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**WHOLENESS IN FRAGMENTS: COLERIDGE'S
SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM**

BY

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF PH.D.
TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

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Abstract

Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism is mostly composed of fragments—sometimes in the form of lectures, sometimes as notes, and sometimes scribbled on the blank leaves of pamphlets. In his lectures from 1808 to 1819 on literature, Coleridge seldom adhered to the prospectus. In many cases they ended up as fragments. Critics are divided between those who insist that Coleridge's criticism is distinguished by the consistency of its principles and methodology and those who insist on its fragmentariness.

The purpose of the thesis is to reveal the wholeness of a Shakespearean criticism that consists of fragments. Some critics such as Thomas MacFarland claim that fragmentation is the distinguishing condition of the Romantic era. According to him, a diasperactive form; that is, an actual incompleteness striving toward a hypothetical unity is common in the art of an era in which the fragment functions as the symbol for the whole. Lee Lust Brown argues that Coleridge hypothesised a textual whole which was both more than and prior to its parts and yet his own writing manifests a degree of literal fragmentation. He takes the fragment as a synecdoche of wholeness and claims that textual wholeness is not so much lost as deferred or displaced in the question of its possibility. Agreeing with these critics, I argue for the wholeness of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism. In so doing, first of all, I deal with the representative schools of Shakespearean criticism before or contemporary with Coleridge, those of his predecessors and of the German Idealists, because these constitute the two main sources informing Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism. Considering that Coleridge's

Shakespearean criticism is closely linked to his poetic principles, I try to define his poetic principles—the concept of nature, organicism, and imagination. I deal with Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare under three heads; Shakespeare as an artist, Shakespeare's poetic works, and their appreciation.

In chapter one, in order to trace the background of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, I discuss the two distinctive schools of Shakespearean criticism contemporary with Coleridge; i.e., the British school and the German school. After describing the general characteristics of the two schools, I focus on several leading exponents of each of the two kinds of criticism; for the British school, Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, and the character critics such as Richardson and, for the German school, I focus on the Schlegel brothers.

In chapter two, I deal with the poetical principles that form the ground of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism; that is, the concept of nature, organicism and imagination. These unifying principles are themselves expounded by Coleridge in a series of fragments. The concept of nature forms the basis of his explanation not only of Shakespeare himself but of Shakespeare's work. His notion of nature is closely related with his notion of art, organic unity, copy and imitation. I discuss these concepts by comparing them with similar concepts in his predecessors and in the Schlegels. Another concept in Coleridge's criticism is imagination. His concept of imagination is shown to differ not only from the empirical concept but also from the concept found in the German idealists.

In chapter three, I show how a unified ideal of Shakespeare can be drawn from the fragments. Just as Coleridge believed that it was possible to formulate a portrait of

Shakespeare as an artist from his writings, my focus is on the role of Shakespeare in giving substance to Coleridge's concept of poetic genius, a concept that Coleridge arrives at by reconciling the notion of genius as it was formulated within the British empiricist tradition and by the German idealists.

In chapter four, I begin by tracing Coleridge's insistence that Shakespeare's drama is an instance, indeed the highest instance, of all art. Hence Coleridge insists on the relationship between the different instances of the aesthetic. I, then, turn to Coleridge's representation of the plays as themselves constituting the supreme instance of organic form. In his discussion of Shakespeare's plots Coleridge characteristically focuses on the beginning scenes only. Hence, his discussion of the plays is fragmentary. But for Coleridge the beginning scenes are the seeds in which the principle determining the development of the whole play is fully contained. A similar organic principle underlies Coleridge's treatment of the different elements of drama; form, character, language, pun, and wit. Coleridge insists that none of these can be studied separately and that they have their being only in their interrelationship. I focus on the relationship between theoretical and practical criticism, indicating Coleridge's distinctiveness by comparing his notion of form, characterisation, and language with those of other 18th century critics.

In chapter five, I deal with Coleridge's appreciation of Shakespeare's work. This chapter focuses both on ways of seeing and reading Shakespeare. The starting point of my argument is the question of whether or not Coleridge is appropriately regarded as a closet critic. Most commentators have insisted on Coleridge's preference for reading rather than seeing plays but his writing shows that he was interested in seeing plays and in theatrical illusion. His focus moved to reading plays partly because of his dislike of

performance but more importantly because of his dislike of current theatrical practices. Thus his theory of illusion applies equally to theatrical illusion and the reading experience. Coleridge establishes illusion as the product of the imaginations of both poet and audience working in co-operation. Finally, I discuss Coleridge's idea of the perfect audience for Shakespeare's plays, the audience that the plays imply.

In conclusion I offer a general view of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism and indicate its crucial place in critical history.

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My family gave me constant support. I am thankful to my sisters, brothers, brothers-in-law, sister-in-law, nephews, and nieces for their warm wishes and encouragement. I am especially grateful to my two brothers, Sangwon and Jaewon. Sangwon motivated me to study in Britain and Jaewon gave me invaluable comfort and encouragement whenever I was in a difficult situation. My greatest debt, however, goes to my parents, for their love, understanding, and emotional and financial support throughout writing this thesis.

Abbreviations

- AP* Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Anima Poetae*. Ed. E.H. Coleridge. London: 1895.
- AR* ———. *Aids to Reflection in the Forming of a Manly Character*. Ed. Kathleen Coburn. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1993.
- BL* ———. *Biographia Literaria*. Eds. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate. 2 vols. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1983.
- C 17th C* ———. *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*. Ed. Roberta Florence Brinkley. Duke University Press, 1955.
- CL* ———. *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. E.L. Griggs. 6 vols. Oxford: 1956-71.
- CM* ———. *Marginalia*. Ed. George Whalley. 3 vols. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1980-1992.
- CN* ———. *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. Kathleen Coburn. 8 vols. 1957-90.
- C & S* ———. *On the Constitution of the Church and State*. Ed. E.E. Bostetter, H.J. Jackson, and J.R. de Jackson. 2 vols. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1995.
- EOT* ———. *Essays on his Times*. Ed. D.V. Erdman. 3 vols. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1978.
- F* ———. *The Friend*. Ed. Barbara E. Rooke. 2 vols. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1969.
- IS* ———. *Inquiring Spirit*. Ed. Kathleen Coburn. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, 1951.
- LS* ———. *Lay Sermons*. Ed. R.J. White. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1972.

- Lect* ———. *Lectures 1808-1819: On Literature*. Ed. Reginald Foakes. 2vols. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1984.
- Logic* ———. *Logic*. Ed. J.R. de J. Jackson. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1981.
- LR* ———. *The Literary Remains of Samuel Talyor Coleridge*. Ed. H.N.Coleridge. 4vols. London: William Pickering, 1836-9.
- MAL* ———. *Miscellanies, Aesthetic and Literary of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. T. Ashe. London: George Bell and sons, 1885.
- Sh C* ———. *Shakespearean Criticism*. Ed. T.M.Raysor. 2vols. London: 1930.
- Sh&F* ———. *Shorter Works and Fragments*. Ed. H.J.Jackson and J.R.de Jackson. 2vols. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1995.
- TL* ———. *Theory of Life in Shorter Works and Fragments*. Ed. H.J.Jackson and J.R.de Jackson. 2vols. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1995.
- TM* ———. *S.T.Coleridge's Treatise on Method as Published in the Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*. Ed. Alice D. Snyder. London: [n.p] 1934.
- TT* ———. *The Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. Carl.R. Woodring. London and Princeton: Princeton University Press and Routledge, 1990.
- TI & Om* ———. *The Table Talk and Ommiana. Of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Annotated by Coventry Patmore. London: Oxford University Press, 1917.
- CDAL* Schlegel, A.W. *A Course of Literature on Dramatic Art and Literature*. Tr. John Black. London: Henry G. Bone, 1846.
- CJ* Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Tr. James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911.
- Preface* Johnson, Samuel. *The Preface to Shakespeare* in *Johnson's*

Preface to Shakespeare. Ed. and Intro. Smallwood. Bristol: Bristol
Classical Press, 1985.

Note on Primary Materials

In transcribing from the primary materials of Coleridge I have omitted editorial deletions to make the text easier to read.

Introduction

Studies of Coleridge as critic have almost invariably remarked on his Shakespearean criticism.¹ But, considering its overall importance, exclusive studies of the Shakespeare criticism are not very substantial. After Henry Nelson Coleridge edited Coleridge's notes on Shakespeare in *The Literary Remains* (4 vols 1836-9), Sara Coleridge published *Notes and Lectures on Shakespeare* in 1849. Then, T.M. Raysor first assembled and organised scattered notes, lecture reports, and letters on Shakespeare into two volumes of *Shakespearean Criticism* (1930; revised 1960). In the introduction to this book,

¹ J.R. de J. Jackson, in his *Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969, uses Coleridge's analysis of Hamlet in his explanation of Coleridge's notion of human faculties. Jackson also remarks Coleridge's notion of Shakespeare as his example of a poet who practises a Method to explain Coleridge's concept of Method. Appleyard, in *Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature*, Cambridge, Mas.: Harvard University Press, 1965, points out that Coleridge is among the first who saw aesthetic form in its historical context and demonstrates Coleridge's explanation of the difference between the plays of Shakespeare and Sophocles. In explanation of Coleridge's organic unity, quite a few critics discuss Coleridge's notion of Shakespeare's dramatic form. James Volant Baker in *The Sacred River* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957, argues that Shakespeare is an example of Coleridge's theory of the reconciliation of opposite powers. Clarence D. Thorpe in "Coleridge As Aesthetician and Critic." *Journal of the History and Ideas* 5(1944): 387-414, remarks that Shakespeare is Coleridge's example of the reconciliation between multitude and unity. Richard Harter Fogle in *The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press; Cambridge University Press, 1962, also writes that Coleridge, in his treatment of Shakespeare, pursues his method of reconciling unity with multitude. Stephen Prickett in *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, notes that Coleridge offers Shakespeare as a genius who realised organic theory. Ronald C. Wendling in *Coleridge's Progress to Christianity*. London: Bucknell University Press, 1995, explains that Coleridge's notion of "symbols and myths created by the imagination are the media where the universal and particular, the eternal and the temporal meet" and offers Shakespeare's dramas as symbols and myths of secular literature. Paul Hamilton in *Coleridge's Poetics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, exemplifies Coleridge's idea of Shakespeare in explaining his poetics. Critics such as Tim Fulford, Robert N. Essick, and James C. McKusick propose the language of Shakespeare's dramas as the prime example of Coleridge's theory of language. Fulford, for example, in *Coleridge's Figurative Language*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991, insists that Coleridge's greatness as a critic is demonstrated in his Lectures about Shakespeare's language. McKusick, in *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986, offers Shakespeare's language as what Coleridge calls the 'language of nature'. Essick in "Coleridge and the Language of Adam," *Coleridge's Biographia Literaria: Text and Meaning*. Ed. Frederic Burwick. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989. 62-74, argues that Coleridge finds the possibility of recovering Adamic language in Shakespeare's language.

Raysor remarks that though Coleridge borrowed very largely from Schlegel and other critics, he had his own arguments and some are the products of his own superb genius. Raysor especially emphasizes Coleridge's introspective psychology and his insight into human motives. Terence Hawkes edited *Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare* in 1959. In 1987 R.A.Foakes edited *Lectures 1808-1819: On Literature* in two volumes of which a large portion is devoted on Shakespeare. There he tried to arrange Coleridge's lectures chronologically and tried to connect his Shakespearean criticism with his other general criticism. In his Editor's Introduction, Foakes describes the procedure of the lectures, the characteristics of the Shakespearean criticism, its similarities with and differences from his British predecessors, as well as Coleridge's historical views, his method of criticism, and its value for the future. Two years later he also edited *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*.

Other studies have been carried out in the form of books or periodical articles. Jonathan Bate, in *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*,² points out Coleridge's achievement, originality, and contribution to Shakespearean criticism in terms of his synthesis of English and German sources. In *The Romantics on Shakespeare*³ he shows the political, and historical background to the Romantics' studies of Shakespeare. For the Romantics, Bate argues, Shakespeare was 'a vital resource with which the Romantics could register their own development from pro-French radicals to apologists for the English and the Middle classes.' For Coleridge, Hamlet is a philosophical aristocrat, reflecting Coleridge's view of himself. Similarly in

² Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

³ ———. *The Romantics on Shakespeare*. London: Penguin, 1992.

"The Politics of Romantic Shakespearean Criticism,"⁴ Bate also searches for the political meaning of Shakespeare for the Romantics including Coleridge. According to him, behind the notion of organic and mechanical form is a hidden political agenda, equating organic form with Britain and Germany, and mechanical form with France.

Some critics claim Coleridge's unique status among Shakespearean critics. Earl R. Wasserman, in "Shakespeare and the English Romantic Movement,"⁵ distinguishes between Shakespeare for the eighteenth-century critics, and for the Romantics including Coleridge. John Beer in "Coleridge's Originality As a Critic of Shakespeare,"⁶ tries to define the difference between Coleridge and Schlegel in terms of their concept of organic form. T.S. Eliot in "Shakespearean Criticism: From Dryden to Coleridge,"⁷ acknowledges Coleridge's importance for modern Shakespearean Criticism. In "Coleridge on Shakespeare: Method Amid the Rhetoric,"⁸ Peter Hoheisel generally characterises Coleridge's notion of Shakespeare's drama as an embodiment of the ideal or a symbol of the ideal.

Some articles mainly deal with Coleridge's character criticism. Roberta Morgan in "The Philosophic Basis of Coleridge's Hamlet Criticism,"⁹ argues that Coleridge's

⁴ ———. "The Politics of Romantic Shakespeare: Germany, England, France." *European Romantic Review* 1(1990): pp.1-26.

⁵ Wasserman, Earl, R. "Shakespeare and the English Romantic Movement." Ed. Herbert M. Schueller, *The Persistence of Shakespeare Idolatry: Essays in Honour of Robert W. Babcock*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964.

⁶ Beer, John. "Coleridge's Originality as a Critic of Shakespeare." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 19(1986):51-69.

⁷ Eliot, T.S. "Shakespearean Criticism: From Dryden to Coleridge." Eds. Harley Granville-Barker and G.B. Harrison. *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949.287-299.

⁸ Hoheisel, Peter. "Coleridge on Shakespeare: Method Amid the Rhetoric." *SIR* 13(1974): 15-23.

⁹ Morgan, Roberta. "The Philosophic Basis of Coleridge's Hamlet Criticism." *ELH* (1939):256-270.

criticism of *Hamlet* is based on association psychology. In "A Note on Coleridge,"¹⁰ Alice D Snyder also discusses Coleridge's debt to psychology in his character analysis. David Ellis and Howard Mills disagree with the largely accepted argument that Coleridge 'Romanticised Hamlet'. In "Coleridge's Hamlet: The Notes versus the Lectures,"¹¹ they assume Coleridge as character critic, but argue that Coleridge's interest is in Hamlet's whole character related to the play. In their opinion, Coleridge was not concerned with 'Hamlet's thinking too much' but with the more fundamental problem of perception. A balance between the real and the imaginary is a moral necessity for Coleridge.

Another approach concerns Coleridge's theory of illusion. R.A.Foakes, in "Forms to His Conceit": Shakespeare and the Uses of Stage Illusion,"¹² explains Coleridge's notion of illusion, linking to it his theory of imitation. J.R.de J.Jackson similarly attacks the argument that Coleridge was a closet critic, and relates Coleridge's theory of imitation and stage illusion in his "Coleridge on Dramatic Illusion and Spectacle in the Performance of Shakespeare's Plays"¹³. In *Illusion and the Drama*¹⁴, Frederick Burwick distinguishes between Coleridge's and Schlegel's notions of illusion. Whereas Schlegel is mainly concerned with illusion thematically, Coleridge is interested in the mechanism of illusion itself, and related it to his theory of imitation.

¹⁰ Snyder, Alice D. "A Note on Coleridge's Shakespeare Criticism." *MLN*(1923): 23-31.

¹¹ Ellis, David; Mills, Howard. "Coleridge's Hamlet: The Notes versus the Lectures." *Essays in Criticism* 29(1979): 244-53.

¹²Foakes, R.A. "'Forms to His Conceit': Shakespeare and the Uses of Stage Illusion." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 66(1980): 103-119.

¹³ Jackson, J.R.de J., "Coleridge on Dramatic illusion and Spectacle in the Performance of Shakespeare's Plays." *Modern Philology* 62(1964): 13-21.

¹⁴ Burwick, Frederick. *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1991.

In his *Coleridge: Critic of Shakespeare*¹⁵, M.M.Badawi attempts to study the critical methods and assumptions of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism and to reveal his contribution to Shakespearean criticism in England. First, Badawi highlights problems in English Shakespearean criticism before Coleridge such as the concept of nature as a sense of wildness and irregularity, the concept of imagination defined by sensationalist psychology, attention to the psychological element in aesthetic experience, seeking motives in characters, character studies on the assumption that characters are human beings, and the attempt to find morality in Shakespeare's works, the location of beauties and faults in Shakespeare's works, etc. Then he discusses the relation between Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism and his poetic theory; i.e., the pleasure principle, the theory of imagination, the end of poetic drama, and poetic faith and dramatic illusion. In Section III, "Form and meaning", in Section IV, "Character and psychology", and in Section V, "Character and morality", Badawi tries to show Coleridge's difference from the eighteenth-century critics. In Section VI, "Shakespeare's poetry," he deals with language, words and meaning, imagery metaphor, puns, and versification. To some extent, Badawi's study is successful especially in unfolding the subtleties and elaboration of Coleridge's character analysis as distinguished from that of the eighteenth-century critics. But there is no clear explanation of the basis of Coleridge's method and the assumptions of his Shakespearean criticism. And Badawi does not link Coleridge's poetic theory to his practical criticism.

My main concern in this thesis is, like other critics, to reveal Coleridge's unique position as a critic of Shakespeare. In doing so, I begin from the problem of the

¹⁵ Badawi, Muhammad M. *Coleridge: Critic of Shakespeare*. New York and London: Cambridge

fragmentariness of his criticism. As Thomas McFarland points out, "Coleridge's most pregnant, vital, and idiosyncratic work is to be found in his pure fragments: in the haphazard entries of his notebooks, and in the immediacies of marginal notations in books he was reading."¹⁶

As R.A.Foakes points out in his edition of the Lectures on Literature, they were not very well organised. As Henry Crabb Robinson complained, there were often irrelevancies and digressions.¹⁷ "The records of the lectures", Foakes puts it,

are never better than incomplete, and are frequently sketchy. Coleridge's annotations in the editions of Shakespeare he used may include a few pages written out at the beginning of a play to provide an introduction, but for the rest consist usually of jottings and brief comments intended for development in the lecture-room.¹⁸

Here, we can discuss whether the fragmentariness of his lectures and notes on Shakespeare was the result of his lack of will, illness, procrastination or simply of the literary zeitgeist.

Such critics as Anne Janowitz question whether Coleridge's fragmentary poems belong to a genre that should be recognized as the dominant mode of romanticism or whether the fragmentariness is simply a kind of excuse. According to Janowitz, Coleridge "finds in the notion of the fragment a useful vehicle by means of which to defend his poems from censure and give them status as part of an identifiable, not

University Press, 1973.

¹⁶ McFarland, Thomas. *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Modalities of Fragmentation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p.22.

¹⁷ See *Lect I*, p.283.

¹⁸ Foakes, R.A. *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*. London: The Athlone Press, 1989, p.14. Also see, *Lect I*, p.xi

universal, poetic genre.”¹⁹

Unlike Janowitz, Elizabeth Wanning Harries in *The Unfinished Manner* categorises Coleridge’s poems published in *Sibylline Leaves* (1816) as fragmentary poems following the tradition of the Vergilian Sibylline leaves, which is a metaphor for a collection of various and fragmented pieces. Harries researches the ruin form as deliberate partial creation in the later eighteenth century which ranged in its expression from poetry to novels, essays, sermons, and artificial ruins. Though Harris distinguishes the romantic fragmentary form from the ruin form in the late eighteenth century, she strongly insists on the connection between the two forms; that is, the romantic fragmentary form depends on the ‘fragmentary procedures and justification’ which developed in the later eighteenth century. In this context, Coleridge’s fragmentary form, according to her, was influenced by Sterne. Harris notes, “The extent of Coleridge’s debt to Sterne seems to me astonishing, particularly though not only in chapter 13”²⁰ of *Biographia Literaria*.

Such critics as Thomas McFarland, Philip Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, Lee Rust Brown, John Beer, and Stephen Prickett offer the fragment as a prevalent mode of romanticism. McFarland in *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin* discusses the problem of the gap between Romantics’ organic ideals and the fragmentary nature of what they actually experienced, and he tries to interpret the fragment as the part which symbolically implies the whole. According to him, the conception of reconciled opposites is an attempt to overcome this ruptured awareness of existence and “Coleridge’s own polar schematisms are, typically for him, but also generically for a

¹⁹ Janowitz, Anne. “Coleridge’s 1816 Volume: Fragment as Rubric.” *SIR* 24(1985): 21-39, p.22.

²⁰ Harris, Elizabeth Wanning. *The Unfinished Manner: Essays on the Fragment in the Later Eighteenth Century*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994, p.155.

wider definition of Romantic activity, almost invariably inconclusive or fragmentary.”²¹ Stephen Prickett proposes romanticism, especially German Romanticism as self-consciously revolutionary both in form and in content and claims that its manifesto was presented in the form of fragments, at once isolated and all-embracing.²² John Beer in “Fragmentations and Ironies” relates the circumstances of the romantic era to the form of the fragment, i.e., a fractured society, the gap between the Romantics’ religious and political thought and reality.

Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy define the fragment as the romantic genre.²³ They propose that the fragment as a genre should not be confused with ‘the detached piece pure and simple’, with ‘the residue of a broken ensemble’, or with an ‘erratic block’. For them, the fragment is not only philosophical. The philosophical fragment, according to them, takes on the value of a ruin which functions as a monument and an evocation of something beyond itself. However, “what is thereby both remembered as lost and presented in a sort of sketch (or blue print) is always the living unity of a great individuality, author, or work.” The literary fragment, unlike a pure piece, or any of the genre terms employed by the moralists such as sentence, maxim, opinion, and anecdote, implies incompleteness. They explain the relation of fragment to the whole thus:

Fragmentary totality, in keeping with what should be called the logic of the hedgehog, cannot be situated in any single point: it is simultaneously in the whole and in each part. Each fragment stands for itself and for that from which it is detached. Totality is the fragment itself in its completed individuality. It is thus

²¹ McFarland, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin*, p.339.

²² Prickett, Stephen. “Coleridge, Schlegel and Schleiermacher: England, Germany (and Australia) in 1798.” *1798: The Year of the Lyrical Ballads*. Ed. Richard Cronin. London: Macmillan Press, 1998. 170-184, p.174.

²³ Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe and Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*. Tr. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988, p.40.

identically the plural totality of fragments, which does not make up a whole (in, say, a mathematical mode) but replicates the whole, the fragmentary itself, in each fragment.²⁴

According to Lee Rust Brown, "Coleridge, following German theories, hypothesized a textual whole which was both "more than" and "prior to" its parts; and yet Coleridge's own writing, both poetry and prose, manifests a degree of literal brokenness proportionate to the severely difficult status of his ideal of wholeness."²⁵ Brown argues that, for Coleridge, a unified text was a promise which could never be fulfilled and that "the prose fragments ask to be read in light of their fractured relationship to an absent unified text: their own brokenness substitutes, apologetically, for the wholeness they signify."²⁶ Brown proposes the problem of the reader's reading of fragments. "Coleridge's prose fragments," according to him,

engage readers to view the text at hand with an eye on the prospect of a wholeness which is also a text, but which is not present for reading. Part of what we, as readers, have inherited from romanticism is a willingness to trade our demand to "comprehend" a text for a certain latitude in the register of "speculation": we look for something more and other than what we find on the page, something more and other than we have found, so far, on any page.²⁷

Coleridge in chapter 13 of *Biographia Literaria* remarks on the character of his own writing. The letter which Coleridge insists came from a friend is in fact known to be written by himself²⁸:

²⁴ Ibid., p.44.

²⁵ Brown, Lee Rust. "Coleridge and the Prospect of the Whole." *SIR* 30(1991): 235-253, p.237.

²⁶ Ibid., p.243.

²⁷ Ibid., p.245.

²⁸ See *BLL*, n3.

...I see clearly you have done so much, and yet not enough. You have been obliged to omit so many links, from the necessity of compression, that what remains, looks (if I may recur to my former illustration) like the fragments of the winding steps of an old ruined tower.(BL I, 302-3)

In studying Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, my concern lies in finding the wholeness in the fragments as Brown suggests. Following the notion of taking the fragment as the defining romantic genre, I would like to display wholeness in the fragmentary pieces of Coleridge's criticism. As Harris suggests, fragmentary writing in the Romantic era is a genre which succeeds the tradition of the ruin form. But whether it is deliberately planned or unplanned is obscure. As McFarland and other critics argue, the fragment is a unique romantic mode of writing which inevitably results from the disparity between vision and articulation. Coleridge, for instance, in analysing Shakespeare's form as the example of an organic unity, might have felt a disparity between his idea and its articulation.

In Chapter one, the notion of wholeness in fragments may be understood as John Livingston Lowes does in *The Road to Xanadu*. Here, Lowes makes the point that the "essential virtue of poetry is resident, not in its matter, but in the power that moulds brute matter."²⁹ Lowes in this book tries to display how fragments are picked up and metamorphosed into immortal shape in Coleridge's poems. In *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, as in his poems, various materials are picked up and are metamorphosed into a shape that is Coleridge's own. Therefore, if we define Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism as fragmentary, the fragments themselves are shaped by bringing together numerous fragments.

²⁹ Lowes, John Livingston. *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination*. Boston:

Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy emphasise individuality and dynamics in each fragment. "Just as the fragment of Antiquity manifests the essential originality, of the ancient work," they write,

The modern fragment "characterizes" this originality, and thereby sketches out the "project" of the future work whose individuality will dialectically reunite and sublimate (art aside, we are very close to Hegel) the thinking, living, and working[*oeuvrant*] dialogue of ancient and modern fragments.³⁰

In chapter one, I attempt to survey the sources of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, largely British and German ones, to see how Coleridge 'dialectically reunites and sublimate' the sources for his own criticism. Unlike Badawi's section one, "Shakespeare before Coleridge," I focus on the particularities of several representative individuals or groups both in Britain and Germany such as Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, the character critics, and the Schlegel brothers.

In adumbrating the wholeness of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, I make Coleridge's concept of nature the central idea of his Shakespearean criticism. In chapter two, my main concern lies in relating the Coleridgean notion of nature to his poetic principles. In *The Friend*, Coleridge distinguishes *natura naturans* from *natura naturata*, taking the former as his ideal. His reinterpretation of *natura naturans* is, however, quite different from the notion of nature in the eighteenth-century Shakespearean critics, which may render him unique in Shakespearean criticism. His concept of nature is directly related to his poetic principles; that is, his concept of art, the reconciliation of opposites, organic unity, and imagination. In describing his poetic

Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927, p.101.

³⁰ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy. *The Literary Absolute*, p.47.

principles, I also attempt to display his originality.

In chapter three, I attempt to portray Shakespeare as an artist. In this chapter, I relate Coleridge's concept of nature to his idea of Shakespeare. Though Coleridge conventionally describes Shakespeare as 'a poet of nature', the meaning is quite different from what was generally accepted in the eighteenth century. I would aim to describe in what way it is different and how his concept of nature could be related to his idea of Shakespeare as a poet of genius, Spinozistic deity or Proteus, a poet of method, a poet and prophet, and a poet of his age and of no age.

In chapter four, I deal with Coleridge's idea of Shakespeare's artistic works. Starting with Coleridge's general view of Shakespeare's works I will examine his comparison of them with painting and certain kinds of music. Then, applying Coleridge's principle that artistic work is analogous to nature in Shakespeare's works, I try to demonstrate Coleridge's method of analysing Shakespeare's work as an organic unity.

Finally, in chapter five, my concern lies in Coleridge's interest in the reception of Shakespeare. My argument begins with whether the description of Coleridge as a 'closet critic' is appropriate or not. My intention is to reveal that he is not anti-theatrical. His concern with illusion is important evidence in support of this argument. Coleridge's theory of illusion is one of the most remarkable aspects of his Shakespearean criticism. To demonstrate its uniqueness, I examine his comparison of illusion with dreams and with his theory of imitation and copy. Finally, I focus on his interest in the audience and the relationship between author, work, and audience, which is also based on his concept of nature.

Chapter 1. The Reconciliation of British and German Sources

Coleridge's status as a critic seems even more assured than his reputation as a poet.

Clarence D. Thorpe's evaluation of Coleridge as an aesthete and critic is typical:

He was first of all a master of synthesis, whose eager, searching mind reached out in every direction for every manner of knowledge and idea, examining, trying out, accepting, rejecting, and finally assimilating that which he found both true to logic and to his own experience and adaptable to the system he eventually evolved. The key words to his achievement are catholicism, reconciliation, and integration.¹

Herbert Read claims that Coleridge was responsible for a revolution in critical method:

The distinction of Coleridge, which puts him head and shoulders above every other English critic, is due to his introduction of a philosophical method of criticism. English criticism before his time, in the hands of a Dryden, a Warton, or a Johnson, had been a criticism of technique, of craftsmanship—sometimes presupposing some general rules, such as that of dramatic unity, but oftener a merely mechanical, but at best an individualistic and arbitrary activity, resulting in such perversities, or rather inadequacies, as Johnson's remarks on Shakespeare. Coleridge changed all that.²

This opinion might be disputed and, in fact, such critics as Norman Fruman and Joseph Warren Beach have dismissed Coleridge's criticism as a kind of accumulation of plagiarism. Beach insists that "we are in a position today to outline the picture of a rather minor prophet furtively stuffing his shirt with other men's wisdom and giving himself the airs of an Aquinas or an Aristotle."³ Norman Fruman also argues that Coleridge is overvalued. In his *Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel*, he tries to reveal

¹ Thorpe, Clarence D. "Coleridge As Aesthete and Critic." *Journal of the History and Ideas* 5(1944): 387-414, p.389.

the 'true' face of Coleridge. He says of, for instance, *Biographia Literaria* that "Many historically significant studies of the subject have quoted only sparingly from German sources, sometimes without stooping to provide translations; others have consistently directed English readers to obscure German texts where, presumably, relevant comparisons with Coleridge might be made."⁴ He attacks Coleridge for the "deliberate plagiarism and obscurantism" in his Shakespearean criticism.⁵ McFarland has said of Fruman's study that the work

was a dedicated attack on Coleridge's reputation from almost every possible vantage point, and it received much attention in the press. For a while one would hear from lawyers and stockbrokers at cocktail parties that it was a shame that Coleridge studies had been destroyed by Fruman's attack. What actually happened, however, was entirely predictable to one who understood the dynamics of canonicity; after the initial flurry, Fruman's book was simply incorporated into the body of Coleridge interpretation, where it now generates occasions for still further publication by way of confirmation or rebuttal, and the Coleridge snowball, actually augmented by the addition, rolls downward ever more massively.⁶

Emerson R. Marks similarly notes that Fruman

would both deflate the author himself and precipitate a revision of a major literary epoch. But these confident expectations have foundered on the solid worth of Coleridge's achievement, indefeasible even after due subtraction of whatever is not his own. Almost two decades later his fame, resistant alike to well-founded reservation and sensationalist detraction, continues undiminished.⁷

² Read, Herbert. "Coleridge as Critic." *Sewanee Review* 56(1948): 597-624, p.606.

³ Beach, J.W. "Coleridge's Borrowing from the German." *ELH* 9(1942): 36-58, p.37.

⁴ Fruman, Norman. *Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971, p.xviii.

⁵ See *Ibid.*, p.142. He insists that without the aid of Schlegel's *Vorlesungen*, the corpus of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism would be markedly different.

⁶ McFarland, Thomas. "A Coleridgean Criticism of the Work of M.H.Abrams." *High Romantic Argument: Essays for M.H.Abrams*. Ed. Lawrence Lipking, Ithaca and London, 1981. 106-127, p.120.

⁷ Marks, Emerson R. "Perverse and Inspired Genius." *The American Scholar* 57(1988):291-305, p.300.

Coleridge, as a critic, especially as a critic of Shakespeare has maintained his reputation. R.A. Foakes argues that "In spite of its limitations and fragmentary nature, Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism again and again reveals the style of a great critic, the power of summing up a particular insight in a memorable way, so that his formulation remains a challenge to later critics."⁸ Kathleen Coburn celebrates Coleridge similarly:

Controversy has sometimes raged over his criticism of Shakespeare, but somehow it survives all his commentators, not only undimmed by time but growing in its twentieth-century development as we begin to catch up with his meaning. Shakespeare, Coleridge held, could not be adequately judged and understood by a priori canons of criticism. His plays have the single unity of the operation of an idea, of forces in conflict, of character or of some other inexorable process of human situations. Their unity is not mechanical, and does not depend on the externals, say of a physical place or one short span of time appropriate to the Greeks or the French theatre. The unity of a Shakespeare play lies elsewhere. Enriched by and not sacrificed to its diversity, its unity lies in the imaginative vision behind it and in the mind of the perceptive spectator, a concept so obvious to us that we forget that it was Coleridge who made it so.⁹

How could Coleridge achieve such a unique position in Shakespearean criticism? Among his other achievements, what is most frequently pointed out is his contribution to the reconciliation of English Empiricism and German Idealism. "Coleridge's achievement," according to Jonathan Bate,

was to combine English empiricism with German systematic rigour, to follow the tradition both of an eighteenth-century critic such as Morgann who began to pay detailed attention to Shakespeare's characters and of the Germans, A.W.Schlegel especially, who placed Shakespeare at the centre of a theory of art.¹⁰

⁸ Foakes, R.A. *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*, p.15.

⁹ Coburn, Kathleen. "Coleridge : A Bridge between Science and Poetry." *Coleridge's Variety*. Ed. John Beer. 81-100, p.97.

¹⁰ Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, p.12.

Raysor also says that Coleridge "drew from the thought of predecessors in the eighteenth century; and from a foreign source,—from the writers of Germany in the great age of German literature—he gathered ideas which gave philosophical scope and dignity to his criticism"¹¹ The merit of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, according to James Baker, is in "the original amalgam that Coleridge made, the very excellent job of smelting and welding the best elements of older theories into one."¹² Certainly, Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism was not produced in a vacuum, or merely as a personal preference, unrelated to contemporary circumstances. Rather, it reflects various kinds of arguments about Shakespeare during the period from the later eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century.

In Shakespearean criticism, Samuel Johnson tried to free himself from the fetters of rigid 'neo-classical' rules. Character critics such as Richardson and Morgann reflect the aesthetically changing atmosphere of this period. In Shakespearean performance, David Garrick was a key figure. We might not be able to say that Coleridge was directly influenced by all of them. But it would not be too much to say that they provided a momentum for Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism.

Another crucial factor which contributed to his achievement is German criticism. Coleridge's indebtedness to A.W.Schlegel has especially been the subject of a heated controversy: some blame Coleridge for his plagiarism and some plead in his favour.

In this chapter, I will deal with the various elements Coleridge adapted to establish his own Shakespearean criticism.

¹¹ Raysor, T.M. *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*. London: Constable, 1930; rev. edn, London: Dent, 1960, p.xvii.

1. The British Connection

1.1 The change of Aesthetic Orientation in the Latter Part of the Eighteenth Century

Some critics try to see Coleridge as the middle point in which two distinguished streams are united. One is the stream of the British tradition, which Coleridge is often seen as continuing rather than breaking. Wasserman, for example, tries to emphasise his continuity with earlier British criticism. In his opinion,

The whole current of eighteenth-century criticism had been in the direction of exposing and acclaiming the supreme greatness of Shakespeare's plays-as art, as drama, as psychology, as morality, as truth; and this was to be continued, usually with greater sophistication, by Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb, and others.¹³

According to David Nichol Smith, the third quarter of the eighteenth century is the true period of transition in Shakespeare criticism.¹⁴ George Winchester Stone, Jr. also argues that in this period a change in critical focus took place:

...Shakespearean criticism underwent a change from 1700 to 1800 from the early judicial standpoint, which measured the dramatist by standards of "rules," which, though finding him a genius, found him deficient in learning, correctness, decorum, and especially in the unity of action or plot, to a later appreciative attitude which abandoned such standards by erecting a new dramatic focus centered upon character delineation rather than upon plot structure—a focus which, in treating Shakespeare's characters as living things acting on varied motives, emphasized that he not only chronicled the stage of all life, but was also the profoundest of moral

¹² Baker, James Volant. *The Sacred River*, p.281.

¹³ Wasserman, Earl R. "Shakespeare and the English Romantic Movement." p.80.

¹⁴ Smith, D.N. *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*. Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1903, p.xxxii.

philosophers. The critical years for this shift were the middle three decades of the century.¹⁵

Several facts contributed to produce this "shift". British Empiricism was one of the very important factors which changed the aesthetic orientation of this era. "The general movement of eighteenth-century acsthetics," according to Thorpe

was in the direction of empirical considerations having to do with the relations of art to the mind in creative and responsive processes. Coleridge was, however, more decisive in this approach than any one before him. His system of critical thought was built upon it, and he would grant validity to aesthetic principles only so far as they could be demonstrated as true through reference to the laws of the human mind.¹⁶

In Britain, a new aesthetics based on human psychology paved the way for a new criticism. Philosophers such as Hobbes, Hume, and Hartley were the main contributors to the new aesthetics. For Hobbes, the origin of thought is sense. "The cause of sense," according to him,

is the external body, or object, which presseth the organ proper to each sense, either immediately, as in the taste and touch; or mediately, as in seeing, hearing, and smelling; which pressure, by the mediation of the nerves, and other strings and membranes of the body, continued inwards to the brain and heart, causeth there a resistance, or counter-pressure, or endeavour of the heart to deliver itself, which endeavour, because *outward*, seemeth to be some matter without. And this *seeming*, or *fancy*, is that which men call *sense*; and consisteth, as to the eye, in a *light*, or *colour figured*; to the ear, in a *sound*; to the nostril, in an *odour*; to the tongue and palate, in a *savour*; and to the rest of the body, in *heat, cold, hardness, softness*, and such other qualities as we discern by *feeling*.¹⁷

¹⁵ Stone, G. W. jr. "David Garrick's Significance in the History of Shakespeare Criticism." *PMLA* 65(1950): 183-197, p.189.

