[edg]es his share' (*LL* 2: 121). This means that through imagining them, the reader interprets his or her own feelings, as if from the outside. The main difference between Coleridge's character criticism and that of Richardson is exactly this emphasis on imaginative interaction with character. Richardson apparently turns to fiction because he cannot find a more direct means of analyzing the mind, and when he concedes that characters are partly the products of the reader's own imagination, he does so only with respect to badly drawn or incomplete characters.[62] Coleridge, by contrast, makes full and explicit use of the characters' fictitiousness. According to him, the passions represented in the plays have to be imagined by the reader in order to be understood, and since the reader contributes with his or her own imagined (but in another sense perfectly real) feelings, the passion understood will be in an oblique way his or her own: 'The reader often feels that some ideal trait of our own is caught or some nerve has been touched of which we were not before aware and it is proved that it has been touched by the vibration that we feel a sort of thrilling which tells us that we know ourselves the better for it.' (*LL* 1: 352) Reading Shakespeare thus gradually articulates a reading subject that had not been known or seen before, one that is born out of the interplay between the text and the reader's own imagination, understanding, and feeling.

It is worth taking a closer look at Coleridge's metaphor of reading as an oblique self-analysis through being 'touched'. Literature touching the 'strings' or 'cords' of the heart, even causing thrills and 'vibrations' in the body, is a recurrent image of the

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but in his most impressive and in his own favourite characters the subordination of the moral to the intellectual Being' (*LL* 1: 574).

[61] 'His mode of drawing character, not by any one description; but by such opinions, half right half wrong, as the friends enemies, & the man himself would give – & the Reader left to draw the *whole* – as in Polonius & Coriolanus –' (512)

[62] 'we figure ourselves the characters which the poet intends to exhibit; we take part in their interests, and enter into their passions as warmly as if they were naturally expressed. Thus it appears, that it *is* often with beings of our own formation that we lament or rejoice, imagining them to be the workmanship of another.' (*Philosophical Analysis*, 36)

discourse of sensibility, on which an important part of Coleridge's criticism relies. What is remarkable, however, is the way he enlists this trope under the philosophical banner of 'know thyself'. The inner self, his image suggests, is loosely analogous to the nervous system (which David Hartley tackled through experiments with vibrations).[63] The mind itself, Coleridge seems to say, is a similarly intricate system or structure, in which all the elements are interconnected, forming a fine web of sensibility. Moreover, this system is not fully known to the conscious self, and it cannot be made known unless it is 'touched', for instance by literature ('some nerve has been touched of which we were not before aware'). Analysis 'by touch' is Coleridge's characteristically gentle and at the same time clinical figure for the philosophical analysis of the mind, which had been described, more violently, as dissection or anatomy. Arguing against the new mode of criticism at the end of the eighteenth century, Vicesimus Knox had once referred to the 'philosophical critic' as an anatomist. What he opposed to such 'scientific' and thus implicitly violent examination was an approach to poetry with feeling (which he described as vibrations of the nervous system).[64] Coleridge's description of the self-reflexive reading experience as based on being 'touched' modulates knowledge and feeling into each other, and thus unites the advantages of both these approaches. Through reading Shakespeare he proposes a 'philosophical' anatomy of the mind, but one that is grounded in the affective component of literary experience.

Speaking of Shakespeare's powers of character-drawing, Coleridge again refers to the sense of touch, in order to illustrate Shakespeare's almost inhuman excess of sensibility. His concern here is to show how Capulet's anger in *Romeo and Juliet* is represented in a way that intimates the whole structure of his character:

> a worthy noble minded old man of high rank with all the impatience of character which is likely to accompany it. It is delightful to see the sensibilities of nature always so exquisitely called forth as if the Poet had the 100 arms of the Polypus, thrown out in all directions to catch the predominant feeling. We might see in Capulet the way in which Anger seizes hold of every thing that comes in its way as in the lines where Capulet is reproving Tybalt for his fierceness of behaviour [...]

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[63] Roy Porter describes how Hartley's anatomical experiments with nerves complemented his philosophical theory, in Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin, 2003), p. 350.
[64] Knox, 'On Modern Criticism', *Essays Moral and Literary* (London, 1782), 1: 129.

& then seeing the lights burn dimly he Capulet turns his anger agᵗ. ~~them~~ the servants: so that no one passion is to predominant [sic] but that it always includes all the parts of the character so that the reader never had a mere abstract of the passion as of anger or ambition but the whole man was presented: the one <predominant> passion acting as the leader of the band to the rest. (*LL* 1:306)

In this passage Coleridge speaks of two kinds of feeling. There is the character's 'predominant feeling', anger, which like an arm 'seizes hold of everything' around the self (after reproving Tybalt, Capulet vents his anger on the servants because 'the lights burn dimly'). At the same time, he talks about Shakespeare's exquisite capacity to feel — in a sense closer to 'touch', as the Polypus image suggests — the whole structure of the character through its minutest manifestations. Capulet's impatience with his servants reveals something about his anger at his son, and how he tries to control it; it also betrays his relation to his social status and his family. Thus one passionate figure (a 'turn', literally, to the servants) intimates the whole configuration of feelings, which constitutes his character.

This account suggests that Shakespeare presents an analysis of his characters through touching — indeed, irritating — them at certain points of their 'nervous' system. Coleridge, of course, used a number of different metaphors to refer to Shakespeare's probing into the mind. Some of the visual ones have already been mentioned (the telescope, the dark chamber, etc), and other more conventional ones could easily be added (like that of drawing or painting of portraits). But the analysis 'by touch' seems to be a uniquely Coleridgean development, which is especially important as it also features in his discussion of the reader's experience of the text. If moral philosophers like Richardson or Kames wanted to know the passions (or the feelings, the 'hidden' part of the self, etc.) through an analysis of literature, Coleridge seems to suggest that such knowledge *of* feeling is conceivable only as knowledge *through* feeling. As several scholars have argued, knowing and feeling shade into each other in the Coleridgean concept of touch, which he developed in numerous notebook speculations.[65] In these writings, touch is described as the primary sense of children

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[65] Raimonda Modiano, 'Coleridge's Views on Touch and Other Senses', *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, Vol 81 (1978), 28-41; David Miall, '"I See It Feelingly": Coleridge's Debt to Hartley', in *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J. B. Beer*, ed. by Tim Fulford and Morton D.

(indeed, of embryos) from which all other senses develop; it is also the sense through which we gain our most direct and fundamental knowledge of the self and of the world outside. More specifically, John Beer has argued that Coleridge's theoretical distinction between single and double touch – a perplexing one, which for our purposes can be reduced to a distinction between a mostly unconscious and a mostly reflexive 'feeling' – found its way not only into his writings on natural philosophy, but also his criticism of Shakespeare.[66] Beer's point can be confirmed by a number of tactile images in Coleridge's lecture texts, especially in connection with Shakespeare's anatomy of the mind. These images invariably suggest an interplay between knowing and feeling. The most memorable image, however, can be found in an early letter to Sotheby, which sums up this dynamism as philosophical 'tact':

> a great Poet must be, implicitè if not explicitè, a profound Metaphysician. He may not have it in logical coherence, in his Brain & Tongue; but he must have it by *Tact* / for all sounds, & forms of human nature he must have the *ear* of a wild Arab listening in the silent Desart, the eye of the North American Indian tracing the footsteps of an Enemy upon the Leaves that strew the Forest –; the *Touch* of a Blind Man feeling the face of a darling Child (*CL* II: 810)

Like the other passages quoted earlier, feeling has a double significance here. The Blind Man 'feels' the face of the child in order to get to know it, but at the same time he is affectively involved, just like the other figures (a 'blind Arab' will reappear in 'The Blossoming of the Solitary Date-Tree', a version of which was read out by Coleridge in a lecture in 1818 [*LL* 2:78]). As a 'Metaphysician', Shakespeare knows 'human nature' so intimately because he knows it *as* feeling.

It cannot be accidental that the same kind of 'tact' was attributed to Coleridge himself ten years later by the very sympathetic *Bristol Gazette*. As the journalist writes, his lecture 'was marked, characteristically, with that philosophical *tact*, which perceives causes, and traces effects impalpable to the common apprehension. He seemed to have been admitted into the closet of Shakespear's mind; to have shared his

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Paley (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), pp. 151-163. Cf. also Miall, 'Coleridge on Emotion: Experience into Theory', in *The Wordsworth Circle*, 22 (1991), 35-39. The most recent account is in Neil Vickers, *Coleridge and the Doctors 1795-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).
[66] John Beer, 'Coleridge's Originality as a Critic of Shakespeare', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 19:2 (Fall 1986), 51-69, p. 53-4.

secret thoughts; and been familiarized with his most hidden motives.' (*LL* 1: 530-1) This seems to be very close to the kind of knowledge earlier philosophical critics had striven to attain. Knowing the 'hidden springs' ('motives') of another mind, having been admitted into its 'closet', Coleridge is said to be in possession of a philosophical understanding of it. But the journalist's reference to 'philosophical *tact*' (with its Coleridgean ring) reflects a realization that such knowledge can never be made wholly objective. The critic's knowledge can never be detached from his interaction with the text; it cannot be formulated and viewed as if at a distance. One of the fundamental traits of Coleridge's philosophical criticism is his renunciation of any attempt at secreting pure 'philosophy' out of literary texts. The philosophy enunciated in his literary lectures is openly dependent on literature, nor does it strive to leave behind the plane of the literary, which enables its articulation in the first place. Coleridge as a critic of Shakespeare does not want to produce an objective knowledge either of philosophical matters or of literary texts, but to analyze, 'by tact', how the reader's mind and Shakespeare's plays are being articulated by each other, through the on-going process of reading. Analysis therefore has to take place continuously, and especially in the 'here and now' of the lecture theatre, because it is also the means by which other readers too, and not just the critic, undergo moral 'treatment'. In the last section of this chapter I am going to discuss the example of Macbeth, in order to trace how Coleridge and Richardson practise character analysis in an attempt to provide moral healing for their respective readers and audiences.

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Throughout the eighteenth century, *Macbeth* had been intimately connected with the problematic of 'character', perhaps due to its own poetic investigation of hidden motives, visibility, and self-knowledge.[67] From Duncan's prophetic remark that 'There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face'

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[67] For a detailed account of eighteenth-century responses to Macbeth see Donohue, *Dramatic Character*, pp. 189-215. For twentieth-century response to character criticism cf. L. C. Knights' attack on Bradley: 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?', in his *Explorations: Essays in Criticism, Mainly on the Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946), 1-39; and Michael D. Bristol, 'How many children did she have?', in John J. Joughin, ed., *Philosophical Shakespeares* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 18-33.

(1.4.11-12), to Macbeth's evocation of darkness ('Stars, hide your fires! / Let not light see my black and deep desires' [1.4.50-51]) and his disastrous renunciation of self-knowledge ('To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself' [2.2.72]), this play had a very specific appeal to philosophically oriented readers.[68] As Joseph Donohue writes, 'in the latter years of the century, response to Shakespearean character comes to depend on the notion that he [Macbeth] is a figure for all men under the influence of passion'.[69] Wordsworth and Coleridge betray what amounts to almost an obsession with *Macbeth* in their early writings, including both their dramas, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and even the 'Intimations of Immortality' ode. The appeal of the play went beyond its poetical concern with self-knowledge and hidden passion. In the late 1790s, Wordsworth and Coleridge could also find in it a possible way of interpreting the French Revolution that suited their needs and provided answers to their most pressing questions about its moral effects.[70] By 1813, Coleridge developed the analogy by comparing in his lectures Macbeth to Bonaparte, expressing the hope that the latter tyrant's fate would be similar to the former's (*LL* 1: 545-6). However, the pathology of the moral 'revolution' presented in the play was first drawn a few years before the French Revolution, by William Richardson in the opening essay of his *Philosophical Analysis* (1774).

Richardson's statement of critical purpose has an uncanny resonance with the later concerns of Wordsworth and Coleridge. 'In treating the history of this revolution,' Richardson writes, 'we shall consider how the usurping principle became so powerful; how its powers were exerted in its conflict with opposing principles; and what were the consequences of its victory'.[71] True, the tyranny of a ruling passion, which overturned the harmony of both the internal and the external 'constitutions' reminded Richardson of Nero and Herod, rather than of any contemporary rulers. The need for curbing specifically 'jacobin' feelings would only be expressed by Coleridge. But the moral Richardson wishes to impress prefigures in a fundamental way what Coleridge

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[68] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Kenneth Muir, The Arden Shakespeare, gen. eds Harold F. Brooks, Harold Jenkins, Brian Morris (London: Methuen & Co, 1962), p. 23; p. 25; p. 57.

[69] Donohue, *Dramatic Character*, p. 193.

[70] In his Fenwick note Wordsworth referred to his essay on Rivers's character as an attempt 'to preserve in my distinct remembrance what I had observed of transition in character & the reflections I had been led to make during the time I was a witness of the changes through which the French Revolution passed' (*Borderers*, 815). Cf. Mary Jacobus, '"The Great Stage Where Senators Perform". "Macbeth" and the Politics of Romantic Theater', *Studies in Romanticism*, 22:3 (Fall 1983), 353-387.

[71] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 48.

also implies in his interpretation of *Macbeth*: the urgency of monitoring and regulating the immoral passions by the conscious self, which is essential for the health of the individual and of the political community. Every reader has a personal responsibility, for – as Richardson writes – 'The formation of our character depends considerably upon ourselves'.[72]

This assertion of individual agency in character formation comes after Richardson's engagement, through *Macbeth*, with a host of problems that could have compromised any such certainty. There is the question of innate disposition (how can *that* be overcome?), more importantly, there is the question of how far the passions can be controlled, if they are just as powerful as Richardson – and the play – shows them to be. And, since control for Richardson depends entirely upon knowledge, there is of course the ubiquitous question of how the passions can be made known to the conscious self, given their fatal capacity for misleading the higher faculties and turning them into their 'slaves'. For good reasons, Richardson does not try to diminish these problems but rather makes them appear initially as intimidating as possible. His first image of the mind is that of chaos, with 'images and ideas continually fluctuating in [it]. We are conscious of no power that regulates their motions, restrains their impetuosity, or composeth their disorder'. As a rule, we do not know ourselves, especially our passions and appetites, which 'are often blended together, or succeed each other, with a velocity which we can neither measure nor conceive'.[73] This is close to Hume's sceptical image of the mind as a theatre in which impressions and ideas follow upon each other in no apparent order, without even the unity of a stage (the mind) or the perspective of an all-seeing spectator (the unified consciousness). Through his analysis of Shakespeare's characters, Richardson proceeds to transform his own initially anarchic view of the mind into an image of ideal balance and harmony, by planting a spectator in it who is able to understand the apparently chaotic events in terms of cause and effect, and to judge them according to the dictates of moral sense. Macbeth's 'poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage' (5.5.24-5) cannot escape being watched and judged; the 'tale / Told by an idiot' (5.5.26-7) will be analyzed into a case history of moral derangement.[74]

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[72] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 85.
[73] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 11.
[74] Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, p. 154.

Richardson starts his investigation by registering a fundamental alteration in Macbeth: 'All the principles in his constitution seem to have undergone a violent and total change. Some appear to be altogether reduced or extirpated: others monstrously overgrown.'[75] This structural view of the self as inner 'constitution' is indeed analogous to the structural interests of contemporary pathologists.[76] The main concern of his analysis is to identify the very first symptoms of the 'monstrous overgrowth' that overturned the healthy structure; symptoms that must have appeared when Macbeth was still virtuous, mild, and healthily ambitious (mildness is attributed to him by Lady Macbeth, and Richardson simply accepts this from her). With clinical self-assurance, he puts his finger on something that might well have seemed disturbing to his polite audience: Macbeth's disease started as a mere 'excursion of the imagination'. He imagined what it would be like to become a king (here Richardson's argument foreshadows arguments made in the 1790s, according to which imaginary treason can itself be treasonable).[77] In other words, what had appeared at first as a harmless private indulgence, led to unforeseeable consequences, destroying the health of the individual and of his country. Imagination, especially when 'aided by partial gratification' (Macbeth's rise to Thane of Cawdor), has power 'to invigorate and inflame our passions'.[78] The passion of ambition thus gains momentum. Macbeth who was at first shocked by the idea of seizing the crown, soon 'can think of [treason] calmly, and without abhorrence'. 'Habituated passions', indulged by the imagination, wear away his inner resistance. Even when he temporarily relinquishes his undertaking 'symptoms of the decay of virtue are manifest'.[79]

In the light of Macbeth's irreversible and 'monstrous' disease, Richardson seems to have every reason to state, 'there is infinite danger in the apparently innocent and imaginary indulgence of a selfish passion. That harmony of the

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[75] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 47.

[76] Matthew Baillie, for instance, starts his *Morbid Anatomy* by distinguishing between diseases that 'do not produce any change in the structure of parts' and diseases 'where alterations in the structure take place, and these become the proper subjects of anatomical examination'. Matthew Baillie, *The Morbid Anatomy of Some of the Most Important Parts of the Human Body* (London, 1797), p. i.; cited in Tim Fulford, ed., *Romanticism and Science 1773-1833*, 5 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 1: 99.

[77] See John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death :Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford, OUP, 2000).

[78] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 49.

[79] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 63; 67.

internal system is nicely adjusted; and the excessive tension or relaxation of any of the parts produces irregular and discordant tones.' The complicated instrument of the mind in such circumstances starts to fail in its most elementary tasks: 'when the mind is seized and occupied by violent passions, its operations are disturbed, and the notices we receive from the senses are disregarded'.[80] Delusion occurs. In Macbeth's 'broken and incoherent' soliloquies Richardson diagnoses a 'disordered state of mind', also 'expressed by interrupted gestures, absence of attention, and an agitated demeanour'.[81] Before long, his vision of the dagger attest to passion's ultimate triumph over the senses, while 'reason, beaming at intervals, heightens the horror of his disorder'.[82] What follows is murder and precipitous downfall. Macbeth's 'fancy', which used to serve his ruling passion, is now 'haunted with tremendous images and his soul [is] distracted with remorse and terror'. With a flickering moral sense still in place, he 'imagines' himself 'no less abhorred by the spectator, than by the sufferer', and thus his imagination (and, paradoxically, his moral sense) turns him again into a murderer, one who must kill every possible witness.[83]

The relentless determinism, the way cause and effect inexorably follow each other in this account, gives unusual emphasis to Richardson's call for vigilance and self-monitoring: 'Whoever would cultivate an acquaintance with himself, and would know to what passions he is most exposed, should attend to the operations of fancy, and by remarking the objects she with greatest pleasure exhibits, he may discern, with tolerable accuracy, the nature of his own mind, and the principle most likely to rule him.'[84] This half-optimistic advice is set against the graver warning implicit in the analysis of *Macbeth*. Imaginary indulgence of a passion, Richardson suggests, may start a chain-reaction that transforms the self beyond recognition. Joseph Donohue in his account of Richardson highlights just how drastic that diagnosis is: 'When a man of honourable purpose and human instincts could awake to find himself a murderer of king and fellow subject, no solid island of virtuous conduct seemed able to stand against the

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[80] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 70

[81] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 64.

[82] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 71.

[83] *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 76; 78.

[84] *Philosophical Analysis*, pp. 50-51.

tidal onslaught of passion.'[85] Donohue sees this as evidence of the weakening of moral

certitudes which he traces in Richardson's writings. However, I think that the

precariousness of moral health that is implied here is rather Richardson's method of

affirming morality in a way that is arguably more effective than stating rules of 'virtuous

conduct', namely by impressing upon his readers' minds the need for monitoring their

own imagination. Imagination, he seems to say, can trigger a transformation of the self

which is beyond conscious explanations or initial motives – indeed it can change the self

beyond recognition, effecting what Wordsworth would call a 'transition in character'.[86]

This emphasis on the imagination as a transformative principle is another important

point where Richardson's concerns intersect with Romantic thought. Viewed from this

angle, the discourse on the imagination appears as not so much an endorsement of

spiritual freedom as a mode of articulating and managing subjectivity by constant

reflection on its own fictions.[87]

   In his notes on *Macbeth*, Coleridge too explores the transformative role

of the imagination with respect to character, and while doing so manages to draw into

the analysis aspects of the play that Richardson had left unexamined. For Coleridge, the

tragedy as a whole is played out in terms of the imagination. He finds the earliest proof

of this in the opening scene: whereas *Hamlet* opens with 'the gradual ascent from the

simplest forms of conversation to the language of impassioned Intellect', in *Macbeth*

'the invocation is made at once to the Imagination, and the emotions connected

therewith' (*LL* 2:305). The Weird Sisters signal the threshold to the imaginary, but in

one note Coleridge even suggests the use of 'flexible character-masks' (*LL* 2: 305) in a

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[85] Donohue, *Dramatic Character*, p. 215.

[86] In his Fenwick note (1843), see Wordsworth, *The Borderers*, Robert Osborn ed. (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1982), p. 815. Cf. Robert Osborn's Introduction, *The Borderers*, p. 33.

[87] Cf. Clifford Siskin's Foucauldian interpretation of the Romantic self: 'The self configured by the desire for ongoing revision, in other words, is self-disciplinary: by requiring and expecting unlimited development, it always opens deeper depths to surveillance and invites more and more specialized intervention.' Siskin, *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 13. See also Terry Castle on the pathological imagination in Alexander Crichton's *Inquiry into Mental Derangement* (1798): 'Indeed, the compulsive image-making of the reverie-prone individual – the constant meditation on imaginary objects and scenes – resulted directly in the unleashing of spectres. "The belief in the reality of the phantoms of the imagination," he warned, arose when images of the mind "acquired such a degree of force from frequent repetitions, as to be superior in their effect to those derived *ab externo*."' Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 183.

theatrical production, presumably because this would have underlined still more the dominant role of imagination throughout the play.[88]

Like Richardson, Coleridge is keen to identify the first symptoms of Macbeth's transformation, and he finds them, characteristically enough, in his initial silence at the Witches' prophecy. Trained to read with suspicion, Coleridge recognizes silence as the first sign of suppressed passion (it is not pure coincidence that John Philip Kemble, who played a 'philosophical' Macbeth at Drury Lane, was understood to excel above all in his silences).[89] In his Bristol lecture, Coleridge is reported to have shown 'how Macbeth became early a tempter to himself: and contrasted the talkative curiosity of the innocent-minded and open dispositioned *Banquo* [...] with the silent, absent, and brooding melancholy of his partner' (*LL* 1: 531). This scene is very important for Coleridge for it is an example of Shakespeare's method of 'opening up' a character to inspection through indirect means. Silence is made significant by the proximity of speech.[90] Macbeth's first reaction (or rather, non-reaction), symptomatic of his hidden desires, is made apparent through Banquo's reflection on it:

> But O how truly Shakespearean is the opening of Macbeth's character given in the
> *unpossessedness* of Banquo's mind, wholly present to the present Object – an unsullied un-
> scarified Mirror – & in strict truth of Nature that he and not Macbeth himself directs our notice to

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the effect produced on Macbeth's Mind, rendered *temptible* by \<previous\> dalliance of the Fancy with ambitious Thoughts. (*LL* 2: 306)

As this passage suggests, Coleridge identifies the sources of Macbeth's crime in 'dalliance of the Fancy with ambitious Thoughts'; at a later point he will call attention to 'the danger of indulging in fancies' (*LL* 2: 308). The illicit imagining of power is not crime itself, but it makes the mind '*temptible*', very much as Richardson had warned. Coleridge finds confirmation 'of the remark on the birth-date of guilt' (*LL* 2: 307) in Macbeth's subsequent speech, in which imagined crime is described together with its effects:

> Present fears
> Are less than horrible imaginings.
> My thought, whose murther is yet but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man,
> That function is smother'd in surmise,
> And nothing is, but what is not.   [1.3.137-142][91]

Imagining murder abstracts Macbeth from reality and makes reality appear as unreal – this is how indulged passion transforms the perception of the world and consequently the character itself. Coleridge calls attention to this effect throughout his comments, stating, for instance, that in his fight against conscience Macbeth becomes similar to 'delirous Men, that run away from the Phantoms of their own Brains, or raised by Terror to Rage stab the real object that is within their own Reach' (*LL* 1: 529).