¹⁶ Thorpe, "Coleridge As Aesthetician and Critic.", p.392.

¹⁷ Hobbes, Thomas. *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*. Vol.3. Ed. William Molesworth, London: John Bohn, 1839, pp.1-2.

For Hobbes, after an object(s) is removed, or the eye shut, we still retain an image of the thing seen, and it is this that we call imagination. Therefore, imagination is, in his words, nothing but 'decaying sense'. Hobbes explains all human mental faculties in terms of his theory of sense. In explaining passion, he argues that passions are the mainspring of human activity.¹⁸ The beginnings of motion, within the body of man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, according to Hobbes, are commonly called endeavour.¹⁹ From the word 'endeavour,' he explains various kinds of human passion such as love, hate, contempt, good, evil, delightful, profitable, unpleasant, offence, displeasure, joy, pain, etc. Thorpe evaluates Hobbes's contributions to aesthetics as follows:

Hobbes did much to make the emotions respectable; he also helped to make them understood....

Hobbes's approbation of novelty is rooted in his developed conception of the natural craving of human spirit for an extension of experience. "Knowing much" is the basis for novelty, because the writer whose wide observation and ranging curiosity has carried him beyond the ordinary reaches can open to the minds of his readers previously undiscerned vistas. He has discovered relationships before unperceived, has seen more, has seen more clearly and deeply than others; he is therefore able to express similitudes which are fresh and new and which strike with pleasant surprise, with a sense of strangeness, and with a delightful satisfaction in a perception of added knowledge. This is essentially a romantic principle. Hobbes was not the first to recognize the principle, but he was the first of the moderns to give it a full and rational exposition. It is not strange, therefore, that his statement made strong appeal to succeeding critics who had an eye to fundamentals.²⁰

¹⁸ See Thorpe, Clarence Dewitt. *The Aesthetic theory of Thomas Hobbes*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1940, p.289.

¹⁹ Hobbes, *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*. Vol. 3.,p.39.

²⁰ Thorpe. *The Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, pp.289-290. Also see Baker, James Volant. *The Sacred River*, p.46. According to Baker, "Hobbes, in spite of his mechanical theory, makes the mind creative and uses association of ideas as an aid to creativity. Association provides the cohesion in the storehouse of memory."

David Hume divides the perceptions of the human mind into two distinct kinds, i.e., impressions and ideas. In his thought, “ *all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.*”²¹ He divides impressions into two kinds, those of sensations and those of reflexion. He explains the relations between the two kinds of impressions and ideas in this way:

An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion, because derived from it. These again are copied by the memory and imagination, and become ideas; which perhaps in their turn give rise to other impressions and ideas.²²

For him, memory and imagination are not always easy to distinguish from each other. Both memory and imagination borrow their simple ideas from the impressions, and never go beyond these original perceptions. However, whereas memory keeps the original order and position of its ideas, imagination transposes and changes them as it likes.²³ Imagination is also the means by which simple ideas are changed into complex ones. Hume explains forming complex idea from simple ones thus:

As all simple ideas may be separated by the imagination, and may be united again in what form it pleases, nothing wou'd be more unaccountable than the operations of that faculty, were it not guided by some universal principles, which render it, in some measure, uniform with itself in all times and places. Were ideas entirely loose and unconnected, chance alone wou'd join them; and 'tis impossible the same simple ideas should fall regularly into complex ones (as they commonly

²¹ Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*. Vol.1. Eds. T.H.Green, and T.H.Grose. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874, p.314.

²² *Ibid.*, p.317.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.386-387.

do) without some bond of union among them, some associating quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another.²⁴

For him the associating qualities are 'resemblance', 'contiguity', and 'cause and effect' and the faculty which notices these qualities is imagination. In Hume, another important point in forming ideas is that

'tis certain *that* we form the idea of individuals, whenever we use any general term; *that* we seldom or never can exhaust these individuals; and *that* those, which remain, are only represented by means of that habit, by which we recal them, whenever any present occasion requires it. This then is the nature of our abstract ideas and general terms; and 'tis after this manner we account for the foregoing paradox, *that some ideas are particular in their nature, but general in their representation.*²⁵

In explaining the individuality of each idea, Hume emphasises the subjectivity of the perceiver.

David Hartley also holds to the view that ideas come from sense and that complex ideas are formed out of simple ideas by means of association. First, external objects impress vibratory motions upon the white medullary substance of the nerves and brain.²⁶ By impressions gained from this first procedure, we get sensations. Sensations, according to him, are internal feelings of the mind, which arise from the impressions made by external objects upon the several parts of our bodies. He calls other internal feelings ideas, and ideas which resemble sensations, ideas of sensation. He terms ideas of sensation simple, and intellectual ideas complex. The simple ideas of sensation run

²⁴ Ibid., p.319.

²⁵ Ibid., p.330.

²⁶ See Hartley, David. *Observations on Man: his frame, his duty and his expectations*. Vol.1. Bath: Printed by R.Crutwell, 1810, p. 12.

into clusters and combinations by association, and these coalesce into one complex idea, by the approach and commixture of the several compounding parts.²⁷

Hartley also suggests the difference of ideas between people according to their particular circumstances. "As persons who speak the same language have," he says,

a different use and extent of words, so though mankind, in all ages and nations, agree, in general, in their complex and decomplex ideas, yet there are many particular differences in them; and these differences are greater or less, according to the difference, or resemblance, in age, constitution, education, profession, country, age of the world, &c. *i.e.* in their impressions and associations.²⁸

This kind of view is reflected in the aesthetics of the time in terms of the concept of human nature, the importance of feeling, and of subjectivity.²⁹ As to the focus on the subjectivity of mind, as W.J.Bate points out,

by encouraging aesthetics to take the subjective activity of the mind as the starting point of any investigation, British associationism opened the door even more widely for an inevitable individualistic relativism. In doing so, it substantiated a tendency which was to be even more characteristic of the romantic thought of the following century: a tendency to emphasize the fundamental importance of individual feeling or sentiment.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., p.77.

²⁸ Ibid., p.80.

²⁹ See Appleyard, J.A. *Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature*, p.62. There he suggests, "...the stronger and more frequently repeated impressions gradually overcame the weaker ones and came to control the associative process; likewise, in the ambiguous voluntaristic-necessitarian theory of will which the associationists proposed, it was possible for a person to direct this associative process by concentrating on better thoughts and feelings so as to have them prevail. The unity of mind thus became one of viewpoint, originating in and controlled by a subjective process. In aesthetics this meant that the unity of the work of art, which had heretofore been based on its correspondence to the requirements of the genres which expressed the "kinds" of literature which the general principles of human nature allowed, now found itself defined by the "dominant idea" which animated the work. Unity was therefore a matter of tone, of the attitude of writer to audience or to subject matter."

³⁰ Bate, W.J. *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of taste in eighteenth-century England*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1946, p.128.

The main elements of British romanticism, i.e., spontaneity of emotion, subjectivism, the importance of feeling and sympathy, are, in large parts, the heritage of late eighteenth-century aesthetics based on British empirical psychology.

With the rise of British empiricism several aesthetic changes followed. "Neo-classicism", Thomas Woodman says,

was itself a much more flexible system than might at first appear, but the emphasis within it had already begun to shift, as we have seen. The criticism of Addison early in the century is significantly more psychological and subjective than before, and this was to be the way forward. Ideas such as originality and the need for imagination began to receive much more attention from the mid-century on. The Renaissance revival of learning had encouraged a new historical study of the classics, but, paradoxically, this would eventually undermine classicism by showing how different the classical world was from our own. Interest in earlier British literature also grew enormously. The new historical and textual scholarship led ultimately to relativism and historicism, the idea that each culture has its own radically different values and standards.³¹

As to the decay of rigid neo-classical rules, James Engell points out the erosion of a sense of stable genres.³² He also suggests that what he calls 'the New Rhetoricians' altered the course of British letters. According to Engell, they renovated the study of rhetoric and applied it to contemporary English literature, which eventually provided "a basis for the romantic veneration of the expressive and emotional power of figurative and "natural" language."³³ They, Engell says,

are among the most perceptive psychologists of their time. If close reading was one leg of the stiff twin compass they used to measure literature, then the other leg was nothing less than knowledge of human nature—not as some steady and unchanging construct, but through personal observation, reflection, and study.³⁴

³¹ Woodman, Thomas. *A Preface to Samuel Johnson*. London: Longman, 1993, p.111.

³² See Engell, James, *Forming the Critical Mind: Dryden to Coleridge*. Cambridge, Mas., London: Harvard University Press. pp.156-157.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.195.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.200.

The conception of sympathy is another key factor which pervaded literature during this time. Walter Jackson Bate argues that sympathy has similarities to the German concept of *Einfühlung* and has an important role in forming British romanticism.³⁵ With it, the sentimentalist view gained ground and changed the critical treatment of Shakespeare's characters.³⁶

But the development of Shakespearean criticism did not only passively reflect development in philosophy. The role of several individuals was also important, individuals such as Johnson, Garrick, Richardson, Whately and Morgann.

1 · ii Samuel Johnson

If we divide neo-classicist, and Romantic critics of Shakespeare into separate groups, it would be natural to place Johnson with neo-classicists, as Abrams indicates:

Whether art is to represent a composite of scattered beauties, generic humanity, average forms, and familiar appearances, or whether unique characteristics, undiscovered particularities, and ultra-violet discriminations— all these forms and qualities are conceived to be inherent in the constitution of the external world, and the work of art continues to be regarded as a kind of reflector, though a selective one. The artist himself is often envisioned as the agent holding the mirror up to nature, and even the originality of a genius is explained in large part by his possessing the zeal and acuity to invent (in the root sense of 'discover') aspects of the universe and of human nature hitherto overlooked, and the imaginative ingenuity to combine and express familiar elements in new and surprising ways. Nature's world, as Sidney had said, 'is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden'; but the dynamics of the transformation, so far as they are discussed, consist not of

³⁵ See Bate, W.J. *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England*, p.132.

³⁶ Stock, R.D. *Samuel Johnson and Neoclassical Dramatic Theory*. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1973, p.43.

emotional stresses peculiar to the poet, but of the legitimate human demands, common to poet and audience, for illumination and delight.³⁷

However, Johnson cannot be securely labelled a neo-classicist.³⁸ R.G.Peterson, for example, says that "his literary criticism is no longer said to embody all the neoclassical or Augustan values."³⁹ In James Engell's opinion,

Johnson's positions do not stem from a constrained or rigid system, nor from a code of maxims built on fear of the practices of others simply because those practices are different. There is rarely anything narrow or self-righteous about his positions and their structures. His actions and words are the product of thinking always alert to the opposite implication of whatever is being forcefully presented at the moment.⁴⁰

W.R.Keist points out the innovatory aspects in Johnson's criticism:

Whichever of these three bases Johnson uses to ground his case against the earlier critics— whether the activity of poets, the real state of nature, or the general conditions of pleasure he is endeavoring to replace what he considers narrow principles with principles more commodious. And this endeavour regularly leads him to forsake the view of art as manifesting itself in distinct species, a view presented in greater detail in the treatises of his predecessors, for the ampler domain of nature, in which, as he conceives of it, distinctions and definitions hitherto thought inviolable and "natural" can be shown to be rigidities, arbitrary constrictions, or, at best, ideal manifestoes. One of the chief distinctions of Johnson from his predecessors in criticism is in this careful reduction of the realm of art, and this habit of regarding literature as a natural process, set in the context of other natural processes such as social behavior, and thus amenable to treatment in relation to its psychological causes and effects, its natural materials, and its circumstantial determinants.⁴¹

³⁷ Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp*. London, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953, pp.41-42.

³⁸ See Woodman, Thomas. *A preface to Samuel Johnson*, p.111. Elsewhere in the book, he says that "In some accounts he was the last bastion of an alien neo-classicism and in others the sturdy defender of British liberty against the rules."

³⁹ Peterson, R.G. "Samuel Johnson at War with the Classics." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 9(1975): 69-86, p.74.

⁴⁰ Engell. *Forming the Critical Mind: Dryden to Coleridge*, p.175.

⁴¹ Keist, W.R. "The Theoretical Foundations of Johnson's Criticism." *Critics and Criticism*. Ed.Crane and et al. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952. 389-407, p.395.

Johnson's flexibility is shown in his Shakespearean criticism, which turns away from previous Shakespearean criticism. His sturdy empiricism allows him to recognise that neo-classical principles may be unsuitable for dealing with dramas such as Shakespeare's. In dealing with Shakespeare's dramas, he accepts a broader concept of nature based on human experience. To uncover what is distinctive in his criticism, we must start with his concept of nature.

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of nature....Shakespeare is above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions; they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species (*Preface*, 4-5).

Here, we can see Johnson's idea of the ideal poetic work and of the ideal poet. He takes the representation of nature as the ideal poetic work and the poet of nature, the poet holding up to his readers a faithful mirror, as the ideal poet. Though these arguments seem to follow faithfully the norms of neo-classicism, more careful investigation of his concept of nature, however, reveals that the substance of his argument is not the same.

For a neo-classicist, "the laws of nature are the laws of reason; they are always and everywhere the same, and like the axioms of mathematics they have only to be presented in order to be acknowledged as just and right by all men."⁴² The neo-classicists held that the universe is a giant machine designed by God, and that it runs by God's will without

even a slight error. Thus people can understand divinity through the nature of the world.

Locke's statement well demonstrates the neo-classical concept of nature:

But since we are searching now for the principle and origin of the knowledge of this law in which it becomes known to mankind, I declare that the foundation of all knowledge of it is derived from those things which we perceive through our senses. From these things, then, reason and the power of arguing, which are both distinctive marks of man, advance to the notion of the maker of these things...and at last they conclude and establish for themselves as certain that some Deity is the author of all these things. As soon as this is laid down, the notion of a universal law of nature binding on all men necessarily emerges; and this will become clear later on. From what has been said, however, it is quite certain that there is a law of nature that can be known by the light of nature. For whatever among men obtains the force of a law, necessarily looks to God, or nature, or man as its maker; yet whatever man has commanded or God has ordered by divine declaration, all this is positive law. But since the law of nature cannot be known by tradition, all that remains is that it becomes known to men by the light of nature alone.⁴³

Likewise, for neo-classicists, divinity reveals itself not merely in nature but in man's inner self. Nature, however, can only be perceived through the refinement and maturity of men's inner selves. Therefore, for them, nature "has come to mean what is congenial to those in whom human nature is most fully developed, that is, to the educated in the most polite nations of the civilized world."⁴⁴

In solving the problem of how to apply the concept of nature to the criticism of literature, critics such as Pope identify nature with the ancients, suggesting that to follow nature is to follow the ancients.

But as the eighteenth century unfolded, the concept of nature changed. Whereas for the neo-classicist nature meant reason, for later generations, it meant instinct, emotion,

⁴² Willey, Basil. *The Eighteenth Century Background*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1940, p.2.

⁴³ Locke, John. *Essays on the Law of Nature*. Ed. W. von Leyden. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958, p.133.

⁴⁴ Willey, Basil. *The Eighteenth-Century Background*, p.20.

and sensibility. Some even regarded reason as an aberration from nature. Such changes can be detected in Johnson's concept of nature.

For Johnson, according to Frederic V. Bogel, general nature is not

a metaphysical entity, a kind of Adamic essence imparted by each generation to its progeny or a Platonic Form of which individual men and women are more or less accurate copies. Nor, for Johnson, does this lack of metaphysical status mean that there is no such thing as general nature, merely numerous particular individuals. Rather, it is an "empirical" concept, of sorts, derived from the testimony of human history, the evidence of literature and other cultural witnesses...⁴⁵

Here, we can see that the Johnsonian concept of nature is different both from the neo-classical concept of nature and from the romantic one. Likewise, Shakespearean truth to nature in Johnson's opinion, G.F.Parker says,

is something clearly distinct from the realism characteristic of the novelist, and this difference makes finally unnecessary the directive moral purpose upon which Johnson had insisted in the case of the novel. Shakespeare's representations of general nature, it would seem, penetrating as they do beneath qualities 'superficial, accidental, and acquired', reach to a depth at which fidelity to the truth of the world and fidelity to moral truth become one.⁴⁶

In *The Preface to Shakespeare*, Johnson shows his opinion of Shakespeare's work, comparing it with that of others:

The work of a correct and regular writer is a garden accurately formed and diligently planted, varied with shades, and scented with flowers; the composition of Shakespeare is a forest, in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and to roses; filling the eye with awful pomp, and gratifying the mind with endless diversity. Other poets display cabinets of precious rarities, minutely finished, wrought into shape, and polished into brightness. Shakespeare opens a mine which contains gold and diamonds in inexhaustible plenty, though clouded by

⁴⁵ Bogel, Frederic V. "The Rhetoric of Substantiality: Johnson and the Later Eighteenth Century." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 12(1979): 457-80, p.472.

⁴⁶ Parker, G.F. *Johnson's Shakespeare*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, p.21.

encrustations, debased by impurities, and mingled with a mass of meaner mineral. (*Preface*, 31)

In these comparisons, we can catch the uniqueness of Johnson. For example, the comparison to a forest or a mine appeals to an empirical or commonsensical meaning of the word nature, not to a Coleridgean understanding of the word. But the comparison because it is designed to defend Shakespeare's 'irregularities' or 'impurities' demonstrates Johnson's deviation from neo-classicists. In Johnson's opinion, Shakespeare's adherence to general human nature

has exposed him to the censure of criticks, who form their judgments upon narrower principles. Dennis and Rhymer think his Romans not sufficiently Roman; and Voltaire censures his kings as not completely royal. Dennis is offended, that Menenius, a senator of Rome, should play the buffoon; and Voltaire perhaps thinks decency violated when the Danish usurper is represented as a drunkard. But Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident; and if he preserves the essential character, is not very careful of distinctions superinduced and adventitious. His story requires Romans or kings, but he thinks only on men. He knew that Rome, like every other city, had men of all dispositions; and wanting a buffoon, he went into the senate-house for that which the senate-house would certainly have afforded him. He was inclined to shew an usurper and a murderer not only odious, but despicable, he therefore added drunkenness to his other qualities, knowing that kings love wine like other men, and that wine exerts its natural power upon kings (*Preface*, 8).

Here, based on his concept of human nature, Johnson again defends what neo-classicists identified as Shakespeare's faults. According to the neo-classical concept of propriety, "the manners must be suitable, or agreeing to the persons; that is, to the age, sex, dignity, and the other general heads of manners: thus, when a poet has given the dignity of a king to one of his persons, in all his actions and speeches, that person must discover majesty, magnanimity, and jealousy of power, because these are suitable to the general

manners of a king.”⁴⁷ From the neo-classical viewpoint, Shakespeare’s aristocratic Romans or English Kings represent a violation of nature. But Johnson defends such things precisely by claiming that they are consonant with nature. Nevertheless, the expression, “if he preserves the essential character, is not very careful of distinctions superinduced and adventitious”, shows a lingering neo-classical aesthetic.

Johnson and Coleridge derive their concepts of human nature from different sources, but they attach a similar content to the term.⁴⁸ The following two passages will show us similarities while also indicating basic differences:

His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find (*Preface*, 4).

...he(Shakespeare)⁴⁹ drew characters which would always be natural, and therefore permanent, inasmuch as they were not dependent upon accidental circumstances(*Sch II*, 110).

Like Johnson, truth to human nature is Coleridge’s major literary concern. In his principle of truth to human nature, according to Thorpe, “he began where Samuel Johnson and the Scotch rhetoricians had ended, and from it derived all his indispensable subsidiary principles.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Bligh, John. “Shakespearean Character Study to 1800.” *Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakespeare Studies and Production* 37 (1981): 141-153, p.144.

⁴⁸ See Robinson, Herbert Spencer. *English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Gordian P., 1968, p.126. There he comments that Johnson claims that Shakespeare’s characters are always easily recognizable types of humanity, and not merely individuals with the limited and temporary peculiarities of place, profession, or fashion. According to Robinson, this point offers us a clear anticipation of Coleridge.

⁴⁹ The word in the parenthesis is mine.

⁵⁰ Thorpe, “Coleridge as Aesthetician and Critic,” p.390.

Johnson's defence of Shakespeare's comedy is also related to his concept of nature:

Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolick of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design (*Preface*, 9).

For Johnson, Shakespeare's tragi-comedy is not a demerit of Shakespeare but a testimony that he follows nature faithfully. The world is so complex that it is natural that the tragic and the comic ingredients should be mingled in a play which reflects the world. Thus, Johnson "dismisses with an appeal from criticism to nature the charge that Shakespeare had polluted his tragedy with comic diversions and indecorous scenes."⁵¹ Johnson's defence of tragi-comedy is, according to Robinson, "a perfect anticipation of the view insisted upon by Coleridge—almost in the very same words."⁵²

For Johnson, Shakespeare knows how to dramatise his plays in order to impress their reality on the mind of the audience. In Johnson's opinion,

Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolic or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf; and he that should form his expectations of human affairs from the play, or from the tale, would be equally deceived. Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion: even where the agency is supernatural the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world:

⁵¹ Smallwood, *Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1985, p.xxvii.

⁵² Robinson, *English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century*, p.129.

Shakespeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shewn nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed (*Preface*, 7).

Johnson, here, not only emphasises realism in characterisation but also the naturalness of Shakespeare's dramaturgy. What Johnson disapproves of is not the improbability of characters themselves such as a dwarf or a giant but the artificiality of the characterisation. That "Shakespeare has no heroes," therefore, means that heroes in Shakespeare are not the fabulous ones found in romances but have solid real personality. For Johnson, "the characters and language of Shakespeare were woven in the colours of nature. They therefore resisted decay, and remained unfaded by time."⁵³ Even though he takes supernatural themes, the story comes to life. The situation he creates might be beyond the boundaries of real life, but Shakespeare has the ability to make it appear natural. In doing so, "nature is the link between author and reader—the common elements that guarantee truth and the accidental variations that produce variety being the basis for selection by the one and for comparison and judgment by the other."⁵⁴ In this respect Johnson's argument reminds us of the Coleridgean concept of "propriety". For Coleridge, a drama, no matter how unrealistic it may be, will gain reality if the audience accepts it.

Shakespeare's composition, in Johnson's opinion, is not monotonous. It is composed of diverse ingredients. He sometimes makes the audience delighted and sometimes makes it sad "through tracts of easy and familiar dialogue"(*Preface*, 12). But

⁵³ Smallwood, *Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare*, p.xxvi.

⁵⁴ Keist, "The Theoretical Foundations of Johnson's Criticism," p.399.

in Johnson's thought, the audience is not an automaton which moves according to the author's intention. Even though the audience laughs or mourns as the author commands it, it does not do it "without indifference."

Shakespeare, Johnson argues, knows how to retain the audience's interest. His plays are full of incidents by which people are easily caught, whether they are groundlings or gentlemen. People become more curious as the plot unfolds. Their pleasure does not only come from the excellence of particular dialogues but from the action itself.

In Johnson's opinion, on the stage "something must be done as well as said". In Shakespeare's plays, shows and bustles are not an extravagances but necessary parts. To Voltaire's wonder at "how Shakespeare's extravagances are endured", Johnson answers that "Addison speaks of poets, and Shakespeare, of men."

Shakespeare's celebrated effectiveness can be linked to the problem of the reaction of the audience. Johnson's notion of illusion is here central. He begins by rejecting the possibility that "any representation is mistaken for reality". For Neo-classicists, it is absurd for the scenes to be transported from Alexandria to Rome because the spectator really imagines himself at Alexandria and thus cannot cope with the shift of place. He dismisses the neo-classical rule of unity of place because it relies on an incoherent idea of delusion—that is, "Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has no certain limitation; if the spectator can be once persuaded, that his old acquaintance are Alexander and Caesar, that a room illuminated with candles is the plain of Pharsalia, or the bank of Granicus, he is in a state of elevation above the reach of reason, or of truth, and from the heights of empyrean poetry, may despise the circumscriptions of terrestrial nature" (*Preface*, 22). According to Johnson, delusion of this kind is not possible:

The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They come to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. (*Preface*, 22).

This argument frees Johnson from neo-classical constraints, but, on the other hand, it left him unable to explain the absorption into which we are likely to fall during a theatrical performance. As a matter of fact, in Frederick Burwick's opinion, "while he saw the possibility of the mind succumbing to the imagination, Johnson nevertheless insisted upon the copresence of reason."⁵⁵ Johnson explains that the audience "is moved only because the dramatic scene provokes the image-making faculty to conjure up the potentiality of the spectator's participation in a similar scene, and not because the sufferings and joys of the actors appear real."⁵⁶ This explanation in a way demonstrates that he takes account of the operation of imagination on the spectator's mind, considering that "the image-making faculty" means imagination at Johnson's time.

Johnson's opinion of imagination is shown in the following passage:

Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind. When the imagination is recreated by a painted landscape, the trees are not supposed capable to give us shade, or the fountains coolness; but we consider, how we should be pleased with such fountains playing besides us, and such woods waving over us. We are agitated in reading the history of *Henry the fifth*, yet no man takes his book for the field of Agincourt. (*Preface*, 24)

⁵⁵ Burwick, Frederick. *Illusion and the Drama*. p.31.

⁵⁶ Wasserman, Earl R. "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century Theories of Acting." *Journal of English and German Philosophy* 46(1947): 264-272, p.271.

Johnson's concept of imitation does not mean an exact copy of reality. It is closer to the Romantic concept of imitation. Not only does Johnson indicate an operation in the audience's mind but also in the author's mind. According to Woodman, "the concept of 'nature' obviously has crucial implications for 'imagination' too."⁵⁷ For Johnson, Shakespeare is 'a poet of nature', which suggests that Shakespeare has, above all others, the faculty of understanding human nature in a fundamental and psychological sense. When Johnson said that Shakespeare's plays are a 'mirror of life', he surely kept in mind that Shakespeare's plays not only reflect the real aspects of ordinary lives but also show dispositions in the characters which prompt the audience to find the same feelings in its own mind. The faculty which makes it possible to understand human nature is not merely the careful observation of life but the ability to put oneself in an other's place and thus feel the other's feelings; that is, the sympathetic imagination. Johnson's concept of imagination W.J.Bate describes as "able to penetrate the barrier which space puts between it and its object and, by actually entering into the objects, so to speak, secure a momentary but complete identification with it."⁵⁸

Coleridge's concept of illusion is different from Johnson's. Nevertheless, Johnson's discarding of the possibility that "any representation is mistaken for reality" provided the turning point for future theories of illusion including Coleridge's.

"The Preface," Nichol Smith says,

deals with Shakespeare as a man and as a writer, and not with any single play. The purpose is to state in general, though with incidental detail, what the name of Shakespeare ought to suggest to every intelligent mind. The attitude is judicial,

⁵⁷ Woodman. *A Preface to Samuel Johnson*, P.119.

⁵⁸ Bate, W.J. "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century English Criticism." *Journal of English Literary History* 12(1945): 144-164, p.144.

‘without envious malignity or superstitious veneration’. Impartial examination would prove Shakespeare to be the greatest writer, or one of the two greatest writers, in the world’s literature; still he was a man who lived as other men do, and if he made mistakes he was chargeable with them as other men are.

Such is the older criticism, and its final exponent is Johnson. On its own lines it is difficult to see that any advance was possible.

The advance was made on other lines, and Johnson himself was one of its leaders. Just as his edition of Shakespeare is the pivot of the old and the new scholarship of the eighteenth century, similarly we may take it as a rough mark for the beginning of the new criticism. We need not look for this new criticism in the Preface. But it speaks out loud and bold in the Notes.

In these Notes Johnson did not confine himself to textual difficulties. Like Warburton before him, and Theobald, and Pope, he would draw attention to the beauty of a line or passage; and he would sometimes add his estimate of the play as a whole. He is at his happiest when he is moved to write about a character.⁵⁹

By the older criticism Nichol Smith means that which has a neo-classical orientation. New criticism seems to mean the new kind of criticism that developed around the latter part of the eighteenth-century, such as Johnson’s discarding of ‘the value of Unities’ based on his concept of nature, and ‘Character Criticism’.

Johnson exemplifies, according to Smith, “the new subject-study of Shakespeare’s characters, and the study of Shakespeare through his characters; and this subject has remained the chief occupation of the best Shakespeare criticism to the time of Mr. A.C.Bradley.”⁶⁰ Of Johnson’s influence on Coleridge in the study of character, Smith indicates that Johnson’s account of Polonius “was borrowed by Coleridge, and not battered in the borrowing.”⁶¹

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⁵⁹ Smith, Nichol. *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928, pp.78-79.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.80.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.79.

David Garrick is another crucial figure in Shakespeare studies.⁶² He is not merely the founder of the bardolatry of the romantic era but greatly contributed to new developments in acting, criticism, and the revival of the authentic texts of Shakespeare. Garrick, Stone says,

was the professed admirer, champion, and priest of Shakespeare. He was the one who more than any other, in Burke's words, elevated the actor's profession to that of a liberal art, and he could boast an international reputation for brilliancy and conviviality equal to that of any of his contemporaries.⁶³

With regard to Shakespearean aesthetics, he is worthy of notice in several respects. First, the Jubilee which David Garrick held to pay tribute to Shakespeare was a crucial landmark in the resurgence of interest in Shakespeare. The Stratford Jubilee, according to M.W.England,

was the first Shakespeare festival to engage national interest, and there is much of interest even now in the staging of an eighteenth-century fete on the grandest scale. What is more interesting is the manner in which this celebration fired the public imagination. It was vilified and defended, reproduced on stage in varying moods of glorification and satire, entangled with the threads of English life.⁶⁴

After the Jubilee, Shakespearean activities in all fields —i.e., criticism, painting, and acting, — were boosted. "Garrick", England says,

raised Shakespeare's characters from the dead; when he retired, they all died, when he died, they all died again, mourned for him, welcomed him joyously to Heaven and Mount Olympus simultaneously. No mount of satire could halt the ectoplasmic emanations. Shakespeare and Garrick were deity and priest, father and son, twin brothers, Elijah and Elisha. Garrick was the reincarnation of Shakespeare. The

⁶² See, Raysor, *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, p.xviii.

⁶³ Stone, George Winchester, Jr. "David Garrick's Significance in the History of Shakespearean Criticism." *PMLA* 65(1950): 183-197, p.185.

⁶⁴ England, M. Winburn. *Garrick's Jubilee*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964, p.3.

relationship was stated in terms of many myths. The reiterated proof of their oneness was their mastery of both comedy and tragedy, a miraculous power found only in Shakespeare until Garrick proved he also possessed it, thereby proving he was Shakespeare.⁶⁵

This seems to be extreme praise for Garrick. But it reflects how greatly people were touched by his performances and how much he provoked people's interest in Shakespeare's plays. "His(Garrick's)⁶⁶ first appearance on the London stage," Arthur Murphy comments,

was at Goodman's Fields on the 19th of October 1741. The moment he entered the scene the character he assumed was visible in his countenance; the power of his imagination was such that he transformed himself into the very man; the passions rose in rapid succession, and before he uttered a word were legible in every feature of that various face. His look, his voice, his attitude changed with every sentiment...⁶⁷

That he was hailed as "the incarnation of Shakespeare" was in part a simple recognition of the greatness of his acting which satisfied the taste of the people. England comments that he

was peculiarly in a position to reflect the great minds of his day. In the history of the theater he is unique- unique in his genius, unique in his intimate association with genius. Perhaps he was nothing more than a mimic, a sounding board, a mirror. At least he was a true mirror.⁶⁸

The spectators, according to Allardyce Nicoll,

from the beginning of his career to its close, associated him with the concept of 'Nature',... Assuredly he made his impact as an individual, but the excitement was largely generated by something else, by something, in fact, which was immediately

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.166.

⁶⁶ The word in the parenthesis is mine.

⁶⁷ Murphy, Arthur. *The Life of David Garrick*. Reprinted in *Shakesepare:The Crittical Heritage*. Vol.6. p.632.

⁶⁸ England, *Garrick's Jubilee*, p.4.

related to the whole of the period's culture. The eighteenth century, in life, painting, music, and literature, was dominated and enriched by ideas of taste and style; and those who watched Garrick derived their pleasure not only from appreciating the skill of the performer but also from recognising that his entire approach was founded on a style which, quite apart from his own excellence, could be savoured and defined in and for itself.⁶⁹

Garrick was said to excel in understanding the character's inner world and conveying it through his acting, which was so spontaneous and natural as to make the audience react spontaneously and sympathise with the character. However, his acting was not, of course, naturalistic in the manner of today's movies or TV dramas.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, his natural style of acting was a change from the declamatory rhetoric of his predecessors.

Garrick's acting greatly influenced theatre itself- from stage management to visual equipment and even the genre of painting.⁷¹ Literary criticism, especially Shakespearean criticism, could not avoid his influence. According to Stone, "In 1754 many contributors to *Gray's Inn Journal* analyzed Shakespeare's characters, after having seen Garrick act them."⁷² Thomas Whately is assumed to have reached his non-Aristotelian conclusions after he had observed Garrick's representation of Shakespeare's characters. Morgann

⁶⁹ Nicoll, Allardyce. *The Garrick Stage: The Theatres and Audience in the Eighteenth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980, p.9.

⁷⁰ See, Nicoll., p.14 and Janet Ruth Heller, "The Bias Against Spectacle in Tragedy: The history of an idea." *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 23 (1982): 239-255, p.253. Both suggest that the naturalness of his style was that of the eighteenth century even though he gave his audience the illusion of reality.

⁷¹ See Bertelsen, Lance. "David Garrick and English Painting." *Studies in the Eighteenth Century* 11(1978): 308-324, p.316.

⁷² Stone, G.W.Jr. "David Garrick's Significance in the History of Shakespearean Criticism." p.191. Also see Stone. "Garrick's Production of King Lear: A Study in the Temper of the Eighteenth-Century Mind." *Studies in Philology* 45 (1948): 89-103, p.91. He states that: "His appearance in any role so powerfully influenced his audiences that contemporary critical statements on plays in which he performed became inextricably interwoven with his stage presentation."

inscribed to Garrick a presentation copy of his book, a tacit acknowledgement of Garrick's contribution to the understanding of Shakespeare.⁷³

Garrick's acting was not merely a spontaneous overflow of sensibility which was transmitted through the sympathetic imagination but also the result of his conscious artistic activity. In respect to an actor's creating illusion, to quote from Wasserman ; "the central problem the eighteenth century attempted to answer is whether the illusion is a fiction to be achieved by conscious, artful deception or an authentic realization , through sympathetic imagination, of the artistically shaped role."⁷⁴ Those who emphasised the importance of the actor's sensibility held that

if the actor's sensibility is great enough, "the action and expression will arise from the occasion, unstudied, unpremeditated, and as it were natural to him; and being natural as well as great, it will affect every body: and this is the character of true sensibility."⁷⁵

Garrick himself accepted the importance of the actor's emotional ardour. Garrick, as Wasserman points out, believed that

the organic totality of a dramatic role is greater than the sum of its component parts, and that its totality can be sympathetically grasped only when the actor's emotional ardor carries him beyond his rational and analytical self and identifies him with (what is greater than himself) the artistic objective.⁷⁶

His support of sensibility did not mean that he excluded judgement or self-consciousness. It is said that Garrick not only studied people carefully but gave full play

⁷³ See Stone. "David Garrick's Significance in the History of Shakespearean Criticism," pp.192-196.

⁷⁴ Wasserman, Earl R. "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century Theories of Acting." p.265.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.269.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.269.

to his technique to make his acting seem natural and spontaneous. Here, technique, Leigh Woods explains,

suggests that the actor who employs it is working out of a structure of artifice, above all. Particularly in the atmosphere of self-conscious sincerity which attached to the theatre in Garrick's time, and which he helped both to foster and to perpetuate, it would have been to his advantage to conceal his technical awareness and facility behind an appearance of nearly total spontaneity and emotional vulnerability, in character.⁷⁷

If we study him more carefully, it is clear that he knew that acting is an art and that in this respect, complete self-absorption is not desirable. While he was acting, he was both self-conscious and well-prepared.⁷⁸ Garrick's conscious technique as an actor and his ability to calculate his effects in their precise impact on the audience enabled him to create and sustain many of his most powerful moments.⁷⁹

Garrick's acting by relying both on sympathetic imagination and a self-consciously developed technique shows that the two factors were not mutually exclusive, but reciprocal. Coleridge's ideal models of the artist are Shakespeare and David Garrick. In *Omniana*, Coleridge says,

The warmest admirers of historic merit would not willingly be supposed to overlook the difference, both in kind and degree, between an excellence that in its very nature is transient, or continuing, only as an echo, in the memory of a single generation, while the name alone remains for posterity, and a power, enduring as the Soul of Man and commensurate with the human language.

But without dreading the imputation of a wish to balance weights so unequal, we may assert that if ever two great men might seem to have been made for each

⁷⁷ Woods, Leigh. *Garrick Claims the Stage*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1984, p.121.

⁷⁸ See Smith, Helen R. *David Garrick*. London: British Library, 1979, p.32. She remarks that "the less analytical accounts of Garrick's acting usually emphasize his seeming naturalness, although the keener critics were well aware that this was achieved by finely calculated preparation and technique. There is a familiar account of how Garrick obtained ideas for some of the most moving scenes in his performance as Lear by visiting a man who had gone mad when he accidentally killed his own child."

⁷⁹ See Woods, *Garrick Claims the Stage*, p.119.

other, we have this correspondency presented to us in the instance of Garrick and Shakespeare. It will be sufficient for me to direct attention to one peculiarity, the common and exclusive characteristic of both,— the union of the highest Tragic and Comic Excellence in the same individual. This indeed supersedes the necessity of mentioning the particular merits which it implies and comprehends, while it is eminently and in the exactest sense of the word *characteristic*, inasmuch as this transcendent power sprung from the same source in both,— from an insight into human nature at its fountain head, which exists in those creations of Genius alone, in which the substance and essential forms are the Gifts of Meditation and self-research, and the individualizing accidents, and the requisite drapery, are supplied by observation and acquaintance with the world. We may then hope for a second Garrick or of an approach to Shakespeare where we find a knowledge of Man united to an equal knowledge of Men, and both co-existing with the power of giving Life and Individuality to the products of both. For such a being possesses the rudiments, whatever character he may choose to represent. He combines in his own person at once the materials and the workman. The precious proofs of this rare excellence in our Greatest Dramatic poet are in the hands of all men. To exhibit the same excellence in our greatest actor, we can conceive no more lively or impressive way than by presenting him in two extreme Poles of his Creative and almost Protean Genius—in his Richard the third and his Abel Drugger (*TT&Om*, 467).