One of Coleridge's important critical moves is to extend the diagnosis to Lady Macbeth, a character who had been described by both Richardson and Kames as 'monstrous', i.e. inexplicable. Coleridge, on the contrary, believes that her most violent outbursts still reveal remnants of conscience and femininity, which she tries to disown.[92] Criticism has discussed the significance of this unconventional view, matched only by the re-interpretation of the figure by Mrs. Siddons.[93] Viewed in the context of

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[91] Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, pp. 20-21.

[92] The *Bristol Journal* reported at length Coleridge's rejection of 'the prejudiced idea of *Lady Macbeth* as a Monster: as a being out of nature and without conscience' (*LL* 1: 532).

[93] Julie A. Carlson discusses why Romantic critics start to analyze female characters in general and the role Siddons plays in this transformation in Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 156-175.

'philosophical analysis', Coleridge's reading of the Lady seems to give even clearer emphasis to the pathological dimension of the imagination, which both he and Richardson have identified in Macbeth. According to Coleridge, Lady Macbeth's disease mirrors that of her husband, for in both cases the transformation is triggered by indulging fancies. She is 'a woman of a visionary and day-dreaming turn of mind: her eye fixed on the shadows of her solitary ambition' (*LL* 1: 532). Her 'unsex me' speech characterises 'one who had habitually familiarized her Imag[ination] to dreadful Conceptions & is now trying to do it still more' (*CM* 4:727) – the analogy with Richardson's 'Habitually familiarised passion' is quite evident here. Her exhortations to Macbeth are proof of a 'Day-dreamer's valiance' (*LL* 2: 308). Even more than Macbeth, she lives in an imaginary world of her own creation. While Coleridge often refers to the 'fancy' and 'delirium' in connection with Macbeth, he retains 'imagination' for the more passive Lady, whose mind is 'accustomed only to the Shadows of the Imagination, vivid enough to throw the every day realities into shadows but not yet compared with their own correspondent realities.' (*LL* 2: 308) Her obsession with imagined power poisons all aspects of her life – she has 'no personal sense' (*CM* 4:727), 'her feelings [are] abstracted , through the deep musings of her absorbing passion, from the common-life sympathies of flesh and blood' (*LL* 1: 532). Her sleepwalking, writes Coleridge, is the ultimate proof of her 'drea[m]-wa[king] & wake-dreaming Character' (*CM* 4:776).

However, at the 'very first reality, L. M. shrinks' (*LL* 2: 309). She does not (or rather cannot) cross the line between imaginary and actual crime. Coleridge's moral interest is therefore focussed on Macbeth, for his development poses the question of the accountability of the imagination in the most uncompromising form. In 1808 Macbeth is described as a 'Commanding Genius' (the same category Coleridge used for Napoleon), with 'an active & combining Intellect, and an Imagination of just that degree of vividness which disquiets & impels the Soul to try to realize its Images' (*LL* 1: 137). Partly because of his need to analyse his own early radical sympathies, Coleridge was deeply interested in tracing how imagination might turn to (criminal) action – a transition that was described as in some sense a debased version of poetic creation. The analogy is implied in several of his comments on Macbeth and the Lady which highlight their 'visionary' side, but is elaborated most fully in the *Biographia*, where Coleridge

states that 'Commanding Geniuses' 'must impress their preconceptions on the world without' (*BL* 1: 32) – which seems to mean that the 'Commanding Genius', who has too much imagination to live like ordinary people, but too little to be a poet, is unable to read his own mind without, as it were, writing it first into reality. Julie A. Carlson has discussed how Coleridge attempted to dissociate himself from his own radical past by drawing a line between 'Commanding' and 'Absolute Genius', and how he negotiated their relationship in the medium of the theatre.[94] I would suggest that Coleridge's method of doing so owed a great deal to Richardson's 'stage-tactics', which set out to know the self through dividing it into spectator and spectacle, fictitious 'patient' and philosophical analyst.

In treating Macbeth, Coleridge perhaps was also treating himself, striving to analyse the dangerous tendencies of the imagination in a closed 'case'. This might be seen from the way he adds his annotations, as it were to the margins of *Macbeth*. In his lecture, for instance, after stating that Macbeth is 'rendered *temptible*' by his own imagination (*LL* 2: 306), he cited Wallenstein's soliloquy in his own translation: 'Must do the deed, because I thought of it, / And fed this heart here with a dream?' (4.4.1ff). This was an important question for Coleridge, for supposing that action was wholly determined by speculation and passion (or even worse, that it was a natural consequence of unconscious dreams), meant that it was beyond the individual's control. This is the view endorsed by Ordonio in Coleridge's own play *Remorse*, after having complained of 'this unutterable dying away – here – / This sickness of the heart!' (2.1.127-8):

> What have I done but that which nature destin'd,
> Or the blind elements stirr'd up within me?
> If good were meant, why were we made these Beings?
> And if not meant –   [2.1.131-134; *PW* III.2: 1264]

Coleridge here evokes Macbeth's soliloquy ('This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill; cannot be good: – If ill,' etc [1.3.130-1]), on which, in preparation for his lectures, he wrote the following comment: "The First struggl[e] of Conscience[,] his disobedien[ce] to which is to destroy him b[y] the very pang[s] of Compuncti[on]. "*Remorse*."" (*CM* 4:

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[94] *In the Theatre of Romanticism*, p. 23.

770) Coleridge thus writes *Remorse* into *Macbeth* and *Macbeth* into *Remorse*.[95] If we take up the connection, the note suggests that Ordonio's guilt involved – in spite of his own self-justification – an act of 'disobedience', a conscious break with the moral order. Ordonio has good reasons not to remember this, and it is accordingly missing from the analysis he gives of himself in the third person:

> He walk'd alone,
> And phantom thoughts unsought for troubled him.
> Something within would still be shadowing out
> All possibilities; and with these shadows
> His mind held dalliance. Once, as so it happen'd,
> A fancy cross'd him wilder than the rest:
> To this in moody murmur and low voice
> He yielded utterance, as some talk in sleep.
> The man who heard him. – [...]
>   With his human hand
> He gave substance and reality
> To that wild fancy of a possible thing. –
> Well it was done!   [4.1.110-125; *PW* III.2: 1297-8]

Ordonio here wants to obscure his own moral responsibility by establishing a smooth transition from involuntary thoughts to shadows his 'mind held dalliance' with, and from his 'yielding utterance' to a fancy to its realization by a 'human hand'. This is strongly reminiscent of Macbeth's separations of 'hand' from 'eye', to mitigate his sense of guilt for the planned murder.[96] Ordonio's speech creates an immaterial phantom world to hide the fact that he arranged the assassination of his brother, and that in the very moment in the play he is planning to kill his own accomplice. The speech, then, is an example of the 'prudential and selfish Reasonings' (*LL* 1: 529) Coleridge identified in *Macbeth*, and

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[95] Jonathan Bate traces more Shakespearean allusions in this speech, which he does not find very effective: 'Osorio's gallimaufry begins in the manner of Hamlet, then shifts to the tone of Timon, glances at Lear or Othello with the repetition of 'fool!', and ends with something of Macbeth's equivocation [...] Though there is this similarity in content, there is none in effect. Osorio is only going through the motions of describing passion; Coleridge is unable to imitate the way that Shakespeare *expresses* passion by showing us the intricate processes of his character's mental operations.' *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 52.

[96] See 1. 4. 52-3: 'The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be / Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.' Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, p. 25.

the use of the third person singular highlights the self-alienation involved in Ordonio's state and actions.[97]

What Coleridge seems to insist on with respect to both *Macbeth* and *Remorse* is that a conscious moral choice must have been made by the characters before committing the act of crime. The fact that he could read silences and omissions as the most telling of symptoms (this seems to be reflected in his own broken line in *Remorse*, 'And if not meant –'), enabled him to make this argument without having to frame the characters' moral choice as text. In the first scenes of *Macbeth*, the choice is still to be made: '*King hereafter* was still contingent – still in Macbeth's moral will – tho' if he yielded to the temptation & thus forfeited his free-agency, then the link of *cause* and *effect more physico* would commence' (*LL* 2:306). Even if he cannot point out the moment of 'yielding' in the text, Coleridge suggests that the 'natural' – and hence uncontrollable – laws of causality which determine the progress of a character depend on an act of the 'moral will'. Acts of the imagination, he seems to say, do not materialize without one's consent, however secretly it is given.

Having read this final, invisible symptom into the text, Coleridge can 'round up' Macbeth's character and present it as a finished product of philosophical analysis.[98] What he explains in the Conclusion to the *Biographia* about the reassuring nature of diagnoses could apply to this interpretation as well:

> It is within the experience of many medical practitioners, that a patient, with strange and unusual symptoms of disease, has been more distressed in mind, more wretched from the fact of being unintelligible to himself and others, than from the pain or danger of the disease: nay, that the patient has received the most solid comfort, and resumed a genial and enduring cheerfulness, from some new symptom or product, that had at once determined the name and nature of his complaint, and rendered it an intelligible effect of an intelligible cause: even though the discovery did at the same moment preclude all hope of restoration. (*BL* 2: 235)

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[97] See Coleridge's note: 'Under the maske of the third Person Osorio relates his own Story, as in the delusion of self-justification & Pride it appeared to himself, at least as he wished it to appear to himself.' (*PW* III.1: 160)

[98] The 'label' on the case history reads as follows: 'When once the mind, in despite the remonstrating conscience, has abandoned its free power to a haunting impulse or idea, then whatever tends to give depth and vividness to this idea, or indefinite imagination increases its despotism, and in the same proportion renders the reason and free will ineffectual.' *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (London: Constable and Co., 1936), p. 293.

In our case, the roles are assigned in a slightly different fashion: it is framing the diagnosis of a fictitious character, which might prove to be liberating for the reader-critic. As we have seen, it was clear to Coleridge that in literary 'case histories', the shape of the interpretation depended to a large extent on the reader's own imaginative self-analysis, which in turn was enabled by the 'outness' of the literary text. Shakespeare's characters, it seems, were used by him to obliquely read and manage his own passions and imagination, while at the same time he could offer these readings as external to himself, and thus fit to be communicated to the public for their own benefit. This strategy is in fact the mirror image of Coleridge's 'myth' of Shakespearean creation, according to which Shakespeare's characters provided the means by which he emancipated himself from his own enthusiasm. 'Poetry a rationalized Dream dealing [out?] to manifold Forms our own Feelings, that never perhaps were attached by us consciously to our own personal Selves' (*CN* 2: 2086) -- in my view, this memorable notebook entry simultaneously describes the creation and the reception of poetry. For the reader, as for the poet, it provides a way to analyze ('rationalize') feelings, imagined as the feelings of an 'other'. Coleridge's self-analysis through Hamlet is only the most obvious example of how he rationalized and objectified imagined or real 'diseases' of his own mind through reading Shakespeare, and it is evident that he offered these readings as a moral medicine to his audience as well.