The above passage gives us a sufficient indication of Garrick's importance for Coleridge.

Another of Garrick's contributions to Shakespeare studies was his effort to restore the true text of Shakespeare's plays. 'Authenticity' is, of course, a relative concept.⁸⁰ It is said that Garrick sometimes isolated and highlighted the characters more than Shakespeare or even Tate had done if he thought it necessary to his interpretation of the characters.⁸¹ Nevertheless, he contributed to purifying Shakespeare's texts. In Garrick's time, Shakespeare's plays were quite often performed in radically altered versions. For instance, Tate's version of *King Lear* was more popular than the original. *King Lear*

⁸⁰ See Vickers. *Shakespearean: The Critical Heritage*. Vol. 6., pp. 61-62. Vickers argues that Garrick's contribution to the knowledge and appreciation of Shakespeare is difficult to define. He points out Samuel Johnson's comment on Garrick, Walpole's dislike of Garrick as a writer and adapter, and Steevens's accusing him of influencing the taste of the age by pursuing his own interests. Vickers even insists that Garrick's influence on the revival of Shakespeare is proven to be false by modern scholarship.

was one of Garrick's main roles, and Stone describes the development in his renditions of the play thus:

Garrick started with Tate, but ended with a play much closer to Shakespeare. Thoroughly apprised of the mainsprings of tragic appeal as Pity and Fear, he alternately dissolved his audience in tears and froze them with horror (if we can credit the hyperbole of mid-century comment). But pity won, for Garrick saw in *King Lear* a Shakespearean play which could surpass competition from all writers of pathetic tragedy and could commend the emotional pleasure of tears more successfully than sentimental comedy. Tapping the strong vogue for the pathetic and sentimental, Garrick skilfully met public desire for these dramatic types in his production of *King Lear*, and without much sacrificing the sacredness of Shakespeare's text. Study of his text and his performance in the title role reveals the extent of his skill.⁸²

This shows that Garrick is an authority in both a theoretical and practical way; he is well acquainted with the audience's taste and knows how to move it. At the same time, he had a through knowledge of the original texts. His enthusiasm extended to founding the Shakespeare library, to which many contemporary editors owed their information. Needless to say, his effort to restore the authentic Shakespeare texts was successful. "By gradual infiltration," Stone says,

Garrick was restoring to the stage Shakespeare's wording as well as Shakespeare's character emphasis. In these two ways he was aligning himself with Addison and Foote, and was satisfying his own ideals concerning Shakespeare's text.⁸³

Garrick's effort to restore the authentic texts directed the taste of the contemporary audience to appreciate the authentic Shakespeare.

⁸¹ See Woods, Leigh. "Garrick's King Lear and the English Malady." *Theatre Survey* 27(1986):17-35, p.26.

⁸² Stone, G.W.Jr. "Garrick's Production of King Lear: A Study in the Temper of the Eighteenth-Century Mind." p.91.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.94.

Brian Vickers defines character criticism as a criticism that developed in the last quarter of the eighteenth-century devoted to study of the individual characters of Shakespeare's plays, abandoning discussion of plot or language. According to him, in character criticism, the new and the traditional coexist: the interest in psychology is new, but the exponents of character criticism still adhered to neo-classical norms, i.e. the consistency of characters and the fulfilment of moral purpose in the characters. Within these norms, they tried to show how the characters are consistent and how they might be excused for their apparent immorality by explaining and analysing their psychology. Vickers suggests that character criticism arose as a means of defending those aspects of Shakespeare's plays that had been condemned by rigid neo-classicists.⁸⁴

John Bligh disagrees with Vickers on several points. According to him, character studies (he does not agree that these constitute a distinct critical genre) are not confined to the late eighteenth-century but were common during the period from 1664 to 1800. And they did not necessarily conform to the neo-classical norms of character. For him, significant exponents of character studies are Pope, Whately, Johnson, Lord Kames, and Morgann. Pope suggests the method of comparison between characters, i.e., between Richard III and Macbeth, and Whately developed Pope's method. Johnson points out Shakespeare's deep understanding of human nature. Kames celebrates Shakespeare's ability to express human passions. Finally Morgann argues that Shakespeare's

characters grew organically in the mind of their maker and, in Bligh's opinion, this is an anticipation of the organicism of Kant and A.W.Schlegel. For Bligh, the first critic who did not apply Aristotlean rules in character studies is William Richardson. David Hume contributed to the new direction of character studies by his theory of the conversion or transformation of the passions. Bligh includes Kant and A.W.Schlegel as contributors to the new direction of Shakespearean criticism.⁸⁵

But we cannot deny that there was a school that focused on character criticism in the latter part of the eighteenth-century. And their critical method is closely related to the psychological analysis of human nature. Their defence of Shakespeare verges on bardolatry. "The method of mainstream bardolatry," Howard Felperin says,

was in no way elitist or nostalgic but democratic and progressive, drawing as it did on emerging paradigms of a universally human subjectivity, common to the historical author, his timeless characters, and the contemporary audience.⁸⁶

Coleridge's criticism of characters reflects many of their views. In some aspects of his criticism, as R.A.Foakes notes,

Coleridge can be shown to have been anticipated by some earlier writers, and yet the overwhelming impression his lectures give is of a new force, a new comprehensive vision of Shakespeare, offered to his audience at a time when the weight of the main eighteenth-century tradition still lay heavy on the age in a way it is now difficult to appreciate.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ See Vickers, Brian. "The Emergence of Character Criticism, 1774-1800." *Shakespeare Survey: an Annual Survey of Shakespeare Studies and Production* 37(1984): 11-21, pp.11-12.

⁸⁵ See Bligh, John, "Shakespearean Character Study to 1800." pp.141-153.

⁸⁶ Felperin, Howard. "Bardolatry then and Now." *The Appropriation of Shakespeare*, Ed. Jean I.Marsden. New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.129-144, p.137.

⁸⁷ Foakes. *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*, p.5.

Among others, Whately and Richardson are said to have been read by Coleridge. Thomas Whately's *Remarks on Some of the Characters of Shakespeare* is important in that "it is the first book to concern itself with the psychological analysis of Shakespearean characters."⁸⁸ For him, Shakespeare is excellent beyond comparison for his deep and comprehensive knowledge of the human heart. "Every play of Shakespeare," he says,

abounds with instances of his excellence in distinguishing characters. It would be difficult to determine which is the most striking of all that he drew; but his merit will appear most conspicuously by comparing two opposite characters, who happen to be placed in similar circumstances.⁸⁹

Whately uses the technique of comparison between two characters in similar situations. In his comparison of Macbeth and Richard III, he demonstrates that both characters have similarities in that they are soldier kings who usurped the throne by the same means and were defeated by the lawful heir in the final battle. Whately, however, tries to indicate the disparities between them:

Thus, from the beginning of their history to their last moments are the characters of Macbeth and Richard preserved entire and distinct. And though probably Shakespeare, when he was drawing the one had no attention to the other, yet, as he conceived them to be widely different, expressed his conceptions exactly, and copied both from nature, they necessarily became contrasts to each other; and by seeing them together that contrast is more apparent, especially where the comparison is not between opposite qualities but arises from the different degrees, or from a particular display or total omission of the same quality.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Robinson, *English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century*, pp.180-181.

⁸⁹ Whately, Thomas, *Remarks on Some of the Characters of Shakespeare*(1785). Reprinted in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*. Vol.4. Ed. Brian Vickers. London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, p.409.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.428-429.

Throughout the comparison, he demonstrates how Macbeth and Richard differ from each other. Macbeth, for example, has natural affections, only stifled upon great occasion, while Richard is totally destitute of every softer feeling. Whereas Macbeth is in agony when he thinks of his crime, Richard is delighted with his crime. When Macbeth is on the point of murdering King Duncan, he is hesitant and his further murders come from fear and insecurity, but, in the case of Richard, he is eager to put everything into execution. According to Robinson, Whately successfully demonstrated Shakespeare's superior skill in bestowing individuality on characters superficially similar, and Coleridge was convinced that such a task as Whately's was eminently worth while.⁹¹

Coleridge, in his Lectures, uses a similar technique when he offers a comparison between Henry Bolingbroke and Richard III:

Next we come to Henry Bolingbroke, the rival of Richard II. He appears as a man of dauntless courage, and of ambition equal to that of Richard III.; but, as I have stated, the difference between the two is most admirably conceived and preserved. In Richard III. all that surrounds him is only dear as it feeds his inward sense of superiority: he is no vulgar tyrant—no Nero or Caligula: he has always an end in view, and vast fertility of means to accomplish that end. On the other hand, in Bolingbroke we find a man who in the outset has been sorely injured: then, we see him encouraged by the grievances of his country, and by the strange mismanagement of the government, yet at the same time scarcely daring to look at his own views, or to acknowledge them as designs. He comes home under the pretence of claiming his dukedom, and he professes that to be his object almost to the last; but, at the last, he avows his purpose to its full extent, of which he was himself unconscious in the earlier stages(*ShC II*, 147).

Like Whately Coleridge establishes the similarity of the two characters only as a first step towards a more elaborate examination of differences.

⁹¹ Robinson. *English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century*, p.179.

William Richardson has been called the first philosophical critic of Shakespeare and "the foremost psychological critic of Shakespeare in the late eighteenth century."⁹² His study of the characters has its origin in his philosophical study of human nature. Richardson celebrates Shakespeare's skill in characterisation and in imitation, which he regards as the two essential powers of dramatic invention. In his analysis of the characters of *Hamlet*, he says that we must examine the motives of the characters and the temper of mind that produces their behaviour in order to judge their propriety. In his opinion,

...the grief of Hamlet is for the death of a father: He entertains aversion against an incestuous uncle, and indignation at the ingratitude and guilt of a mother. Grief is passive: if its object be irretrievably lost, it is attended with no desires, and rouses no active principle. After the first emotions, it disposes us to silence, solitude, and inaction. If it is blended with other passions, its operations will pass unnoticed, lost in the violence of other emotions, though even these it may have originally excited, and may secretly stimulate. Accordingly, though sorrow be manifest in the features and demeanour of Hamlet, aversion and indignation are the feelings he expresses. Aversion not only implies dislike and disapprobation of certain qualities, but also an apprehension of suffering by their communion; and consequently, a desire of avoiding them. As it arises on the view of groveling and sordid qualities, we treat the character they belong to with contempt, rather than with indignation. They influence the imagination; we turn from them with disgust and loathing, as if they were capable of tainting us by their contagion; and, if those that possess them discover any expectation of our regarding them, we are offended at their pretensions. Claudius, endeavouring to caress and flatter Hamlet, of whose virtues and abilities he is afraid, thinks of honouring him by a claim of consanguinity, and is replied to with symptoms of aversion and deep contempt. Yet Hamlet delivers himself ambiguously, inclined to vent his displeasure, but unwilling to incur suspicion.⁹³

Richardson, here, analyses the complex inner psychology of Hamlet and tries to find the motive of his irresolution. As Robinson notes, Richardson traces the irresolution in

⁹² Babcock, Robert Witbeck. *The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry 1766-1799*. New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1964, p. 159.

⁹³ Richardson, William. *A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Shakespeare's Characters*. Edinburgh, 1774, pp.90-92.

Hamlet to the weakness of his character caused by conflicting emotions and in his attention to what he regards as Hamlet's weakness, he anticipates Goethe, Schlegel and Coleridge.⁹⁴

Henry Mackenzie also concentrates on character analysis. For him, Shakespeare's superiority is in his powers of invention, his command over the passions, and his knowledge of nature. Shakespeare, he thinks, is frequently careless about structure and probability. But Shakespeare's knowledge of the human mind never forsakes him. In Mackenzie's opinion, of all the characters of Shakespeare, Hamlet is the most difficult to be reduced to any fixed or settled principle. "The basis of Hamlet's character," he argues,

seems to be an extreme sensibility of mind, apt to be strongly impressed by its situation, and over powered by the feelings which that situation excites. Naturally of the most virtuous and most amiable dispositions, the circumstances in which he was placed unhinged those principles of action which, in another situation, would have delighted mankind and made himself happy. That kind of distress which he suffered was, beyond all others, calculated to produce this effect. His misfortunes were not the misfortunes of accident, which, though they may overwhelm at first the mind will soon call up reflections to alleviate, and hopes to cheer; they were such as reflection only serves to irritate, such as rankle in the soul's tenderest part, his sense of virtue and feelings of natural affection; they arose from an uncle's villainy, a mother's guilt, a father's murder!⁹⁵

In order to define the peculiar notion of Hamlet's revenge, he compares it with Orestes's. Whereas Orestes' revenge satisfies by persuading us that the wicked have been justly punished, Hamlet's revenge and his death leave us sadly absorbed in our memory of that 'sweet prince'. Hamlet's madness is, he comments, always subject to the control of his reason except when he shows the temporary marks of real disorder at

⁹⁴ Robinson. *English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century*, pp.189-190.

the grave of Ophelia. While distinguishing counterfeit madness and real distraction by comparing Hamlet and Lear, he explains why Hamlet shows real mental disorder at Ophelia's death. It is Mackenzie's analysis of Hamlet's character, according to Robinson,

—which connects him with Goethe and Coleridge— his explanation of the contradictory elements in his nature, his comparison between Hamlet and Orestes, (to the advantage of the former), his solution of Hamlet's madness, his clear perception of Shakespeare's skill in always discriminating between genuine and counterfeited mental disorder, his defence of the scene with the Grave-diggers, and his sympathetic apprehension of imagination in writing—all these as signs of a new order, are to be placed to Mackenzie's credit.⁹⁶

Mackenzie, Vickers also argues, by

attempting to reduce Hamlet's character to a 'fixed or settled principle', defined it as marked by extreme sensitivity, tending towards weakness or inaction. Similar analyses were made by William Richardson and Thomas Robertson, who took the argument further, claiming that Shakespeare had arranged Hamlet's contradictory qualities in such a way as to cancel each other out, rendering him unable to act. The Romantic conception of Hamlet, from Coleridge to Bradley and beyond, is born here.⁹⁷

Though it does not appear that Maurice Morgann's *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* was known to Coleridge⁹⁸, it clearly anticipates romantic criticism. In this essay, Morgann suggests a new interpretation of the character of Falstaff, against the usually accepted idea that Falstaff was a coward. Morgann identified the leading quality of Falstaff; that is, a high degree of wit and humour, from which all the rest take their colour. Falstaff, he comments,

⁹⁵ Mackenzie, Henry. *The Mirror*, nos 99 and 100(1780). Reprinted in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*. Vol. 6. pp.273-274.

⁹⁶ Robinson. *English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century*, p.220.

⁹⁷ Vickers. *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*. Vol.6, p.26.

seems, by nature, to have had a mind free of malice or any evil principle; but he never took the trouble of acquiring any good one. He found himself esteemed and beloved with all his faults; nay *for* his faults, which were all connected with humour, and for the most part grew out of it. As he had, possibly, no vices but such as he thought might be openly professed, so he appeared more dissolute thro' ostentation. To the character of wit and humour, to which all his other qualities seem to have conformed themselves, he appears to have added a very necessary support, *that* of the profession of a *Soldier*.⁹⁸

Here, we can see his defence of Shakespeare against the accusation of a lack of moral purpose or insight. He analyses the pattern of Falstaff's behaviour by carefully showing the motivations and linking the motivations to the progressive unfolding of his character. Besides, he indicates historical factors in Falstaff's character; that is, how a particular character such as Falstaff's grows from particular soils. This kind of interpretation, in a way, as Blich suggests, reminds us of the theory of organicism.

Coleridge's own study of Shakespeare's characters may seem deeper and more complex than those of the eighteenth-century critics, but it remains the case that Coleridge owed much to the work of his British predecessors.

2. The German Connection

Stephen Prickett summarises the German influence on Coleridge as follows:

From evidence in his notebooks, he seems to have heard of Kant as early as 1796, but it was only on his arrival in Göttingen, and under the intense intellectual stimulation he found in the university circles there, that he was able to begin a serious study of Kantian and idealist philosophy. The result was a total reorientation

⁹⁸ See Foakes, R.A. *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*. p.5. Also see Robinson. *English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century*, p.204.

⁹⁹ Morgann, Maurice. "On the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff." *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*. Ed. D.Nichol Smith. Galsgow: James MacLehose, 1903, pp.226-227.

of his ideas. Indeed, it is not too much to say that this period in Germany, from 1798 to 1800, was to produce a permanent and lasting transformation of Coleridge's mental landscape...it is clear that passing from Hartley to Kant was, for Coleridge, like undergoing a change of state—as it were an intellectual boiling point. There was to be no return. Gone was the Hartleian system of vibrations, the earnest panglossian Optimism and the schemata of providentially regulated stages of growth towards the final summit of human insight, in what Hartley (rather prosaically) called the 'moral sense', and in its place were the distinctions between reality and appearance, 'Pure' and 'Practical' Reason, and an idea of the imagination, that were to haunt Coleridge's thought for the rest of his life.¹⁰⁰

For the German influence on Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, the Schlegel brothers are central. Starting from De Quincey, a number of critics have tried to reveal Coleridge's indebtedness or his plagiarism. Among them, Anna Augusta Helmholtz has placed side by side passages of Coleridge and Schlegel. She refers to De Quincey's charge of plagiarism, but adds a defence:

De Quincey's article called forth still another defender, James Gillman, with whom Coleridge made his home during the last eighteen years of his life. He says, "With regard to the charge made by Mr. De Quincey, of Coleridge's so borrowing the property of other writers as to be guilty of 'petty larceny'; with equal justice might we accuse the bee which flies from flower to flower in quest of food, and which by means of an instinct bestowed upon it by the All-wise Creator, extracts its nourishment from the field and the garden, but digests and elaborates it by his own native powers.* * * Coleridge, who was an honest man, was equally honest in literature; and had he thought himself indebted to any other author, he would have acknowledged the same."¹⁰¹

Most critics have admitted the importance of the German influence on Coleridge, but, like Gilman, have insisted on Coleridge's active role in 'digesting' and transforming it into a new form. Jonathan Bate, for instance, argues that in Coleridge, "borrowed

¹⁰⁰ Prickett, Stephen. "Coleridge, Schlegel and Schleiermacher: England, Germany (and Australia) in 1798." p.171.

¹⁰¹ Helmholtz, Anna Augusta. *The Indebtedness of Samuel Taylor Coleridge to A. W. Schlegel*. New York: Haskell House, 1971, p.281.

materials are constantly transformed and combined in new ways".¹⁰² In T.M.Raysor's opinion, "the great influence of Schlegel confirmed and developed rather than suggested many of Coleridge's ideas."¹⁰³ In Coleridge's criticism, according to Abrams, "he appropriated nothing that he did not assimilate to his own principles, he restated little that he did not improve".¹⁰⁴ The difference between Coleridge and Schelling, Foakes says,

is often (though certainly not always in the case of Schlegel) much the same as the difference between, say, Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra, and its source in North's Plutarch, or Katherine's trial speech and its source in Holingshed. Like Shakespeare, Coleridge made memorable what he found; in this way, it might be said that he gave ideas life, and is therefore a true original.¹⁰⁵

Baker even suggests that the German influence was a matter for congratulation rather than regret:

Whatever we may think of Coleridge's metaphysics *per se*, of the manuscript philosophy that he bequeathed to his devoted disciple Green, or of the Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy in which he immersed himself, it is no matter of regret, it is a matter of congratulation, that he read German aesthetic theory. For this was the golden age of German aesthetic theory, the age of Lessing, of Herder, of Wincklemann, of Goethe, of Schiller, of the Schlegels, of Schelling, of Novalis, of Hegel. It was a point of the highest good fortune that Coleridge stayed in Germany at the turn of the eighteenth century and that he kept in touch thereafter with German literature and aesthetic. The reading that he did in German aesthetics—added to his own keen native sensibility—was partly responsible for the acuity of his critical perceptiveness.¹⁰⁶

One of the most important influences from the Germans is the a priori concept of unity. According to René Wellek, for Schlegel, literature forms a great completely

¹⁰² Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, p.24.

¹⁰³ Raysor. *Shakespearean Criticism*, p.xxx.

¹⁰⁴ Abrams. *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p.218.

¹⁰⁵ Foakes, R.A. "Repairing the Damaged Archangel." *Essays in Criticism* 24(1974): 423-27, pp.426-427.

coherent and evenly organised whole comprehending in its unity many worlds of art and itself forming a peculiar work of art.¹⁰⁷ This view of literature is not peculiar to Schlegel but implicit in German philosophy, especially of the Kantian kind. For Kant, art is an *a priori* concept, "where we realize a preconceived concept of an object which we set before ourselves as an end."¹⁰⁸ Of artistic form, Kant says,

So much for the beautiful representation of an object, which is properly only the form of the presentation of a concept, and the means by which the latter is universally communicated. To give this form, however, to the product of fine art, taste merely is required. By this the artist, having practised and corrected his taste by a variety of examples from nature or art, controls his work and, after many, and often laborious, attempts to satisfy taste, finds the form which commends itself to him. Hence this form is not, as it were, a matter of inspiration, or of a free swing of the mental powers, but rather of a slow and even painful process of improvement, directed to making the form adequate to his thought without prejudice to the freedom in the play of those powers (*CJ*, 174).

Kant, according to Abrams, "formulates the view of a natural organism as immanently but unconsciously teleological, a 'self-organizing being' which, possessing both its own 'moving power' and its own 'formative power,' develops from the inside out, and in which the relations between the parts and the whole can be restated in terms of an interrelationship of means and end."¹⁰⁹ This sort of aesthetics provides a turning point and we could say, quoting Margaret R. Higonnet,

Old assumptions about the appropriate context of interpretation or the nature of literary unity break down, and new norms take their place. Aristotle gives way to Kant and Fichte, ontology to epistemology, mimesis to expression.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Baker. *The Sacred River*, p.275.

¹⁰⁷ Welleck, Rene. *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*. Vol.2. London: Cape, 1955, p.7.

¹⁰⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement in Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. Tr. James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911, p.34.

¹⁰⁹ Abrams. *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p.208.

¹¹⁰ Higonnet, Margaret R. "Organic Unity and Interpretative Boundaries: F.Schlegel's Theories and Their Application in His Critique of Lessing." *SIR* 19(1980): 163-192, p.164.

Friedrich Schlegel greatly contributed to elaborating the new aesthetics,—especially the theory of organicism: “his notes and essays of the 1790’s record the questioning and experimentation that preceded his commitment at the middle of his career to a primarily organicist paradigm.”¹¹¹ According to Orsini, F.Schlegel found the possibility of the application of his organic theory to literature in Shakespeare’s dramatic works. “One of the most important critical applications of the principle of Organic Form,” Orsini says,

was effected when it was made to bear upon the question of the unity of Shakespeare’s plays. Critics who upheld the so-called Aristotelian dramatic unities maintained that Shakespeare’s plays, not observing those unities, did not possess any unity and hence were devoid of any form. By the middle of the eighteenth century the unities were very largely discredited in English criticism, but for a time, no other concept of form was available in English criticism, and no unity could be claimed for Shakespeare’s plays, even the masterpieces. So, as I have shown elsewhere, there was a brief interregnum in English criticism during which the traditional unities were dead, but no other positive doctrine had arisen to take their place. In consequence, the critics were puzzled and did not know what to think.

Then came the Schlegels in Germany, and August Wilhelm wrote his famous defense of Shakespeare, based upon the concept of organic form, clearly contradistinguished from the concept of mechanical form: ...This was taken up by Coleridge and used by him as a powerful instrument of criticism throughout his critical work. Thus Shakespeare’s artistry was vindicated and positive criticism of his work became possible again, and flourished.¹¹²

This opinion might be questioned, given that there were many discussions of form in Shakespeare’s plays in the eighteenth century in Britain. Though they did not develop a theory such as organicism, they tried to defend Shakespeare’s form on the ground of its

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.168. She also says that “Schlegel believes himself to be effecting a change in definitions of wholeness of structure in literature; this change exactly corresponds to the shift in paradigms from mechanism to organism, from “mirror” to “lamp”, which M.H.Abrams has described so thoroughly”(Ibid., p.166).

¹¹² Orsini, G.N.G. “The Organic Concepts in Aesthetics.” *Comparative Literature* 21(1969): 1-29, p.21.

truth to nature. Nevertheless, we must admit that the German concept of organicism is different from the British concepts of form which were employed in the eighteenth-century.

F.Schlegel's philosophical analysis of the relationship between the finite and the infinite is also important for an understanding of Coleridge's poetry and criticism. According to Wessel, "Finitude as a principle of unity, form, and simplicity and infinitude as a principle of richness, variety, and complexity constitute the basis for Schlegel's concept of *das Klassische* and *das Romantische* and, hence, form the philosophical framework for any possible synthesis."¹¹³ F. Schlegel applies Fichte's philosophy to his aesthetic theory. Fichte argues that man is both infinite and finite, finite insofar as he subjects himself to the objective or not-self, infinite within this finite because the boundary can be posited ever farther out, to infinity.¹¹⁴ Fichte criticises Kant for his limitation of human knowledge to what is presented in sensuous intuition. He argues that there is also intellectual intuition and he refers to the immediate consciousness of the infinite as spiritual intuition, which he ultimately identifies with aesthetic experience.¹¹⁵ Directing Fichte's argument to aesthetics, Schlegel seeks to fuse the finite and the infinite together into one embracing unity, whereas Kant reconciled them by dividing them into two ontologically distinct realms.¹¹⁶

The principle of synthesis of the infinite and finite is the concept of becoming. In the process of becoming, all the opposites are united into one, in which diversities are still

¹¹³ Wessel, Leonard P., Jr. "The Antinomic Structure of Friedrich Schlegel's Romanticism." *SIR* 12(1973): 648-669, pp.656-657.

¹¹⁴ McNiece, Gerald. *The Knowledge that Endures*. London: Macmillan, 1992, p.114.

¹¹⁵ Wessel. "The Antinomic Structure of Friedrich Schlegel's Romanticism," p.657.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.658.

preserved. "Schlegel's criticism, or what he occasionally refers to as "theory,"" Ginette Verstrate states,

is the moment in which the opposition between the universal and the singular, between the spirit(*Geist*) and the letter(*Buchstabe*) dissolves, and their synthesis takes place. The synthesizing view of plurality thus presented is one that undoes not only the opposition between the two poles, but also the individuality of the two opposites, which in their mutual destruction, reaffirm their polarization on a higher synthetic level.¹¹⁷

His theory of irony can be understood in the same context of his trying to fuse the infinite and the finite: that is, Schlegel's sense of the incessant conflict of the infinite or absolute and the finite or relative, of aspiration and limitation is close to the core of his concept of irony.¹¹⁸ Schlegel's irony is defined as a mode of reconciling opposition in an incessant interaction. In Romantic irony, self-consciousness works in order to keep judgment within the creative process. "The ironist," according to McNiece,

aspires to richness and fullness of meaning and beauty, but is aware that he is composing fictions. This consciousness, this true presence of mind, involves, as Friedrich Schlegel suggested, a kind of interior distance which further refines and strengthens self-awareness.¹¹⁹

His theory of irony seems to be applied in A.W.Schlegel's argument for Shakespeare's conscious artistry in creating his plays.

A.W.Schlegel applied Friedrich's literary theory to practical criticism. A.W.Schlegel's *Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* is important not only for the history of Shakespeare criticism but for the history of aesthetics in the

¹¹⁷ Verstraete, Ginette. "Friedrich Schlegel's Practice of Literary Theory." *The German Review* 69(1994):28-35, p.29.

¹¹⁸ McNiece. *The Knowledge that Endures*, p.113.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.112.

English speaking world.¹²⁰ This text develops several key critical topics such as the relationship between a dramatic form and social and historical forces, the comparison of the ancient and the romantic drama, and of mechanical form and organic form.

All these topics come together in his concept of 'organicism'. In organic theory, the Germans use the plant as the metaphor for the work of art. The characteristics of organic form as the term is used by Friedrich and A.W.Schlegel can be summarised in Appleyard's words:

First, organic form is perceived in the *individual* thing. The development of the oak is influenced by the circumstances in which it grows; its essence is known as identical with that of other oaks by abstraction but it is known first and primarily in the way in which it actually exists, that is, with its essence immersed in the individuality which it has by reason of all its particular determinations. Second, this special form is characterized by organization of parts with respect to the whole. In Coleridge's terms, the parts are "outward symbols and manifestations of the essential principle." They are parts by virtue of the principle which organized them.—Third, the unity of the work of art is like this organic unity. True organic unity is predicated of living things only; art imitates this unity.¹²¹

The origin of drama, according to A.W.Schlegel, lies in the natural disposition to mimicry of human beings. He designates children's natural inclination to mimicry as its ground: children always try to mimic grown people when they have the opportunity to do so. But in order for drama to come into being, a further step is needed; that is, to separate and extract the mimetic elements from the separate parts of social life, and to present them to itself again collectively in one mass. In this step, a social fact is added to the human disposition. Originating in such natural and social inclinations, drama has been widely diffused all over the world from ancient Egypt to China. Each country has

¹²⁰ See, Orsini, G.N.G. "Coleridge and Schlegel Reconsidered." *Comparative Literature* 16(1964): 97-118, p.100.

¹²¹ Appleyard, J.A. *Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature*, pp.113-114.

developed its own particular drama so that it shows different skills and talents in its dramatic art. Among the dramatic forms Schlegel first chooses Greek and Roman dramas to compare with each other:

We do not wonder at the contrast in this respect between the Greeks and the Romans, for the Greeks were altogether a nation of artists, and the Romans a practical people. Among the latter the fine arts were introduced as a corrupting article of luxury, both betokening and accelerating the degeneracy of the times. They carried this luxury so far with respect to the theatre itself, that the perfection in essentials was sacrificed to the accessories of embellishment. Even among the Greeks dramatic talent was far from universal. The theatre was invented in Athens, and in Athens also was it brought to perfection (*CDAL*, 34).

Similarly, Schlegel compares the drama of the different nations of modern Europe- e.g. the drama of Spain and Portugal, and Germany.

His comparison of Classic and Romantic drama echoes F.Schlegel, who, Ernst Behler points out,

had based his studies on the assumption of an 'absolute difference' between the classical and the modern age and tried to present the fundamental opposition of classical and romantic poetry.¹²²

The two forms of drama differ because of their social and historical circumstances. For A.W.Schlegel, the one is plastic, the other, picturesque; that is, the ancient tragedy is the sculpture, whereas the romantic is the picture.

In comparing the ancient tragedy to a sculptural group, he says that the figures correspond to the characters, and their grouping to the action, as being all that is properly exhibited. But, in a large picture, not only are figure and motion exhibited in larger, richer groups, but at the same time all that surrounds the figures must also be

portrayed. Schlegel, while admitting sculpture's superiority in the representation of figure, brings the merit of picture into relief: the picture gains more life "by colours which are made to imitate the lightest shades of mental expression in the countenance" and this enables us to read what is happening in the deeper mind.

Romantic drama, according to him,

does not (like the Old Tragedy) separate seriousness and the action, in a rigid manner, from among the whole ingredients of life; it embraces at once the whole of the chequered drama of life with all its circumstances; and while it seems only to represent subjects brought accidentally together, it satisfies the unconscious requisitions of fancy, buries us in the reflections on the inexpressible signification of the objects which we view blended by order, nearness and distance, light and colour, into one harmonious whole; and thus lends, as it were, a soul to the prospect before us(*CDAL*, 344).

For A. W. Schlegel, the paragon of romantic drama is Shakespeare. Shakespeare's dramas, in his opinion, grew out of the peculiar conditions of his own age and cultural milieu. The age possessed a fullness of healthy vigour. In that age, the spirit of chivalry was not yet wholly extinct, and the Queen was qualified to inspire the minds of her subjects with an ardent enthusiasm that inflamed the spirit to the noblest love of glory and renown. Feudal independence still survived in some measure and the nobility vied with each other in splendour of dress and number of retinue, and in conversation, they took pleasure in quick and unexpected answers(*CDAL*, 349).

In Shakespeare's work, he finds "indissoluble mixtures", the combination of nature and art, verse and prose, seriousness and mirth, spirituality and the corporeal, etc. Each of Shakespeare's composition, Schlegel states,

¹²² Behler, Ernst. "Origins of Romantic Aesthetics in Friedrich Schlegel." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 7(1980): 47-66, p.61.

is like a world of its own, moving in its own sphere. They are works of art, finished in one style, which revealed the freedom and judicious choice of their author(*CDAL*, 378).

Schlegel, while dismissing the argument of those critics who consider the authority of the ancients as sufficient models for modern literature and argue that if nations have not followed the ancient models, they have produced only irregular dramas, suggests the necessity of an alternative kind of form. For him the poetic spirit requires to be limited within its proper precincts, as has been felt by all nations from the first invention of metric form, and must act according to laws derivable from its own essence because if it does not, its strength will evaporate in boundless vacuity(*CDAL*, 339-340).

Schlegel insists that works of genius cannot be permitted to be without form, by which he means organic form. Here, he distinguishes organic form from mechanic form:

Form is mechanical when, through external force, it is imparted to any material merely as an accidental addition without reference to its quality; as, for example, when we give a particular shape to a soft mass that it may retain the same after its induration. Organical form, again is innate; it unfolds itself from within, and acquires its determination contemporaneously with the perfect development of the germ. We everywhere discover such forms in nature throughout the whole range of living powers, from the crystallization of salts and minerals to plants and flowers, and from these again to the human body. In the fine arts as well as in the domain of nature—the supreme artist, all genuine forms are organical, that is, determined by the quality of the work(*CDAL*, 340).

If we apply this notion of organic form to drama,

something like the plot, in embryonic form, may pre-exist in the mind of the author or on paper as an outline, but the plot itself requires the presence of living characters and not abstractions. Plot and character thus come to form a unity, and neither of them pre-exists to this unity, which will determine the situations, the individual actions and speeches.¹²³

¹²³ Orsini, G.N.G. "The Organic Concepts of Aesthetics," p.14.

Of A.W.Schlegel's effort to establish organic theory and apply it to literature, Abrams says:

The writings of August Wilhelm Schlegel provide a compendious summary of German concepts of organic invention,.... Unlike most of his contemporaries, the older Schlegel had a tidy mind. In the lectures he read in Berlin between 1801 and 1804, he collected and ordered the ideas contributed by thinkers from Leibniz through Kant to Friedrich Schlegel and Schelling, trimmed away some of the accrued extravagance and a good deal of rhetoric, and most importantly, brought them down to the consideration of specific questions in the history and analysis of works of art. The true philosopher sees everything 'as an eternal becoming, an unintermitted process of creation.' No living organism can be understood from the standpoint of materialism alone, because its nature is such 'that the whole must be conceived before the parts,' and it can only be made intelligible as 'a product which produces itself,' exhibiting in the process 'an endless reciprocation, in which each effect becomes a cause of its cause'.¹²⁴

We can see an example of Schlegel's organic theory in his criticism of *Romeo and Juliet*. He begins by saying that *Romeo and Juliet* is a simple story, in which two persons feel mutual love at first glance and, under circumstances hostile to their union, unite themselves in a secret marriage, but they are forcibly separated from each other and by voluntary death are united in the grave to meet again in another world. He says that such a simple story, under Shakespeare's handling, has become a glorious song of praise for the inexpressible feeling which ennobles the soul and gives to it its highest sublimity, and which elevates even the senses into soul, while at the same time it is a melancholy elegy. He celebrates Shakespeare's excellent dramatic arrangement, the

¹²⁴ Abrams. *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p.212.

significance of every character in its place, the judicious selection of all the circumstances (*CDAL*, 401).¹²⁵ *Romeo and Juliet* is also marked by its unity:

All that is most intoxicating in the odour of a southern spring,— all that is languishing in the song of the nightingale, or voluptuous in the first opening of the rose, all alike breathe forth from this poem. But even more rapidly than the earliest blossoms of youth and beauty decay, does it from the first timidly-bold declaration and modest return of love hurry on to the most unlimited passion, to an irrevocable union; and then hastens, amidst alternating storms of rapture and despair, to the fate of the two lovers, who yet appear enviable in their hard lot, for their love survives them, and by their death they have obtained an endless triumph over every separating power. The sweetest and the bitterest love and hatred, festive rejoicing and dark forebodings, tender embraces and sepulchral horrors, the fulness of life and self-annihilation, are here all brought close to each other; and yet these contrasts are so blended into a unity of impression, that the echo which the whole leaves behind in the mind resembles a single but endless sigh (*CDAL*, 400-401).

To create such a drama, Shakespeare must be a profound artist.

Shakespeare has reflected, and deeply reflected, on character and passion, on the progress of events and human destinies, on the human constitution, on all the things and relations of the world(*CDAL*, 359).¹²⁶

Schlegel even takes anachronism as an example of Shakespeare's deliberate artifice. It is the means, he claims, by which Shakespeare moved the exhibited subject out of the background and brought it near to us. For example, Hamlet is an old Northern story, but Shakespeare makes it a story of his own time.

¹²⁵ Rene Welleck celebrates Schlegel's paper on *Romeo and Juliet* as an example of his organic theory. According to him, "Schlegel's view of Shakespeare is first developed in the remarkable paper on *Romeo and Juliet* (1797), which is all centered around the one idea that Shakespeare had "finer, more spiritual concepts of dramatic art than one usually tends to ascribe to him." Welleck, p.65.

¹²⁶ See Rene Welleck. *A History of Modern Criticism*. Vol.2. p.45. There, he writes, "Schlegel repeated over and over again that Shakespeare was a "deep-thinking artist" and found in him "superb cultivation of mental powers, practised art, and worthy and maturely considered intentions."

Schlegel's view of theatre and illusion is closely related to his organic view of dramatic form. Like other historical and social circumstances, dramatic form is influenced by the structure of the theatre:

With the Spanish theatre at the time of its formation, it was the same as with the English, and when the stage had remained a moment empty, and other persons came in by another entrance, a change of scene was to be supposed though none was visible; and this circumstance had the most favourable influence on the form of the dramas. The poet was not obliged to consult the scene-painter to know what could or could not be represented; nor to calculate whether the store of decorations on hand were sufficient, or new ones would be requisite; he was not driven to impose restraint on the action as to change of times and places, but represented it entirely as it would naturally have taken place; he left to the imagination to fill up the intervals agreeably to the speeches, and to conceive all the surrounding circumstances. This call on the fancy to supply the deficiencies supposes, indeed, not merely benevolent, but also intelligent spectators of a poetical tone of mind. That is the true illusion, when the spectators are so completely carried away by the impressions of the poetry and the acting that they overlook the secondary matters, and forget the whole of the remaining objects around them. To lie morosely on the watch to detect every circumstance that may violate an apparent reality which, strictly speaking, can never be attained, is in fact a proof of inertness of imagination and an incapacity for mental illusion (*CDAL*, 453).

According to Schlegel, the Globe

is a massive structure destitute of architectural ornaments, and almost without windows in the outward walls. The pit was open to the sky, and the acting was by day-light; the scene had no other decoration than wrought tapestry, which hung at some distance from the walls, and left space for several entrances. In the background of the stage there was a second stage raised above it, a sort of balcony, which served for various purposes, and according to circumstances signified all manner of things. (*CDAL*, 450)

How profoundly the structure of the contemporary theatre influenced Shakespeare's dramatic form is difficult to establish. But his stress on the role of the audience's imagination was important in forming Coleridge's view of illusion, especially the

concept of 'intelligent illusion' and the reliance on 'spectators of a poetical tone of mind'.

Schlegel argues that the attention of the audience is held by the play's 'unity of interest'. The unity of interest, Burwick writes,

is an organic unity that enlarges the scope of participation beyond the destiny of a single character and allows a total engagement of the audience in the dramatic situation. For Schlegel, unity is a meaningful criteria only in reference to the spectator's sense of a total impression ("Gesamteindruck"). A logical cohesion of cause and effect is a means, not an end. The drama should excite the response of all the "Geisteskräfte". If the understanding should balk at some casual improbability, the imagination and the feeling are not apt to follow. The "unity of interest" is never pulled along by a single thread of dramatic action, however, and the cumulative effect may well overwhelm the sceptical reason. Schlegel likens it to a river fed by many tributaries that continues to increase its turbulent strength until it pours forth into the vast sea.¹²⁷

The unity of interest does not merely emphasise the role of the dramatist but of the audience. This concept of the 'unity of interest' is a concept which substitutes for the neo-classical unities, and provides the means by which Schlegel and Coleridge endeavour to explain the Romantic drama.

Schlegel is also interested in Shakespeare's characterisation, Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature, and his use of the supernatural. Compared with Johnson and the British character critics, his thoughts on these matters do not seem extraordinary. In some points, he echoes the British critics. His view of Caliban and Ariel, however, is said to have been borrowed by Coleridge. Caliban, in Schlegel's opinion,

has become a by-word as the strange creation of a poetical imagination. A mixture of gnome and savage, half daemon, half brute, in his behaviour we perceive at once

¹²⁷ Burwick, Frederick. *The Drama and Illusion*. pp.155-156.

the traces of his native disposition, and the influence of Prospero's education. The latter could only unfold his understanding, without, in the slightest degree, taming his rooted malignity: it is as if the use of reason and human speech were communicated to an awkward ape. In inclination Caliban is malicious, cowardly, false, and base; and yet he is essentially different from the vulgar knaves of a civilized world, as portrayed occasionally by Shakespeare. He is rude, but not vulgar; he never falls into the prosaic and low familiarity of his drunken associates, for he is, in his way, a poetic being; he always speaks in verse....The delineation of this monster is throughout inconceivably consistent and profound, and, notwithstanding its hatefulness, by no means hurtful to our feelings, as the honour of human nature is left untouched.

In the zephyr-like Ariel the image of air is not to be mistaken, his name even bears an allusion to it; as, on the other hand Caliban signifies the heavy element of earth. Yet they are neither of them simple, allegorical personifications but beings individually determined(CDAL, 395-396).

Benziger argues that "Schlegel develops his entire doctrine of organic unity from the consideration of precisely this point, how an artist can create characters who do not behave as mere puppets."¹²⁸ This argument is problematic, since such critics as Johnson also suggested the naturalness and individuality of supernatural beings in Shakespeare's dramas. Rather, Schlegel explains Shakespeare's dealing with the supernatural world as a kind of demonstration of his ability to pierce even the inward life of nature and to reveal it to us thus:

In general we find in *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Tempest*, in the magical part of *Macbeth*, and wherever Shakespeare avails himself of the popular belief in the invisible presence of spirits, and the possibility of coming in contact with them, a profound view of the inward life of nature and her mysterious springs, which, it is true, can never be altogether unknown to the genuine poet, as poetry is altogether incompatible with mechanical physics, but which few have possessed in an equal degree with Dante and himself(CDAL, 396).

As I have suggested so far, Schlegel's Shakespearean criticism is important chiefly because of his concept of organicism. His account of the influence of historical and

social circumstances in shaping dramatic form, the comparison between mechanical form and organic form, his view of Shakespeare as an artist, and his theory of unity of interest, were all borrowed by Coleridge.

Schlegel's aesthetic orientation in Shakespeare criticism is quite different both from Johnson's, based on the concept of 'nature', and from those of the character critics, largely based on human psychology. It can be said that the former is an expression of Continental Transcendentalism and the latter, of British empiricism. For the former, art is an independent being having its own space, but for the latter, it is a kind of reflector. Therefore, the main interest of the former is focused on an *a priori* concept of art itself, whereas the latter is focused on how faithfully art reflects the world. These two positions are united in Coleridge. Coleridge, in his Shakespearean criticism, combines the German frame and the British tenor. He, in other words, keeps the aesthetics of the German idealists which takes art as an independent being, but in practical criticism, he follows his British predecessors in many aspects.

¹²⁸ Benziger, James. "Organic Unity: Leibniz to Coleridge." *PMLA* 66(1951): 24-48, p.39.

Chapter 2. Coleridge's Concept of Nature and His Poetic Principles

As I discussed in the preceding chapter, Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare is derived from various sources. However, the material is not reproduced in the absence of any system. Rather, his Shakespearean criticism is written on the basis of certain principles. In fact, it might not be an exaggeration to say that Coleridge dedicated himself to establishing such principles. The principles he tried to establish were not merely applicable to literary criticism but to all subjects with which he dealt,— i.e., science, philosophy, politics, and religion, etc.

Coleridge's thought, whether, religious, poetic, political, or scientific, always aspires towards the systematic, but critics have differed as to how far the aspiration is matched by achievement. Some, such as M.H.Abrams see Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* as "a romantic *Bildungsgeschichte*, representing the growth of the poet-philosopher-critic's mind."¹ H.J.Jackson characterises features such as continual and progressive expansion, comprehension and productivity— the essential features of the spiral— as the significant forms of Coleridge's mature thought.² Dorothy Emmet argues that

¹ Abrams, M.H. "Coleridge and the Romantic Vision of the World." *Coleridge's Variety*. Ed. John Beer. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1975. 101-133. p.104. Also see MacFarland, Thomas. "So Immethodical a Miscellany: Coleridge's Literary Life." *Modern Philology* 83(1986): 405-413, p.407. MacFarland takes *Biographia Literaria* as the counterpart of Wordsworth's *Prelude*. According to him, "Coleridge's use of an autobiographical framework was a device with a twofold efficacy: it was likely to find favor with an intellectual public already conditioned by Rousseau's *Confessions* (compare the parallel situation of de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*), and it afforded him an organizing principle for his thoughts, which were at the time somewhat ambivalent and unresolved."

² Jackson, H.J. "Turning and turning': Coleridge on Our Knowledge of the External World." *PMLA* 101(1986): 848-856, p.855.

the heart of Coleridge's philosophical interest lay in trying to understand the powers he found operative in his own mind, especially in creative work. Then he tried to see these powers as *connatural* (his word, and also an older medieval word) with powers of life and growth in nature, and finally tried to see powers in the mind and in nature as alike depending on a spiritual ground.³

Coleridge, throughout his life, tried to locate a single principle embracing both the universe and man, and that principle is most easily explained by considering Coleridge's concept of nature. In Coleridge's system, the concept of nature is closely related to his poetic principles. The concepts of polarity, or opposites reconciled, and of organism are all embraced in the concept of nature. In this chapter, first, I will examine Coleridge's concept of nature, and then try to link to it his ideas of art, organic unity, imitation and copy, and of the reconciliation of opposites. Coleridge's concept of imagination can also be deduced from his concept of nature. All of these concepts are crucial to understand Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism and will demonstrate in what way Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism is unique.

1. The concept of nature

In his notes and lectures on Shakespeare, one of the terms Coleridge uses most often is nature. As in Johnson, nature in Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism is a basic concept propping his further arguments. Raimonda Modiano argues that Coleridge's writings on natural philosophy

³ Emmet, Dorothy. "Coleridge on Powers in Mind and Nature." *Coleridge's Variety*. 166-182. p.167.

reveal the essential features of a coherent and integrated system that is thoroughly structured and even conceptually rigid, notwithstanding the fact that it is dispersed in bits and pieces throughout Coleridge's works.⁴

Douglas Brownlow Wilson also notes that in Coleridge's later prose works he elaborated the idea of nature philosophically and this elaboration is central to an understanding of his aesthetic view.⁵ Coleridge was said to be influenced by the *naturphilosophen* such as Schelling and Steffens. According to Modiano,

The *Naturphilosophen* generally conceived the universe as a complicated web of polar forces, operating in distinct though related modes, in both inorganic and organic nature, matter and spirit. They commonly rejected the Newtonian atomistic conception of nature, proposing instead a dynamic theory which explained the manifestations of given phenomena on the basis of original forces opposed to one another.⁶

Coleridge found some errors and inconsistencies in the *Naturphilosophen* and recast their systems in a new mould.⁷

1 · i Nature as *Natura Naturans*

For Coleridge, nature is of two kinds- *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. Though this distinction can be traced to Spinoza's Ethics, Coleridge's use of it is individual. According to Coleridge,

⁴ Modiano, Raimonda. *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*. London and Basingstoke: the Macmillan Press, 1985, p. 188.

⁵ Wilson, Douglas Brownlow. "Two Modes of Apprehending Nature: A Gloss on the Coleridgean Symbol." *PMLA* 87(1972): 42-52, p.44.

⁶ Modiano. *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p.141.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.188.

The word Nature has been used in two senses, viz. actively and passively; energetic (=forma formans), and material (=forma formata). In the first (the sense in which the word is used in the text) it signifies the inward principle of whatever is requisite for the reality of a thing, as *existent*: while the *essence*, or essential property, signifies the inner principle of all that appertains to the *possibility* of a thing....In the second, or material sense, of the word Nature, we mean by it the sum total of all things, as far as they are objects of our senses, and consequently of possible experience—the aggregate of phaenomena, whether existing for our outward senses, or for our inner sense.(FI, 467*)⁸

Natura naturans is not supernatural but supersensuous.⁹ It is “living and actuating Powers” of nature. Natura naturans, as David Vallins points out, is “an eternal and infinite essence of which the forms of passive nature (or *natura naturata*) are modifications.”¹⁰ Therefore, all nature,

all the mighty world
Of eye and ear—

presents itself to us, now as the aggregated *material* of duty, and now as a vision of the Most High revealing to us the mode, and time and particular instance of applying and realizing that universal rule, pre-established in the heart of our reason!(FI, 112)

“In seeking to discover *natura naturans*”, Douglas Brownlow Wilson says, Coleridge directs his inquiry not primarily toward the outward appearances of nature, but rather to these outward forms as manifestations of their inner creative principles.¹¹

For Coleridge, the universe is one productive unity. According to Trevor H Levere, Coleridge’s notion of the universe

⁸ See Vallins, David. “Production and Existence: Coleridge’s Unification of Nature.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56(1995): 107-24, p.111. According to him, the concept of *natura naturans* has much in common with the ideas of productive energy employed by Coleridge. The concept of God or Nature is not mystical in intention but leads logically to the view that every single thing in the universe belongs to , or falls within, a single, intellectual, causal system.

⁹ Barfield, Owen. *What Coleridge Thought*. London: Oxford University Press, 1972. p.25.

is like Schelling in his *Einleitung zu seinem Entwurfe eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* (Jena and Leipzig, 1799), a copy of which Coleridge annotated. But whereas the universe of Schelling and of Steffens produces itself by an inner logical necessity, Coleridge's universe is produced according to divinely created laws following an initiating divine act—so both pantheism and atheism are avoided, and God's will governs all.¹²

Coleridge, in his system, tried to develop a scheme to explain the formation and operation of the universe. His starting question concerns the powers of Nature; that is, "what are the powers, or what are the primary constituent powers of nature, into some modification or combination of which all other powers are to resolve?" According to him, all the primary powers of nature may be reduced to two and each of these produces two others and a third as the union of both. The first two are "distinctive power" and "agglomerative power". The nature of the former is to manifest, therefore it tends to draw out and to distinguish. The nature of the latter is to hide or keep hidden, therefore it tends to draw back and to bring into one mass. Coleridge characterises agglomerative power as inward, intro-active, centripetal, distinctive power as outward, extroitive, centrifugal. Following the Bible, he calls distinctive power light, and agglomerative power, lack of light, or, opacity.

Here, light does not mean visual light or solar light but the light spoken of in Genesis I.v.3. Coleridge explains it as that which "*goes forth* to declare, like a word *spoken*; or *remains* on the surface (or *outside*) to *distinguish*, like a word *written*; and in both cases, makes the thing *outward*, and *outers* (now spelt, utters) its nature. The agglomerate power is the principle of weight, gravity or gravitation.

¹⁰ Vallins. "Production and Existence: Coleridge's Unification and Nature," p.111.

¹¹ Wilson. "Two Modes of Apprehending Nature: A Gloss on the Coleridgean Symbol," p.44.

¹² Leverc, Trevor H. "Coleridge, Chemistry, and the Philosophy of Nature." *SIR* 16(1977): 349-79, p.367.

Each power has two other powers: under gravity there are attraction and repulsion and under light the powers of contraction and dilation. Then there is the third power; that is, the union of the two powers: from the union of the attractive and repulsive powers there results solidity or the solidific power and from the union of contraction and dilation results in fluidity. For Coleridge,

these are *Constituent Powers*— that is, all things are constituted by them, and of course *pre-suppose* them. But after the Things are made, the same Powers re-appear *in* the things, but differently modified— and may therefore be called the *Real Powers*, ((from Res, a thing)) and the former *Ideal Powers*.— Thus the ideal Power of Gravity re-appears in the *Real Power* of Magnetism: the I.P. of light in the R.P. of electricity: while the union of the two is the Real Power of Galvanism. And so the I.P. of Attraction is the R.P. of Negative Magnetism; the I.P. of Repulsion re-appears in the R.P. of Positive Magnetism— & so

Contraction = Neg. Electricity
Dilation = Pos. Electricity. (*TL*, 851)

For Coleridge, in nature there is a law by which the powers operate. Coleridge explains the process by which law operates in nature by drawing an example from Erasmus Darwin. In Coleridge's opinion, the substances of nature

are the symbols of elementary powers, and the exponents of a law, which as the root of all these powers, the chemical philosopher, whatever his theory may be, is instinctively labouring to extract. The instinct, again, is itself but the form, in which the idea, the mental Correlative of the law, first announces its incipient germination on his mind: and hence proceeds the striving after unity of principle through all the diversity of forms, with a feeling resembling that which accompanies our endeavours to recollect a forgotten name; when we seem at once to have and not to have it; which the memory feels but cannot find. (*FI*, 470-1)

Here, we notice that a law or an idea is an *a priori* concept. For him,

the very impulse to universalize any phaenomenon involves the prior assumption of some efficient law in nature, which in a thousand different forms is evermore one and the same; entire in each, yet comprehending all; and incapable of being abstracted or generalized from any number of phaenomena, because it is itself presupposed in each and all as their common ground and condition: and because every definition of a genus is the adequate definition of the lowest species alone, while the efficient law must contain the ground of all in all. It is *attributed*, never *derived*.(F I., 467*)

For him, what is contemplated objectively is called a law and the same contemplated subjectively is called an idea. He argues that Plato names ideas laws and Bacon describes the laws of the material universe as the ideas in nature. (C&S, 13)¹³

Coleridge assumes that polarity is the law of nature. In a fragment, he notes,

1. Polarity is a Law and a Necessity of Nature exclusively— of Hades actualized and actualizing.

2. Polarity always supposes a Contrariety in the Origins of its antagonist Forces— always pre-supposes a contradiction in its Ground. For its end is to reconcile a contradiction, which yet must remain as long as Nature remains, and the solution of which would be the evanescence of Nature, and is its true *End*. *Finis Naturae est Naturae Finis*. Nature's End(cessation) is the true End (final Cause) of Nature. But to this Conciliation, this Solution Polarity is a tendency to approximate.

3. Nevertheless, Polarity is not a Composite Force, or *Vis tertia* constituted by the momenta of two counter-*agents*. It is 1 manifested in 2, not $1+1=2$. A divine Energist indeed is the antecedent causative *Conditio sine qua non* (Indispensable condition) of the Polarity; but the Polarity itself is the (immediate) Act of the *Energoumenos* alone— i.e. of Nature, or Hades potentiated by the energetic WORD. The polar forces are the two forms, in which a one Power works in the same act and instant. Thus it is not the *Power*, Attraction and the Power Repulsion at once hugging and tugging like two sturdy Wrestlers that compose the Magnet; but the Magnetic Power working at once positively & negatively. A. and R. are the two Forces of the one magnetic *Power*....(Sh&F, 784-5)

According to Barfield, polar forces are not physical forces though they give rise to physical forces. The two forces, then,

¹³ Also see *The Friend I.*, p.492.

are not parts of phenomenal nature; they are not body, nor in any conventional sense the "causes" of what is bodily. They are not material in the sense that, for instance, the forces of electricity and magnetism are material. These 'constituent powers',...are acts or energies that are "suspended and, as it were, quenched in the product." They are the inside of anything to which we can apply the noun *matter* or the adjective *material*.¹⁴

For Coleridge, "in Man the centripetal and individualizing tendency of all Nature is itself concerned and individualized—he is Revelation of Nature!"(TL, 551) Man, for Coleridge,

shares the condition of growth and becoming with the animals, of course, but through his power of self-consciousness—properly activated by the will—man may further approach nature through the medium of reason and apprehend it as *natura naturans*.

Coleridge himself—in epitomizing his own peculiar claims for the mind as a religious faculty—envisions it as uniquely fitted, in its most august powers, to entertain self-consciously nature's powers of growth and becoming.¹⁵

The power in man which enables him to recognise nature as *natura naturans* is the same kind of power in nature. Wilson points out that Coleridge's originality in his concept of nature is "neither in his definition of the symbol, nor in his sacramentalism, but in his psychological explication of both."¹⁶ This idea is well demonstrated thus:

In a self-conscious and thence reflecting being, no instinct can exist, without engendering the belief of an object corresponding to it, either present or future, real or capable of being realized: much less the instinct, in which humanity itself is grounded: that by which, in every act of conscious perception, we at once identify our being with that of the world without us, and yet place ourselves in contradistinction to that world. Least of all can this mysterious pre-disposition exist without evolving a belief that the productive power, which is in nature as nature, is essentially one (i.e. of one kind) with the intelligence, which is in the human mind above nature: however disfigured this belief may become, by accidental forms or accompaniments, and though like heat in thawing of ice, it may appear only in its

¹⁴ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, p.33.

¹⁵ Wilson. "Two Modes of Apprehending Nature: A Gloss on the Coleridgean Symbol," p.45.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.50.

effects....In all aggregates of construction therefore, which we contemplate as wholes, whether as integral parts or as a system, we assume an intention, as the initiative, of which the end is the correlative.

Hence proceeds the introduction of final causes in the works of nature equally as in those of man.(FI, 497-8)

Elsewhere Coleridge demonstrates this connection between spiritual power in man and power in nature:

I feel an awe, as if there were before my eyes the same Power, as that of the REASON—the same Power in a lower dignity, and therefore a symbol established in the truth of things. I feel it alike, whether I contemplate a single tree or flower, or mediate on vegetation throughout the world, as one of the great organs of the life of nature. Lo!— with the rising sun it commences its outward life and enters into open communion with all the elements, at once assimilating them to itself and to each other. At the same moment it strikes its roots and unfolds its leaves, absorbs and respires, steams forth its cooling vapour and finer fragrance, and breathes a repairing spirit, at once the food and tone of the atmosphere, into the atmosphere that feeds it. Lo!— at the touch of light how it returns an air akin to light, and yet with the same pulse effectuates its own secret growth, still contracting to fix what expanding it had refined. Lo!— how upholding the ceaseless plastic motion of the parts in the profoundest rest of the whole it becomes the visible organismus of the whole *silent* or *elementary* life of nature and, therefore, in incorporating the one extreme becomes the symbol of the other; the natural symbol of that higher life of reason, in which, the whole series (known to us in our present state of being) is perfected, in which therefore, all the subordinate graduations recur, and are re-ordained “*in more abundant honor.*”(LS, 72)

Dorothy Emmet argues that this notion of Coleridge differentiates him from Kant.

According to her,

whereas Kant confines knowledge to the phenomenal world and has to rest agnostic about things in themselves beyond the phenomenal world (he has as it were an iron curtain between the phenomenal and noumenal), Coleridge wants to take these ‘facts of the mind’ as clues to the character of a really existent nature, not just of nature as a phenomenal construct. And he tries to do this by seeing the same powers at work in the mind and in nature beyond the mind.¹⁷

¹⁷ Emmet, Dorothy. “Coleridge on Powers in Mind and Nature,” p.169. Also see Wendling, Ronald C. *Coleridge's Progress to Christianity*. London: Bucknell University Press, 1995, p.138. According to Wendling, in the conception of nature naturing, “resides Coleridge’s essential difference from Kant, whatever his hesitations about it in 1815. He agrees with Kant that the understanding shapes the phenomena represented in the senses and it cannot know the noumena. But in arguing the existence of a

Coleridge, borrowing from Jacobi and Hemsterhuis, defines Reason as “an organ bearing the same relation to spiritual objects, the Universal, the Eternal, and the Necessary, as the eye bears to material and contingent phaenomena. To him, it “is an organ identical with its appropriate objects.”(FI, 156) Therefore, “God, the soul, eternal Truth, &c are the objects of Reason; but they are themselves *reason*.”(FI, 156)

In *The Friend*, he claims for this view the authority of Bacon:

But that there is potentially, if not actually, in every rational being, a somewhat, call it what you will, the pure reason, the spirit, lumen siccum, νοῦς, φῶς νοερόν, intellectual intuition, &c. &c.; and that in this are to be found the indispensable conditions of all science, and scientific research, whether mediative, contemplative, or experimental; is often expressed, and every where supposed, by Lord Bacon. And that this is not only the right but the possible nature of human mind, to which it is capable of being restored, is implied in the various remedies prescribed by him for its diseases, and in the various means of neutralizing or converting into useful instrumentality the imperfections which cannot be removed. There is a sublime truth contained in his favourite phrase—*Idola intellectus*. He thus tells us, that the mind of man is an edifice not built with human hands, which needs only be purged of its idols and idolatrous services to become the temple of the true and living Light. Nay, he has shown and established the true criterion between the ideas and the idol of the mind—namely, that the former are manifested by their adequacy to those ideas in nature, which in and through them are contemplated.(FI, 491)

This power in man enables him to see the outer world as a symbol of *natura naturans*.

In his Notes, we can see his approach to nature as penetrating its symbolism:

In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering thro' the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were *asking*, a symbolical language of something within me that already and forever

noumenal power shaping phenomena from within (a formal plastic power outside the categories of the understanding) and the knowability of that power by a power in the whole mind other than the understanding, namely reason, Coleridge differs crucially from Kant. A noumenal world exists for both, but only for Coleridge can it be known as well as assumed.”

exists, than observing anything new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phaenomeon were the dim Awakening of a forgotten or hidden Truth of my inner Nature/ It is still interesting as a Word, a Symbol! It is Λογος, the Creator! (and the Evolver!)(*CN* II 2546, April 1805).

Coleridge describes the relation between natural symbol and our soul:

all the merely bodily Feelings subservient to our Reason, coming only at its call, and obeying its Behests with a gladness not without awe, like servants who work under the Eye of their Lord, we have solemnized the long marriage of our Souls by its outward Sign & natural Symbol. It is now registered in both worlds, the world of Spirit and the world of Senses.(*CN* II 2600, May-Jun 1805)¹⁸

1 · ii Organic Nature

For Coleridge, nature is an organic unity, not a mechanical one. According to Levere,

Coleridge's cosmos was a living one, informed by the power of life, and reaching its climax in man at the summit of the terrestrial creation. Coleridge's concern with the ascent of life complemented his probing into his human nature and his fascination with the relations between mind and body.¹⁹

¹⁸ See Engell, James & W.Jackson Bate, eds. "Editor's Introduction." *BL*, p.lxxxiii: "A symbol is also 'conatural' or 'consustantial': it fuses the nature of mind with the reality of nature. Symbols are thus esemplastic, shaping into one. The symbols of perception grow so habitual that frequently we fail to regard them as symbols. But language, numbers, and mental images are all symbolic reflections of what we originally perceive. (Coleridge came to believe that our symbols of perception are constitutive with nature; they truly represent the ideal form and divine power responsible for creating nature and nature's law.)" Also see Prickett, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth*, p.187. "A symbol is only a part of the greater whole it reveals, but it *implies* the totality. The way in which it does this he attempts to describe by the idea of 'translucence'. In a symbol, he suggests, the material and temporal become as it were a *lens* whereby we can bring into focus for a moment the eternal abstraction of which it is a fractional and incomplete part. By insisting that a symbol was above all a living part of the unity it represents, Coleridge was able to perform the astonishing feat of bringing together his Platonism and his knowledge of optical science."

¹⁹ Levere, Trevor H. *Poetry Realized in Nature: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and early nineteenth-century science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p.201. Also see the same book, p.220. Levere writes that "Coleridge possessed an imaginative sympathy with the enterprise of science. Because he had a unified vision of the natural world, he had no need to confine his inquiries within the traditional compartments respected by scientists. He was able to utilize the work of chemists, geologists, and physiologists, without insisting on the complete separation of their disciplines. Freedom from the limitations imposed by disciplinary boundaries enabled him to ask questions and suggest research in areas

Self-knowledge required complementary knowledge of nature. David Vallins says,

Once we have the faith of unity, any part of nature, whether living or dead in the physical sense, can recall the infinite totality to which it belongs. This totality can be nothing other than that of a living whole—of the world or the universe as an organism only a tiny portion of which we can perceive, yet the principle of whose existence can be recalled by the parts, raising these above the limited and fragmentary nature of perception.²⁰

In organic nature, in Coleridge's opinion, from the plant to the highest order of animals, each higher implies a lower as the condition of its actual existence. In his scheme, in nature there are vital and organic powers. As the condition of its existence, each higher power implies a lower power.

For him the first power of these organic powers is that of growth, or productivity. The second power is that of locomotion and it is also called irritability. Without the first power, the second could not exist or could not manifest itself. Therefore productivity is the necessary antecedent of irritability, and in the same manner, irritability of sensibility. The lower power derives its intelligibility from the higher and the highest inheres latently or potentially in the lowest. Thus in sensibility a power in every instant goes out of itself and in the same instant retracts and falls back on itself.

For him, the pure sense or inward vision must be assumed as truth of fact in all living growth. For example, the growth of a plant differs from that of a crystal. Whereas the latter is formed wholly *ab extra*, in the former the movement *ab extra* is, in order of

avoided by many of his contemporaries, and skepticism about conclusions based on atomism made him a trenchant critic of the cruder explanations of contemporary mechanistic science. Coleridge's philosophy and his knowledge of science repeatedly led him to point out inconsistencies, and to identify as significant problems avoided or ignored by contemporary natural philosophers.

²⁰ Vallins. "Production and Existence: Coleridge's Unification of Nature," p.113.

thought, consequent on, and yet constantaneous with the movement *ab intra*. He finds sensibility to be the general character of life. It supplies not only the way of conceiving, but the insight into the possibility of irritability and growth. Thus growth taken as separate and exclusive of sensibility would be unintelligible. Even when it is not actually, it must be involved potentially. Even where life does not manifest itself in the highest dignity, it has an evident tendency thereto and this has two epochs, or intensities. Potential sensibility in its first epoch, or lowest intensity, appears as growth and in its second epoch, it demonstrates itself as irritability, or vital instinct. In both, the sensibility must have pre-existed as latent. For him, growth is that which appears in the stamina of the plant during the act of impregnating the germane and irritability has its first appearance of nerves and nervous bulbs, in the lowest orders of the insect realm. In Coleridge's view, evolution as contradistinguished from apposition, or superinduction from elsewhere, is implied in the conception of life.(C&S, 179-181)

On the basis of this idea, Coleridge explains how each shape is formed. In his opinion, there is an essential difference between an organism and a machine in that in an organism

not only the characteristic Shape is evolved from the invisible power, but the material Mass itself is acquired by assimilation. The germinal power of the Plant transmutes the fixed air and the elementary Base of Water into Grass or Leaves; and on these the Organific Principle in the Ox or the Elephant exercises an Alchemy still more stupendous. As the unseen Agency weaves its magic eddies, the foliage becomes indifferently the Bone and its Marrow, the pulpy Brain, or the solid Ivory. That what you see *is* blood, *is* flesh, is itself the work, or shall I say, the translucence, of the invisible Energy, which soon surrenders or abandons them to inferior Powers, (for there is no pause nor chasm in the activities of Nature) which repeat a similar metaphorsis according to *their* kind;—These are not fancies, conjectures, or even hypotheses, but *facts*; to deny which is impossible, not to reflect on which is ignominious.(AR, 398)

This notion differs from the concept of the great chain of being. Arthur O. Lovejoy in his *The Great Chain of Being* explains the concept thus:

— the conception of the universe as a “Great Chain of Being,” composed of an immense, or — by the strict but seldom rigorously applied logic of the principle of continuity—of an infinite, number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kind of existents, which barely escape non-existence, through “every possible” grade up to the *ens perfectissimum*—or, in a somewhat more orthodox version, to the highest possible kind of creature, between which and the Absolute Being the disparity was assumed to be infinite—every one of them differing from that immediately above and that immediately below it by the “least possible” degree of difference.²¹

According to Lovejoy, the Great chain of Being embodies three principles—the principle of plenitude, the principle of continuity, and the principle of unilinear gradation. He explains the principle of plenitude by referring to Plato’s thesis that “the universe is a *plenum formarum* in which the range of conceivable diversity of kinds of living things is exhaustively exemplified,” and to the assumption that “no genuine potentiality of being can remain unfulfilled, that the extent and abundance of the creation must be as great as the possibility of existence and commensurate with the productive capacity of a ‘perfect’ and inexhaustible Source, and that the world is the better, the more things it contains.”²² The principle of continuity which Lovejoy traces to Aristotle is that “all quantities—lines, surfaces, solids, motions, and in general time and space— must be continuous”, that “the qualitative difference of things must similarly constitute linear or continuous series,” and that “all organisms can be arranged

²¹ Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1964, p.59.

in one ascending sequence of forms."²³ The principle of unilinear gradation is that "all individual things may be graded according to the degree to which they are infected with [mere] potentiality."²⁴ According to Lovejoy, this vague notion of an ontological scale was combined with the more intelligible conceptions of zoological and psychological hierarchies. Craig C. Miller notes that the concept of the great chain of being differs from Coleridge's view of nature as "ascending" in her striving for individuation.²⁵

In considering each individual life, Coleridge describes it as an organic unity. He defines life as "*the principle of individuation, or the power which unites a given all into a whole that is presupposed by all its parts.*"(TL, 510) He explains the relation between parts and the whole as follows:

a whole composed, *ab intra*, of different parts, so far interdependent that each is reciprocally means and end, is an individual, and the individuality is most intense where the greatest dependence of the parts on the whole is combined with the greatest dependence of the whole on its parts; the first (namely, the dependence of the parts on the whole) being absolute; the second (namely, the dependence of the whole on its parts) being proportional to the importance of the relation which the parts have to the whole, that is, as their action extends more or less beyond themselves. For this spirit of the whole is most expressed in that part which derives its importance as an End from its importance as a Mean, relatively to all parts under the same copula.(TL, 512)

He compares organic parts and mechanical ones. Of individuals, he writes,

the living power will be most intense in that individual which, as a whole, has the greatest number of integral parts presupposed in it; when, moreover, these integral parts, together with a proportional increase of their interdependence, as *parts*, have

²² Ibid., p.52.

²³ Ibid., pp.55-56.

²⁴ Ibid., p.59.

²⁵ Miller, Craig W. "Coleridge's Concept of Nature." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25(1964): 77-96, p.85. Also see, Levere, *Poetry Realized in Nature: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and early nineteenth-century science*, p.107.

themselves most the character of wholes in the sphere occupied by them. A mechanical point, line, or surface, is an *ens rationis*, for it expresses an intellectual act; but a physical atom is *ens fictitium*, which may be made subservient, as ciphers are in arithmetic, to the purpose of hypothetical construction, *per regulam falsi*; but transferred to *Nature*, it is in the strictest sense an *absurd* quantity; for extension, and consequently divisibility, or *multeity*, (for space cannot be divided,) is the indispensable condition, under which alone anything can *appear* to us, or even be *thought of*, as a *thing*. But if it should be replied, that the elementary particles are atoms not positively, but such a hardness communicated to them as is relatively invincible, I should remind the assertor that *temeraria citatio supernaturalium est pulvinar intellectus pigri*, and that he who requires me to believe a miracle of his own dreaming, must first work a miracle to convince me that he had dreamt by inspiration. (TL, 513)

Here, we can notice that Coleridge admits the necessity of parts mechanically divided for our commonsensical notion of the world. But he dismisses a mechanical concept of the world as merely an assemblage of atoms.

Coleridge states his organic view as follows:

We had seen each in its own cast, and we now recognize them all as co-existing in the unity of a higher form, the Crown and Completion of the Earthly, and the Mediator of a new and heavenly series. Thus finally, the vegetable creation, in the simplicity and uniformity of its *internal* structure symbolizing the unity of nature, while it represents the omniformity of her delegated functions in its *external* variety and manifoldness, becomes the record and chronicle of her ministerial acts and increases the vast unfolded volume of the earth with the hieroglyphics of her history. (LS, 72-73)

2. Coleridge's Artistic Principles

2 · i Art

Coleridge in "Poesy or Art," defines art :

Now Art, used collectively for painting, sculpture, architecture and music, is the mediatrix between, and reconciler of, nature and man. It is therefore, the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation; colour, form, motion, and sound, are the mould of a moral idea. (*MAL*, 42)

Art is the inevitable consequence of the human mind. He argues that "as soon as the human mind is intelligibly addressed by an outward image exclusively of articulate speech, so soon does art commence." (*MAL*, 43) He comments that art is the effect produced by the union of the animal impression with the reflective powers of the mind; that is, art is the result of the union of the impression of the outer things gained through the senses and the intellectual power of the human mind. For him, art is not merely the thing presented, but that which is represented by the thing. In other words, art is the representation of the essence of nature captured by the human mind. In his opinion, nature itself is the art of God. And for the same cause,

art itself might be defined as of a middle quality between a thought and a thing, or as I said before, the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human. It is the figured language of thought, and is distinguished from nature by the unity of all the parts in one thought or idea. Hence nature itself would give us the impression of a work of art, if we could see the thought which is present at once in the whole and in every part; and a work of art will be just in proportion as it adequately conveys the thought, and rich in proportion to the variety of parts which it holds in unity. (*MAL*, 44)

From such a concept of art as the reconciliation of nature and man, does his concept of imitation and copy derive. He followed Aristotle in thinking of poetry as being an imitation of nature. "When Coleridge maintains with Aristotle that art is essentially ideal," Thorpe puts it:

he means not necessarily that art is better than life or that it depicts nature as more beautiful than it is, but that before anything can become art it must become completely a thing of the mind. Art imitates nature, he tells us. Yes, but how does it imitate nature? By making copies of individual objects, or by selecting the details of many objects and combining them into ideal form more nearly perfect than any one of them in itself could be, as disciples of the neo-classic theory of ideal imitation believed? No, Coleridge would have no traffic with notions of such mechanical processes. The ideality he sought was that in which the mind through observation and reflection, and through the wonderful workings of the unconscious self, came into complete possession of not the externality but the internal meanings of the object—a possession so close that the mind and the object attained a harmonious unity.²⁶

His concept of imitation is distinct from what he means by copy:

The impression on the wax is not an imitation, but a copy, of the seal; the seal itself is an imitation. But, further, in order to form a philosophic conception, we must seek for the kind, as the heat in ice, invisible light, &c., whilst, for practical purposes, we must have reference to the degree. It is sufficient that philosophically we understand that in all imitation two elements must coexist, and not only coexist, but must be perceived as coexisting. These two constituent elements are likeness and unlikeness, or sameness and difference, and in all genuine creations of art there must be a union of these disparates. The artist may take his point of view where he pleases, provided that the desired effect be perceptibly produced,—that there be likeness in the difference, difference in the likeness, and a reconciliation of both in one. (*MAL*, 45)

Here, he tries to define imitation philosophically rather than practically. He once again uses the comparison of “the heat in ice,” or “invisible light.” Though we can not sense heat in thawing ice, we can notice its effect. Likewise, in imitation, there must be the production of effect. If the artist copies mere nature—*natura naturata*, the result is empty and even unreal. He argues that an artist must master the essence, “the *natura naturans*, which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man.” (*MAL*, 46)

²⁶ Thorpe, Clarence D, “Coleridge As Aesthetician and Critic,” pp.399-400.

His notion of a good portrait is a proper example of his distinction between copy and imitation. According to him, each living thing has its moment of self-exposition, and so has each period of each thing. To expose this is the business of ideal art whether it is the image of childhood, or youth, or age. A good portrait is the abstract of the personal. It is not a likeness for actual comparison, but for recollection. A person's abstraction is unlikely to be captured by the people who are familiar with the subject as a result of the constant pressure and check imposed on their minds by the actual presence of the original. Therefore, sometimes, the portrait may not be recognised by them. (*MAL*, 49) In imitation we can catch the essence of the subject but, on the other hand, in copy, we tend to see a superficial likeness of the subject.

He dislikes modern copies of antique sculpture for the following reasons:

—1st, generally, because such an imitation cannot fail to have a tendency to keep the attention fixed on externals rather than on the thought within;—2ndly, because, accordingly, it leads the artist to rest satisfied with that which is always imperfect, namely, bodily form, and circumscribes his views of mental expression to the ideas of power and grandeur only;—3rdly, because it induces an effort to combine together two incongruous things, that is to say, modern feelings in antique forms;—4thly, because it speaks in a language, as it were, learned and dead, the tones of which, being unfamiliar, leave the common spectator cold and unimpressed;—and lastly, because it necessarily causes a neglect of thoughts, emotions, and images of profounder interest and more exalted dignity, as motherly, sisterly, and brotherly love, piety, devotion, the divine become human,—the Virgin, the Apostle, the Christ. (*MAL*, 50)

In other words, such copies are valueless because thought or feeling or emotion and object are not properly unified.