His analysis of *Macbeth* was introduced as showing 'that every thing in Shakespeare tended to make us not only wiser, but better' (*LL* 1: 514). This is not because Shakespeare presented in his plays models of ideal human conduct, but because through 'embodying' the mechanisms of passion he enabled readers to see and understand their own potential disorders from the outside. This is the 'healing influence of *Light* and distinct Beholding' Coleridge writes about in the Conclusion to the *Biographia*, an effect he compares to 'the alleviation that results from "*opening out* our griefs:" which are thus presented in distinguishable forms instead of the mist, through which whatever is shapeless becomes magnified and (literally) *enormous*' (*BL* 2: 235). Interestingly, this image is the exact opposite of that of the Brocken spectre which Coleridge had used in connection with how readers see themselves in Shakespeare's

characters. There, the reader is a definite figure, while the imagined and magnified character is shrouded in mist. Here, the feeling self is experienced as shapeless and '*enormous*', and the self expressed through language gains distinct outlines, becomes intelligible and, possibly, the object of sympathy. It seems to me that both metaphors are relevant to Coleridge's treatment of Shakespeare's characters, and that taken together they describe the dynamism of his analyses exceptionally clearly. The imaginative reading he proposes 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates' the self, in order to 'recreate' it, and his philosophical criticism is even capable of reflecting on that continual transformation.

Chapter Five

Remorse, or the ghost of feeling
(coda)

> 'yet a certain something more than Regret will mingle into
> the regret – a certain something will haunt and sadden the
> heart, which if not Remorse is however a phantom and
> Counterfeit of Remorse' (*LL* 1: 64)

> "The sole true *Something* this in Limbo Den
> It frightens Ghosts as Ghosts here frighten men – '
> (*CN* 3: 4073)

1

Affect is the central concept of philosophical criticism, both in Coleridge
and in the writings of late-eighteenth-century critics like Kames or Richardson. In their
circuitous project, they rely on feeling in order to analyse Shakespeare, and rely on
Shakespeare in order to analyse feeling. However, in Coleridge's lectures, feeling is
turned into an even more powerful principle, which governs interpretation as
performance, thereby making explicit the link between feeling and theatricality that had
only been implied by his predecessors. In Richardson's mental theatre, for instance, the
implied spectator's moral response (from compassion to abhorrence) forms the
groundwork of the interpretation. Responsive feeling, attributed to every 'healthy'
subject, is the touchstone validating his philosophical analysis, while at the same time it
is also the means by which he instructs his readers in how to articulate their own moral
subjectivity. But in this scheme responsive feeling is ultimately superseded by
understanding; no readerly response remains unaccounted for, and no passion is left
unaccommodated in the overall explanatory structure of 'character'. For this reason, in

Richardson's writings metaphors of the theatre are embedded in a larger context of quasi-scientific analysis. His aim is to describe and explain the theatre of passion, which he locates in Shakespeare and in the reader's mind – but, emphatically, not in that of the critic. Coleridge, by contrast, offers analysis as process and performance, that is, as 'theatre' in a wider sense. In his practice, interpretation should be attempted again and again in front of every new audience, precisely because it can never be complete in itself. In his lectures, he not only explains mechanisms of feeling in and through the Shakespearean text, but also exhibits feeling, through bodily and verbal gestures that point towards something beyond analysis, thus keeping alive the need to analyse. His 'performance' of interpretation is governed by two impulses: first, by the impulse to uncover a mental anatomy from Shakespeare's text, that is, to reveal a philosophical knowledge which is supposed to be already 'in' it, and second, by the impulse to 'embody' a philosophical anatomy by making it appear in front of the audience, in the form of poetry mediated by the critic's spectacular, living commentary.

The dialectics of anatomy and embodiment, of feeling and understanding, keep Coleridge's interpretations of Shakespeare in perpetual motion and account for their remarkable capacity to develop, even as they return to the same arguments again and again. In 1811, he divided the 'enlightened readers of Shakespeare' into two classes, 'Those who read with feeling and understanding' and 'Those who with<out> affecting to understand or criticize merely feel and are the recipients of the poet's power' (*LL* 1: 351-2). He regarded himself as a representative of the first class, as is clear, among other things, from the concept of 'analysis by touch', which he developed immediately after the above classification. But it is remarkable that the first class of readers, as it were, incorporates the second; all 'enlightened' reading is governed by some kind of feeling for the text – a feeling of its 'power' – only the more philosophical reader (the critic) also knows what, and presumably why, he feels. Reflection, for this type of reader, has become a habit, but it is always a reflection on, a reaction to, some experience of being 'touched'. In this sense, Coleridge's philosophical analysis, in spite of its reliance on the concept of *a priori* knowledge in matters concerning reason, cannot and does not want to discard the mode of observation he scornfully attributed to empiricist critics, 'those snails of intellect, who wear their eyes at the tips of their feelers' (*SW&F* 1: 3319-220).

The philosophical critic is someone capable of reflecting on his own inner empiricist, and who therefore knows that the 'sense data' of feeling encountered through the reading process are the result of an intricate interplay between the text and the mind.

Coleridge, adept in self-experimentation as he was, was also aware that this kind of reflection generates its own attendant feelings, which in turn can be subjected to further analysis. Very early, in 1794, he wrote about this to Southey: 'I am so habituated to philosophizing, that I cannot divest myself of it even when my own Wretchedness is the subject. I appear to myself like a sick Physician, feeling the pang acutely, yet deriving a wonted pleasure from examining it's progress and developing it's causes.' (*CL* I: 133) Arguably, there is a similar impulse at work behind the anatomies of character developed in his lectures. Whereas Richardson seemed to be content with arriving at a dispassionate diagnosis of the given 'case', Coleridge's analyses, as partly anatomies of the self, involve personal feelings projected onto the fictitious characters, while the critic's intellectual engagement with the figures leads to what he calls the pleasure 'of distinct beholding'. The 'wonted pleasure' derived from philosophical examination thus accompanies not only Coleridge's private habit of self-examination, but also his public lectures. The important difference is that in the latter, Shakespeare's text provides a screen through which the critic's own feeling of 'Wretchedness' can appear at a remove, manifesting mechanisms inherent in human nature as he understands it, while also obliquely contributing to his own self-portrait.

The surplus of feeling keeps Coleridge's critical enterprise in motion; the pleasure he derives from the analysis is multiplied by the pleasure of his audience, which, to make something like a Coleridgean distinction, is not quite the same as the pleasure of reading Shakespeare, or of seeing one of his plays on stage. What Coleridge's audience enjoys is seeing Shakespeare analysed. More precisely, they enjoy seeing analysis performed by Coleridge, who not only understands (as an abstract philosopher), but also, and primarily, feels (as an embodied being). For this reason, Coleridge the critic always appears to feel in excess, and his audience catches some of this excess by registering signs of feeling in his bodily gestures, in the gaps of his speech, or in his passionate rhetoric. Reports of the lectures, as well as his own notes, suggest that he was most eloquent when he identified an excess of feeling in Shakespeare himself, in other words,

when he wished to demonstrate that Shakespeare's philosophy somehow also made manifest what it could not understand. 'The Poet is not only the man made to solve the riddle of the Universe, but he is also the man who feels where it is not solved' (*LL* 1: 327), he wrote in preparation for a lecture in 1811. Shakespeare's capacity to feel what he could not know distinguishes him from the enlightened *philosophes*, and their counterparts, whom in the critique of *Bertram* Coleridge calls 'Jacobinical' dramatists.[1] This is another important implication of the philosophical 'tact' Coleridge writes about; Shakespeare, according to him, has an immediate knowledge of human experience, including even those aspects which cannot be conceptualised. For this reason, even though his characters are elaborations on philosophical problems, they never should be considered as *merely* abstractions; Shakespeare's 'tact' gives them a substance that goes beyond what can be turned into explicit knowledge. Annotating the scene in *Richard II* in which the Queen speaks of her presentiment – the conceit of her 'unborn' grief – Coleridge comments: 'Shakespear's reverence for whatever arises out of our moral nature, even in the guise of superstition – no contemptuous reasoning away the feelings of men –' (*LL* 1: 560). Shakespeare's feeling of 'reverence', or, inversely, his lack of 'contempt', guarantee that his philosophy does not lead to disembodied knowledge, to 'reasoning away', but to poetic embodiment.[2]

As I have argued in the previous chapter, Shakespeare's art originates in 'enthusiastic passion' according to Coleridge; in other words, his poetic 'feelings' are generated by ideas. In a note 'On Aesthetic Problems', written around 1813-14, Coleridge also refers to this quality to distinguish between 'the man of fine & susceptible – i.e. easily excitable – Taste', and 'the Man of Genius'. 'The former,' he writes, 'is excitable by the appropriate *Image*; but in order to the Production of the appropriate Image, capable of ~~calling into~~ awakening & calling into ~~action and Life~~ the Life & *Mind* of the Spectator, the Artist's mind must be excitable & thrown into that

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[1] See also the following note on Shakespeare: 'The regular high Road of Human Affections – it is not the Poet's Business to analyse & criticise the affections & Faiths of Men/ but to assure himself, that such & such are affections & Faiths grounded in human Nature, not in mere accident of Ignorance or Disease – / his most important. – He is the morning Star of Philosophy – the guide & pioneer – (*LL* 1: 127)

[2] See also a note on Massinger, in whose works 'the Dramatis Personae were all planned *each by itself*', whereas in Shakespeare 'the Play is a *syngenesia*, each has indeed a life of its own & is an individuum of itself; but yet an organ to the whole – as the Heart & the Brain – &c/. *The* Heart &c of *that* particular Whole. S. a comparative Anatomist. / Hence Massinger & all indeed but Sh. take a dislike to their own characters, and spite themselves upon them by making them talk like *fools* or *monsters*.' (*LL* 2: 151)

state, by the *Idea* (N.b. not the Spectrum or Phantom but the Idea)' (*SW&F* 1:348). Coleridge here still uses the concept of 'excitement' and 'excitability', as he did in 1810, when he evoked the Brunonian terms to define poetry (*CN* 3: 3827).[3] But in this note (perhaps as opposed to the earlier one), these terms do not point towards an aesthetic of 'physical imagination' – to use Martin Wallen's phrase – but towards one that is fundamentally idealistic. True, Coleridge's idealism relies on the concept of feeling, as something that leads to embodiment. The above note, however, while exhibiting this general feature, also hints at a related insight in Coleridge's criticism that I have neglected so far. Namely, it reveals Coleridge's awareness that the 'materialisation' that takes place in language is in fact closer to being a 'Spectrum or Phantom' from the reader's point of view. In other words, the 'bodies' that are realised in passionate language are effects of language – fictions within fictions – inhabiting 'that lifeless, twilight realm of idea, which is the confine, the *intermundium*, as it were, of existence and non-existence' (*SW&F* 1: 337).