2 · ii Organic Unity

In defining art as the imitation of nature, Coleridge argues that we must imitate the beautiful in nature. He defines beauty thus; "It is, in the abstract, the unity of the manifold, the coalescence of the diverse; in the concrete, it is the union of the shapely (*formosum*) with the vital."(*MAL*, 46) For him, the beautiful, "not originating in the sensations, must belong to the intellect"(*MAL*, 30) and "arise from the perceived harmony of an object, whether sight or sound, with the inborn and constitutive rules of the judgment and imagination: and it is always intuitive."(*MAL*, 31)

Having said that beauty is "Multeity in Unity," he finds an example of beauty in a wheel:

An old coach-wheel lies in the coachmaker's yard, disfigured with tar and dirt (I purposely take the most trivial instances) :—if I turn away my attention from these, and regard the figure abstractly, "still," I might say to my companion, "there is beauty in that wheel, and you yourself would not only admit, but would feel it, had you never seen a wheel before. See how the rays proceed from the centre to the circumferences, and how many different images are distinctly comprehended at one glance, as forming one whole, and each part in some harmonious relation to each and to all." But imagine the polished golden wheel of the chariot of the Sun, as the poets have described it: then the figure, and the real thing so figured, exactly coincide. There is nothing heterogencous, nothing to abstract from: by its perfect smoothness and circularity in width, each part is (if I may borrow a metaphor from a sister sense) as perfect a melody, as the whole is a complete harmony. This, we should say, is beautiful throughout. Of all "the many," which I actually see, each and all are really reconciled into unity: while the effulgence from the whole coincides with, and seems to represent, the effluence of delight from my own mind in the intuition of it.(*MAL*, 20-21)

He describes his experience of sailing as another example of beauty:

Every one of these sails is *known* by the Intellect to have a strict & necessary action & reaction on all the rest, & that the whole is made up of parts, each part referring at once to each & to the whole!—and nothing more administers to the Picturesque than this phantom of complete visual wholeness in an object, which visually does not form a whole, by the influence ab intra of the sense of its perfect Intellectual Beauty or Wholeness.—To all this must be added the Lights & Shades, sometimes *sunshiny*, sometimes *snowy*: sometimes shade-coloured, sometimes, dingy—whatever effect distance, air tints, reflected Light, and the feeling connected with *the Object* (for all Passion unifies as it were by natural Fusion) have in bringing out, and in melting down, differences & contrast, accordingly as the mind finds it necessary to the completion of the idea of Beauty, to prevent sameness or discrepancy.—(CN II 2012, April 1804)

A poet would put this experience of beauty into a poem and a painter would recreate it into a picture. But the organic unity of art is not the same as the organic unity of nature. Fogle points out that for the organic unity of art, there must be the conscious will and the intelligent effort of the artist. Sometimes critics take Coleridge's comparison of a poem to a plant too literally. He did not identify a poem with a plant completely.²⁷ Nevertheless, the comparison indicates what is most distinctive in his notion of art.

The thought that an artistic work, especially a poetic work, is an organic unity or a whole is a traditional Western concept derived from ancient Greece. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, defines tragedy:

Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. 3. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it....4. As therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the

²⁷ Fogle, *The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism*, p.10.

structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed.²⁸

"In ancient criticism," Harold Osborn says, "the idea of organic unity became current under the name 'congruity' or 'concinnity' and it has ever remained a subsidiary principle of criticism though never clearly co-ordinated with the other principles by which critics have judged and assessed the excellence of particular works of art."²⁹

Aristotle's theory of plot and tragedy as a unity was a model for succeeding critics.

Aristotle, in his definition of Epic, says that "the construction of its stories should clearly be like that in a drama; they should be based on a single action, one that is a complete whole in itself, with a beginning, middle, and end, so as to enable the work to produce its own proper pleasure with all the organic unity of a living creature."³⁰ In some ways, Coleridge's idea of poetry as an organic unity echoes Aristotle's idea. But Aristotle seems to use the term in order to emphasise the coherence between the parts. He conceives a poem as a thing made. Terry L. Givens points out that Aristotle's "real (though unrecognized) accomplishment was to have redirected critical theory to the issue of artistic transformation—how representation restructures our experiences of reality, not how art parallels reality."³¹ Reality for Aristotle is not a Platonic idea but something similar to *natura naturata*. To restructure reality into art, Aristotle establishes some norms such as unity of action. He insists that all incidents must be consistent with the unity of action and that all other incidents should be omitted. In addition, he gives

²⁸ Aristotle. *Poetics. Reprinted in Criticism: The Major Texts*, pp.24-25.

²⁹ Osborn, Harold. *Aesthetics and Criticism*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1955, p.239.

³⁰ Aristotle. *Poetics in Aristotle on the Art of Poetry*. Ed. Ingram Bywater. New York and London: Garland, 1980, pp.71-73.

³¹ Givens, Terry L. "Aristotle's Critique of Mimesis: The Romantic Prelude." *Comparative Literature Studies*.28(1991): 121-136, p.133.

some indication of the proper length, scale, and diction of poetry. Even though he emphasises the coherence of the parts, he gives priority to the whole rather than the parts. In his concept of unity, the whole as the combination of the parts has a greater status than the parts.

The idea that a poetic work must be a unity was also presented by Horace. Horace suggests a painting would be a jumble if a painter drew things randomly; that is, to join the neck of horse to a human head cannot produce a unity and neither can the torso of a woman joined to the tail of a dark, grotesque fish. Likewise, a book cannot have unity if the materials are randomly assembled like the dreams of a sick man, in which neither head nor foot can be properly ascribed to any one shape. He allows a licence to painters or poets provided that their works do not bring together heterogeneous ingredients; for instance, savage animals with tame ones, serpents with birds, lambs with tigers.

In addition, Horace insists on the consistency of a work; for example, works with solemn beginnings must not admit the trivial. And there must be a correlation between materials. Also the artist's intention should be consistently maintained. In brief, Horace says, "whatever your work may be, let it at least have simplicity and unity."³² He emphasises propriety and decorum as necessary to achieve unity and in this he established the principles that later informed the criticism of neo-classicists.

Such neo-classicists as Dryden and Pope followed Aristotle and Horace in presupposing that poetry is a whole. In the case of Dryden, in the preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, he says that "After the plot, which is the foundation of the play, the next thing

³² Horace. *Art of Poetry*. Reprinted in *Criticism: The Major Texts*. Ed. W.J.Bate. New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970, p.51.

to which we ought to apply our judgment, is the manners."³³ A unified plot, for him, was the most important aspect of a play. But he did not adhere to the dogmatic three unities maintained by his French contemporaries; rather, he defended Shakespeare's tragi-comedy, by arguing that a dramatic poem is a whole in which a variety of ingredients are united. In *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, he supports the variety of English drama, using Neander's argument:

Our plays, besides the main design, have under-plots or by-concernments, of less considerable persons and intrigues, which are carried on with the motion of the main plot: Just as they say the orb of the fixed stars, and those of the planets, though they have motions of their own, are whirled about by the motion of the *primum mobile*, in which they are contained.³⁴

However various the plots of English drama may seem, the sub-plots remain subordinate to the main plot.

We cannot say that the concepts of unity described so far are merely mechanical. Even Dryden did not support the mechanical concept of unity. He complains of a drama that offers only "the mechanic beauties of the plot, which are the observation of three Unities, Time, Place, and Action".³⁵ And yet it is significant that Dryden describes his concept of unity by analogy with the Newtonian cosmos, which is, for Coleridge itself an expression of a mechanical view of the world.

Coleridge's concept of unity is defined in opposition to mechanical unity. For him, a legitimate poem "must be one, the parts of which mutually support and explain each other." (*BL* II, 13) "A poem," he says, "is that species of composition, which is opposed

³³ Dryden, "Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*." Reprinted in *Essays of John Dryden*. Vol.I. Ed. W.P.Ker. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926, p.213.

³⁴ Dryden. *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. Reprinted in *Essays of John Dryden*. Vol.I. p.70.

to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having *this* object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part*.”(BL II, 13) From this point of view, we can see that the whole and the parts are of equal importance in giving pleasure.

The same relation between the whole and its parts governs his conception of poetic criticism:

The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgment of all countries, in equally denying the praises of a just poem, on the one hand, to a series of striking lines or distiches, each of which absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself disjoins it from its context, and makes it a separate whole, instead of an harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts.(BL II, 13-14)

Presupposing that a poem is a whole, he insists that “if an harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be preserved *in keeping* with the poetry.”(BL II, 15)

Coleridge’s notion of the relationship between parts and the whole is not manifestly distinct from those of Aristotle and his followers. In a way, he echoes their theories. What makes his notion different from theirs is his insistence that a poem should be a living body. “The Spirit of Poetry like all other living Powers,”

must of necessity circumscribe itself by Rules, were it only to unite Power with Beauty. It must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living Body is of necessity an organized one—& what is organization, but the connection of Parts to a whole, so that each Part is at once End & Means!—(Lect I, 494)

³⁵ Dryden, “Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*,” p.212.

He takes a poem as a thing growing, not as something made. Just as all other organic beings grow from their germs, so does poetry. He asks: "What is germ? guttula Seminalis, or a dust-globule of farina? Answer: A(n organic) Differential: of which Growth is the Integration." (*Sh&F* II, 872) We can think of a tree as an example. A seed has the predisposition to be a tree in it. But as it grows into a tree, it is influenced by the outer environment, i.e., the weather, nutrition, and the natural soil, etc. Likewise, a poetic work grows from a germ within the poet's mind. During the process of its growth, the predispositions of the germ are united with outer things, becoming a poetic work. Benziger argues that "the organic poet's idea develops only at the same time that it expresses itself outwardly in the work of art being created; the organic poet, as it were, does not know very clearly what he is doing until he has done it."³⁶ The poet may be conscious of what he is doing but he does not preconceive completely what he will produce. According to a Note taken by Collier,

Coleridge here explained the difference between what he called mechanic and organic regularity. In the former the copy must be made as if it had been formed in the same mould with the original—In the latter there is a law which all the parts obey conforming themselves to the outward symbols & manifestations of the essential principle. He illustrated this distinction by referring to the growth of Trees, which from peculiar circumstances of soil air or position differed in shape even from trees of the same kind but every man was able to decide at first sight which was an ash or a poplar.—(*Lect 1*, 358)

Coleridge's organic criticism relates an artistic work to the environmental circumstances of the artist, both in terms of how an artist is united with the artistic work and how organically each part is related to the whole.

³⁶ Benziger. "Organic Unity: Leibniz to Coleridge," p.28.

The difference between Coleridge's notion of organic unity and the notions of unity to be found in his predecessors has been well defined by Fogle. Organic unity, Fogle comments,

involves the reconciliation of the concept of life with the concept of beauty, or, in the simpler terms of the great account of the imagination, of art with nature, the manner with the matter. It presents an ideal life, a translucence which is the fusion of image and idea, matter and spirit, in pure substance. Its reconciliation of artistic purpose with artistic material, or the potential with its realization, might fitly be illustrated in the old notion of the perfect statue that awaits the sculptor's hand in the block of marble—it is there in nature, but must be formed and heightened into art.³⁷

2 · iii Reconciliation of Opposites

Organic unity, according to Fogle, “manifests itself in the reconciliation of opposites, which Coleridge variously describes as equilibrium, balance, equipoise, polarity, harmony, mesothesis, interpenetration, identity, indifference, fusion, blend, coexistence, consubstantiation, coordination, and intermediation—to list some representative terms.”³⁸ Stephen Prickett notes that Coleridge saw “the principle of organic growth as operating in conjunction with the principle of ‘polarity’—progressing by ‘contraries’, and ‘reconciling opposites or discordant qualities’”.³⁹ Just as in nature, so, in art which is in a sense the reconciliation of opposites, there exists polarity. The reconciliation of opposites, according to Fogle,

³⁷ Fogle, *The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism*, p.67.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.34.

³⁹ Prickett, Stephen. *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth*, p47.

is the Archimedes lever of Coleridge's criticism. His procedure and his terminology are dialectical or "polar." Reality is always organic unity or wholeness, but this reality can only be discursively revealed as two, in the form of polar opposites reconciled, or of centripetal and centrifugal forces in equilibrium. In aesthetics this principle involves the full acceptance of the doctrine of organic unity of form and content, but at the same time it preserves their distinctness as concepts, for without their twoness organic unity would be structureless and unintelligible.⁴⁰

Underneath Coleridge's ideas of art, method, symbol, and imitation lies the principle of the reconciliation of opposites. Many examples of opposites are offered, for example, subject and object, the artist and the artistic work, the spiritual world and the physical world, our body and mind, man and nature. According to Coleridge, a man "has already made no mean progress in Wisdom, who has learnt and learnt to apply the difference between CONTRARIES that preclude or destroy, and OPPOSITES that require and support each other." (*Sh&F*, 960) Opposites, as he explains, do not exclude each other but tend to include. He explains the concept of opposites by taking taste as an example. Whereas bitter and sweet are contraries, acid and sweet are opposites. Whereas bitter and sweet cancel each other, sweet and acid are combined to make a third taste—e.g. sherbet and lemonade. The reconciliation of opposites is the third state in which two opposites are united. The unification of opposites does not mean the combination of two opposite qualities in which each ingredient remains distinct, but the production of a third in which polarity exists.

The reconciliation of subject and object is the starting point of his system. For him, the question of 'I' is the fundamental problem to be solved:

⁴⁰ Fogle. *The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism*, p.4.

If it were asked of me to justify the interest,... Where am I? What and for what am I? What are the duties, which arise out of relations of my Being to itself as heir of futurity, and to the World which is its present sphere of action and impression?—I would compare the human Soul to a Ship's Crew cast on the unknown island (a fair Simile: for these questions could not suggest themselves unless the mind had previously felt convictions, that the present World was not its whole destiny and abiding Country)—....

The moment, when the Soul begins to be sufficiently self-conscious, to ask concerning itself, & its relations, is the first moment of its *intellectual* arrival into the World—Its *Being*—enigmatic as it must seem—is posterior to its *Existence*—. Suppose the shipwrecked man stunned, & for many weeks in a state of Ideotcy or utter loss of Thought & Memory—& then gradually awakened/(CN III 3593, August-September 1809)

Coleridge's life-long interrogation of this problem naturally leads him to the problem of the object:

Object = that which lies before us, or is present to our Senses. The matter perceived in relation to the percipient—the same therefore as Phenomenon relatively to the Beholder—*Quod jacet ob*. In the first and simplest meaning attached to the word, the accusative understood as belonging to the preposition was probably—*oculos*—. Soon however, as the power of abstraction was activated, the *ob* became the antithet to *sub*, so that in certain cases Object and Subject were both applied to the same body—Object, that which was perceived; Subject, that within or beneath the appearance inferred as the Ground and as it were Upbearer of the Appearance.(*Sh&F*, 894)

If we take object to mean what is perceived and subject to mean perceiver, perception itself becomes an example of the reconciliation of opposites. Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria*, dismisses the two following prepositions: "EITHER THE OBJECTIVE IS TAKEN AS THE FIRST, AND THEN WE HAVE TO ACCOUNT FOR THE SUPERVENTION OF THE SUBJECTIVE, WHICH COALESCES WITH IT."(*BL I*, 255) "2. OR THE SUBJECTIVE IS TAKEN AS THE FIRST, AND THE PROBLEM THEN IS, HOW THERE SUPERVENES TO IT A COINCIDENT OBJECTIVE."(*BL I*, 257) He, instead, argues that

an objective is inconceivable without a subject as its antithesis. *Omne perceptum percipientem supponit.*

But neither can the principle be found in a subject as a subject, contradistinguished from an object: for *unicuique percipienti aliquid obicitur perceptum.* It is to be found therefore neither in object or subject taken separately, and consequently, as no other third is conceivable, it must be found in that which is neither subject nor object exclusively, but which is the identity of both. (*BL I, 271*)

Art, for him, is an example of the reconciliation of subject and object:

In regard to Mixed Sciences, and to the first class of Applied Sciences, the Mental initiative may have been received from without; but it has escaped some Critics, that in the Fine Arts the Mental initiative must necessarily proceed from within. Hence we find them giving, as it were, recipes to form a Poet, by placing him in certain directions and positions; as if they thought that every deer-stealer might, if he pleased, become a Shakespeare, or that Shakespeare's mind was made up of the shreds and patches of the books of his day, which by good fortune he happened to read in such an order that they successively fitted into the scenes of *Macbeth, Othello, The Tempest, As you like it &c.* Certainly the Fine Arts belong to the outward world, for they all operate by the images of sight and sound, and other sensible impressions; and without a delicate tact for these, no man ever was, or could be, either a Musician or a Poet; nor could he attain to excellence in any one of these Arts; but as certainly he must always be a poor and unsuccessful cultivator of the Arts if he is not impelled first by a mighty, inward power, a feeling, *quod nequeo monstrare, et sentio tantum*; nor can he make great advances in his Art, if, in the course of his progress, the obscure impulse does not gradually become a bright, and clear, and living Idea! (*TM, 62-63*)

His definition of poetry also demonstrates his principle of the reconciliation of opposites:

What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thought, and emotions of the poet's own mind. The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone, and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, controul (*laxis effectur habenis*) reveals

itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and 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 poetry.(*BL* II, 15-17)

2 · iv Imagination

In the above passage, we see imagination as the mediating power which makes the reconciliation of opposites possible. Coleridge defines its disposition as "esemplastic". In *Biographia*, he says: "*Esemplastic*. The word is not in Johnson, nor have I met with it elsewhere." Neither have I! I constructed it myself from the Greek words, εἰς ἓν κλάττειν i.e. to shape into one; because, having to convey a new sense, I thought that a new term would both aid the recollection of my meaning, and prevent its being confounded with the usual import of the word, imagination."(*BL* I, 168-170)

Imagination, of course, is not a new concept.⁴¹ Locke, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, argues that the imagination is based on human perception:

Thus the first capacity of human intellect is,—that mind is fitted to receive the impressions made on it; either through the senses by outward objects, or by its own operations when it reflects on them. This is the first step a man makes towards the discovery of anything, and the ground work whereon to build all those notions which ever he shall have naturally in this world. All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all that great extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote

⁴¹ See Wordsworth, Jonathan. "The Infinite I Am: Coleridge and the Ascent of Being." *The Wordsworth Circle* 16(1985): 74-84, p.76. He argues that Coleridge's ideas of imagination derive from a native English tradition, not a German one. He points out the main sources of Coleridge's imagination came from Akenside, Addison and Milton.

speculations it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those ideas which *sense* or *reflection* have offered for its contemplation.⁴²

Locke, even though he does not use the term in this passage, admits that in the human mind, there is a faculty of imagination, by which sublime thought towering above the clouds is possible. In his opinion, however, imagination cannot exist separated from sense perception. For him, sensation and reflection are the origin for all faculties of the human mind. These two faculties are not “too narrow bounds for the capacious mind of man to expatiate in, which takes its flight further than the stars, and cannot be confined by the limits of the world; that extends its thoughts often even beyond the utmost expansion of Matter, and makes excursion into that incomprehensible Inane.”⁴³ All this is made possible by the faculty of imagination.⁴⁴

Addison, like Locke, explains that imagination originally arises from sight. But he divides the pleasures of the imagination into two kinds, so that it is possible for him

to discourse of those primary pleasures of the imagination, which entirely proceeded from such objects as are before our eyes; and in the next place to speak of those secondary pleasures of the imagination which flow from ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our

⁴² Locke, John. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Vol.I. Ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894, p.142.

⁴³ Ibid, p.164.

⁴⁴ On the importance that Locke attached to the imagination, see Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism*. Cambridge, Mas., London: Harvard University Press, 1981 p.19. “Locke expresses, too, the mind’s formation of many ideas and elements into one integrated whole, a notion that became central for theories of poetic imagination and symbolism. It played an important part in mid-century and romantic concepts of the way genius designs the overall plan of a system or an art work, and also in the German approach to *Einbildungskraft*, which Tetens, Kant, Schelling and others envisioned as a power of complete synthesis, as in Schelling’s “*In-Eins-Building*,” where he takes *eins* to mean “one.” Locke’s own phrasing is terse but unmistakable. The mind “unites” many ideas and associations into one. Some ideas are “complicated of various simple ideas or complex ideas made up of simple ones, yet are, when the mind pleases, considered each by itself as one entering thing, and signified by one name.”

memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious.⁴⁵

He also distinguishes imagination from sense and understanding. The pleasures of imagination are not so gross as those of sense nor so refined as those of understanding. He prefers the pleasures of understanding because they are founded on some new knowledge or improvement in the mind of man. But he finds pleasures of imagination as delightful as those of the understanding. A description in Homer has charmed more readers than one in Aristotle. So it is that imaginative pleasure appeals more widely than the pleasure of the understanding. In addition, the pleasures of imagination are more obvious and more easily acquired. He explains the process of the operation of imagination:

It is but opening the eye, and the scene enters. The colours paint themselves on the fancy, with very little attention of thought or application of mind in the beholder. We are struck, we know not how, with the symmetry of any thing we see, and immediately assent to the beauty of an object, without enquiring into the particular causes and occasions of it.⁴⁶

This passage reminds us of Coleridge's primary imagination though Addison does not link the operation of imagination with the divine.

Duff, in his *An Essay on Original Genius*, identifies the power defining genius as imagination. Imagination, "being that faculty which lays the foundation of all our knowledge, by collecting and treasuring up in the repository of the memory those materials on which Judgment is afterwards to work, and being peculiarly adapted to the gay, delightful, vacant season of childhood and youth, appears in those early periods in

⁴⁵ Addison, Joseph. "Taste and the Pleasures of Imagination." *Critical Essays from the Spectator*. Ed. Donald F. Bond. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p.176.

all its puerile brilliance and simplicity, long before the reasoning faculty discovers itself in any considerable degree."⁴⁷ This concept of imagination is similar to Wordsworth's in that imagination operates more readily in childhood and it becomes the foundation of knowledge by collecting and treasuring up experience in the memory.

It is Duff's idea of invention, however, that reminds us of Coleridge's secondary imagination. Duff explains invention as lying far beyond the reach of ordinary faculties. Invention is a faculty confined to those "whose minds are capacious enough to contain that prodigious croud of ideas, which an extensive observation and experience supply; whose understandings are penetrating enough to discover the most distant connections of those ideas, and whose imaginations are sufficiently quick, in combining them at pleasure."⁴⁸

Mark Akenside's notion of imagination remains empiricist in that he considered imagination to come from the stimuli of external things. But when he attributes "plastic power" to the imagination, he comes close to the romantic concept of imagination. In his *The Pleasures of Imagination*⁴⁹, he describes the process from enlivening emotions

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.176.

⁴⁷ Duff, William. *An Essay on Original Genius*. Ed. John L. Mahony. Delmar, N.Y.: Scholar's Facsimiles & Reprints, 1978, p.29.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.128. See Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination*, p.87. He links Duff's notion of imagination to Coleridge's as: "The philosophic genius, adding to his imagination greater reason and judgment than are necessary in the poet, unlocks the secrets of things. Through reason and imagination, the philosopher approaches the religious aspect of nature and the ultimate unity of God. This idea, greatly elaborated, Coleridge later made central to his thinking."

⁴⁹ See Akenside, Mark. *The Pleasures of Imagination (Book III). The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside*. Ed. Robin Dix. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickson University Press & London: Associated University presses, 1996. II..382-414. When the plastic power begins to act,

...blind emotions heave

His bosom; and with loveliest frenzy caught,
From earth to heav'n he rolls his daring eye,
From heav'n to earth. Anon ten thousand shapes,
Like spectres trooping to the wisard's call,
Flit swift before him. From the womb of earth,
From the ocean's bed they come: th' eternal heav'ns

and forming images to making an artistic work by adducing the power of imagination. When imagination begins to work, thousands of images dawn on the mind. Imagination operates by blending, dividing, enlarging, and extenuating the images. Only then does the chaos of sensation begin to be organised into a conception within the mind of artist which then obtains artistic form. Interestingly, Akenside conceives the poet as a divinely inspired bard "with loveliest frenzy caught," "rolls his daring eye," "to the wisard's call," "at the voice divine," and "with Promethean art". His definition of the imagination as a power of blending, dividing, enlarging images to order to organise, and his insistence that in a work of art conception and form are unified are ideas found in Coleridge.

Disclose their splendors, and the dark abyss
Pours out her births unknown. With fixed gaze
He marks the rising phantoms. Now compares
Their different forms; now blends them, now divides;
Inlarges and extenuates by turns;
Opposes, ranges in fantastic bands,
And infinitely varies. Hither now,
Now thither fluctuates his constant aim,
With endless choice perplex'd. At length his plan
Begins to open. Lucid order dawns;
And as from Chaos old the jarring seeds
Of nature at the voice divine repair'd
Each to its place, till rosy earth unveil'd
Her fragrant bosom, and the joyful sun
Sprung up the blue serene; by swift degrees
Thus disentangled, his entire design
Emerges. Colours mingle, features join,
And lines converge: the fainter parts retire;
The fairer eminent in light advance;
And every image on its neighbour smiles.
A while he stands, and with Promethean art
Into its proper vehicle he breathes
The fair conception; which imbodied thus,
And permanent, becomes to eyes or ears
An object ascertain'd:....

The treatments of the imagination so far discussed tend to have an empirical basis even though some approach nearer to the Romantic concept of the imagination. Another notion of the imagination, which we might call the transcendental concept of imagination, arose in Germany. Here, the crucial figure is Kant.

Kant, in *Critique of Judgment*, defined several kinds of imagination. According to him, imagination is "the agent employed, as in the case of art, where we realize a preconceived concept of an object which we set before ourselves as an end."(*CJ*, 34) Next is the concept he called reproductive imagination. This imagination, "in a manner quite incomprehensible to us, is able on occasion, even after a long lapse of time, not alone to recall the signs for concepts, but also to reproduce the image and shape of an object out of a countless number of others of a different, or even of the very same, kind."(*CJ*, 77) Of productive imagination, he writes: "If, now, imagination must in the judgment of taste be regarded in its freedom, then, to begin with, it is not taken as reproductive, as in its subjection to the law of association, but as productive and exerting an activity of its own (as originator of arbitrary forms of possible intuitions)."(*CJ*, 86) Productive imagination, being a power free from sense experience, is evidently transcendental. For Kant, the imagination is also an agent of creation:

The imagination (as a productive faculty of cognition) is a powerful agent for creating, as it were, a second nature out of the material supplied to it by actual nature. It affords us entertainment where experience proves too commonplace; and we even use it to remodel experience, always following, no doubt, laws that are based on analogy, but still also following principles which have a higher seat in reason (and which are every whit as natural to us as those followed by the understanding in laying hold of empirical nature). By this means we get a sense of our freedom from the law of association (which attaches to the empirical employment of the imagination), with the result that the material can be borrowed by us from nature in accordance with that law, but be worked up by us into something else—namely, what surpasses nature.(*CJ*, 176)

Coleridge's concept of imagination agrees with Kant's in establishing the imagination as a powerful agent in the creation of a second nature, namely an artistic work, and in granting imagination the power to remodel experience freely, that is, released from the law of association.⁵⁰

Despite Coleridge's claims, his conception of the imagination is not wholly original. Rather, his concept of imagination is a development of ideas that had already been advanced. In a Note, he writes:

Strange Self-power in the Imagination, when painful sensations have made it their Interpreter, or returning Gladness from convalescence, gastric and visceral, have made its chilled and evanished Figures & Landscape bud, blossom, & live in scarlet, and green & snowy white, (like the Fire screen inscribed with nitrate & muriate of Cobalt)—strange power to represent the events & circumstances even to the Anguish or the triumph of the *quasi*-credent Soul, while the necessary conditions, the only possible causes of such contingencies are known to be impossible or hopeless, yea, when the pure mind would recoil from the very (evenlengthened) shadow of an approaching hope, as from a crime—yet the effect shall have *place & Substance & living energy*, & on a blue Islet of Ether in a whole Sky of blackest Cloudage shine, like a firstling of creation. (CN III 3547, July-September 1809)

Here, the 'strange self-power' seems to be what Dorothy Emmet terms 'his creative moods'. She argues that Coleridge's concern was to construct a psychology which would be true to his creative moods, and that he did not find this in Hartley, or for that

⁵⁰ See, Prickett, Stephen, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth*, p.77. He compares Kant's three kinds of imagination with Coleridge's: "of Kant's three functions of the 'Imagination', the 'reproductive', the 'productive', and the 'aesthetic', the first is nearly the same as Coleridge's 'fancy', in that it remains a mechanism; the second, the 'productive', is a spontaneous and active power, and *might* be said to correspond to the Primary imagination of Coleridge; while the last, the 'aesthetic', which transforms the objects into material for a possible act of cognition, *may* be said to correspond to the Secondary Imagination. Like the other two, the correspondence is not exact: Coleridge's Secondary Imagination has, for instance, a much greater influence than Kant could have allowed."

matter in Kant.⁵¹ The creative mood is linked to the unconscious activity of our mind. Stephen Prickett argues that Coleridge's concept of the imagination was fundamentally a psychological theory but that what he meant by psychology differed from Locke or Hartley in kind.⁵² Owen Barfield notes that no very sharp distinction transpires between the act of thinking, the "act of self-consciousness" and the "act of imagination". According to him, imagination is "a varying interplay between active and passive elements in the relation between self and world, of such a nature that the two elements themselves may change, the one into the other." He argues that the boundary between man and nature is not that of a fixed "outness". Rather, the possible interaction between active man and passive nature occurs at or within the skin. The interplay, namely imagination, is not the creature of body and space, though the interplay is involved with both elements. In Barfield's opinion, the interplay occurs in man just as it occurs in nature. Here, we can link the interplay between man and nature to that between God and nature. Barfield writes:

We have seen that the life of nature is at all levels a power of "separative projection," and separative projection ("the eternal act of creation") is what the act of self-consciousness—what the act of imagination—is. The underlying reality (substance) of things is thus not matter, nor any equivalent inanimate base, but immaterial relationship. For Coleridge, because man did not create himself, there is indeed an actual (I-Thou) relation between subject and natural object; but, since man is to be free, it is also a genetic and progressive one. Phylogenetically that progressive relation is nature. Ontogenetically it is imagination.⁵³

This offers an explanation of Coleridge's most famous statement on the imagination:

⁵¹ See Emmet, Dorothy. "Coleridge on Powers in Mind and Nature." p.170.

⁵² Prickett. *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth*, p.71.

⁵³ Barfield. *What Coleridge Thought*, pp.76-77.

The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (*as objects*) are essentially fixed and dead. (BL I, 304)

For Coleridge, human perception itself effects a reconciliation of subject and object by the power of imagination, which is itself a creative act, as he makes clear by describing it as “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.” There is a crucial analogy drawn between the human being’s creativity and that of God. Every act of perception involves an exercise of a quasi-divine imagination.

According to Engell, the primary imagination, or the primary perception

is common to all people. In fact, it is taken for granted and not even called “imagination,” just as a sense of balance is taken for granted and not mentioned while we are walking. The primary imagination is the “*necessary* Imagination.” It automatically balances and fuses the innate capacities and powers with the external presence of the objective world that the mind receives through the senses.⁵⁴

The secondary imagination is peculiar to artistic creation. The secondary imagination is the power with which an artist creates an artistic work. Coleridge writes that it is not different from the primary imagination in kind, but in degree. Unlike the primary imagination, though, the secondary imagination is self-conscious, and operates by an act of will.

That the secondary imagination is not different from the primary in kind means that both share the same faculty as that exercised by God in his creation of the world.

The notion that the mind is creative in perception attributes to the mind divine power and similarly the artist in creating an artistic work may be said quite literally to exercise divine powers. Hence Coleridge's description of Shakespeare, for him, the supreme artist as a deity.

In addition, the notion that ordinary people are as creative as the artist in perception is the condition of Coleridge's insistence on the centrality in drama of the relation between the play and its audience.

Coleridge, in order to explain the unifying mode of imagination, distinguishes imagination from fancy. "The Fancy", according to him,

is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. (*BL I*, 305)

The chief difference between fancy and imagination is that fancy arbitrarily blends memories regardless of the order of time and space whereas imagination organically unites materials into a unity. Coleridge explains the difference between fancy and imagination repeatedly:

The Imagination is the synthetic Power—

motives, and a Judgment which divested of that choice had chiefly attended to the resemblances of different objects, and regarded the differences in mass only as far as they rendered the resemblance more pregnant, by law of Contrast—& we have Fancy—and if there exist no intermediate Power between the Active and Passive, *Fancy* must be the one peculiar Power of poetry—(*Sh&F*, 289)

⁵⁴ Engell. *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism*, p.344.

Here, Coleridge makes it clear that imagination is a “synthetic”, or “intermediate” power.

However, in the absence of imagination, it is fancy that operates in the writing of poetry.

4. ‘Fancy, or the aggregate Power—13th sp—Full gently now &c—the bringing together Images dissimilar in the main by some one point or more of Likeness—distinguished—read from Pocket book—/both common in the writers of Shakespeare’s time/

5. That power of & energy of what a living poet has grandly & appropriately. To flash upon that inward Eye Which is the Bliss of Solitude—& to make every thing present by a Series of Images—This an absolute Essential of Poetry, & of itself would form a poet, tho’ not of the highest Class—It is however a most hopeful Symptom, & V. & A. is one continued Specimen/ (CN III 3247, Spring 1808)

From this passage, it is clear that Coleridge did not at all deny the value of fancy. Indeed his concept of fancy is rather similar to what his British predecessors defined as imagination.

He accuses those whom he calls modern philosophers of making an idol of the image, which is, for him, equivalent to a reverence for the letter rather than the spirit:

The image-forming or rather re-forming power, the imagination in its passive sense, which I would rather call Fancy = Phantasy, a *φαινεσις*,¹ this, the Festisch & Talisman of all modern Philosophers (the Germans excepted) may not inaptly be compared to the Gorgon Head, which *looked* death into every thing—and this not by accident, but from the nature of the faculty itself, the province of which is to give consciousness to the Subject by presenting to it its conceptions *objectively* but the Soul differences itself from any other Soul for the purposes of symbolical knowledge by *form* or body only—but all form as body, i.e. as shape, & not as forma efformans, is dead—Life may be *inferred*, even as intelligence is from black marks on white paper—but the black marks themselves are truly “the *dead letter*”. Here then is the error—not in the faculty itself, without which there would be no *fixation*, consequently, no distinct perception or conception, but in the gross idolatry of those who abuse it, & make that the goal & end which should be only a means of arriving at it. Is it any excuse to him who treats a living being as inanimate Body,

that we cannot arrive at the knowledge of the living Being but thro' the Body which is its Symbol & outward & visible Sign?—(CN III 4066, April 1811)

Fancy is an “image-forming” or “re-forming” power. But it is “the worth & dignity of poetic Imagination, of fusing power, that fixing unfixes & while it melts & bedims the Image, still leaves in the Soul its living meaning—”(CN III 4066). It is imagination that reconciles thought and form: “Form is factitious being, and thinking is the process; imagination the laboratory in which the thought elaborates essence into existence.”(AP, 186)

“Imagination,” for Coleridge, is “the power of modifying one image or feeling by the precedent or following ones.” It combines “many circumstances into one moment of thought to produce that ultimate end of human Thought, and human Feeling, Unity and thereby the reduction of the Spirit to its Principle & Fountain, who alone is the truly *one*.”(Lect I, 68)

The imagination is sharply distinguished from the understanding, which is

the faculty of knowledge thro' Notions or conceptions. A notion or conception is that Act of the mind by means of which a multitude of Impressions (or Representations[]) are arranged and combined, and the different Representation acquire Unity. In this function of unity the Act of Understanding consists.(*Sh&F* II, 1004)

He argues that understanding has two organs; that is, the outward sense and the mind's eye which such writers as Hooker, Lord Bacon, and Hobbes call discourse or the discursive faculty. It may be defined as being the faculty by which we generalize and arrange the phenomena of perception. The functions of the faculty contain the rules and constitute the possibility of outward Experience. The understanding, differentiated by

Coleridge from the organ of Reason, is often taken as ordinary reason. Coleridge explains the three- fold operation of Understanding:

The Sense, (*vis sensitive vel intuitiva*) *perceives*: *Vis regulatrix* (the understanding, in its own peculiar operation) *conceives*: *Vis rationalis* (the Reason or rationalized understanding) *comprehends*. The first is impressed through the organs of sense; the second combines these multifarious impressions into individual *Notions*, and by reducing these notions to Rules, according to the analogy of all its former notices, constitutes *Experience*: the third subordinates both these notions and the rules of Experience to ABSOLUTE PRINCIPLES of necessary LAWS; and thus concerning objects, which our experience has proved to have *real* existence, it demonstrates moreover, in what way they are *possible*, and in doing this constitutes *Science*.(F I 157)

Imagination, for Coleridge, is the bridge between Reason and the physical world. Imagination, Fogle suggests, is “a higher faculty akin to the reason, but unlike the reason it images the ideal, and unlike the understanding it idealizes rather than abstracts from images.”⁵⁵

The key distinction between Coleridge’s notion of the imagination and that held by his predecessors on the one hand and Kant on the other can be briefly indicated by the word that Coleridge coined, *esemplastic*. Coleridge conceives the imagination as the agent which unites the *Noumenon* and the *Phenomenon*.

Barfield well demonstrates how Coleridge’s notion of the imagination brings together art and nature:

“The power which discloses itself from within as the principle of unity in the many,” the “productive unity” of nature, results in a manifold of parts having an “organic” relation with the whole and, through that (*totus in omni parte*) with each other. In apprehending this we are moved by the *beauty* of nature. The same power, at the level of imagination, creates another manifold having a similar relation

⁵⁵ Fogle. *The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism*, p.9.

between parts and whole; and in apprehending it we are moved by the imagination of the poet.⁵⁶

We might even say that this reconciliation of art and nature is the point to which Coleridge's repeated attempts to define the imagination drive and it is a point realised in practice in the work of the writer always recognised by Coleridge as the supreme imaginative artist, in the work, that is, of Shakespeare.