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Most famously, Coleridge used the term 'intermundium' in the *Biographia* in order to distinguish between the Commanding and the Absolute Geniuses, stating that the latter rests content with creation in the twilight realm of the imagination, while the former needs to realise his imaginings in the real world. However, in the entry published in the *Omniana* (1812) from which I have just quoted, the 'intermundium' is revealed as having its own degrees of reality. Coleridge here contemplates the difference between reading and seeing a play on stage, by distinguishing between different degrees of embodiment in the realm of language. Words become more 'real' merely by being read out loud, because 'blending with them a sense of *outness* gives them a sort of reality'. Words spoken on the stage, with 'every contrivance of scenery, appropriate dresses, accordant and auxiliary looks', are experienced as almost fully real, while in

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[3] Perhaps his reliance in this note on Schelling, who was also influenced by John Brown, might have encouraged him to do so. Coleridge's strategy of distancing himself from Brown is traced in Martin Wallen, *City of Health, Fields of Disease: Revolutions in the Poetry, Medicine, and Philosophy of Romanticism* (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 102-118.

'mere passive silent reading' thoughts remain mere thoughts, 'phantoms with no attribute of place, no sense of appropriation, that flit over the consciousness as shadows over the grass or young corn in an April day' (*SW&F* 1: 337). What I have described in Chapters 2 and 3 as figures of passion are, perhaps, somewhere in between the flitting 'shadows' of passive reading and the embodied thoughts of the theatre. They are ultimately closer to the 'shadows', however, for, paradoxically, the more real they appear to the reader, the more phantom-like they necessarily are.

The Queen's conceit in *Richard II* embodies in language a feeling she does not understand, through the figure of a child 'of nothing' with whom she is pregnant. In *King John*, Constance speaks of her grief walking in the room, filling in the clothes of a son whom she believes dead. For Macbeth, even to imagine the death of the king turns the world into a world of phantoms, in which 'Nothing is but what is not', and his sense of guilt (disowned, as Coleridge emphasises) visits him in the form of a ghost. Discussion of ghosts is something that necessarily comes up in Shakespearean criticism, and, of course, Coleridge had a well-documented interest in them in general.[4] But I would suggest that the careful attention paid to ghosts and nightmares (their counterparts in sleep) throughout his lectures can be understood in a more specific context. That is, it can be regarded as directly related to his engagement with questions of feeling and of embodiment in poetic language.

A notebook entry from about 1807-1808 (the time of his first lectures) helps to bring this issue into relief. Coleridge starts with the by now familiar problem that the self – or, here, the soul – cannot be turned into an object of knowledge, but then his argument takes a turn to assert Shakespeare's uniqueness, followed by a curious piece of self-observation:

> Hence even in dreams of Sleep the soul never *is*, because it either cannot or dare not be, any
> <ONE> THING; but it lives in *approaches* – touched by the outgoing pre-existent Ghosts of many

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[4] Ghosts, dreams and nightmares in Coleridge have been most recently discussed in Jennifer Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming: Romanticism, Dreams and the Medical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David Vallins, *Coleridge and the Psychology of Romanticism: Feeling and Thought* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 42-48; David S. Miall and D. Kuiken, eds., 'Coleridge and Dreams', *Dreaming*, 7:1-2 (1997); David Miall, 'The Meaning of Dreams: Coleridge's Ambivalence', *Studies in Romanticism*, 21 (1982), 52-87. For ghosts in romantic writing in general and in Coleridge, see Frederick Burwick, 'Romantic Supernaturalism: The Case Study as a Gothic Tale', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 34/2 (Spring 2003), 74-81.

feelings – It feels for ever as a blind man with his protended Staff, dimly thro' the medium of the aet instrument by which it pushes off, & in the act of repulsion, O for the eloquence of Shakspeare, who alone could feel & yet know how to embody these conceptions, with as curious a felicity as the thoughts are subtle. As if the finger which I saw with eyes Had, as it were, another finger invisible – Touching me with a ghostly touch, even while I feared the real Touch from it. What if in certain cases Touch acted by itself, co-present with vision, yet not coalescing – then I should see the finger as at a distance, and yet feel a finger touching which was nothing but it & yet was not it / the two senses cannot co-exist without a sense of causation / the *touch* must be the effect of that Finger, I see, yet it's not yet near to me, <and therefore it is not it; & yet it is it. Why,> it is an imaginary preduplication. NB. there is a passage in the second Part of Wallenstein, expressing not explaining the same feeling – The Spirits of great Events Stride on before the events – it is in one of the last two or 3 Scenes. (*CN* 2: 3215)

Without attempting to explicate all the connections in this subtle passage, I would like to point out a few things that make it relevant to the interpretation of Coleridge's lectures I have been developing so far. Coleridge here seems to write about dreaming not in order to contrast it with the waking state, but to underline a general characteristic of the soul which he believes to be present 'even in dreams'. The soul in sleep 'lives in *approaches*'. This is fairly close to his description of the process by which the reader encounters aspects of his or her own self, through being 'touched' by poetry. It might be noted here that a similar understanding of the reading process can be found in one of Coleridge's latest works on interpretation, *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (1824), in which he writes, '*whatever finds me* [...] bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from a Holy Spirit' (*SW&F* 2:1121-2).[5] According to the argument developed in that work, the weightiest evidence for the authenticity of the Bible is to be found in the reader's experience; but while the text 'finds' the soul in its depths, those depths are brought to consciousness by the very act of reading, and in this sense exist for the conscious self precisely insofar as they are 'found'.

In the *Confessions*, the reader is said to be touched by the Holy Spirit through the inspired text ('the words of the Bible *find me* at greater depths of my being' [*SW&F* 2.1123]). In the notebook entry, by contrast, it is the 'Ghosts of many feelings' that reach the soul, thereby constituting its life during sleep. Are these feelings called

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[5] The notes in *SW&F* point out the connection with the German term 'Empfindung', of which Coleridge wrote: 'A Sensation, a Feeling, is what I *find in* me *as* in me' (*CN* 3: 4443).

'Ghosts' because they figure in dreams, and therefore have no sufficient cause in the waking world? Or can feelings be generally understood as 'Ghosts' visiting the self as if from the outside? Coleridge sometimes does use metaphors suggesting the latter, although he adds that some feelings – most crucially, love – are fully 'real', without anything ghostly about them.[6] Importantly, ghosts and nightmares themselves are usually explained by him as outward symbols of feelings; they are shapes the imagination gives to 'pre-existent' feelings or sensations, most characteristically to the bodily sensation that accompanies terror.[7] Therefore, his peculiar expression 'outgoing pre-existent Ghosts of many feelings' also suggests that the feelings he refers to have a necessary imaginary component; the soul 'feels' itself – at least in dreams – through embodying the possible causes of its own feeling in some imaginary form. It takes only one step from here to say that feelings experienced in reading are 'ghosts' in a very similar sense.

Coleridge's next sentence ('It feels for ever as a blind man...') seems to be about the way the soul knows itself 'by tact', without ever being able to perceive itself as a whole. The subsequent invocation of Shakespeare is relevant to this theme in more than one way: first, because of Shakespeare's intimate knowledge of the mind, which Coleridge also referred to as philosophical 'tact', and second, because he not only 'feels' but 'knows how to embody these conceptions', through his 'eloquence' (besides, the 'conception' itself might owe something to Gloucester's 'I see it feelingly'). It is curious that immediately after this tribute to Shakespearean embodiment Coleridge turns to describing an experience that unites embodiment with disembodiment in a peculiar way. What he calls the 'ghostly touch' appears to be a sensation of touch caused by the mere idea of being touched, anticipating a 'real' touch by a finger still at a distance (this is what I think is meant by 'imaginary preduplication'). Is this experience mentioned as an example of the subtle truths that Shakespeare knew how to embody? In that case, Shakespeare mysteriously embodies a sense of nearness – the presence of something not

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[6] 'Every mere Passion, like Spirits, and Apparitions, have their hour of Cock-crow, in which they must vanish. But pure Love is therefore no *mere* Passion: & it is a test of its being Love, that no reason can be assigned *why* it should disappear - ' (*CN* 3: 4069). Around the time of writing this entry (Apr 1811) Coleridge in his lectures argued that love involved an act of the free will, and therefore not a 'mere' passion.

[7] Cf. for instance the lectures (1: 131-2; 135-6); *CN* 2: 2878; *CN* 3: 4046 with note ('Keats in 1819 reported Coleridge as defining nightmare as a dream accompanied by a sense of touch').

quite there, like the 'Spirits of great events' in the line from Coleridge's translation of *Wallenstein*. Or is Coleridge perhaps elaborating, more generally, on the kind of 'embodiment' that takes place in Shakespeare? If this be the case, it is worth recalling that in a notebook entry from 1804, Coleridge was already toying with the suggestion that words might primarily evoke ideas of touch, rather than ideas of sight. 'Do not words excite feelings of Touch (tactual Ideas) more than *distinct visual Ideas* – i.e. *of Memory*?', he asks, adding a reminder that this would explain 'many of the popular notions concerning *Ghosts* & apparitions' (*CN* 2: 2152). Seen in the context of our present entry, this must mean that words, and specifically the words of Shakespeare, act as a kind of 'ghostly touch' on the reader's mind; they stimulate what might be called a feeling of nearness (although not of presence), caused by ideas evoked by the text.

The way this notebook entry drifts from 'ghosts' of feeling to Shakespearean embodiment, and back to the 'ghostly touch', prefigures what often happens in Coleridge's lectures, in which feelings and ideas are continually shown as converted into one another through the medium of poetry. The lecturer, who both explains and manifests what Shakespeare is 'about', turns the interaction between feeling and understanding into performance, and thus conveys Shakespeare's 'ghostly touch' to his audience, resulting in that uncanny sense of presence which several commentators have seen as the chief effect of his lectures. In this final chapter, I am going to revisit some of the most important themes I have discussed so far, but taking another angle, looking at their 'ghostly' relevance to Coleridge's own play *Remorse*. This play, as I have noted in Chapter 1, was intimately connected in Coleridge's mind with his lectures, and owed its theatrical success at least in part to the success of his course at the Surrey Institution in 1813. It also represents his most intense creative engagement with Shakespearean drama, reminding us that his work on Shakespeare started much earlier than the lectures themselves, with the writing of *Osorio*. Did lecturing offer Coleridge an opportunity to theorise about what he had learned in practice, while writing his early play? Or was *Osorio* already the result of a highly 'philosophical' reading of Shakespeare and other dramatists? At any rate, some remarks in his lectures on Shakespeare look for all the world like commentaries on *Remorse* (as some explicitly are), while at times *Remorse*, and even the substantially different *Osorio*,

read like illustrations of what Coleridge said during the lectures.[8] I choose to focus on *Remorse* rather than *Osorio* because its staging at Drury Lane coincided with the Surrey Institution course, which allows me to study this play as being in a dialogic relationship with Coleridge's other 'performance' at the lecture theatre.