Coleridge's concept of nature might be termed mythical though he insists that it is grounded in fact. Whether it is a mythical system or a fact, it is 'the Archimedes lever of Coleridge's criticism'. It would be hard to claim that Shakespeare is "a guide to Coleridge's philosophy"⁵⁷ in terms of his concept of nature, but it is a concept at which Coleridge arrived in large part through his study of Shakespeare's work.

⁵⁶ Barfield. *What Coleridge Thought*, p.80.

⁵⁷ Hamilton. *Coleridge's Poetics*, p.180.

Chapter 3. Shakespeare: Nature Humanized

In the eighteenth century Shakespeare was conventionally described as “a poet of nature”, but “nature”, like most concepts, is a concept at once unstable and subject to historical change.¹ In the eighteenth century alone, the notion expresses several different meanings. As Basil Willey points out, to account fully for the differences would be a complicated task. Willey, however, tries to explain the changes in the concept that developed during the eighteenth century as the result of two relevant forces. One is the scientific explanation of the world. Due to the scientific movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, the work of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, Harvey, and Newton, the universe came to be regarded as a Great Machine and the scientists conceived themselves as studying God’s work. A second impetus was supplied by the religious conflicts produced by the Reformation, following which a desire to establish religion in a new framework arose. A Natural Religion developed, which takes nature as the evidence of divine activity. In natural religion, the law of nature is synonymous with the law of God. Of course, the law of God is differently conceived by different ages.

¹ See Willey, Basil. *The Eighteenth Century Background*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1940, p.2. Willey insists on the bewildering variety of senses in which the word nature is used in the period.: “Leslie Stephen has said that ‘Nature is a word contrived in order to introduce as many equivocations as possible into all the theories, political, legal, artistic or literary, into which it enters’. An American scholar has recently distinguished sixty different senses of the term. Even in the seventeenth century Robert Boyle, the natural philosopher, could enumerate eight senses of the word as used in philosophy and natural science, and Pierre Bayle, complaining of the ambiguity of the same word, mentions that eleven different meanings for it can be discovered in Corinthians. Nevertheless in our period it was not the ambiguity of ‘Nature’ which people felt most strongly; it was rather the clarity, the authority, and the universal acceptability of Nature and Nature’s laws.”

With the rise of empiricism, nature tends to be identified with human feelings, or sentiments or passions rather than with reason.² Basil Willey notes that David Hume can be represented as the defender of nature against reason. Willey also regards Hartley as another important figure in that he showed how our nature is the product of a process by which the mind moves from sensation, through imagination to reflection. Willey offers a broad definition:

'Nature' may be conceived rationally or emotionally. Indeed the history of the idea in the eighteenth century can be described in the most general terms as its development from a rational into an emotional principle. Nature and Reason are normally associated in the earlier part of the century, Nature and Feeling in the later. This change is associated with the growth of the cult of sensibility, the substitution of 'je sens, donc je suis' for 'cogito, ergo sum', the increasing value attributed to impulse and spontaneity, and the decreasing importance attached to pure reason.³

When critics describe Shakespeare as a poet of nature, they do not always mean by this the same thing. When Dryden says that "All the images of Nature were still presented to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily," or when he comments that "he was naturally learn'd; he needed not the spectacles of Books to read Nature; he look'd inwards, and found her there"⁴, he emphasises Shakespeare's innate genius. Nature is what need not be learned. Similarly Pope notes that "The Poetry of *Shakespeare* was Inspiration indeed; he is not so much an Imitator as an Instrument of

² See Jackson, Wallace. *Immediacy: The Development of A Critical Concept from Addison to Coleridge*. Amsterdam: Rodopi NV, 1973, p.11. According to Jackson, "By 1700 classical rationalism was in the throes of a death agony, its confident assumptions of right reason as a ruling principle of mind already under serious attack. Surely no dedicated effort was made to "subvert" the neoclassical system, but the implications of sensationalism and empiricism opened the way for inquiries into the nature of man that were not in harmony with that neoclassical image of man."

³ Willey, pp.207-208.

⁴ Dryden, John. *Of Dramatick Poesie, An Essay*. Reprinted in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*. Vol. 1. p.138.

Nature; and 'tis not so just to say that he speaks from her as that she speaks thro' him."⁵

Johnson too lent his authority to the notion that Shakespeare was above all a natural poet.⁶

Coleridge too repeats the notion. In doing so, he sometimes echoes his predecessors, especially when he celebrates Shakespeare's natural genius. But in most cases, the notion is based on his own definitive concept of nature. His concept of genius, the relationship between genius and judgment, his metaphor describing Shakespeare as a Spinozistic deity or as Proteus, Shakespeare as the poet of method, Shakespeare as a prophet, and Shakespeare as a man of his age and of no age are all related to his concept of nature. In this chapter, I would like to link Coleridge's concept of nature to his notion of Shakespeare as a poet.

1. "A Child of Nature"

Eighteenth-century critics followed Dryden or Pope in celebrating Shakespeare's divine or natural gift by calling him "a child of nature". He is celebrated as "a single Instance of the force of Nature, and the Strength of Wit."⁷ Critics such as Joseph Warton describe him as the Muse's darling child:

What are the Lays of artful *Addison*,
Coldly correct, to *Shakespeare's* Warblings wild?

⁵ Pope, Alexander. *The Works of Shakespeare, Collated and Corrected*. Reprinted in *Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage*. Vol.2., pp.403-4.

⁶ See the section on Samuel Johnson in chapter one of this thesis.

⁷ Felton, Henry. *A Dissertation on Reading the Classics, And Forming a Just Style*. Reprinted in *Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage*. Vol.2., p.215.

Whom on the winding *Avon's* willow'd Banks
 Fair Fancy found, and bore the smiling Babe
 To a close Cavern. (Still the Shepherds shew
 The sacred Place, whence with religious Awe
 They hear, returning from the Field at Eve,
 Strange Whisperings of sweet Music thro' the Air.)
 Here, as with Honey gather'd from the Rock,
 She fed the little Prattler, and with Songs
 Oft sooth'd his wond'ring Ears, with deep Delight
 On her soft Lap he sat, and caught the Sounds.⁸

This notion of Shakespeare as 'child of nature' is inseparable from that of Shakespeare as natural genius. Edward Young recognises two exemplary poets; among the moderns, Shakespeare, among the ancients, Pindar. Their genius, according to Young, is an entirely natural endowment:

For Genius may be compared to the Body's natural strength, Learning to the Superinduced Accoutrements of Arms; if the First is equal to the proposed exploit the Latter rather encumbers than assists, rather retards than promotes the Victory. *Sacer nobis inast Deus, says Seneca.* With regard to the Moral world *Conscience*, with regard to the Intellectual *Genius* is that God within. Genius can set us right in Composition without Rules of the Learned, as *Conscience* sets us right in Life without the Laws of the Land. *This, singly, can make us Good as Men: That, singly, as Writers can sometimes make us Great.*

I say sometimes because there is a Genius which stands in need of Learning to make it shine. Of Genius there are two species, an Earlier and a Later, or call them *infantine* and Adult. An Adult Genius comes out of Nature's hand, as *Pellas* out of *Jove's* head, at full growth and mature: *Shakespeare's* Genius was of this kind.⁹

This notion of Shakespeare was continuous throughout the eighteenth century. Joseph

⁸ Warton, Joseph, *The Enthusiast: or the Lover of Nature* (1744). Reprinted in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*. Vol.3., p.121.

Also see Sherlock, Martin. *A Fragment on Shakespeare*. Reprinted in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*. Vol.6., p.436. "It is she who was thy book, O Shakespeare; it is she who was thy study day and night; it is she from whom thou hast drawn those beauties which are at once the glory and delight of thy nation. Thou wert the eldest son, the darling child, of Nature; and like thy mother enchanting, astonishing, sublime, graceful, thy variety is inexhaustible. Always original, always new, thou art the only prodigy which Nature has produced.

⁹ Young, Edward. *Conjectures on Original Composition*. Reprinted in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*. Vol.4., p.406.

Addison classified genius into two kinds. The first consists of the natural geniuses: "those few draw the admiration of all the world upon them, and stand up as the prodigies of mankind, who by the mere strength of natural parts, and without any assistance of art or learning, have produced works that were the delight of their own times and the wonder of posterity."¹⁰ Such geniuses are "like a rich soil in a happy climate, that produces a whole wilderness of noble plants rising in a thousand beautiful landscapes without any certain order or regularity."¹¹ For him, Shakespeare is an outstanding instance of this first kind of genius.¹²

When the critics of the eighteenth century call Shakespeare a child of nature, they tend to indicate also his lack of learning. William Duff takes Shakespeare's lack of learning as a mark of his merit as a poet.¹³ John Dennis also saw Shakespeare as lacking learning, knowledge of poetic art, and knowledge of history.¹⁴ He insists on the

¹⁰ Addison, Joseph. *Critical Essays from the Spectator*. Ed. Donald F. Bond. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p.250.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.252.

¹² Addison's second kind of genius are "those that have formed themselves by rules, and submitted the greatness of their natural talents to the corrections and restraint of art." (*Ibid.*, p.252.)

¹³ See Duff, William. *Critical Observations on the Writings of the Most Celebrated Original Geniuses in Poetry* (1770). Delmar, N.Y.: Scholar's Facsimiles & Reprints, 1973, p195. "Want of learning, or rather knowledge of the learned languages, hath been considered by many as a great disadvantage to Shakespeare; but it should seem to have been very improperly considered as such. For my own part, I am persuaded, that had Shakespeare's learning been greater, his merit as Poet had been less. Conscious of the greatness of his own powers, he had no occasion for the adventitious aid of books, and observations of others. He had nothing to do but to look upon nature and man, and he, at one glance, caught a perfect idea of every object and character which he viewed, of which his imagination enabled him to present a complete resemblance; as well as by its creative power to present objects and characters which never existed in nature, nor in any human imagination but his own."

¹⁴ See Dennis, John. *An Essay On the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare*, in *The Critical Works of John Dennis*. Vol. 2. Ed. Edward Hooker. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1939-1943, p.4. "One may say of him as they did of *Homer*, that he had none to imitate, and is himself inimitable. His imaginations were often as just, as they were bold and strong. He had a natural Discretion which never cou'd have been taught him, and his Judgment was strong and penetrating. He seems to have wanted nothing but Time and Leisure for Thought, to have found out those Rules of which he appears so ignorant. His characters are always drawn justly, exactly, graphically, except where he fail'd by not knowing History or the Poetic Art. He has for the most part more fairly distinguish'd them than any of his Successors have done, who have falsified them, or confounded them, by making Love the predominant Quality in all. He had so fine a Talent for touching the Passions, and they are so lively in him, and so truly in Nature, that they often touch us more without their due Preparations, than those of other Tragick Poets, who have all the Beauty of

slenderness of Shakespeare's classical learning: "If then Shakespeare was qualify'd to read *Plautus* with Ease, he could read with a great deal more Ease the Translation of Sophocles and Euripides."¹⁵ Richardson is typical in insisting that Shakespeare's ignorance was a condition of his greatness.¹⁶

Coleridge was hostile to this kind of notion:

...it was a happy medium & refuge, to talk of Shakespeare as a sort of beautiful *Lusus Naturae*, a delightful Monster—wild indeed, without taste or judgment, but like the inspired Idiots so much venerated in the East, uttering amid the strangest follies the sublimest truths. In nine places out of ten in which I find his awful name mentioned, it is with some epithet of wild, irregular, pure child of nature, &c &c &c.—If all this be true, we must submit to it: tho' to a thinking mind it cannot but be painful to find any excellence merely human thrown out of all human Analogy, and thereby leaving us neither rules (for imitation) nor motives to imitate; but if false, it is a dangerous falsehood—for it affords a refuge to secret self-conceit—enables a vain man at once to escape his readers' Indignation by general swoln panegyrics on Shakespeare, merely his ipse dixit to treat what he has not Intellect enough to comprehend or soul to feel, as contemptible without assigning any reason or referring his opinion to any demonstrated Principle/ and so has left Shakespeare, as a sort of Tartarian Delay Lama, adored indeed & his very excrescences prized as relics, but with no authority, no real Influence—(CN III 3288 March 1808)

Coleridge, throughout his Notes and Lectures, insists that Shakespeare is a learned writer. He approvingly quotes a certain 'professor Wilde':

"His information," says professor WILDE, "was great and extensive, and his reading

Design and all the Advantage of Incidents. His Master-passion was Terror, which he has often mov'd so powerfully and so wonderfully, that we may justly conclude, that if he had the Advantage of Art and Learning, he wou'd have surpass'd the very best and strongest of the Ancients."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹⁶ See Richardson, William. *Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters*. London: printed for Samuel Bagster, 1812, pp.425-426. "Had he been well acquainted with the poets and critics of antiquity, he would probably have been more attentive to unity, and studied greater simplicity in the form of his fables. Not that he would have adopted the practice of ancient poets, in its fullest extent; for this would have been too opposite to the public taste, and too inconsistent with his own luxuriant fancy. We may also add, that some departure from the strict rules of unity enacted by ancient critics, and some deviation from the simplicity of Grecian poets, is no loss to the drama. Shakespeare, however, by having known them, and by having adhered to them in some degree, would have been less irregular and incoherent."

as great as his knowledge of Languages could reach. Considering the bar which his education and circumstances placed in his way, he had done as much to acquire knowledge as even Milton. A thousand instances might be given of the intimate knowledges that Shakespeare had of facts. I shall mention only one. I do not say, he gives a good account of the Salic law, though a much worse has been by many antiquaries. But he who reads the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech in *Henry the Fifth*, and who shall afterwards say that Shakespeare was not a man of great reading and information, who loved the thing itself, is a person whose opinion I would not ask or trust upon any matter of investigation." Then was all this reading, all this information, all this knowledge of our greatest dramatist, a mere *rudis indigestaque moles?*(*TM*, 26)

Coleridge cites *Love's Labour's Lost* to demonstrate Shakespeare's learning:

What was the *Love's Labour's Lost*? Was it the production of a person accustomed to stroll as a Vagabond about streets, or to hold horses at a Play-house door, and who had contented himself with making observation of nature in Shakespeare's earliest works. The dialogue consisted, either of remarks upon what is grotesque in language, or mistaken in literature—all bore the appearance of being written by a man of reading and learning, & the force of genius early saw what was excellent, or what was ridiculous.

Hence the wonderful activity of this kind in the first scene of *Loves labour lost*. Such thoughts would never have occurred to a man ignorant & merely an observer of nature.(*Lect I*, 275)

Shakespeare's mind, according to Coleridge, was "rich in stores of acquired knowledge," and he "commanded all these stores and rendered them disposable, by means of his intimate acquaintance with the great laws of Thought, which form and regulate Method."(*TM*, 35-36).

2. Shakespeare: Nature Humanized

Shakespeare remained for Coleridge a poet of nature but a poet of what we might call "Nature humanized". He is a poet who expresses the inner principles or inner law of

nature; namely, *natura naturans*.¹⁷ An artist, according to Coleridge, “must master the essence, the *natura naturans*, which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher senses and the soul of man.”(*MAL*, 46) With regard to the bond between man and Nature, Coleridge says;

In Man the centripetal and individualizing tendency of all Nature is itself concentrated and individualized—he is a Revelation of Nature! Henceforward, he is referred to himself, delivered up to his own charge; and he who stands the most on himself, and stands the firmest, is the truest, because the most individual, Man. In social and political life this acme is inter-dependence; in moral life it is independence; in intellectual life it is genius.”(*TL*, 551)

Shakespeare, for Coleridge, is this man: “the revelation of nature”, “nature humanized”.

Coleridge compared Shakespeare with Beaumont and Fletcher to demonstrate this:

What had a grammatical and logical consistency of the Ear, what could be put together and represented to the Eye, these Poets took from the Ear and the eye/ unchecked by any intuition of an inward impossibility—just as a man might fit together a quarter of an orange, a quarter of an Apple, and the like of a Lemon and of a Pomegranate, and make it look like one round diverse colored fruit—but Nature who works from within, by evolution and assimilation according to a law, cannot do it—nor could Shakespeare: for he too worked in the spirit of Nature, by evolving the Germ within by the imaginative Power according to an Idea—: for as the Power of Seeing is to Light, so is an Idea (in mind) to a Law in Nature—they are correlatives that suppose each character, more or less will happen to be in correspondence with nature, and still more in apparent compatibility—but yet the false source is always discoverable, first by the (gross) contradictions to Nature in so many other parts, and secondly by the want of the impression, which Shakespear makes, that the thing said not only might have been said but that nothing else could be substituted to excite the same sense of its exquisite propriety—illustrated from Iago when brought into Othello’s sight—(*Lect II*, pp.147-8)

Another interpretation of “Nature Humanized” focuses on the difference between

¹⁷ See chapter two of this thesis.

man and nature. Coleridge explains Shakespeare with a double focus, focusing both on his conforming with the spirit of nature and at the same time on his possession of a consciousness which does not exist in nature.

The wisdom in nature is distinguished from that in man by the coinstantaneity of the plan and the execution; the thought and the product are one, or are given at once; but there is no reflex act, and hence there is no moral responsibility. In man there is reflexion, freedom, and choice; he is therefore, the head of the visible creation. In the objects of nature are presented, as in a mirror, all the possible elements, steps, and processes of intellect antecedent to consciousness, and therefore to the full development of the intelligential act; and man's mind is the very focus of all the rays of intellect which are scattered throughout the images of nature. (*MAL*, 47)

For Coleridge the genius reconciles all these things and his inner self: "Now so to place these images, totalized, and fitted to the limits of the human mind, as to elicit from, and to superinduce upon, the forms themselves the moral reflexions to which they approximate, to make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought, thought nature,—this is the mystery of genius in the Fine Arts." (*Ibid.*, 47) The following passage can be understood in this context:

The organic form on the other hand is innate, it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one & the same with the perfection of its outward Form. Such is the Life, such the form—Nature, the prime Genial Artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers is equally inexhaustible in forms—each Exterior is the physiognomy of the Being within, its true Image reflected & thrown out from the concave mirror—& even such is the appropriate Excellence of her chosen Poet, of our own Shakespear/ himself a Nature humanized, a genial Understanding directing self-consciously a power & a (implicit) wisdom deeper than Consciousness—(*Lect I*, 495)

It is not too much to say that all Coleridge's evaluations of Shakespeare as a poet are based on the double focus that he expresses in the phrase "Nature Humanized".

Coleridge's notion of Shakespeare as a genius, for instance, is also based on these two focuses.

2 · i Shakespeare as A Genius

First, Coleridge argues that a genius must create according to the severe laws of the intellect, in order to generate in himself a co-ordination of freedom and law. He recommends obedience not to cold notions (lifeless technical rules) but living and life-producing ideas, which shall contain their own evidence, the certainty that they are essentially one with the germinal causes in nature. (*MAL*, 47-8) Thus, genius acts as a preservative against those who do not follow the natural law, especially "when the imagination and preconstructive power have taken a scientific or philosophic direction: as in Plato, indeed in almost all the first-rate philosophers—in Kepler, Milton, Boyle, Newton, Leibniz, and Berkley." (*FI*, 416)

In genius, Coleridge writes:

Something new, however, it must be, quite new and quite out of themselves! for whatever is within them, whatever is deep within them, must be as old as the first dawn of human reason. But to find no contradiction in the union of old and new, to contemplate the ANCIENT OF DAYS with feelings as fresh, as if they then sprang forth at his own fiat, this characterizes the minds that feel the riddle of the world, and may help to unravel it! To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood, to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar,

With Sun and Moon and Stars throughout the year,
And Man and Woman—

This is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talents. And so to represent familiar objects as to awaken the minds of others to a like freshness of sensation concerning them (that constant accompaniment of mental, no less than of bodily, convalescence)—to the same modest questioning of a self-discovered and intelligent ignorance, which, like the

deep and massy foundations of a Roman bridge, forms half of the whole structure (*prudens interrogatio dimidium scientiae*, says Lord Bacon)—this is the prime merit of genius, and its most unequivocal mode of manifestation. (*J⁷ I*, 109-110)

Coleridge suggests a boy's feeling for candle light as an example of "the feelings of childhood": A boy, before going to bed, carelessly blows out his candle and he, lying upon his bed in the ensuing darkness, has the opportunity to see the sullen light surviving the extinguished flame. The candle light fades and revives, gathers to a point as it is about to disappear, but becomes brighter than before. It continues to shine with an endurance which in its apparent weakness is a mystery. It protracts its existence so long, clinging to the power which supports it, that it gives the boy a feeling of sadness and melancholy. His sympathies are touched: It looks to him the image of a departing human life, which is the life of a parent or a brother who has gone to the grave.

Coleridge asks if there are any powers by which he could call to mind the same image and hang over it with an equal interest as a visible type of his own spirit when the boy comes to his adolescence. Coleridge locates such a power in the primary sense of duty; that is, if duty begins from the point of accountability to our conscience, and through that, to God and human nature. Another condition of maintaining the power is the soul's transcendence of the animal functions. Then the image of the dying candle light may be recalled and contemplated without the same sensuous feelings of childhood but with a melancholy in the soul, a sinking inward into ourselves from thought to thought, a steady remonstrance and a high resolve.

The youth will gain a world of fresh sensation through the help of nature admonished by reason. New sensations, Coleridge affirms, will open out sanctioned by the reason that is their original author and precious feelings of disinterested joy and love

may be regenerated and restored. And with the study of the visible universe and ancient books, the youth now perceives beauty with his thinking mind. The youth, now, is content to look at his mind and endeavour to look through the system of his being with the organ of reason summoned to go, as far as it has power, in discovery of the impelling forces and the governing laws. (F I, 398-399)

Coleridge also defines genius by contrasting it with talent and sense:

In short, I define GENIUS, as originality in intellectual construction: the moral accompaniment, and actuating principle of which consists, perhaps, in the carrying on of the freshness and feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood.

By TALENT, on the other hand, I mean the comparative facility of acquiring, arranging, and applying the stock furnished by others and already existing in books or other conservatories of intellect. By SENSE I understand that just balance of the faculties which is to the judgment what health is to the body. The mind seems to act *en masse*, by a synthetic rather than an analytic process: even as the outward senses, from which the metaphor is taken, perceive immediately, each as it were by a peculiar tact or intuition, without any consciousness of the mechanism by which the perception is realized. (F I., 419)

Secondly, Coleridge emphasises the conscious activity of the faculties of the mind especially in creative works. Shakespeare, for Coleridge, is a genius who possessed both nature's unconsciousness and human consciousness. In every work of art, according to Coleridge, there is a reconciliation of the external with the internal; that is, the conscious is so impressed on the unconsciousness as to appear in it. The conscious is to the unconscious as the mere letters inscribed on a tomb are to the figures themselves constituting the tomb. He who combines the two, for Coleridge, is the man of genius. Coleridge insists that there is in genius an unconscious activity. He adds that the artist must first distance himself from nature in order to return to her with effect.

This idea is well demonstrated in his classification of genius into two kinds, namely, the absolute genius and the commanding genius. In the commanding genius, "the conceptions of the mind may be so vivid and adequate, as to preclude that impulse to the realizing of them, which is strongest and most restless in those, who possess more than mere talent (or the faculty of appropriating and applying the knowledge of others) yet still want something of the creative, and self-sufficing power of absolute Genius."(BL I, 31) While the absolute genius can

rest content between thought and reality, as it were in an intermundium of which their own living spirit supplies the *substance*, and their imagination the ever-varying form; the latter(the commanding genius)¹⁸ must impress their preconceptions on the world without, in order to present them back to their own view with the satisfying degree of clearness, distinctness, and individuality.(BL I, 32)

For Coleridge, Shakespeare is the prime example of the absolute genius. His idea of poetic genius is largely explained in this context. He enumerates four qualities of genius and argues that all of them are evident in *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* despite their immaturity. In these two poems,

the first and most obvious excellence is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm, than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominant.(BL II, 19-20)¹⁹

Here, Coleridge emphasises Shakespeare's fundamental excellence in versification and identifies the organic relation between concept and versification as the first condition of

¹⁸ Words in parenthesis are mine.

¹⁹ See also *Anima Poetae*, p.178.

genius. Shakespeare is, above all, "the man who has music in his soul". A man who does not have music in his soul cannot be a true poet. A man of talent by incessant effort might be able to arrive at an ability to produce poetic imagery, for instance, from books, and from his appreciation of nature. He, however, can never obtain the sense of musical delight with the power of producing it. The sense of musical delight

is a gift of imagination; and this together with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learnt. It is in these that "poeta nascitur non fit."(Ibid.,20)

Here, Coleridge accepts that skill in versification is innate rather than acquired.

Coleridge suggests that a choice of subjects remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer is a second indication of genius. But this does not mean that the writer should choose a subject totally outside personal experience. Rather, he emphasises the writer's self-sufficing creativity. Coleridge finds Shakespeare's poetic power in *Venus and Adonis*.

It is throughout as if a superior spirit more intuitive, more intimately conscious, even than the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view; himself meanwhile unparticipating in the passions, and actuated only by that pleasurable excitement, which had resulted from the energetic fervor of his own spirit in so vividly exhibiting, what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated.(BL II, 21)

Coleridge points out the handling of images as another proof of genius. The images

become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own

spirit,

Which shoots its being through earth, sea, and air.(BL II,23)

Coleridge presents several poems of Shakespeare as exquisite examples of this quality.

One of them is Sonnet 98²⁰, which expresses a feeling of love. Another example is

Venus and Adonis lines 811-13:

With this he breaketh from the sweet embrace
Of those fair arms, that held him to her heart,
And homeward through the dark lawns runs apace:
Look how a bright star shooteth from the sky!
So glides he through the night from Venus' eye.

He comments on these last two lines :

How many Images & feelings are here brought together without effort & without discord—the beauty of Adonis—the rapidity of his flight—the yearning yet hopelessness of the enamoured gazer—and a shadowy ideal character thrown over the whole—/ or it acts by impressing the stamp of humanity, of human feeling, over inanimate Objects. (CN III 3290, March 1808)

²⁰ From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud pied April drest in all its trim
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them, where they grew:
Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were, tho' sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
Yet seem'd it winter still, and you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play!

For Coleridge, another quality of genius is depth and energy of thought. When Coleridge finds an example of a poet and philosopher in Shakespeare, he focuses on Shakespeare's creative power and intellectual energy.

For poetry is the blossom and the fragrantcy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language. In Shakespeare's *poems*, the creative power, and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace. Each in its excess of strength seems to threaten the extinction of the other. At length, in the DRAMA they were reconciled, and fought each with its shield before the breast of the other. Or like two rapid streams, that at their first meeting within narrow and rocky banks mutually strive to repel each other, and intermix reluctantly and in tumult; but soon finding a wider channel and more yielding shores blend, and dilate, and flow on in one current and with one voice. (*BL II*, 26)

He finds this aspect of Shakespeare in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Just as in *Venus and Adonis*, vivid and minute imagery is united with vigorous thought, but there is a wider range of knowledge and reflection. In these Shakespeare's earliest poems, "the poet and philosopher perpetually struggling with each other—till found unified when they were blended & flowed in sweetest harmony & strength." (*Lect II.*, 121) Coleridge argues that Shakespeare, "possessed by the Muse not possessing, 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—scated him on one of the two Golden Thrones of the English Paranasus, with Milton on the other." (*Lect I*, 244)

Shakespeare accords with Coleridge's definition of the metaphysician. In a letter to William Sotheby, he writes:

It is easy to cloathe Imaginary Beings with our own Thoughts & Feelings; but to

send ourselves out of ourselves, to *think* ourselves in to the Thoughts and Feelings of Beings in circumstances wholly & strangely different from our own/ hoc labor, hoc opus/ and who has atchieved it? Perhaps only Shakespere. Metaphisics is a word, that you, my dear Sir! are no great Friend to/ but yet you will agree, that a great Poet must be, implicite 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 a 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, 13 July 1802)

Here, Coleridge proposes a crucial faculty of a poet—the reconciliation of sense and thought. In his notion of metaphysician, the metaphysician does not only deal with something beyond the physical:

What is that I employ my metaphysics on? To perplex our clearest notions and living moral instincts? To extinguish the light of love and of conscience, to put out the life of arbitrement, to make myself and others *worthless, soulless, Godless?* No, to expose the folly and the legerdemain of those who have thus abused the blessed organ of language, to support all old and venerable truths, to support, to kindle, to project, to make the reason spread light over our feelings, to make our feelings diffuse vital warmth through our reason—these are my objects and these my subjects.—(AP, 42-43)

This highly tactical definition pushes the purpose of metaphysics towards the revelation of truth and the reconciliation of human faculties—i.e., the reconciliation of reason and feeling, the reconciliation of sense and spirit.

Shakespeare, Coleridge says, “was a person who balances sameness with difference—and triteness with novelty—who reconciles judgment with enthusiasm & vehemence with feeling—Art with Nature—the manner with the matter, & our admiration of the poem with the sympathy with the characters & incidents of the poem.” (Lect I, 255)

2 · ii Genius: Summing Whole Mental Faculties

Coleridge, in *Biographia*, says that “in advanced stages of literature, when there exist many and excellent models, a high degree of talent, combined with taste and judgment, and employed in works of imagination, will acquire for a man the *name* of a great genius.”(*BL* I, 37) He also says that “GOOD SENSE is the BODY of poetic genius, FANCY its DRAPERY, MOTION its LIFE, and IMAGINATION the SOUL that is every where, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.”(*BLII*, 18)

As we see in these passages, genius does not signify a single or a few particular faculties but a whole made up of all mental faculties. For Coleridge, a genius, “who is the ideal perfection of the poet, not only puts the whole soul of man into activity but also, and more fundamentally, indemnifies a wholeness of soul which can be put into activity.”²¹ Shakespeare is the supreme example of such a genius:

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 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, Judgment/— 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 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—.(*Lect* I, 127-128)

This passage emphasises Shakespeare’s ‘unrivalled excellence’ in employing all human faculties, and this in itself implies Coleridge’s dislike of the collections of Shakespeare’s

memorable sayings.

Coleridge's notion of genius is distinguished from his eighteenth-century predecessors in that their notions of genius tend to be focused on some few particular faculties. Gerard, for instance, holds invention as the leading quality of genius. For him, invention consists in comprehensiveness of imagination; that is, in a readiness in associating the most distantly related ideas.²² Unlike Coleridge's concept of imagination as a unifying principle with the function of 'dissolving, diffusing, and dissipating in order to recreate', Gerard's imagination selects 'the ferruginous particles' from the quality of matter. Gerard specifies the peculiar property of genius, which is a capacity to express its designs in apt materials. In the case of poetry, the ideas assembled by fancy are expressed in appropriate language to excite strong ideas in its readers.

In the case of Duff, one of the offices of genius is vivid description and imparting lively and fervid feelings to the mind of the reader.²³ This view of genius is reflected in his evaluation of Shakespeare:

...I would say that sublimity, both in imagery and description, is most conspicuous

²¹ Christenson, Jerome C. "The Genius in the *Biographia Literaria*." *SIR*, 17(1978):215-31, p.220.

²² See Gerard, Alexander. *An Essay on Taste*(1759). Menston: Scolar Press, 1971, p.173-174. For him, "In a man of genius the uniting principles are so vigorous and quick, that whenever any idea is present to the mind, they bring into view at once all others, that have the least connection with it. As the magnet selects from a quality of matter the ferruginous particles, which happen to be scattered through it, without making an impression on other substances; so imagination, by a similar sympathy, equally inexplicable, draws out from the whole compass of nature such ideas as we have occasion for, without attending to any others; and yet presents them with a great propriety, as if all possible conceptions had been explicitly exposed to our view, and subjected to our choice.

²³ See Duff, William, *An Essay on Original Genius*, pp.159-160. "A poet, ... who is possessed of original Genius, feels in the strongest manner every impression made upon the mind, by the influence of external objects on the senses, or by reflection on those ideas which are treasured up in the repository of the memory, and is consequently qualified to express the vivacity and strength of his own feelings. If we suppose a person endued with this quality to describe real objects and scenes, such as are either immediately present to his senses, or recent in his remembrance; he will paint them in such vivid colours, and with so many picturesque circumstances, as to convey the same lively and fervid ideas to the mind of the Reader, which possessed and filled the imagination of the Author.

in the character of Homer, that Ossian is most eminently distinguished by the pathetic both in sentiment and description, particularly that species of the pathetic which is calculated to melt the heart into tenderness; and that Shakespeare discovers the strength of his Genius most signally in a certain wild and picturesque manner of describing every object he intends to exhibit, which is peculiar to himself.²⁴

The aesthetics of the eighteenth century tends to give priority to the capacity to provoke immediate passion or feeling. Lord Kames, in *Elements of Criticism*, emphasises how difficult a job awakening passion is:

To awake passion by an internal effort merely, without an external cause, requires great sensibility: and yet that operation is necessary, no less to the writer than to the actor; because none but those who actually feel a passion, can represent it to the life. The writer's part is more complicated: he must add composition to passion; and must, in the quickest succession, adopt every different character. But a very humble flight of imagination, may serve to convert a writer into a spectator; so as to figure, in some obscure manner, an action as passing in his sight and hearing. In that figured situation, being led naturally to write like a spectator, he entertains his readers with his own reflections, with cool description, and florid declamation; instead of making them eye witness, as it were, to a real event, and to every movement of genuine passion. Thus most of our plays appear to be cast in the same mould; personages without character, the mere outlines of passion, a tiresome monotony, and pompous declamatory style.²⁵

Kames demonstrates Shakespeare's excellence in dealing with passion by describing his poetry as "the legitimate offspring of passion" which is 'the sentiment dictated by a violent and perturbed passion.' According to him, Shakespeare imitates this passion most perfectly in Lear's speech accusing his daughters of ingratitude(Act 3, sc.5) and Othello's soliloquy after he has strangled Desdemona. In his opinion, "passions seldom continue uniform any considerable time: they generally fluctuate, swelling and subsiding by turns, often in a quick succession; and the sentiment cannot be just in expressing a

²⁴ Duff, William, *Critical Observations on the Writings of the Most Celebrated Original Geniuses in Poetry*(1770), pp.184-5.

²⁵ Home, Henry (Lord Kames). *Elements of Criticism*. Vol.I. London: Routledge/ Thoemmes Press, 1993,

swelling passion."²⁶ So, according to him, the different stages of a passion and its different directions must be carefully represented in their order. Then, he suggests that a person can be dominated by different passions at once. In this case, his mind is oscillating like a pendulum. Kames finds examples in the Queen's passion in *Henry VIII*, and again in Othello. Another kind is immoderate passion which is against nature or in contradiction to reason and conscience. For the representation of this sort of passion, the characters must hide or dissemble their feelings as much as they can. Kames offers an example in a speech of the usurping Duke of Milan in *The Tempest* (Act 2, sc.1) and in the speech of King John's instigating Hubert to murder Arthur.

William Richardson finds Shakespeare's genius in his characterisation. Richardson argues that Shakespeare's eminent distinction is,

... imitating the passion in all its aspects, by pursuing it through all its windings and labyrinths, by moderating or accelerating its impetuosity according to the influence of other principles and of external events, and finally by combining it in a judicious manner with other passions and propensities, or by setting it aptly in opposition. He thus unites the two essential powers of dramatic invention, that of forming characters; and that of imitating, in their natural expressions, the passions and affections of which they are composed.²⁷

2 · iii Genius and Judgment

Coleridge differs from his eighteenth-century predecessors in insisting that Shakespeare's genius appears in his judgment. His British predecessors of the eighteenth-century usually thought Shakespeare's genius separate from his judgment or

pp.454-455.

even considered the two faculties contradictory. Gerard, for example, writes that "soundness and strength of judgment may be possessed without considerable genius".²⁸

William Duff, assuming that a genius aspires to achieve some object, accepts that genius must be allied with imagination, judgment, and taste. According to him,

The proper office of JUDGMENT in composition, is to compare the ideas which imagination collects; to observe their agreement or disagreement, their relations and resemblances; to point out such as are of homogeneous nature; to mark and reject such as are discordant; and finally, to determine the truth and utility of the inventions or discoveries which are produced by the power of imagination. This faculty is, in all its operations, cool, attentive, and considerate. It canvasses the design, ponders the sentiments, examines their propriety and connection, and reviews the whole composition with severe impartiality. Thus it appears to be in every respect a proper counterbalance to the RAMBLING and VOLATILE power of IMAGINATION. The one, perpetually attempting to soar, is apt to deviate into the mazes of error; while the other arrests that wanderer in its vagrant course, and compels it to follow the path of nature and of truth.²⁹

Coleridge insists on a quite different relation between genius and judgment:

The science of criticism dates its restoration from the time when it was seen that an examination and appreciation of the end was necessarily antecedent to the formation of the rules, supplying at once the principle of the rules themselves and of their application to the given subject. From this time we have heard little (among intelligent persons, I mean) of the wildness and irregularity of our Shakespeare. Nay, when once the end which our myriad-minded bard had in view and the local accidents that favoured or obstructed or in any way modified its manifestation are once thoroughly comprehended, the doubt will arise whether the judgment or the genius of the man has the stronger claim to our wonder, or rather it will be felt that the judgement was the birth and living offspring of his genius, even as the symmetry of a body results from the sanity and vigour of the life as the organising power. (*Logic*, 67)

Here we can see his belief in the organic relationship of genius and judgment. In his

²⁶ Ibid., p.462.

²⁷ Richardson, William. *Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters*. London, 1812, pp.32-33.

²⁸ Gerard. *An Essay on Taste*, p.179.

lecture, Coleridge claims that “ In all successive Courses, delivered by me, since my first attempt at the Royal Institution, it has been and it still remains my Objective to prove that in all points from the most important to the most minute, the Judgment of Shakespeare is commensurate with his Genius—nay, that his Genius reveals itself in his Judgment, as in its most exalted Form.”(*Lect II*, 263-4) Elsewhere he insists: “Great as was the genius of Shakespeare, his judgment was at least equal.”(*Lect I*, 517)

The excellence of Shakespeare’s judgment is especially visible in his management of the first scenes of his plays. Shakespeare, according to Coleridge, places before us at one glance both the past and the future, as in the feuds and party spirit of the servants of the two houses in the first scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*. Or the first scenes at once begin to excite curiosity as to what follows, as in the storm of wind, the waves, and the boatswain in the *Tempest*.

Another example of the excellence of Shakespeare’s judgment is the seemingly casual communication of Edmund’s origin, by means of which we are prepared for his character in an easy and natural way. Coleridge explains the germ and growth of Edmund’s pride—i.e., his powerful intellect and strong energetic will combined with being the known and acknowledged son of Gloucester and jealousy of his legitimate brother. He suggests that such pride, combined with the consciousness of the baseness of his own birth, is a main spring of the action.