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In a review of the printed version of *Remorse*, John Taylor Coleridge (anonymously) traced back the poetic features of the Lake School to a specific variant of 'philosophical' reading practised by Coleridge and Wordsworth (and, to a lesser degree, Southey). These poets, he argues, arrived at their own 'system' by reading Shakespeare, Milton, and other early poets:

> Analysing by metaphysical aids the principles on which these great men exercised such imperial sway over the human heart, they found that it was not so much by operating on the reason as on the imagination of the reader. We mean that it was not so much by argument, or description, which the reason acknowledged to be true, as by touching some chord of association in the mind, which woke the imagination and set it instantly on a creation of its own.[9]

In 1811 Coleridge said of Shakespeare, 'You feel him to be a poet inasmuch as, for a time, he has made you one – an active creative being.' (*LL* 1: 251) His reviewer seems to have had something similar in mind, claiming that philosophical analysis led to the poets' recognition of the main laws of their art (which, for John Taylor Coleridge, were associationist), and from there to creative writing. But, as he goes on to argue, observation did not stop there; the Lake Poets formed strong 'habits of making every mental emotion the subject of analysis' (*CH*, 177), with sad effects. As a result they

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[8] Frederick Burwick demonstrates the relevance of *Remorse* to Coleridge's theories on dramatic illusion in *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp. 267-279. Julie Carlson argues that through its inherent ambiguities the play stages Coleridge's anxieties about 'action' (in connection with the French Revolution and the theatre), see Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 97-114. The conservative politics of *Remorse* are contrasted with the radical *Osorio* by J. D. Moore in 'Coleridge and the "Modern Jacobinical Drama": *Osorio, Remorse*, and the Development of Coleridge's Critique of the Stage, 1797-1816', *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 84 (1982), 443-464. In what follows, I will confine my reading of the play to the problematic of feeling, embodiment and analysis, and do not aim for a comprehensive interpretation.

[9] *Quarterly Review* (Apr 1814, ix, 177-90); *CH*, p. 176.

became abnormally 'susceptible of emotion from slight causes' which set them apart from the generality of men; 'yet it is evident that the artist who built his fame entirely upon [latent beauties], must resign his claims to genius for the reputation of mere science' (*CH*,178). This is a curious repetition of what Vicesimus Knox had written decades earlier about 'philosophical criticism', only here it is no longer criticism but poetry itself that is chastised for being unduly 'scientific'. Moreover, this 'science' leads to false results, because its habit of minute observation magnifies and even distorts natural feelings, which in John Taylor Coleridge's opinion 'must be left to play unobserved, and without fear of observation' (*CH*, 178). It is no wonder, then, that even if he recommends *Remorse* for reading in the closet, he does not express much enthusiasm for it on the stage. For him, *Remorse* is far too philosophical for the theatre – but it is not quite clear, whether he thought this a problem because he believed that putting philosophy on stage was impossible, or because he was worried that it might be possible, after all, but thought that there was something wrong about making the minute 'play' of feelings publicly observable.[10]

Two issues mentioned here – the question of Shakespearean influence and that of the analysis of feeling – feature in most reviews of *Remorse*, either as an acted play or as a publication, even if the reviewers express different opinions concerning Coleridge's literary merits. Hazlitt, for instance, in an uncharacteristically sympathetic review of the performance, written anonymously for the *Morning Chronicle*, pointed out that Teresa's double portrait of Ordonio and Alvar is a variation on Hamlet's speech to Gertrude ('to thy mind's eye present him / As at that moment he rose up before thee, / Stately, with beaming look! Place, place beside him / Ordonio's dark perturbed countenance!' etc. [4.2.66-69; *PW* III.2: 1303]). Coleridge, irritated by this, wrote to John Rickman: '(so help me the Muses) that Passage never once occurred to my conscious recollection, however it may, unknown to myself, have been the working Idea within me!' (*CL* 3: 429) This characteristic defence makes Shakespeare's influence appear as a kind of ghostly visitation in Coleridge's own text, but lest this sound too

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[10] The need for 'closeting' Coleridge was also expressed by H. C. Robinson, who wrote of the play: 'Coleridge's great fault is that he indulges before the public in those metaphysical and philosophical speculations which are becoming only in solitude and with select minds'. (*On Books and Their Writers*; quoted in *CH*, 138)

melodramatic, it must be added that the play is haunted by several other works too.[11]
While there is an overall similarity of plot with Schiller's *Die Räuber*, the climactic
invocation scene was inspired by Schiller's novella *Der Geisterseher (The Ghost-Seer;
or Apparitionist* [London, 1792]), and Coleridge himself acknowledged 'Thefts from the
Wallenstein' in a letter to Southey, together with an unconscious echo in the line 'The
obscurest Haunt of all our Mountains' from Wordsworth's 'The Brothers' ('I did not
recognize [it] as Wordsworth till after the Play was all printed' [*CL* 3: 435]). But in spite
of these and several other allusions (including those to Coleridge's own works), the
Shakespearean 'touch' is strongest of all, and was undoubtedly recognised by the
audience. Apart from *Hamlet* (which is most pervasively present), *Othello, Macbeth,
Lear* and *The Winter's Tale* are evoked at important points of the drama, the last one, for
instance, in Alvar's ominous self-definition as 'He that can bring the dead to life again'
(2.1.164; *PW* III.2: 1265).

Teeming with such allusions, the play self-consciously advertised itself as
reviving the Shakespearean mode. Charles Lamb's playful, much-criticised Prologue
evoked Shakespeare for this reason, together with the ghost of Garrick (playing men in
Elysium, 'As in his days of flesh he play'd the ghost' [*PW* III.2: 1071]). Coleridge
shared the triumph of the opening night with his wife, writing to her, 'there is a large
number of Persons in London, who hail with enthusiasm any prospect of the Stage's
being purified & rendered classical' (*CL* 3: 430-1). In a letter to Southey, he made more
explicit what was meant by 'classical', contrasting his own play with the popular works
of Edward Moore and Thomas Southerne: 'As to the outcry, that the Remorse is not
pathetic (meaning such pathos, as convulses us in Isabella or the Gamester) the answer is
easy – True! the Poet never meant that it should be. It is as pathetic as the Hamlet, or the
Julius Caesar.' (*CL* 3: 434) The reference to *Hamlet* suggests that Coleridge probably
intended to convey a predominantly intellectual or philosophical kind of 'passion', as

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[11] Jonathan Bate argues that the 'unconscious allusion' is a key concept in Romantic poetics; he also
analyses at length the Shakespearean subtext of *Remorse* and quotes the above letter, in *Shakespeare and
the English Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 35-6; 50-57. Peter
Mortensen discusses Coleridge's appropriation of *Die Räuber*, and its conservative ideological
implications, in 'The robbers and the police: British romantic drama and the Gothic treacheries of
Coleridge's *Remorse*', in Avril Horner, ed., *European Gothic: A spirited exchange 1760-1960*
(Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 128-146. The connection with Schiller's
Robbers is discussed by Woodring and J. D. Moore, while Carlson relates *Remorse* to *Wallenstein*.

opposed to the sensationalism of modern sentimental plays (of the *Gamester* he wrote to J. P. Collier that 'there was nothing in it to improve the heart, or enlighten the understanding. To be sure, it produced tears, and so would a blunt razor on shaving the upper lip' [qu. *CL* 3:361n]). The pathos of *Remorse* is inseparable from the philosophical analysis embodied in it, and Coleridge's aim in writing and staging it most probably coincided with the double achievement he so often attributed to Shakespeare: to 'enlighten' and 'improve' at the same time.

But, as in the case of Hamlet's juxtaposition of his father's and Claudius's portrait, the comparison with Shakespeare provoked a judgement that could hardly be favourable for Coleridge. In his letter to his wife, he acknowledged 'the want of vulgar Pathos in the Play itself – nay, there is not enough even of *true* dramatic Pathos' (*CL* 3: 431). Was Coleridge still recalling here Dennis's distinction between vulgar and enthusiastic passion? At any rate, his admission that there is no '*true* dramatic Pathos' suggests that, unlike Shakespeare, he did not manage to fully embody his philosophical 'conception'. This is exactly what Hazlitt wrote, even while paying Coleridge the tribute of comparing his play to Shakespeare:

> It has been observed, that dramatic writers may be divided into two classes, that Shakespeare alone gives the substance of tragedy, and expresses the very soul of the passions, while all other writers convey only a general description or shadowy outline of them – that his is the real text of nature, and the rest but paraphrases and commentaries on it, rhetorical, poetical, sentimental. If Mr. Coleridge has not been able to break the spell, and to penetrate into the inmost circle of the heart, he has approached nearer than almost any other writer, and has produced a very beautiful representation of human nature, which will vie with the best and most popular of our sentimental dramas. (*CH*, 116)

The problem was that in the presence of Shakespeare all living authors turned pale. What both Coleridge and Hazlitt were trying to theorise as Shakespeare's 'substance', the embodied, passionate element, was felt missing even from Coleridge's fairly successful tragedy, as he himself later admitted.[12] In an important article on 'The

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[12] For Coleridge's self-criticism see *Table Talk* (17 Febr 1833): 'There's such a divinity doth hedge our Shakespeare round, that we cannot even imitate his style. I tried to imitate his manner in the Remorse, and, when I had done, I found I had been tracking Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger instead. It is really very curious. At first sight, Shakespeare and his contemporary dramatists seem to write in styles much

Drama', Hazlitt took back most of the praise he had bestowed on *Remorse* and made the blame more specific, using the same criteria that Coleridge himself applied to Shakespeare. The author of *Remorse*, he argues, 'mistakes scholastic speculations for the intricate windings of the passions, and assigns possible reasons instead of actual motives for the excesses of his characters. He gives us studied special-pleadings for involuntary bursts of feeling, and the needless strain of tinkling sentiments for the point-blank language of nature.'[13]

What is interesting in this evaluation, and in a number of others repeating its points, is not their accuracy of judgement but the way they describe Coleridge's failure in terms of analysis of feeling, and (lack of) embodiment.[14] I think that this is not accidental, nor is it purely a result of shared critical conventions, although it certainly reflects a general way of thinking about drama that both Coleridge and Hazlitt adapted to their own critical ends. But quite apart from this, it is rather the case that the play seems to offer itself for such criticism. Passionate language, the analysis of feelings, and even the anatomy of character are subjects thematised in *Remorse*, which become more or less problematic due to their being displayed on the stage. Therefore, having argued earlier for considering Coleridge's analyses of Shakespeare as a specific kind of performance, I would like to end by saying that his 'Shakespearean' tragedy can be regarded as staging problems addressed in his philosophical analysis of Shakespeare.

4

In his 'Reply to a Critic', provoked by a review in the *Theatrical Inquisitor* by 'H' (whom he believed was Hazlitt), Coleridge set out to defend the poetic

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alike: nothing so easy as to fall into that of Massinger and the others; whilst no one has ever yet produced one scene conceived and expressed in the Shakespearean idiom.' Jonathan Bate quotes this entry and notes the reference to *Hamlet*'s 'There's such divinity doth hedge a king', in *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, p. 50.

[13] 'The Drama: No. IV' (Apr 1820, *The London Magazine*); *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed., P. P. Howe (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1930), 18: 309.

[14] Another example from *The Times* (25 Jan 1813): 'It can be no common or inferior intelligence, that can thus combine in the next degree to creation, embody its loose and fluctuating materials into substantial shapeliness, and breathe 'the breath of life into his nostrils', and bid it come forth active and animated, cloathed with beauty, and instinct with soul.' (*CH*, 121)

language of his own play by rehearsing once more what he had frequent occasion to assert about Shakespeare:

> We may take either way, and the result will be the same – If we say, strong Figures, bold Metaphors, and rapid associations of distant Images by slight resemblances are appropriate to Poetry, yet these being the natural Language of the Mind in a state of high excitement, Passion must be Soul of Poetry – or if Passion be the soul of Poetry, the &c – (*SW&F* 1: 345)

The body of passion is figurative language, and therefore – it follows – the language of drama must be highly figurative. *Remorse* certainly abounds in what would have been regarded as 'bold' poetry at the time; Teresa's speech in the first scene, cited in a number of reviews, provides a representative example:

<div style="text-align:center">

If it be wretched
To watch some bark, and fancy Alvar there,
To go through each minutest circumstance
Of the blest meeting, and to frame adventures
Most terrible and strange, and hear *him* tell them;
*(As once I knew a crazy Moorish maid,
Who drest her in her buried lover's cloaths,
And o'er the smooth spring in the mountain cleft
Hung with her lute, and play'd the self same tune
He used to play, and listened to the shadow
Herself had made) - if this be wretchedness,
And if indeed it be a wretched thing
To trick out mine own death bed, and imagine
That I had died, died just ere his return!
To see him listening to my constancy,
Or hover round, as he at midnight oft
Sits on my grave and gazes at the moon   (1.2.25-41; *PW* III.2: 1245-6)

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* (Here Valdez bends back, and smiles at her wildness, which Teresa noticing, checks her enthusiasm, and in a soothing half-playful tone and manner, apologizes for her fancy, by the little tale in parenthesis).