3. Shakespeare: Poet of Method

²⁹ Duff, *An Essay on General Genius*, p.6.

“The word METHOD(*μέθοδος*),” according to Coleridge,

being of Grecian origin, first formed and applied by that acute, ingenious, and accurate People, to the purposes of Scientific arrangement, it is in the Greek language that we must seek for its primary and fundamental signification. Now, in Greek, it literally means *a way, or path, of transit*. Hence the first idea of Method is *a progressive transition* from one step in any course to another; and where the word Method is applied with reference to many such transitions in continuity, it necessarily implies a Principle of UNITY WITH PROGRESSION.(*TM*, 2)³⁰

A transition implies a unification of opposites, unity with progression. For Unification, there must be an act of mind. Coleridge calls the act of mind the instigator of all method. He, presupposing a universal method, by which every step in our progress in Art and Science should be directed, suggests that we should seek it in the human intellect. Coleridge argues that we should not apply the word method to a dead and arbitrary arrangement, containing itself no principle of progression. He notes that “all from in-attention to the method dictated by nature herself, to the simple truth, that as the forms in all organized existence, so must all true and living knowledge proceed from within; that it may be trained, supported, fed, excited, but can never be infused or impressed.”(*F I*, 500) And “All method supposes a union of *several* things to a common end, either by disposition, as in the works of man; or by convergence, as in the operations and products of nature.”(*F I*, 497)

Coleridge again explains method in terms of relations:

All things, in us, and about us, are a Chaos, without Method: and so long as the mind is entirely passive, so long as there is an habitual submission of the Understanding to mere events and images, as such, without any attempt to classify and arrange them, so long the Chaos must continue. There may be transition, but there can never be progress; there may be sensation, but there cannot be thought; for

³⁰ See also *F.I.*, p.457.

the total absence of Method renders thinking impracticable; as we find the partial defects of Method proportionably render thinking a trouble and a fatigue. But as soon as the mind becomes accustomed to contemplate, not *things* only, but likewise *relations* of things, there is immediate need of some path or way of transit from one to the other of the things related;—there must be some law of agreement or of contrast between them; there must be some mode of comparison; in short, there must be Method. We may, therefore, assert that the *relations of things* form the prime objects, or, so to speak, the *materials of Method*; and that the contemplation of those relations is the indispensable condition of thinking Methodically.(TM,3)

This passage warns us of the danger of a mechanical arrangement of knowledge or thought. Coleridge, not merely in *The Friend* but also in *Biographia*, repeatedly attacks the superficiality of mechanical philosophy. The methodical relations in things are not mechanical but organical, as shown in nature.

Coleridge demonstrates the role and the importance of method, by showing the consequences of its lack:

For the absence of Method, which characterizes the uneducated, is occasioned by an habitual submission of the understanding to mere events and images as such, and independent of any power in the mind to classify or appropriate them. The general accompaniments of time and place are the only relations which persons of this class appear to regard in their statements. As this constitutes *their* leading feature, the contrary excellence, as distinguishing the well-educated man, must be referred to the contrary habit. METHOD, therefore, becomes natural to the mind which has been accustomed to contemplate not *things* only, or for *their own sake alone*, but likewise and chiefly the *relations* of things, either their relations to each other, or to the observer, or to the state and apprehension of the hearers. To enumerate and analyze these relations, with the conditions under which alone they are discoverable, is to teach the science of Method.(FI, 451)

Judging from the above passage, method is closely related to the power of mind. To employ method means to unify our mind and our experience so as to make possible a transition to a higher step. Coleridge explains the two kinds of relations of things. One is the relation by which we understand a thing must be; namely, the relation of LAW. The

other is the relation by which we merely perceive that it is; namely, the relation of Theory. The relation of Law, according to him, "is in its absolute perfection conceivable only of God, that Supreme light, and Living Law". The human mind, however, is only capable of viewing some relations of things as predetermined by a truth in the mind itself but the mind can find other truths in an indefinite progression. The second relation is called that of theory, "in which the existing forms and qualities of objects, discovered by observation, suggest a given arrangement of them to the Mind, not merely for the purposes of more easy remembrance and communication; but for those of understanding, and sometimes of controlling them. Medicine, Chemistry, and Physiology are examples of a Method founded on the second sort of relation.(TM, 4-5)

Coleridge placed the Fine Arts between the Method of relation of Law and that of relation of Principle. For him, the Method of the Fine Arts is that "in which certain great truths, composing what are usually called the *Laws of Taste*, necessarily predominate; but in which there are also other Laws, dependent on the external objects of sight and sound, which these Arts embrace."(TM, 5) The Method of the Fine Arts is, therefore, the reconciliation of the Method of relations of Law and that of the relations of Principle. Coleridge shows what a man of method is like, taking Plato as an example:

...with the clear insight that the purpose of the writer is not so much to establish any particular truth, as to remove the obstacles, the continuance of which is preclusive of all truth; the whole scheme assumes a different aspect, and justifies itself in all its dimensions. We see, that to open anew a well of springing water, not to cleanse the stagnant tank, or fill, bucket by bucket, the leaden cistern; that the EDUCATION of the intellect, by awakening the principle and *method* of self-development, was his proposed object, not any specific information that can be *conveyed into it* from without: not to assist in storing the passive mind with the various sorts of knowledge most in request, as if the human soul were a mere repository or banqueting-room, but to place it in such relations of circumstance as should

gradually excite the germinal power that craves no knowledge but what it can take up into itself, what it can appropriate, and reproduce in fruits of its own(*F I*, 472-473)

If Plato is “the poetic philosopher” who removed obstacles and showed the way of self-development, Shakespeare is “the philosophical poet” who accomplished the same job.

According to Coleridge, there is Method in poetry and “those who tread the enchanted ground of POETRY, often times do not even suspect that there is such a thing as *Method* to guide their steps.”(*TM*, 25) Shakespeare’s mind, according to Coleridge, was “rich in stores of acquired knowledge, commanded all these stores and rendered them disposable, by means of his intimate acquaintance with the great laws of Thought, which form and regulate Method.”(*TM*, 35)

Shakespeare, in Coleridge’s opinion, was pursuing two Methods at once; one psychological and the other poetical. Psychological Method is especially employed in dealing with the psychological aspect of characters. Shakespeare’s Poetical Method is revealed by a preponderance of pleasurable feeling; for example, where the interest of the events and characters and passions is too strong to be continuous without becoming painful, Poetical Method is required so that our distress is alleviated.(*TM*, 32)

For Coleridge, Shakespeare is the poet following the method of nature. “For, in many instances, the predominance of some mighty passion takes the place of the guiding Thought, and the result presents the method of Nature, rather than the habit of the Individual.”(*F I*, 456) Shakespeare, Coleridge notes, is methodical in the delineation of character, in the display of passion, in the conceptions of moral being, in adaptation of language, in the connection and admirable intertexture of his ever-interesting fable.

4. Shakespeare: Proteus and Spinozistic Deity

Coleridge has two main images for Shakespeare's creativity: Proteus and the omnipresence of Spinoza's God. The idea of Shakespeare as Proteus was also suggested by Richardson and some German critics such as Schlegel and Schelling. "The genius of Shakespeare," Richardson writes, "is unlimited. Possessing extreme sensibility, and uncommonly susceptible, he is the Proteus of the drama; he changes himself into every character, and enters easily into every condition of human nature."³¹

A.W. Schlegel concurs:

The whole of Shakespeare's productions bear the certain stamp of his original genius, but yet no writer was ever farther removed from every thing like a mannerism derived from habit and personal peculiarities. Rather is he, such is the diversity of tone and colour, which varies according to the quality of his subjects he assumes, a very Proteus.(*CDAL*, 378)

Hazlitt also compares Shakespeare to Proteus. For him Shakespeare's genius "consisted in the faculty of transforming himself at will into whatever he chose: his originality was the power of seeing every object from the exact point of view in which others would see it."³² Hazlitt, like the above critics, emphasises Shakespeare's ability in sympathising with other minds and thus his ability to create very different characters.

Coleridge's argument accommodates these opinions in that Shakespeare is allowed the ability to enter into every character and every situation. Frederick Burwick points out that for Coleridge the metaphor implies the divine status of the poet. "For

³¹ Richardson, William. *Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters*, p.31.

³² Hazlitt, William. *On Genius and Common Sense*. Reprinted in *Criticism: the Major Texts*, p.329.

Coleridge,” Burwick argues, “the artist retains his identity as the divine centre of his creation_ Coleridge insists on the controlling presence of the artist’s imagination.”³³

However, I would like to understand the metaphor with reference to Coleridge’s concept of the relation of man and nature. Coleridge writes that “The genuine naturalist is a dramatic poet in his own line: and such as our myriad-minded Shakespeare is, compared with the Racines and Metastasios, such and by a similar process of self-transformation would the man be, compared with the Doctors of the mechanic school, who should construct his physiology on the heaven-descended, Know Thyself.”(*LS*, 79) Before arriving at this conclusion, he identifies the “I am” as the substance and the life of all our knowledge:

Without this latent presence of the “I am,” all modes of existence in the external world would flit before us as colored shadows, with no greater depth, root, or fixture, than the image of a rock hath in a gliding stream or the rain-bow on a fast-sailing rain-storm. The human mind is the compass, in which the laws and actuations of all outward essences are revealed as the dips and declinations. (The application of Geometry to the forces and movements of the material world is both proof and instance.)(*LS*, 78-79)

At this point Coleridge relates the laws of nature to the mind of man. And from the fact that the mind of man represents the law of nature, he tries to find the “I am,” and nature as the symbol of God’s power. Coleridge finds some similarity between the natural philosopher and the poet:

They (the assumed indecomposable substances of the laboratory)³⁴ are the symbols of elementary powers, and the exponents of a law, which, as the root of all these powers, the chemical philosopher, whatever his theory may be, is instinctively

³³ Burwick, Frederick, “Coleridge and Schelling on Mimesis.” *The Coleridge Connection*. Eds. Richard Gravil and Molly Lefebre. Hampshire, London: The Macmillan Press, 1990. 178-199, p.190.

³⁴ The words in the parenthesis are mine.

labouring to extract. This instinct, again, is itself but the form, in which the idea, the mental Correlative of the law, first announces its incipient germination in his own mind: and hence proceeds the striving after unity of principle through all the diversity of forms, with a feeling resembling that which accompanies our endeavors to recollect a forgotten name; when we seem at once to have and not to have it; which the memory feels but cannot find. Thus, as “the lunatic, the lover, and the poet,” suggest each other to Shakespeare’s Theseus³⁵, as soon as his thoughts present him the ONE FORM, of which they are but varieties; so water and flame, the diamond, the charcoal, and the mantling champagne, with its ebullient sparkles, are convoked and fraternized by the theory of the chemist.(F I, 470-1)

Coleridge, in his Lectures, says that “Proteus who now flowed, a river; now raged, a fire now roared, a lion—...assumed all changes, but still in the stream, in the fire, in the beast, it was not only the resemblance but it was the Divinity that appeared in it, & assumed the character.”(Lect I, 225) He made a similar claim for Shakespeare: “Shakespeare always *Master* of himself and his Subject—a genuine Proteus—we see all things in *him*, as Images in a calm Lake— most distinct most accurate—only more splendid and more glorified—”(Lect I, 528)

³⁵ See Shakespeare *Midsummer Night's Dream* V i 1-17
 Hip. 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.
 The. More strange than true. I never may believe
 These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
 Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.
 The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
 Are of imagination all compact:
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
 That is the mad man: the lover, all as frantic,
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
 The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
 And as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.

Elsewhere he directly relates nature and Proteus:

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—but to become by power of Imagination another Thing—Proteus, a river, a lion, yet still the God felt to be there!—Then his thinking faculty & thereby perfect abstraction from himself—he writes exactly as if of an other planet, or as describing the movement of two Butterflies—.(*Lect I*, 69-70)

Here, "perfect abstraction from himself," is nothing but "essence Proteus", as shown in the following passage:

Hard to express that sense of the analogy or likeness of a Thing which enables a Symbol to represent it, so that we think of the Thing itself—& yet knowing that the Thing is not present to us. —Surely, on this universal fact of words & images depends by more or less mediations the *imitation* instead of *copy* which is illustrated in the very nature Shakespearianized!—that Proteus Essence that could assume the very form, but yet known & felt not to be the Thing by that difference of the Substance which made every atom of the Form another thing!—that likeness not identity—an exact web, every line of direction miraculously the same, but the one worsted, the other silk.(*CN II* 2274, November 1804)

Coleridge's second metaphor for Shakespeare's mode of creativity is Spinoza's pantheistic God. There is no essential difference between the two metaphors. Spinoza's concept of God, according to McFarland, is "a being absolutely infinite—that is, a substance consisting in infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality".³⁶ For Spinoza,

The existence of particular things is only modally possible; substantially, in terms of an answer to the question of what they really are, they have no existence as 'things'. And it further follows that the substance of any given thing, by this reduction, will

³⁶ McFarland, Thomas. *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p.63.

be indistinguishable from the substance of any other thing, and that consequently, by the law of identity of indiscernibles, there could not be a multiplicity of substances, or theoretical answers to the question 'what is it?', but one substance only. 'Setting the modifications aside', says Spinoza, 'and considering substance in itself, that is, truly, there cannot be conceived one substance different from another—that is, there cannot be granted several substances, but one substance only.'³⁷

If we accept this definition, the metaphors of Proteus and the Spinozistic deity can be seen to figure the same truth. But Coleridge seems to emphasise the mode of Shakespeare's characterless objectivity in creating his works more when he uses the metaphor of Spinoza's God.

To demonstrate this characteristic of Shakespeare, Coleridge often compares Shakespeare with Milton:

Shakespeare is the Spinozistic deity—an omnipresent creativeness. Milton is the deity of prescience; he stands *ab extra*, and drives a fiery chariot and four, making the horses feel the iron curb which holds them in. Shakespeare's poetry is characterless; that is, it does not reflect the individual Shakespeare; but John Milton himself is in every line of the *Paradise Lost*. (*TT&Om* (May 12, 1830), 92)

Whereas Milton is "the *poet* appearing and wishing to appear as the poet, and likewise, as the man, as much as, though more rare than, the father, the brother, the preacher, and the patriot," (*AP*, 296) Shakespeare is a poet who does not reveal his personal characteristics in his poetry. Though Shakespeare and Milton, for Coleridge, are opposed to each other in the mode of their writing, they are not different in telling us "the identity of truth and fact". Coleridge, while explaining the concept of objectivity, discusses the different modes by which Shakespeare and Milton arrive at this quality:

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.65-6.

...I must premise that there is a *synthesis* of intellectual insight including the mental object, the organ of the correspondent being indivisible, and this (O deep truth!) because the objectivity consists in the universality of its subjectiveness—as when it *sees*, and millions *see* even so, and the seeing of the millions is what constitutes to *A* and to each of the millions the *objectivity* of the sight, the equivalent to a common object—a synthesis of *this*, I say, and of proper external object which we call *fact*. Now, this it is which we find in religion. It is more than philosophical truth—it is other and more than historical fact; it is not made up by the addition of the one to the other, but it is the *identity* of both, the coinherence.

Now, this being understood, I proceed to say, using the term objectivity (arbitrarily, I grant), for this identity of truth and fact, that Milton hid the poetry in or transformed (not trans-substantiated) the poetry into this objectivity, while Shakespeare, in all things, the divine opposite or antithetic correspondent of the divine Milton, transformed the objectivity into poetry. (Ibid., 296-7)

Here, we can notice that, for Coleridge, both Shakespeare and Milton tell something essential in their poetry which he describes as 'objectivity'. Keats's insistence on the poet's characterlessness could be understood in the same context as Coleridge's concept of Shakespeare as a Spinozistic deity. "A poet," Keats says, "is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually infor[ming] and filling some other Body—The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures."³⁸ Keats names this kind of poet the chameleon Poet and Shakespeare is his supreme example. "As to the poetical character itself, he argues,

(I mean that sort of which, if I am anything, I am a Member, that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the chameleon poet.³⁹

³⁸ Keats, John. From the Letters (October 27, 1818), in *Criticism: the Major Texts*, p.350.

³⁹ Ibid., p.349.

Here, Coleridge would have agreed with Keats on Shakespeare's objective mode of creating characters. But he would not have agreed with Keats about the chameleon poet's delight in creating everything, even evil characters. For him, "No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher."(*BL* II, 25)

5. Shakespeare as A Prophet

Coleridge's concept of the prophet or seer is focused on the ability to penetrate the essential law of things. In Essay I in *The Friend* he explains the state of the golden age; that is, the age when "Conscience acted in Man with the ease and uniformity of Instinct; when Labour was a sweet name for the activity of sane Minds in healthful Bodies, and all enjoyed in common the bounteous harvest produced, and gathered in, by common effort; when there existed in the Sexes, and in the Individuals of each Sex, just variety enough to permit and call forth the gentle restlessness and final union of chaste love and individual attachment, each seeking and finding the beloved one by the natural affinity of their Beings; when the dread Sovereign of the Universe was known only as the universal Parent, no Altar but the pure Heart, and Thanksgiving and grateful Love the sole Sacrifice—"(*F* I, 7). One day a rain of madness fell on all the people except a prophet who warned the people of this disaster. As a result, people totally changed, becoming selfish, idolatrous, and murderous. The prophet also watched a whole troop of his fellow men famished and in fetters, led by one of their fellow men who had enslaved them. But the mad people in turn see the prophet as a mad man. A man exclaimed:

“Who is this man? How strangely he looks! how wild!—a worthless idler!” In this fable we can see the Coleridgean concept of the seer. He has the ability to penetrate appearance and the ability to know impending danger and he can advise on the right way to avoid the disaster. Nevertheless, in the sight of the “normal” people he looks mad, wild, and idle.

Coleridge sees prophets in different fields. He recognises seers or prophets of science in those who find the laws of organic nature. Contrary to the received notion that the highest and most perfect vegetable, and the lowest and rudest animal forms ought to be considered the links of the two systems, some scientists discovered that the resemblance would be as the proximity, greatest in the first and rudimental products of vegetable and animal organization. According to Coleridge,

From these men, or from minds enkindled by their labours, we hope hereafter to receive it, or rather the yet higher ideas to which it refers us, matured into *laws* of organic nature; and thence to have one other splendid proof, that with the knowledge of LAW alone dwell Power and Prophecy, decisive Experiment, and, lastly, a scientific method, that dissipating with its earliest rays the gnomes of hypothesis and the mists of theory may, within a single generation, open out on the philosophic Seer discoveries that had baffled the gigantic, but blind and guideless industry of ages.(I' 1, 470)

He also sees an example of the seer or prophet in Edmund Burke. In Burke's speeches and writings at the commencement of the American war, and at the commencement of the French Revolution, he found the same principles though the practical inferences are almost opposite. Here, principles is “a term with a specific meaning for Coleridge, i.e., “ideas” in the Platonic sense.”⁴⁰ He asks some questions

⁴⁰ Headley, Douglas. “Coleridge's Intellectual Intuition, the Vision of God, and the Walled Garden of

about why the speeches and writings are more interesting now than they were found at the time of their first publication. His answer is that

Edmund Burke possessed and had sedulously sharpened that eye, which sees all things, actions, and events, in relation to the *laws* that determine their existence and circumscribe their possibility. He referred habitually to *principles*. He was a *scientific* statesman; and therefore a *seer*. For every *principle* contains in itself the germs of prophecy; and as the prophetic power is the essential privilege of science, so the fulfillment of its oracles supplies the outward and (to men in general) the *only* test of its claim to the title. (*BL* I, 191-192)

Likewise, prophets in religion, for Coleridge, are those who gain an insight into God's power rather than those who can see into the future. He defines God's power thus:

It is absolutely one, and it IS, and affirms itself TO BE, is its only predicate. And yet this power, nevertheless, is! In eminence of Being it IS! And he for whom it manifests itself in its adequate idea, dare as little arrogate it to himself as his own, can as little appropriate it either totally or by partition, as he can claim ownership in the breathing air, or make an enclosure in the cope of heaven. He bears witness of it to his own mind, even as he describes life and light: and, with the silence of light, it describes itself and dwells in *us* only as far as we dwell in *it*. The truths, which it manifests are such as it alone can manifest, and in all truth it manifests itself. By what name then canst thou call a truth so manifested? Is it not REVELATION? Ask thyself whether thou canst attach to that latter word any consistent meaning not included in the idea of the former. And the manifesting power, the source and the correlative of the idea thus manifested—is it not GOD? Either thou knowest it to be God, or thou hast called an idol by that awful name! Therefore in the most appropriate, no less than in the highest, sense of the word were the earliest teachers of humanity *inspired*. They alone were the true seers of GOD, and therefore prophets of the human race. (*FI*, 515-6)

Tim Fulford, in *Coleridge's Figurative Language*, discusses the influence of the esoteric tradition and Coleridge's idea of himself as a prophet. According to Fulford, "Coleridge himself was able to portray himself as an inspired interpreter, about to be visited by new

"Kubla Khan." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59 (1998): 115-134, p.132.

‘powers of Insight’ into the prophet’s inner sense, and hearing like Isaiah ‘the sound of [the] wing’s of the seraphim(NB 52, f, 19v).’⁴¹

In the case of poetry, Coleridge’s concept of the prophet can be understood with reference to his idea of the prophet in other fields. But at the same time, Coleridge maintains the traditional concept of the poet as prophet.

Like all western literature, English poetry has traditionally accorded to the poet a prophetic function.

From Langland, the Gawain poet, and the Chaucer of the great dream visions; through Spenser, the Shakespeare whose career concludes in the visionary *Tempest*, and Milton; and down through Smart, Gray, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Yeats, the English poet has been concerned with how and what man sees and has been determined to reveal or uncover—whether in dreams, vision, opium state, or psychic trance—the world beyond the one the average man sees but that actually determines the moral and spiritual significance of the quotidian.⁴²

The Romantic concept of the poet insistently identifies him as a seer or prophet. Robert Lowth’s *Lectures on Hebrew Poetry* is recognised as a profound influence on the Romantic poets. In the *Lectures*, Lowth suggests that “the word *Nabi* was used by the Hebrews in an ambiguous sense, and that it equally denoted a prophet, a poet, or a musician, under the influence of Divine inspiration.”⁴³ The prophetic office, he argues,

had a most strict connexion with the poetic art. They had one common name, one common origin, one common author, the Holy Spirit. Those in particular were called to the exercise of the prophetic office, who were previously conversant with the sacred poetry. It was equally a part of their duty to compose verses for the service of the church, and to declare the oracles of God; it cannot, therefore, be doubted, that a great portion of the sacred hymns may properly be termed

⁴¹ Fulford, Tim. *Coleridge’s Figurative Language*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991, pp.150-1.

⁴² Wojcik, J. & Frontain, R. eds. “Introduction: The Prophet in the Poem.” *Poetic Prophecy in Western Literature*. Rutherford, Madison, Tenneck: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1984. 13-30, p.21.

⁴³ Lowth, Robert. *Lectures on The Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*. London: Chadwick, 1847, p.200.

prophecies, or that many of the prophecies are in reality hymns or poems. Since, as we have already proved, it was from the first a principal end and aim of poetry, to impress upon the minds of men the sayings of the wise, and such precepts as related either to the principles of faith, or the laws of morality, as well as to transmit the same to posterity; it ought not to appear extraordinary, that prophecy, which in this view ranks as a principal, and is of the highest importance, should not disdain the assistance of an art so admirably calculated to effect its purposes.⁴⁴

Terence Hoagwood identifies three strands in the notion of prophecy, that is, the story of the universe, the story of the age, and finally, the story of the perceiving mind. He argues that in classical or romantic works the three strains are not disentangled.⁴⁵ Lowth's definition of prophecy can be understood in a similar context. "The immediate design of all prophecy," according to him, "is to inform or amend those generations that precede the events predicted; and it is usually calculated either to excite their fears and apprehensions, or to afford them consolation."⁴⁶ These roles of the prophet accord with the role of poet as it is construed by the Romantic poets. The major Romantic poets aspired to write a quasi-epic which not only dealt with the problem of the universe but also diagnosed the present time and offered a vision of the future, but their focus is on the need to transform the manner in which the world is perceived. The poets, Hoagwood says, "are engaged in renovating the forms of thought through the transformation of perception. The denial of externally imposed authority, including the conventional concept of time, is based on the cognitive activity of the human mind."⁴⁷

Shelley's definition of poetry identifies it as prophecy in this sense. Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry*, says,

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.201-202.

⁴⁵ See Hoagwood, Terence Allen. *Prophecy and the Philosophy of Mind: Traditions of Blake and Shelley*. [n.p.]: The University of Alabama Press, 1985, p.4.

⁴⁶ Lowth. *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, p.224.

⁴⁷ Hoagwood. *Prophecy and the Philosophy of Mind*, p.189.

...poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain, or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being...It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration.⁴⁸

Coleridge's definition of the poet is similar:

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 and which continually awakens his feelings being of the same feeling. What is old and worn out, not in itself, but from the dimness of the intellectual eye brought on by worldly passions he makes new: he pours upon it the dew that glistens and blows round us the breeze which cooled us in childhood.(*Lect 1*, 327)

Solving the riddle of the universe is traditionally said to be the business of a prophet.

Shakespeare, Coleridge's ideal poet, possessing the most powerful imagination, is also the supreme prophet.

Shakespeare, above all, has an insight into truth and he is "the philosopher, the grand Poet who combined truth with beauty and beauty with truth..."(*Lect 1*, 335). In his note on Coleridge's lecture, Collier writes,

Coleridge concluded by a panegyric upon Shakespeare whom he declared to be the wonder of the ignorant part of mankind but much more the wonder of the learned who at the same time that he possessed profundity of thought could be looked upon as no less than a Prophet—Yet at the same time with all his wonderful powers making us feel as if he were unconscious of himself & of his mighty abilities: disguising the half-god in the simplicity of a child or the affection of a dear

⁴⁸ Shelley. *A Defence of Poetry*. Ed. Albert S. Cook. Boston, Mass.: Ginn, 1890, p.42.

companion—(*Lect I*, 367-368)

For him, to seek for intuitive knowledge is the job of the philosopher. Quoting from the *Ennead*, he writes:

“it is not lawful to enquire from whence it sprang, as if it were a thing subject to place, motion, for it neither approached hither, nor again departs from hence to some other place; but it either appears to us or it does not appear. So that we ought not to pursue it with a view of detecting its secret source, but to watch in quiet till it suddenly shines upon us; preparing ourselves for the blessed spectacle as the eye waits patiently for the rising sun.” (*BL I*, 241)

This does not mean that intellectual intuition is passively received. It needs philosophical imagination. The people who possess philosophical imagination which he calls the sacred power of self-intuition are those “who within themselves can interpret and understand the symbol, that the wings of the air-sylph are forming within the skin of the caterpillar; those only, who feel in their own spirits the same instinct, which impels the chrysalis of the horned fly to leave room in its involucre for antennae yet to come.” (*BL I*, 241-242) These people “know and feel, that the *potential* works *in* them, even as the *actual* works on them!” (*BL I*, 242)

For Coleridge, Shakespeare has the intuitive power and this intuition is incarnated in appropriate imagery. Shakespeare is a poet-prophet who “has placed the greater number of his profoundest maxims and general truths, both political and moral, not in the mouths of men at ease, but of men under influence of passion, when the mighty thoughts overmaster and become the tyrants of the mind that has brought them forth.” (*LS*, 15) He writes, “In his *Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, principles of deepest insight and widest interest fly off like sparks from the glowing iron under the loud

anvil.”(Ibid., 15).

6. A Man of His Age and of No Age

It is said that Coleridge was one of the first critics to consider Shakespeare from the historical view-point. The historical premise is, according to Appleyard, that “aesthetic form is largely determined by historic context, and that the best clue to the explanation of literary artifacts is often the study of the circumstances in which they were created”⁴⁹ Coleridge often explained Shakespeare’s excellence by relating it to his age. But Coleridge’s attitude is bifocused; one is that Shakespeare was influenced by his age and the other is that Shakespeare is beyond his age:

...I confess, that one main object of this Lecture was to prove that Shakespeare’s eminence is his own, and his age’s—as the Pine Apple, the Melon, and the Gourd may grow in the same bed—nay, the same circumstances of warmth and soil may be necessary to their full development—but does not account for the golden hue, the ambrosial flavor, the perfect shape of the Pine Apple, or the tufted Crown on its head—Would that those who would twist it off could but promise us in this instance to make it the germ of an equal Successor—(*Lect II*, 147)

Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Fletcher are the playwrights of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period and we can find the common characteristics of the age and its circumstances in their work but they are different as the pine apple and the melon are different in their taste, colour, and form.

Coleridge explains how far a poet is influenced by accidental circumstances. “A poet,” he claims,

⁴⁹ Appleyard, J.A. *Coleridge’s Philosophy of Literature*, p.124.

writes not for past ages, but for that in which he lives, and that which is to follow. It is natural that he should conform to the circumstances of his day; but a true genius will stand independent of these circumstances:...(Lect I, 516)

Coleridge points out the difference of literary circumstances and the traces of the age or their literary environment in figures such as Dante and Ariosto:

Whilst Dante imagined himself a copy of Virgil, and Ariosto of Homer, they were both unconscious of that great power working within them, which carried them beyond their originals; for their originals were polytheists. All great discoveries bear the stamp of the age in which they were made....(Ibid., 516)

In Shakespeare's case, his age favoured him. Coleridge writes that Shakespeare

lived in an age in which from the religious controversies carried on in a way of which we have no conception. There was a general energy of thinking, a pleasure in hard thinking & an expectation of it from those who came forward to solicit public praise of which, in this day, we are equally ignorant. Consequently the judges were real amateurs. The author had to deal with a learned public, & he had no idea of a mixed public—it was divided, in truth, between those who had no taste at all & who went merely to amuse themselves—and those who were deeply versed in the literature to which they gave encouragement.(Lect I, 228)

Coleridge's evaluation of the age of Shakespeare differs significantly from that of his predecessors. They argued that Shakespeare's age was rather disadvantageous for Shakespeare. Duff, for example, admits the influence of the age on Shakespeare but his conclusions are at odds with Coleridge's. The age of Elizabeth, according to him, "justly renowned for the wisdom of her councils, and the terror of her arms, was certainly not the aera of correct and refined taste; and it may not be amiss to observe that the writings of Shakespeare, with all their uncommon excellence, have taken a strong tincture of the antithesis, the witticisms, and the rudeness of the times; a circumstance, which, if

properly attended to, will account for, and extenuate the far greatest part of the blemishes which have been imputed to him.”⁵⁰ John Dennis has a similar opinion. Shakespeare, he insists, “was neither Master of Time enough to consider, correct, and polish what he wrote, to alter it, to add to it, and to retrench from it, nor had he Friends to consult upon whose Capacity and Integrity he could depend.”⁵¹

Coleridge, on the other hand, sometimes argues that Shakespeare transcends his age:

His predecessors (the Poets of Italy France England &) drew their aliment from the soil. There was a nationality—they were of a country of a genius—grafted with the chivalrous spirit & sentiment of the north—and with the wild magic imported from the East. Not so Shakespear—He bore no obvious witness of the soil from whence he grew—compare him with mountain Pine.

Self-sustained—deriving his genius immediately from heaven—-independent of all earthly or national influence

That such a mind involved itself in a human form is a problem indeed which my feeble powers may witness with admiration but cannot explain. My words are indeed feeble when I speak of that myriad minded man who all artists feel above all praise— (*Lect II*, 119)

At first sight, this passage seems to contradict his recognition of Shakespeare as the poet of his age. This passage, as the metaphor of the mountain pine shows, should be understood as an argument for Shakespeare as the poet of nature. Therefore, the notion that Shakespeare was “Self-sustained—deriving his genius immediately from heaven—-independent of all earthly or national influence” does not accord with the notion of Shakespeare as “a mere child of nature”. Once again, Coleridge emphasises that Shakespeare’s adherence to the permanent law of nature frees him from parochialism, idiosyncrasy, or regionalism:

⁵⁰ Duff, *Critical Observations on the Writings of the Most Celebrated Original Geniuses in Poetry*, pp.194-5.

Least of all poets antients or modern does Shakespear appear to be coloured or affected by the age in which he lived—he was of all times—& countries. true to the great & enduring eternal of our nature

North the chivalrous of the North art was a mere accident, a subordin[ate] to his genius & nothing (of) the importation of the East—
He drew from the eternal of our nature—(ibid., 119)

If we say that Shakespeare's plays and Sophocles's are different, we might be able to find reasons in the differences between the historical circumstances under which the plays were written. But if we say that they are the same in that they contain the universal and permanent truths of the human condition, we can say that they are both poets beyond time. While Coleridge points out the differences between *King Lear* and *Oedipus the King*, he argues that "the great men of Greece & the great man of England proceeded in the same process." (*Lect I*, 210)

Coleridge writes,

Poetry in its essence a universal Spirit but which in incorporating itself adopts & takes up the surrounding materials, & adapts itself to existing Circumstances. What it cloaks itself in, it glorifies—like a plant, dependent on Soil for many things, yet still retaining its original Line—Essentials therefore—accidents are the two grounds of judgment—(*Lect I*, 511)

This passage sums up his argument that Shakespeare is both of his age and of no age. Coleridge's statement that "he is of no age—nor, I may add, of any religion, or party, or profession. The body and substance of his works came out of the unfathomable depths of his own oceanic mind: his observation and reading, which was considerable, supplied him with the drapery of his figures" (*TT&Om*, (March 15, 1834), 296) can be understood

⁵¹ Dennis. *An Essay On the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare*, p.15.

in this context.

So far, I have discussed Coleridge's representation of Shakespeare as a poet. I started from the commonest epithet for Shakespeare, 'a child of nature'. Almost unanimously, the eighteenth-century Shakespearean critics hold Shakespeare's genius to be 'a natural gift' which implies that it is wild, irregular, and exuberant. For Coleridge, Shakespeare is also a poet of nature, which he describes as 'Nature Humanized'. But his notion of Shakespeare as a poet of nature is distinguished from those of his eighteenth-century predecessors.

First, I tried to define his description of Shakespeare as 'Nature Humanized' based on his concept of nature. Then, I discussed the Coleridgean concept of genius and in what aspects Shakespeare is the ideal example of this genius. For Coleridge, genius is not merely a divine gift, but involves an active unity of the human faculties. The insistence on the co-presence of genius and judgment is also peculiar to Coleridge.

Next, I considered Coleridge's idea of Shakespeare as a poet of Method. As he defines it in *Treatise on Method*, method is a progressive transition from one step to another and it is a way of operating in nature. Coleridge's notion of Shakespeare as a prophet is based on his notion of the prophet. Shakespeare, as a poet who awakens the mind's eye of the people, who sends us principle, maxim and truth, is consistent with the Coleridgean meaning of prophet.

Then, I tried to interpret Coleridge's metaphors for Shakespeare, namely, Shakespeare as a Proteus and Shakespeare as a Spinozistic deity. But I distinguished them from each other in that one is more focused on Shakespeare's identity according to the principle of nature while paying attention to his power to create everything without

revealing his personal peculiarities and the other is focused on Shakespeare's objective mode, as compared to Milton's.

Finally, Coleridge suggests that Shakespeare was influenced by his age but at the same time that he is beyond time. I considered these apparently contradictory arguments from different aspects. Shakespeare is a poet of an age in that he created works different from those of Sophocles. He, however, is not the poet of the age in that he created works marked by their universality and truth beyond time and place.

Chapter 4. Shakespeare's Poetic Work: Nature Shakespearianized

In Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, the most distinctive words describing Shakespeare's works are 'natural' and 'contrived'. These apparently contradictory terms best sum up Coleridge's idea of Shakespeare's achievement. For him, those of Shakespeare's works which appear most natural have needed the most contrivance. In order to produce such work, a supremely qualified artist is required. Shakespeare is the best qualified of all.

Coleridge argued that a poetic work can be defined by the nature of the poet. Hence, he defines Shakespeare's work by way of defining the poet himself. His understanding of Shakespeare's genius, for instance, defines his understanding of the poetic works: they are the products not only of his divine gift but of his wisdom and experience. As Coleridge argues, all the faculties such as wit, subtlety, fancy, profundity, imagination, moral and physical susceptibility to pleasure are combined in Shakespeare: his works are the results of the combination of these faculties. Likewise, his artistic works can be described as of his age and at the same time beyond his age; in his work, we notice both the peculiarities of his age and a universality transcending that age. And his work has a prophetic character: it not only diagnoses the human situation but points the way to its betterment. Finally, if he is depicted as 'Nature Humanised', his works can be seen as 'Nature Shakespearianized'.

One of the merits of Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare lies in his method of

appreciating Shakespeare's works. He defines the general principles of art and shows how well Shakespeare's poetry is congruent to the principles.¹ As shown in his notes, articles, and lectures, he tried to define the concept of the fine arts and to establish the relationship between them and poetry. In his opinion, poetry and the other arts share some common characteristics; he included "Music and Painting under the great Genus of Poetry"(*Lect 1*, 225). The comparison of Shakespeare's work to painting or music is an important indication of his general view of Shakespeare's poetic works.

Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare's work is closely related to his principle of nature. Generally, for Coleridge, Shakespeare's works are analogous to nature, an incarnated organic unity of idea. Shakespeare's artistic works are exquisite examples of the reconciliation of opposites, i.e. the natural and the artificial. To achieve its organic status, his work needs to be well contrived. Coleridge focuses on how well each part is contrived to be an organic whole as if he were describing how each cell or each blood vessel works in our body.

In this chapter I will first discuss Coleridge's view of the general characteristics of Shakespeare's work by comparison with other fine arts, namely, painting, architecture, and music. I will describe his notion of Shakespeare's work as an organic whole and then how each part works within the whole; his ideas of form, characterisation, language, metre, pun, and wit will be discussed in this respect.

¹ See Heller, Janet Ruth. *Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, and the Reader of Drama*. Columbia and London: Columbia University Press, 1990, p.56. Heller points to Coleridge's method of lecturing thus: "He explains to his auditors that he has "taken the great names of Milton and Shakespeare rather for the purpose of illustrating great principles than for any minute examination of their works". These principles were designed to stimulate his audience to develop skill in reflective thought, which Coleridge viewed as an art, and he wished to make his students capable of drawing their own conclusions about literature and other topics."