I quote this passage at length, with Coleridge's note that appeared in the printed version, because the two kinds of text together illustrate the dynamics of 'passionate language' that characterise the play. The figurative kernel of the speech is Teresa's 'little tale', exemplifying the work of passion in an image clearly indebted to Shakespeare, among other passages, perhaps to Constance on Grief. The 'Moorish maid' is said to perform what in Constance's speech is attributed to passion; she fills in the clothes of her dead lover, plays, in his place, a song she can listen to, gives an 'outness' to the absence she feels. The little vignette, in turn, functions in the longer passage as a kind of mirror through which Teresa contemplates – and, importantly, interprets – her own mental processes. Reflection, manifested in the winding syntax of an extraordinarily long sentence, thus keeps her safely this side of 'craziness'. In other words, the figure of the maid appears as a defence from what the note calls her 'wildness' and 'enthusiasm', being at the same time symptomatic of it.[15]

It was probably because of this ambiguity that Coleridge felt it necessary to furnish the explanatory note, even though in his lectures he ridiculed plays that read like novels in their instructions for actors. Incidentally, the printed *Remorse* is full of such instructions, which Coleridge claimed were left in the script against his intentions.[16] This note, however, reveals that the author's explanation – a parenthesis upon a parenthesis – fulfils a necessary function. The 'living commentary' of looks and tones had to be spelt out in print, if only because the intricate turns of passionate language were, he thought, not readily (or no longer) understandable for the general reader. That is, instead of making the sense immediately apparent, 'embodied' language led to ambiguities. Coleridge made another similar comment which also indicates that what he understood as the work of passion in the text needed further interpretation. To Teresa's 'Nor shall you want my favourable pleading', he added in handwriting, '(then a[n half-]pause, & dropping her voice, as hinted by the relaxation of the metre. "Nor shall you &c") I mention this, because it is one of the Lines, for which Mr Gifford [...]

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[15] Burwick emphasizes Teresa's lack of delusion in this speech in *Illusion and the Drama*, p. 271, while Carlson points out the precariousness of the distinction between illusion and delusion in her *In the Theatre of Romanticism*, pp.111-12.

[16] See the *Preface:* 'From the necessity of hastening the Publication I was obliged to send the Manuscript intended for the Stage: which is the sole cause of the number of directions printed in Italics.' (*PW* III.2: 1069)

declared me at Murray's Shop fit to be whipt as an idle School-boy. – & *I*, alas! had conceited it to be a little beauty! – ' (*PW* III.2: 1257n) Coleridge here applies (somewhat self-servingly) a principle to his own work which he had applied to Shakespeare. Metre, in this view, is an aspect of the expressive utterance to which the whole human body contributes, and therefore it should be understood flexibly and in conjunction with other non-verbal aspects of speech. But whereas Shakespeare, as he argued, was able to imply such 'instructions' merely through rhythmic patterns, he found himself obliged to make them explicit in self-defence.[17]

In Coleridge's writings, passions 'embodied' in language almost always require further interpretation and analysis. This is evidenced not only by his authorial comments, but by the actions and speeches of his characters themselves. Teresa's 'wild' fancies, for instance, are eminently self-conscious; they are the fancies of a character, who is represented as having been trained to read her own feelings, and who perhaps feels them because of having first encountered them in reading. Coleridge playfully alluded to this when in the Epilogue, spoken in the theatre by the actress Miss Smith, he described Teresa as a reader of old romances, a kind of female Quixote, and contrasts her with the consumers of modern novels.[18] Modern novels, we recall, are pernicious according to Coleridge exactly because they encourage feeling without reflection (in the Epilogue they are said to 'spare the blush, and undersap the heart'); it is highly significant, then, that he defines his own drama in opposition to them, just as he did with Shakespeare. However, this can only serve to reveal that Teresa is not a Shakespearan heroine, even if she at times appears to be one who has read Shakespeare. She is adept in reading feelings (as, for instance, her 'pathognomy' of Ordonio suggests),[19] but because of this, feelings said to be her own appear at times as belonging to someone else. Adela Pinch in her study on the 'epistemologies of emotion' has argued that this problem – it

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[17] Coleridge was generally pleased with the versification of *Remorse*, writing to Southey: 'The second Good quality is, I think, the variety of metres, according as the Speeches are merely transitive; or narrative; or passionate; or (as in the Incantation) deliberate & formal Poetry. It is true, they are all or most Iambic Blank Verse; but under that form there are 5 or 6 perfectly distinct metres.' (*CL* 3: 434)

[18] 'Then for reading – what but huge romances, / With as stiff morals, leaving earth behind 'em, / As the brass-clasp'd, brass-corner'd boards that bind 'em, / Knights, chaste as brave, who strange adventures seek, / And faithful loves of Ladies, fair as meek; / Or saintly hermits' wonder-raising acts, / Instead of – novels *founded upon facts*!' (*PW* III.2: 1133-4)

[19] In 4.2, 46-48, Teresa asks Valdez, 'saw you his countenance? / How remorse, and scorn, and stupid fear, / Displac'd each other with swift interchanges?' (*PW* III.2: 1302)

could be summed up in shorthand as the 'otherness' of feeling – runs through the discourse on feeling from Hume to Wordsworth and beyond.[20] Having traced Coleridge's engagement with the philosophical analysis of feeling in his lectures, one need not be surprised to find the same problem emerging in Coleridge's own play. What is striking is rather the centrality of this theme to *Remorse*, displaying as it does the Coleridgean tensions between the claims of feeling and the claims of understanding.

This tension might be made clearer by taking a closer look at Teresa's 'tale' of the Moorish maid and its Shakespearean provenance. Apart from Constance, the tale also evokes Desdemona's narrative before her death, especially since Teresa has just spoken of Othello-like 'adventures / Most terrible and strange', told by an imaginary Alvar. But Desdemona's story is in an entirely different register:

> My mother had a maid called Barbary,
> She was in love, and he she loved proved mad
> And did forsake her. She had a song of 'willow',
> An old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune
> And she died singing it. That song tonight
> Will not go from my mind. I have much to do
> But to go hang my head all at one side
> And sing it like poor Barbary   [4.3.24-31][21]

Desdemona, like Teresa, recognises herself in the figure of the maid, who, in turn, expresses her 'fortune' in the 'old thing' of a song. However, what Desdemona does next (after 'unpin me here'), is to sing the maid's song, which resonates uncannily with her comments spoken as 'herself', regarding her immediate situation ('Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve, – / Nay, that's not next. Hark, who is't that knocks?' [4.3.51-52]).[22] Narrative in this way is transformed into re-enactment of feeling through lyric and dialogical comment, which also involves a subtle difference between the 'old' song and the one sung by Desdemona. In *Remorse*, by contrast, the maid's story is

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[20] Pinch, Adela, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996).

[21] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by E. A. J. Honigman, The Arden Shakespeare, gen. eds Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), pp. 290-291.

[22] Shakespeare, *Othello*, p. 292.

evoked by Teresa without repeating the 'self same tune' that the maid used to play, and the function of the narrative is to establish an intellectual distance – signalled in writing by the parentheses – from Teresa's own 'enthusiasm'. By the end of her speech, she is distanced from herself to the extent that she is described as a ghost, 'hovering round' her own grave.

Coleridge might have pointed out that the 'Moorish maid' in Teresa's speech prepares the audience for the appearance of Alhadra, the Moorish woman. She is the kind of female figure he sometimes exemplified as Deborah, whose speech is poetic because it is an immediate expression of passion; however, in *Remorse* even this figure is revealed from the start as inhabited by a ghostly feeling. Ending a long speech about her imprisonment (also cited by reviewers as beautiful and 'impassioned'), Alhadra interrupts herself, just at the point of her escape: 'For if I dwell upon that moment, Lady, / A trance comes on which makes me o'er again / All I then was – my knees hang loose and drag, / And my lip falls with such an idiot laugh, / That you would start and shudder!' (1.2.229-233; *PW* III.2: 1253) This passage again reveals a dividedness of feeling at the heart of Coleridge's play. Unlike the Ancient Mariner (whom she resembles), Alhadra here does not quite enact the moment of sublime transport with all its bodily symptoms, but describes herself from an external point of view, as a being, potentially, of preternatural proportions. What the passage manages to convey by this is not the embodiment, but the nearness, of feeling; the sense of 'almost there', which Coleridge described as the ghostly touch.

A passage from Alvar's 'dream' – a counterpart to Alhadra's speech – comes closest in *Remorse* to invoking *Lear*-like sublimity, while it also exemplifies Coleridge's strategy to keep it at bay. Alvar here recounts an obscure story of a dream vision (which may or may not be an account of what really happened to him) of how he escaped being murdered. The event, no doubt, is meant to attest to the power of passionate language as Coleridge, following late Enlightenment theories, understood it: 'But by my looks, and most impassion'd words, / I rous'd the virtues that are dead in no man, / Even in the assassins' hearts!' (1.2.279-81; *PW* III.2: 1255) Passionate speech, with its necessary bodily accompaniments, evokes instinctive sympathy in all mankind.

But Alvar, curiously, recounts his own transformation immediately after this event, which makes him appear similar to Alhadra after her release:

> On a rude rock,
> A rock, methought, fast by a grove of firs,
> Whose threaddy leaves to the low-breathing gale
> Made a soft sound most like the distant ocean,
> I stay'd, as though the hour of death were pass'd,
> And I were sitting in the world of spirits –
> For all things seem'd unreal! [...]
> A storm came on, mingling all sounds of fear,
> That woods, and sky, and mountains, seem'd one havock.
> The second flash of lightning shew'd a tree
> Hard by me, newly scath'd. I rose tumultuous:
> My soul work'd high, I bar'd my head to the storm,
> And with loud voice and clamorous agony
> Kneeling I pray'd to the great Spirit, that made me,
> Pray'd that REMORSE might fasten on their hearts,
> And cling with poisonous tooth, inextricable
> As the gor'd lion's *bite*!   (1.2. 286-304; *PW* III.2: 1255-6)

This passage is about an experience of metamorphosis, through which 'all things seem'd unreal', and in this preternatural state, beaten by the storm, bare-headed, Alvar 'rose', like a ghost, to address the 'great Spirit'. What he calls a 'prayer', however, is in fact a 'fearful curse', as Teresa immediately recognises in her response – in other words, it is the speech-act most characteristic of Lear.

Alvar is careful to relegate the force of this passionate utterance to the past, and to the context of a dream (we might recall Coleridge's strategy in the lectures to encounter Lear at one remove). Yet this is a play in which dreams have a strange power to influence reality, and in which 'the Past lives o'er again'. Acknowledging this, Reeve Parker in a reading of *Osorio* even argued that there is no reason to believe that

Alvar is, in fact, *not* a ghost.[23] The speech certainly establishes Alvar's return as a ghostly visitation in a figurative sense, although it never quite becomes that on the level of the dramatic plot, and, as Parker observes, Coleridge did eliminate much of this ambiguity in his reworking of *Osorio* as *Remorse*. But even in the more fully embodied reality of the staged play, Coleridge's figurative undermining of the 'substance' of his characters leads to a sense of tenuousness, a permeability of the boundaries of personhood through language and representation. In the most spectacular and also most ambivalent scene of the play, Alvar invokes his own ghost, but 'it' declines to appear (while, of course, it is there all along 'embodied' in his person). He substitutes, instead, a painting of his 'assassination', which has the power of 'making the absent present', only to be consumed by flames the next moment. The picture, like Alvar's 'dream', offers a representation of a passionate scene, instead of a scene itself, and even though it is described as a rendering of Alvar's own experience, it is nevertheless a picture showing him from the outside.[24]

Alvar in the incantation scene is supposed to display the picture of the assassination in order to raise once more 'the virtues that are dead in no man', and thereby to save the guilty Ordonio. But the play reveals a basic uncertainty about whether the 'looks, and most impassion'd words' have the same power when represented through painting, music and poetry, instead of being witnessed in action.[25] Virtues, in Ordonio, have certainly not been raised by the 'invocation'; and it seems that even the feeling of remorse had to be brought home to him from the outside, almost by force. This is most clearly presented in the last scene, in which the living Alvar 'stands in' for the ghost of remorse that his brother should have been feeling, but failed to

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[23] Reeve Parker, 'Osorio's Dark Employments: Tricking out Coleridgean Tragedy', *Studies in Romanticism*, 33/1 (1994), 119-160; my interpretation focuses on several of the ambiguities also pointed out by Parker.

[24] Coleridge includes this passage from *Osorio* in the printed *Remorse* as an authorial note. To Alhadra's question ('And then he fram'd this picture, unaided / By arts unlawful, spell, or talisman?'), Alvar replies: 'A potent spell, a mighty talisman! / The imperishable memory of the deed, / Sustain'd by love, and grief, and indignation! / So vivid were the forms within his brain, / His very eyes, when shut, made pictures of them!' (*PW* III.2: 1270). The correspondence between passion and vivid images, which was so important for Priestley (as I have argued in Chapter 2), can still be recognised here, while the 'imagination' is only indirectly evoked.

[25] The differences between representation in painting and in theatre, as well as the general problem of the 'semblance' of truth in *Remorse* are discussed by Sophie Thomas, in 'Seeing things ("as they are"): Coleridge, Schiller, and the play of semblance', *Studies in Romanticism*, 43:3 (Winter 2004), 537-555.

acknowledge. Addressed as 'Spirit of the dead', Alvar as it were reads into his brother the signs of passion appropriate for such an occasion: 'I fix mine eye upon thee, and thou tremblest! / I speak, and fear and wonder crush thy rage, / And turn it to a motionless distraction' (5.1.154-6; *PW* III.2: 1316). The problem that this scene dramatises is that remorse – a reflexive feeling, or, in Hume's terminology, an 'indirect passion' – presupposes two selves, one that sees and one that is seen.[26] Ordonio, as Coleridge wrote to Southey, suffers from 'the Self-contradiction introduced into the Soul by Guilt' (*CL* 3: 433). But since remorse exists in this split between two selves, it cannot be expressed as, properly, one's own. It is the feeling of inner dividedness, which approaches the consciousness as a ghost – a feeling that does not quite belong to the self. The aim of Alvar from the start is to 'raise' remorse in his brother, and the play as a whole dramatises this process of evoking and 'proving' feeling. But in realising this scheme, Coleridge had to face the problem that remorse could not be made observable in an immediately convincing way; it could only be represented as something that visits the self from the outside. This is why (as the reviews indicate) members of the audience were perplexed whether 'true' remorse had ultimately been raised in Ordonio or not.

This problem is relevant not only to the eponymous passion of the play, but to all the feelings that its characters continuously reflect upon. Reflexive pathos is the predominant mode of *Remorse*, and it populates the play with 'ghosts' of feeling, that is, with feelings represented as external to the self.[27] Ordonio is described as 'haunted' by 'phantom thoughts', even prior to the scheme of killing his brother; moreover, he himself is repeatedly characterised as phantom-like. The same letter which discusses Ordonio's inner 'Self-contradiction' indicates that Coleridge thought of him as a divided being to the very end, indeed, as two beings:

> Spite of wretched Acting, the Passage told wonderfully, in which as in a struggle between two
> unequal Panathlists or Wrestlers, the weaker had for a moment got uppermost – & Ordonio with

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[26] Indirect passions in Hume 'have the self for their object, that is, they reintroduce the idea of the self into the mind' (Jane L. McIntyre, 'Personal Identity and the Passions', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 27/4 [1989], 545-557, 551).

[27] A case might be made for Alhadra as another 'ghost', embodying the passion of revenge that Alvar does not want to acknowledge as his own. Their interview is in this sense analogous to Ordonio's final meeting with Alvar, and the so-called 'compact' between them contains the same element of compulsive 'haunting' that characterises Alvar and Ordonio's relationship.

unfeigned Love & genuine repentance, says – I will kneel to thee, my Brother! Forgive me,
Alvar! – till the Pride, like the Bottom-swell on our Lake, gusts up again in – Curse me with
Forgiveness. (CL 3: 434)

This quality of inner dividedness – something Hazlitt also appreciated in Ordonio – is intimately connected with the theatrical effect of Coleridge's stage in general.[28] We might even say that his drama originates in the principle of inner division, with all its characters, not only Ordonio, inhabited by more than one self, constantly turning away from, or analysing, their own feelings.

A passage from the unfinished 'Opus Magnum', quoted by E. S. Shaffer in connection with Coleridge's character criticism, exemplifies this general movement from reflexive analysis towards a theatre of ghosts:

> Vain Pride of Intellect! Mad Narcissus, that in barren Self-Love transformed thyself to Form
> without Substance, Surface without depth, the Object a Shadow, and the Subject the Notion of a
> Shadow. Whence did this Nothing acquire a plural number? From the Senses? [...] & whence the
> number, and the diversity of the Senses, that multiply, or rather *transnihilate* the absolute
> Something into the Universe of Nothings? And what is that inward Mirror, in and for which these
> Nothings have at least a relative reality? Or does thou wait till Pain and Anguish and Remorse
> with moody scorn ask thee: And are *we* Nothings?[29]

A scene in which ghosts, instead of being dispelled by the observing intellect, start speaking to it, was one of Coleridge's worst personal nightmares; it was also one that deeply fascinated him.[30] Here, as Shaffer has shown, something like that nightmare is recounted in an argument against empiricist philosophers (most notoriously Hume) who disregard the unifying feeling of conscience and thereby reduce the mind to a

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[28] Cf. Hazlitt in the *Morning Chronicle*: 'Besides the obvious features, and stronger workings of the passions in this character [Ordonio], there are many traits of a more subtle nature which, we trust, will not escape nice observation of an enlightened audience, though they may be regarded as too metaphysical for tragedy. [...] We have insisted the longer on this excellence, because of its rarity, for except Shakespeare, who is every where full of these double readings and running accompaniments to the ruling passion, there is scarcely any other dramatic writer who has so much as attempted to describe the involuntary, habitual reaction of the passions and the understanding on each other' (*CH* 114-5).

[29] This is quoted and discussed in Shaffer, 'Iago's Malignity Motivated: Coleridge's Unpublished "Opus Magnum", in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 19 (1968), 195-203; pp. 199-200.

[30] 'Saturday Night, at Mr Butler's at Ridding - the Nightmair - so near awaking and my saying – Yes! Dreams, or creatures of my Dreams, you may make me feel you as if you were keeping behind me / but you cannot speak to me – immediately I heard impressed on my outward ears, & with a perfect sense of *distance* answered – O yes! but I can – ' (*CN* 3: 3984)

fragmented, self-involved state. But the scenario described in this passage seems to apply equally well to the problematics of *Remorse*, a play in which the villain is called a 'blind self-worshipper' (5.1.157; *PW* III.2: 1316), prefiguring the 'Mad Narcissus' of this passage, and in which the 'substance' of character is continuously 'transnihilated' by the self-reflexive intellect.

The pattern of a feeling disowned, returning to the self from the outside, seems to have a relevance to Coleridge's thinking that goes beyond the question of remorse as a specific passion. It appears, for instance, in what he described as his own strategy of composition in his early poems: 'my eloquence was most commonly excited by the desire of running away and hiding myself from my personal & inward feelings' (*CL* V: 1309), with the effect that a 'glow' of passion returned to his language, supposedly against his will. In that letter, as I have argued in Chapter 3, Coleridge was referring to this strategy as a way of circumventing the inherent theatricality involved in the expression of feeling. However, what he does not note there is that this strategy leads to another kind of theatricality, in which the self encounters its own feeling in the form of ghostly visitation.[31]

What I have been suggesting through this analysis is that the theatre of *Remorse* is founded on this kind of theatricality, in which feeling is represented by being denied (as by Ordonio) or analysed (as by Teresa). In a curious way, then, John Taylor Coleridge's suspicions concerning the too minute observation of feeling have proved to be relevant to *Remorse*. The play does display the 'transnihilating' effects of reflection on feeling, while it also pays tribute to Shakespeare's embodied language, through the characters' evocation of his passages as recording moments of authentic feeling.

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As I have argued in the opening section of this chapter, reflexive analysis and embodied feeling were also the two key components that kept Coleridge's

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[31] See also *The Friend* on a projected work on 'Dreams, Visions, Ghosts, Witchcraft, &c.': 'I might then explain in a more satisfactory way the mode in which our thoughts in states of morbid slumber, become at times perfectly dramatic (for in certain sort of dreams the dullest Wight becomes a Shakespeare) and by what law the *Form* of the vision appears to talk to us in its own thoughts in a voice as audible as the shape is visible; and this oftentimes in connected trains...' (*F* 1:145)

interpretations of Shakespeare in motion. In *Remorse*, reflection on feeling is predominant, leading to a sense of ghostliness that (if Hazlitt is to be credited) permeated even the staged version of the play. In the 'intermundium' of the lectures – somewhere in between theatre and meditative reading – Coleridge's intense engagement with Shakespeare produced a sense of nearness, as if the characters and even Shakespeare himself had been informing him in a ghostly way. I have been arguing that Coleridge's interest in questions of 'feeling' played a central role in creating this unique effect, and that he inherited this interest, together with a host of philosophical and moral issues attached to it, from the British tradition of philosophical criticism. Thus, while not calling into question the importance of German thought with respect to many of Coleridge's critical preoccupations (for example, the symbol and the organic form), I have attempted to trace the dialogue he pursued within the British critical tradition.

The idea that human nature could be studied most efficiently through a philosophical reading of Shakespeare, as well as the assumption that such an investigation is to be carried out by analysing feeling represented in the text and experienced by the reader, were crucial to the work of critics from Kames to Richardson. These ideas are still present in Coleridge, not as vestiges of an older system, but very often as the parameters within which his own interpretations are carried out. Equally present are the methods these critics employed: the rhetorical analysis of passionate figures elaborated by Kames, Blair, and Priestley, and the hermeneutic of character developed by Richardson. Coleridge's uniqueness in this exchange arises from the self-consciously experimental or performative manner in which he applies these methods, leading to a constant testing of their limits, opening up their hidden possibilities. Coleridge's readiness for self-questioning as a critic was re-enforced by the genre of the public lecture itself, adapted to suit the open-endedness of his inquiry. Therefore, while still participating in the tradition of 'philosophical criticism', he is putting the problems of self-knowledge on trial through more rigorous and sustained analyses than his predecessors, never quite losing sight of what defies explanation in the immediate experience of reading.

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