1. Fine Arts and Shakespeare's Poetic Works

Coleridge defines the fine arts as “the translation of man into nature”. For him, art is “the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation; colour, form, motion, and sound, are the elements which it combines, and it stamps them into unity in the mould of a moral idea.”(*MAL*, 42) In his opinion, “the art of communicating whatever we wish to communicate so as to express and to produce excitement”(CN III 3827, May 1810) is the common faculty shared by all the fine arts. Fine arts are not a copy but an imitation; all fine arts are essentially ideal; the purpose of the communication of mental excitement is immediate pleasure; the basic principle is unity in diversity. In notes taken by J. Tomalin, this notion is propounded:

Coleridge included Music & Painting under the great Genus of Poetry, & we could not understand those, unless we first impressed upon the mind that they are ideal & not the mere copy of things, but the contemplation of mind upon things.(*Lect* I, 225)

Coleridge's understanding of the fine arts as belonging to a single genus is occasionally shown in his application of his definition of art to painting and music and poetry in its exclusive sense. For instance, he applies his definition of poetry to “Raphael & Handel equally as to Milton”(CN III 3827). This unified notion of art is not unrelated to his comprehensive sense of beauty. He notes:

—Of the very many fine Sunsets (we have had of late—) that of this evening most

glorious—and now what a lovely Moonlight Night with these soft flakes of white clouds, (the cloudlets & bands immediately over the Moon /) died in tenderest Blue and on my table the two flower-glasses and one flower pot, in an oblique line:/. raised each over the other, so that the 2nd had the cylinder-glass of the first, and the Flower-pot, almost concealed by the Jasmines & Honeysuckles, hides that of the Second—I was looking out of my window, saying to myself—What a beautiful Scene! when the Maid came in to my room & said—What beautiful Flowers!—and it immediately occurred to me to ask myself—how many portions of a barley-corn T. Phillips's(R.A.) Musical Scale of Proportions would go to explain the sense & sensation of *Beauty* excited by either! (CN IV 5433, August 1826)²

This notion of beauty is, in a broad sense, connected to his concept of organicism. In his survey of the natural world, he relates a bird's colour to a flower's fragrance:

Hence the feathery vegetation of the Birds—the rich colors—and a substitute for the fragrant of the Plant.—we have Light in the form (under the power) (sub ditione) of Gravity in Color, and Gravity sub forma et ditione Lucis in Sounds & sweet yearning varied by quick provoking challenging sounds are the surrogates of the Vegetable Odors—& like these, are the celebrations of the Nuptial moments, the hour of Love.—Music is to Fragrance, as Air to Water/ Milton's *Comus*.—(Sh&F, 1455-1456)

His notion of synesthesia as shown in “A light in sound, a sound-like power in light”(The Eolian Harp) seems to be linked to his notion of organic relations.

Coleridge's idea of the kinship among the fine arts is not original to him. As usual, he absorbed traditional thought and recreated it as his own. The comparison of Shakespeare's drama to Raphael's or Titian's painting is not just the result of the influence of Schlegel. From his youth, he was keen on painting, architecture, and music and tried to establish the relationship between poetry and the other fine arts. To

² See CN IV, 5432n, Kathleen Coburn notes that Thomas Phillips is the author of *Lectures on the History & Principles of Painting*(1833). According to Coburn Coleridge had known Phillips at least from 1819 when Phillips painted his portrait. “In Lect VI “On Design” he argued that there is in us an inherent sense of beauty and in many things ‘a resident beauty; principally the result of well-regulated proportion’ (266). He referred to architecture, Greek vases, flowers, the visual, and then said, ‘For the ear, proportion and combinations of sound producing beautiful, or rather delightful, music have been mathematically

understand the way he compares them is, I think, a good introduction to Coleridge's appreciation of Shakespeare's works.

I · i Shakespeare's Works and Painting

From ancient Greek aesthetics, the relationship between poetry and painting as sister arts has been discussed, but at different periods different kinds of relationship have been suggested. Plato, in his *The Republic*, places the poet by the side of the painter because, in Plato's opinion,

he is like him in two ways: first, in as much as his creations have an inferior degree of truth— in this, I say he is like him; and he is also like him in being concerned with an inferior part of the soul; and therefore we shall be right in refusing to admit him into a well-ordered State, because he awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason.³

Though Plato took the poet and the painter as inferior beings because they appeal to the feelings which he thought inferior to reason, he points to the important role of both poetry and painting, especially in Romantic aesthetics. Aristotle also maintains the sisterhood of the two arts:

The poet being an imitator, like a painter or any other artist, must of necessity imitate one of three objects,— things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be....First as to matters which concern the poet's own art. If he describes the impossible, he is guilty of an error; but the error may be justified, if the end of the art be thereby attained (the end being that already mentioned),— if, that is, the effect of this or any other part of the poem is thus rendered more striking.⁴

demonstrated". He cited Beethoven's ability to compose (mathematically) when deaf."

³ Plato. *The Republic*. Reprinted in *Criticism: The Major Texts*, p.17.

⁴ Aristotle. *Poetics*. Reprinted in *Criticism: The Major Texts*, p.36.

Aristotle's distinction between different kinds of imitation had a profound impact on later poets and painters. Horace too compares poetry to painting: "a book may be like just such a picture if it portray idle imaginings shaped like the dreams of a sick man, so that neither head nor foot can be properly ascribed to any one shape."⁵ Horace, unlike Aristotle, does not have a place for the pure imaginary world. For him, plausibility and verisimilitude are crucially important for both poetry and painting.

The concept "a poem like a painting", or "a painting like a poem" has been important in the traditions of both poetry and painting. Poetry provided good subject matter for painting and painting, in turn, had a profound impact on the description of images in poetry.⁶ In the Renaissance poets and painters shared common ideas and ornaments. Philip Sidney defines a poem as 'a speaking picture'⁷. According to Hagstrum,

One striking characteristic of the poetry of the English Renaissance was its delight in long and sensuous descriptions of works of art, in which the poet vied with the painter in creating pictorial vividness and verbal color.⁸

In Shakespeare himself, the notion of sisterhood between picture and poem is shown. In *Lucrece*, the stanzas in which Lucrece compares her situation after being raped with the fall of Troy demonstrates Shakespeare's idea of a picture as a dumb poem:

To this well-painted piece is Lucrece come,

⁵ Horace. *Art of Poetry*. Reprinted in *Criticism: The Major Texts*, p.51.

⁶ The relationship between poetry and painting is elucidated by Jean H. Hagstrum in her *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958.

⁷ Sidney. *An Apology for Poetry*. Reprinted in *Criticism: The Major Texts*, p.86.

⁸ Hagstrum. *The Sister Arts*, p. 112.

To find a face where all distress is stelled.
Many she sees where cares have carved some,
But where all distress and dolour dwelled,
Till she despairing Hecuba beheld,
 Staring on Priam's wounds with her old eyes,
 Which bleeding under Pyrrhus' proud foot lies.

In her the painter had anatomized
Time's ruin, beauty's wrack, and grim care's reign;
Her cheeks with chaps and wrinkles were disguised;
Of what she was no semblance did remain.
Her blue blood changed to black in every vein,
 Wanting the spring that those shrunk pipes had fed,
 Showed life imprisoned in a body dead.(Lucrece, 1443-1456)

Though this tradition weakened in the periods of metaphysical poetry and the era of Milton, we can see some sensual images in Richard Crashaw's poetry and there are pictorial aspects in the description of the garden in *Paradise Lost*. In eighteenth-century poetry, the description of nature in detail is not unrelated to the rise of landscape painting. Painting is even placed in the superior position as it is more immediate and more powerful in provoking feeling. Eighteenth-century writers therefore valued the pictorial aspects in their poetry. This is not true just of poetry but of the novel. Fielding, for example, in *Tom Jones*, describes Allworthy's garden as if it is a painting. In the Romantic period, it is said that poetry found its kinship with music rather than in painting, as attention shifted to the expression of feeling from the imitation of nature.⁹ Coleridge, however, still pays a lot of attention to painting. Though we can find his unique musical rhythm in his poetry, we can also see many scenes of painting in it; for example, Kubla Khan's pleasure dome and his garden, and several scenes in *The Ancient Mariner*, which Dorée, like several others, has illustrated. Coleridge's

⁹See Chapter IV. "The Development of the Expressive Theory of Poetry and Art," in M.H.Abrams' *The*

evaluation of *Venus and Adonis* enables us to trace his view on *ut pictura poesis*. He conjectured in such poems as “Venus and Adonis” and “Rape of Lucrece”

that even then the great instinct, which impelled the poet to the drama, was secretly working in him, prompting him by a series and never broken chain of imagery, always vivid and because unbroken, often minute; by the highest effort of the picturesque in words, of which words are capable, higher perhaps than was ever realized by any other poet, even Dante not excepted; to provide a substitute for that visual language, that constant intervention and running comment by tone, look and gesture, which in his dramatic works he was entitled to expect from the players.(*BL II, 21*)

When Coleridge defined the difference between the poets of his age and those of the 15th and 16th centuries, he remarked that the difference may be extended to “the sister art of painting”(*BL II, 29*). For him modern poetry is characterised by “new and striking IMAGES; with INCIDENTS that interest the affections or excite the curiosity”(*BL II,29*). He offers this description of the general tendency of the modern poets:

Both his characters and his descriptions he renders, as much as possible, specific and individual, even to a degree of portraiture. In his diction and metre, on the other hand, he is comparatively careless. The measure is either constructed on no previous system, and acknowledges no justifying principle but that of the writer’s convenience; or else some mechanical movement is adopted, of which one couplet or stanza is so far an adequate specimen, as that the occasional differences appear evidently to arise from accident, or the qualities of the language itself, not from meditation and an intelligent purpose.(*BL II, 29-30*)

He finds an analogy for the materials and structure of modern poetry in the contemporary landscape painters:

Their foregrounds and intermediate distances are comparatively unattractive: while the main interest of the landscape is thrown into the back ground, where mountains

and torrents and castles forbid the eye to proceed, and nothing tempts it to trace its way back again. But in the works of the great Italian and Flemish masters, the front and the middle objects of the landscape are the most obvious and determinate, the interest gradually dies away in the background, and the charm and peculiar worth of the picture consists, not so much in the specific objects which it conveys to the understanding in a visual language formed by the substitution of figures for words, as in the beauty and harmony of the colours, lines and expression, with which the objects are represented. Hence novelty of subject was rather avoided than sought for. (*BL II*, 32)

The relationship between poetry and painting helps Coleridge to explicate the unity in multitude and “nature idealized into poetry” (*FL*, 471) that he finds in Shakespeare’s works. His comparison of Shakespearean drama to painting, Greek drama, and statuary is often presented as an instance of A.W.Schlegel’s influence on Coleridge’s lectures on Shakespeare. Coleridge pointed out that statuary was characterised by a high degree of abstraction requiring that what is undignified must not be brought into company with what is dignified. He compares Shakespearean drama to a picture by Raphael or Titian which creates the same degree of harmonious effect with a large variety of figures and with less abstraction and more truth to nature. Though Schlegel and Coleridge both compare Shakespearean drama (Schlegel calls it the Romantic drama) to painting, and the Greek drama to statuary, we cannot say that their perspectives are the same. Schlegel focused on the ways a drama is unfolded; that is, the Greek drama emphasised characters and action from a single point of view but the Romantic drama shows a chequered life with its circumstances, in which we can see the slightest movements of the characters.

Coleridge goes far beyond Schlegel. Uvedale Price’s *Essays on the Picturesque*,

which Coleridge probably read¹⁰, suggests what is different in Coleridge's idea of painting and sculpture. According to Price,

In Sculpture, and the whole work being of one uniform colour, the figures, whether single or grouped, without any accompaniments, there is nothing to seduce or distract the eye from the form; to which therefore the efforts of the sculptor are almost exclusively directed; whereas in painting, the charm of general effect or impression, of whatever kind it may be, will often counterbalance the greatest defects in point of form, and makes amends for the want of grandeur, beauty, and correctness.¹¹

Coleridge uses a similar metaphor in his comparison of Shakespearean drama to Westminster Abbey:

The Greeks reared a structure, which in its parts and as a whole, filled the mind with calm and elevated impression of perfect beauty and symmetrical proportion. The moderns, blending materials, produced one striking whole; this may be illustrated by comparing the Pantheon with York Minster or Westminster Abbey. Upon the same scale we may compare Sophocles with Shakespeare;—in the one there is completeness, a satisfying, an excellence, on which the mind can rest; in the other we see a blended multitude of materials; great and little; magnificent and mean: mingled, if we may so say, with a dissatisfying, or falling short of perfection: yet so promising of our progression, that we would not exchange it for that repose of the mind, which dwells on the forms of symmetry in acquiescent admiration of grace. (*Lect I*, 517)

To illustrate the concept of the picturesque, Price also compares Greek architecture with the Gothic:

A temple or palace of Grecian architecture in its perfect entire state, and with its surface and colour smooth and even, either in painting or reality is beautiful; in ruin it is picturesque...in Grecian buildings, the general lines of the roof are strait; and even when varied and adorned by a dome or a pediment, the whole has a character

¹⁰See Modiano. *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature.*, p.9.

¹¹Price, Uvedale. *Essays on the Picturesque*. Vol.I. London: Printed for J.Mawman, 1810, p.139.

of symmetry and regularity....In Gothic buildings, the outline of the summit presents such a variety of forms, of turrets and pinnacles, some open, some fretted and variously enriched, that even where there is an exact correspondence of parts, it is often disguised by an appearance of splendid confusion and irregularity. In the doors and windows of Gothic churches, the pointed arch has as much variety as any regular figure can well have: the eye too is less strongly conducted, than by the parallel lines in the Grecian style, from the top of one aperture to that of another: and every person must be struck with the extreme richness and intricacy of some of the principal windows of our cathedrals and ruined abbeys. In these last is displayed the triumph of the picturesque; and their charms to a painter's eye are often so great, as to rival those which arise from the chaste ornaments, and the noble and elegant simplicity of Grecian architecture.¹²

Price's concept of the picturesque, which has the two characteristics of variety and intricacy, parallels Coleridge's. For Coleridge, the picturesque is achieved "when the Parts by their harmony produce an effect of a Whole, but there is no seen form of an Whole producing or explaining the Parts".(*Sh&F*, 353) At this point it is necessary to recollect that he described Modern drama or Shakespearean drama as picturesque.

Coleridge's comparison of Shakespearean drama to Raphael's or Michael Angelo's paintings focuses on another perspective; namely, its aspect of "nature idealized". His differentiation between 'copy' and 'imagination' is applied to paintings as well as to poetry. According to him,

Painting went on in Power till in Raphael it attained the apex, and in him too I think it began to turn down the other side. The Painter began to think of overcoming difficulties.

After this the descent was rapid, till sculptors began to work inveterate likenesses of periwigs in marble— as see Algarotti's tomb in the cemetery at Pisa— and painters did nothing but *copy*, as well as they could, the external face of Nature. (*TT I*, 25 June 1830, 170)

Like Raphael's paintings, Shakespeare's work is the ideal example of 'imitation'. "What

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.51-54.

Shakespeare proposed to realize was", he says,

an imitation of human Action in connection with sentiments, passions, characters, incidents and events for the purpose of pleasurable emotion; so that whether this be shewn by Tears of Laughter or Tears of Tenderness, they shall still be Tears of Delight, and united with intellectual Complacency.(*CM* III, 894)

In Raphael's or Titian's or Michael Angelo's paintings Coleridge finds something ideal. For him, "the Italian masters differ from the Dutch in this that ages in their pictures are perfectly ideal: the infant that a Madonna holds in her arms cannot be guessed of any particular age—it is humanity in fancy."*(TT* I, 24 July 1831, 1299)

According to him,

Ideal = the subtle hieroglyphical *felt-by-all* though not without abstruse and difficult analysis detected & understood, consonance of the *physiognomic* total & substance (Stoff) with the obvious *Pathognomic*/ herein equi-distant from Opie-ism, i.e. passions planted in a common face (or portrait) that might equally well have been the accidental Substance of any other Passion, and the insipid personified passions of Lebrun, or the unmeaning abstraction of the true Ideal Michael Angelo's despairing Woman at the bottom of the Last Judgment/ (*CN* II 2828, March-April 1806)

Coleridge in explaining the close correspondence of some predominant system of philosophy and taste and character, the whole tone of manners and feeling, and religious and political tendencies, points to the coincidence of the revival of Platonism by Dante and Petrarch with the appearance of Giotto and the six other strong masters, and the culmination of what he calls 'divine Philosophy' with Michael Angelo, Rafael, Titian, and Correggio.(*CL* IV, 28 July 1817) According to him,

He for whom Ideas are constitutive, will in effect be a Platonist—and in those, for whom they are regulative only, Platonism is but a hollow affectation. Dryden *could*

not have been a Platonist,— Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Michael Angelo, & Rafael could not have been other than Platonists.(CLV, 14 January 1820)

Coleridge compares Act. III, sc.iv of *King Lear*, to a Michael Angelo:

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—(Lect II., 333)

As the idea of despair is incarnated in Michael Angelo's The Last Judgment, so the idea of agony is embodied in a scene of Shakespeare's drama. Shakespeare's drama is described as the incarnation of idea: “—Shakespeare's plays might be separated into those where the real is disguised in the ideal; & those where the ideal is hidden from us in the real.”(Lect I, 357)

In appreciating Shakespeare's drama it is wrong to emphasise too strongly its themes; for example, the idea of *Othello* is jealousy, *Macbeth*, ambition, *King Lear*, ingratitude. Description of this kind is not merely superficial but distorts the true meaning of the dramas. When Coleridge says that he can see humanity in the infant in Raphael's Madonna, he reads within the figure the whole human story from the creation and the fall and the redemption by God's incarnation. When he says there is ideal despair in the woman of Michael Angelo's the 'Last Judgement', he locates in the figure not just despair but the religious meaning of despair. Likewise, he took Shakespeare's works as symbols embodying a permanent ideal or truth. Coleridge, in his system of

logic, proposed the Logical Pentad; prothesis, thesis, antithesis, mesothesis, and synthesis. He explains that prothesis is both as one in one and in the same relation, and mesothesis is the indifference of thesis and antithesis, that which is both in either but in different relations. According to him,

Painting is the Mesothesis of thing and thought. A coloured wax peach is one *thing* passed off for another thing— a practical lie, and not a work appertaining to the Fine Arts— a delusion— not an imitation. Every imitation as contradistinguished from a copy, is a Mesothesis, but which according to the variable propiority to the Thesis or the Antithesis may be called the liberating Mesothesis. Thus, Real and Ideal are the two poles, the Thesis and Antithesis. The Sophoclean drama, or the Samson Agonistes is the Mesothesis in its propiority or comparative proximity to the ideal— the tragedies of Heywood, Ford, &c. (*ex. gr.*, The Woman killed by Kindness,) is the Mesothesis in comparative proximity to the Real, while the Othello, Lear, &c., is the *Mesothesis* as truly as possible ἐν μέσῳ though with a *clinamen* to the ideal.(C 17th C, 606)

I · ii Shakespeare's Works and Music

The idea that poetry and music are sister arts was a comparatively recent theory though Aristotle had presented music as a more valuable and essential form of imitation because it can imitate the moral habits and state of feeling that take place in the human mind or soul. Longinus's *On the Sublime* is considered as originating the theory of poetry as the expression of feeling. But his work was not known until it was published in 1554. It was during the 18th century that the relationship between poetry and music was first investigated. At this time, the theory that poetry is the expression of feeling, not an imitation of nature came to the fore. John Brown's *Dissertation on the Rise, Union and Power, the Professions, Separations, and Corruptions of Poetry and Music*

not only elucidated the relationship between poetry and music but also had an important influence on Romantic poetics both in Germany and England.¹³

John Brown, in the *Dissertation*, finds the origin of dance, music and poetry in the expression of passion. He argues that agreeable passions and disagreeable passions are expressed by the three powers of action, voice, and articulate sounds. The savages who are at the lowest scale of human kind show the passions suited to their wretched state: their gestures are uncouth and horrid: their voice is thrown out in howls and roaring; their language is like the gabbling of geese. But if the state of savage life ascends a step or two, this chaos of gesture, voice and speech rises into an agreeable order and proportion. The natural love of measured melody, which time and experience produce, turns the voice into song, the gestures into dance, the speech into verse or numbers. He is concerned to explain the generation and natural alliance of what he calls three sister-graces, music, dance, and poem.¹⁴

Hugh Blair, who also had an influence on poetical theory around Coleridge's time, sets out to define poetry: its origin, and progression and versification. He thought the most just and comprehensive definition of poetry is that it is the language of passion, or of enlivened imagination, formed, most commonly, into regular numbers.¹⁵ For him, like Brown, poetry and music had the same origin:

Man is both a poet and a musician by nature. The same impulse which prompted the enthusiastic poetic style, prompted a certain melody, or modulation of sound, suited to the emotions of joy or grief, of admiration, love, or anger. There is a power in sound, which, partly from nature, partly from habit and association,

¹³See Schueller, Herbert M. "Literature and Music as Sister Arts." *Philological Quarterly* 26(1947): 193-205, p.204.

¹⁴ Brown, John. *A Dissertation on the Rise, Union, and Power, the Professions, Separations and Corruptions of Poetry and Music*. London: J.Murray, 1773, pp.27-28.

¹⁵ Blair, Hugh. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letters*. London: Baynes, 1824, p.482.

makes such pathetic impressions on the fancy, as delight even the most wild barbarians. Music and poetry, therefore, had the same rise: they were prompted by the same occasions; they were united in song; and as long as they continued united, they tended, without doubt, mutually to heighten and exalt each other's power. The first poets sung their own verses: and hence the beginning of what we call versification, or words arranged in a more artful order than prose, so as to be suited to some tune or melody.¹⁶

Robert Lowth says that "poetry itself is indebted for its origin, character, complexion, emphasis, and application, to the effects which are produced upon the mind and body, upon the imagination, the senses, the voice, and respiration, by the agitation of passion."¹⁷

Coleridge himself insists that "Music may be divided from poetry." (*F I*, 444) For him they share an origin in that both are the expression of passion. According to him,

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/ (*CN III* 4397 March 1818)

In *Biographia*, he also insists that poetry always implies passion in its most general sense, as an excited state of the feelings and faculties. (*BL II*, 71)

Judging from his idea of the relationship between poetry and music, and between

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.485.

¹⁷ Lowth, Robert. *Lectures on The Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, p.183.

poetry and painting, we notice that he is neither exclusively inclined to *ut pictura* poesis nor *ut musica* poesis. Rather he tries to find the common characteristics shared by all the arts including poetry. As he finds pictorial aspects in Shakespeare, or some analogous points to Shakespeare's work in painting, so he enjoys musical aspects in him and also compares his work to a musical composition. If we consider his ideas on the nature of music, we can comprehend his interest in the musical aspects in Shakespeare more easily:

What is music?—Sounds organized—

All Passions & human emotions have their characteristic actions & physiognomical features in the movements of the body, the changes of the features, the tones transitions & rythmus of the voice.—Nature has her changes & actions, (& if not really yet poetically) man infuses into them the same soul, of the effects of which he is conscious in his own phaenomenal or corporeal existence.—

Sounds have their qualities (characterized by terms) expressing their effect upon the organs of hearing, as loud soft— these when agreeable are termed melodious— They have their agreements & relative proportions = Concords (or vice versa) The(y) have according to a loss of human perception measure, rythmus—&when sounds, being concords form a measured series with certain proportions it is harmony.—Melody, concord & harmony are the body of music, but its soul is passion, emotion feeling.—(*Sh&F* II, 960-961)

This idea of music may be applied to the tone, rhythm, and metre of the speech of Shakespeare's characters. He insists, "To please me, a poem must be either music or sense— if it is neither, I confess I cannot interest myself in it."(*TT&Om*, (April 5, 1833), 219) As music is constituted by feelings and passion as well as melody and harmony, poetry should keep metre and rhythm congruent with human feelings and passion. As I suggested in the preceding chapter, Coleridge claims that Shakespeare has music in his soul. He, in *Venus and Adonis*, found a perfect sweetness of versification perfectly

adapted to the subject, refusing more majestic rhythm than the subject required.

Another important point for Coleridge is that both poetry and music are symbols of

ideas:

The term Idea, is an instance in point; and I hazard this assertion, together with the preceding sentences, in the full consciousness, that they must be unintelligible to those who have yet to learn, that an *Idea* is equi-distant in its signification from Sensation, Image, Fact, and Notion: that it is the antithesis not the synonyme of εἶδωλον. The magnificent son of Cosmo was wont to discourse with Ficino, Politian, and the princely Mirandula on the *Ideas* of Will, God, and Immortality. The accomplished author of the *Arcadia*, the Star of serenest brilliance in the glorious constellation of Elizabeth's court, our England's Sir Philip Sydney! He the paramount gentleman of Europe, the poet, warrior, and statesman, held high converse with Spencer on the *Idea* of Supernatural beauty; an all "earthly fair and amiable," as the *Symbol* of that Idea; and on Music and Poesy as its living *Educts*!(*LS*, 100-102)

Coleridge compares himself with such composers as Mozart and Beethoven. In terms of the representation of an idea, music is more immediate than painting. He thinks that

a great Composer, a Mozart, a Beethoven must have been in a state of Spirit much more akin, more analogous, to mine own when I am at once waiting for, watching, and organically constructing and inwardly constructed by, the *Ideas*, the living Truths, that may be re-excited but cannot be expressed by Words, the Transcendents that give the Objectivity to all Objects, the Form to all Images, yet are themselves untranslatable into any Image, unrepresentable by any particular Object than I can imagine my self to be to a Titian, or a Sir C. Wren.(*LS*, 214)

In music, "there is always something more and beyond the immediate expression,"(*MAL*, 51), which is the proof that man is designed for a higher state of existence.

Responding to those who try to find Shakespeare's faults, he compares Shakespeare

with such musicians as Mozart and Haydn:

...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. A very slight knowledge of music will enable any one to detect discords in the exquisite harmonies of HAYDN or MOZART;...but to know why the minor note is introduced into the major key, or the nominative case left to seek for its verb, requires an acquaintance with some preliminary steps of the methodical scale, at the top of which sits the author, and at the bottom the critic.(*Sh&F*, 654-655)

When he compares Sophocles's plays and Shakespeare's, he also applies the comparison to music. He says whereas the ancient music consisted of melody produced by the succession of pleasing sounds, the modern embraces harmony, which is produced by combination.(*Lect I*, 517)

Coleridge's appreciation of Cimarosa's symphonics is also congruent with his notion of Shakespeare's work:

If we listen to a symphony of CIMAROSA, the present strain still seems not only to recal, but almost to *renew*, some past movement, another and yet the same! Each present movement bringing back, as it were, and embodying the spirit of some melody that had gone before, anticipates and seems trying to overtake something that is to come: and the musician has reached the summit of his art, when having thus modified the Present by the past, he at the same time weds the Past *in* the Present to some prepared and corresponsive Future. The auditor's thoughts and feelings move under the same influence: retrospection blends with anticipation, and Hope and Memory (a female Janus) become one power with a double aspect. A similar effect the reader may produce for himself in the pages of History, if he will be content to substitute an intellectual complacency for pleasurable sensation. The events and characters of one age, like the strains in music, recal those of another, and the variety by which each is individualized, not only gives a charm and poignancy to the resemblance, but likewise renders the whole more intelligible. Meantime ample room is afforded for the exercise both of the judgment and the fancy, in distinguishing cases of real resemblance from those of intentional imitation, the analogies of nature, revolving upon herself, from the masquerade figures of cunning and vanity.(*F I*, 129-130)

For Coleridge, the beginnings of Shakespeare's works "strike at once the key-note, and give the predominant spirit of the play."(*LR* II, 208) "The variety by which each is individualized" and "analogon of nature" are two of Coleridge's key phrases for Shakespeare's work.

2. Shakespeare's Poetic Work

In *The Friend*, Coleridge describes his plan to write a "Travelling Conversation", taking place during a tour to the northern counties with a man named Satyrane and several others. In describing how such conversations might achieve unity, he exhibits his fundamental notion of writing.

Independent of the delightful recollections, the lively portraiture and inward music, which would enliven my own fancy during the composition, it appeared to me to possess the merit of harmonizing an infinite variety of matter by that unity of interest, which would arise from the Characters remaining the same throughout, while the Tour itself would supply the means of introducing the most different topics by the most natural connections.(*F* II, 186)

The stability of characters and the changing of the scenery could be combined, it seems, to produce that balance between sameness and variety from which, Coleridge believes, the unity of a work of art follows. He finds a similar balance in Shakespeare's work.

In Coleridge's opinion, there is a predominance of ideas in poetry in its comprehensive sense.(*F* I, 464) Likewise, he defines the noblest poem thus:

Frame a numeration table of the primary faculties of Man, as Reason, *unified per Ideas*, Mater Legum (Arbitrement, Legibilitatis mater) Judgment, the discriminative, Fancy, the aggregative, Imagination, the modifying & *fusive*, the

Senses & Sensations—and from these the different Derivatives of the Agreeable from the Senses, the Beautiful, the Sublime/ the Like and the Different—the spontaneous and the receptive—the Free and the Necessary—And whatever calls into consciousness the greatest number of these in due proportion & perfect harmony with each other, is the noblest Poem.—(CN III 3827, May 1810)

Shakespeare's poetry, for him, best satisfies the above definition of poetry as he finds Shakespeare's works "nature idealized" in terms of both the predominance of ideas and their organical unity. For him, "it would be scarcely more difficult to push a stone out from the pyramids with the bare hand, than to alter a word, or the position of a word, in Milton or Shakespeare, (in their most important works at least) without making the author say something else, or something worse, than he does say."(BL I, 23)

Another of Coleridge's definitions of poetry extends this notion:

The ideal of earnest Poetry consists in the Union & harmonious melting down—the fusion—of the sensual into Spiritual, of the Man as an animal into man as a power of reason & self-government—which we have represented to us most clearly in their Plastic Art, or Statuary—where the Perfection of Form is an outward Symbol of inward Perfection, and the most elevated Ideas—where the Body is wholly penetrated by the Soul, & spiritualized even to a state of Glory —Like a perfectly transparent Body, the matter in its own nature darkness becomes [] a vehicle & fixture of Light, a means of developing [] Beauties & unfolding *its unity*, into *all its ex*[] wealth of various Colors without which [] or division of Parts—(Lect I, 457)

Here, Coleridge emphasises the union of meaning and form. He says that the spirit of poetry like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules. For him poetry is a "living Body"(Lect I, 494), which is of necessity an organised one. He describes organization as the connection of parts to a whole, so that each part is at once end and means. Metre and measured sounds as the vehicle of poetry, he remarks, are a

fellow- growth from the same life as the bark is to the tree.

2 · i Form

Shakespeare's poetic works, whether they are poems or dramas, satisfactorily meet Coleridge's definition of ideal poetry. He actually expressed the opinion that "Shakespeare produced Dramatic Poems, not Tragedies nor Comedies." (*CM* III, 894) Shakespeare's works, in Coleridge's opinion, are organic wholes in which "the heterogeneous is united, as it is in nature" (*LR* II, 83). This is not the same as Johnson's notion when he defends Shakespeare's drama by insisting that it is "true to nature". Whereas Johnson compares the play with nature as shown or experienced, Coleridge's defence is based on nature's invisible law or principle.

Coleridge compares Shakespearean drama to Raphael's or Titian's paintings in order to describe how its construction differed from Sophoclean drama. Coleridge explains the difference by means of another aspect of organicism:

We call, for we see & feel, the Swan & the Dove both transcendently beautiful—As absurd, as it would be, to institute a comparison between their separate claims to Beauty from any abstract Rule common to both without reference to the life & being of the animals themselves, say rather if having first seen the Dove we abstracted its outlines, gave them a false generalization, called them principle or ideal of Bird-Beauty & then proceeded to criticize the Swan or the Eagle—not less absurd is it to pass judgment on the works of a Poet on the mere ground that they have been called by the same class-name with the works of other poets of other times & circumstances, or any ground indeed save that of its inappropriateness to its own end & being, its want of significance, as symbol and physiognomy. (*Lect* I, 465)

Likewise, the rules of the Greek drama cannot be applied to Shakespearean drama. For

him, among the three unities, time, place and action, the two former were mere conveniences attached to the local peculiarities of the Athenian drama, and the last alone deserved the name of a principle, and in this Shakespeare stood pre-eminent. Of the unity of action, he says,

...instead of Unity of Action I should great prefer the more appropriate tho' scholastic and uncouth words—Homogeneity, proportionateness and totality of Interest.— The distinction or rather the essential difference betwixt the Shaping skill of mechanical Talent, and the creative Life-power of inspired Genius. In the former each part [is] separately conceived and then by a succeeding Act put together—not as Watches are made for wholesale—for here each part supposes a preconception of the Whole in *some* mind—but as the pictures on a motley Screen— (N.b. I must seek for a happier illustration.)

Whence the harmony that strikes us in the wildest natural landscape? In the relative shapes of rocks, the harmony of colours in the Heath, Ferns, and Lichens, the Leaves of the Beech, and an Oak, the stems and rich chocolate-brown Branches of the Birch, and other mountain Trees, varying from varying Autumn to returning Spring—compared with the visual effect from the greater number of artificial Plantations?—The former are effected by a single energy, modified ab intra in each component part—. Now as this is the particular excellence of the Shakespearean Dramas generally, so is it especially characteristic of *Romeo and Juliet*. (*Lect II*, 362)

According to him, the law of unity which has its foundation not in the factitious necessity of custom, but in nature itself is every where and at all times observed by Shakespeare in his plays.

Coleridge, as I discussed in chapter two, insisted on the difference between mechanical regularity and organic regularity. In the case of the former, the author constructs the framework in advance and then builds the parts step by step, usually according to the conventional rules, but in the case of the latter, the plot grows as a sprout grows into a tree. Or we can compare the former to assembling a radio or an

automobile. The final production might look a perfect one in which every part engages with another part. But we cannot feel life in it.¹⁸ His comment on French tragedies demonstrates the aspect of mechanical regularity¹⁹:

...however meanly I may think of the French serious Drama, even in it's most perfect specimens; and with whatever right I may complain of it's most perpetual falsification of the language, and of the connections and transitions of thought, which Nature has appropriated to states of passion: still, however, the French Tragedies are consistent works of art, and the Offspring of great intellectual power. Preserving a fitness in the parts, and a harmony in the whole, they form a nature of their own, though a false nature.(F II, 216)

For him, the beginning of Shakespeare's every play is well prepared and well calculated as a germ or sprout of the whole play:

With the single exception of *Cymbeline*, they either place before us at one glance both the past and the future in some effect, which implies the continuance and full agency of its cause, as in the feuds and party-spirit of the servants of the two houses in the first scene of *Romeo and Juliet*; or in the degrading passion for shews and public spectacles, and the overwhelming attachment for the newest successful war-chief in the Roman people, already become a populace, contrasted with the jealousy of the nobles in *Julius Caesar*;—or they at once commence the action so as to excite a curiosity for the explanation in the following scenes, as in the storm of wind and waves, and the boatswain in the *Tempest*, instead of anticipating our curiosity, as in most other first scenes, and in too many other first acts;—or they act, by contrast of diction suited to the characters, at once to heighten the effect, and yet to give a naturalness to the language and rhythm of the principal personages, either as that of *Prospero* and *Miranda* by the appropriate lowness of the style,—or as in *King John*, by the equally appropriate stateliness of official harangues or narratives, so that the

¹⁸ See Simpson, David. "Coleridge on Wordsworth and the Form of Poetry." *Coleridge's Theory of Imagination Today*. Ed. Christine Gallant. New York: AMS Press, 1989. 211-225, p.216. Simpson argues that "Mechanic or fanciful form displays the joints that have been necessary to shape it; organic or imaginative form effaces the details of its own coming into being. Mechanic form leaves on its surface the signs of its own construction; organic form has no visible history, but exist wholly in the present."

¹⁹ See Bate, Jonathan. "The Politics of Romantic Shakespearean Criticism: Germany, England, France." *European Romantic Review* 1(1990):1-26, p.6. Bate sees political meaning behind organic and mechanical form. "It has, however, been insufficiently recognized that the distinction is a deeply political one. Given that its context is Schlegel's anti-Gallicism, the attack on mechanical form is an attack not only on neo-classical aesthetics but also on such systematic formulations as the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and, preeminently, the Civil Code which Napoleon had promulgated on 21 March 1804."

after blank verse seems to belong to the rank and quality of the speakers, and not to the poet ;—or they strike at once the key-note, and give the predominant spirit of the play, as in the *Twelfth Night* and in *Macbeth* ;—or finally, the first scene comprises all these advantages at once, as in *Hamlet*.(LR II, 207-8)

For example, Polixenes' obstinate refusal of Leontes in *Winter's Tale* is an admirable preparation for the whole play. After Polixenes says that "There is no tongue that moves, no none in the world", he yields to Hermione, which is at once perfectly natural from mere courtesy to her sex and the exhaustion of his will by Leontes's efforts. Coleridge took this first scene as well calculated to set in nascent action the jealousy of Leontes. In the first scene of *Richard II*, there is the germ of the ruling passion which was to be developed thereafter. Richard's hardness of mind, arising from kingly power, his weakness and debauchery from continual and unbounded flattery, and the haughty temper of the Barons are all glanced at in the first scenes.(LR II, 166-167) The first scene of *Love's Labour's Lost* is rendered natural by the choice of the characters and in this scene the whimsical determination on which the drama is founded is expounded.

The Tempest, according to Coleridge, opens with a busy scene admirably appropriate to a drama of this kind and giving the key-note to the whole harmony. It prepares and initiates the excitement required for the entire piece. In the second scene, Prospero's speeches, till the entrance of Ariel, give all the information necessary for the understanding of the plot. The moment chosen by Prospero to tell the truth to his daughter is, Coleridge says, perfectly timed because anything which might have been disagreeable to us in the magician is completely merged in the humanity and natural feelings of the father.(LR II, 95-96)

In *Hamlet*, Horatio's initial scepticism about the ghost in Act I, sc.1 prepares for his

appearance. The armour, the dead silence, the watchfulness that first interrupts it, the welcome relief of the guard, the cold, the broken expressions of compelled attention to bodily feelings, all these excellently accord with and prepare for the subsequent gradual rise into tragedy. The presence together on stage of Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo is judiciously contrived for it renders the courage of Hamlet and his impetuous eloquence perfectly intelligible, and the apparition of itself has by its previous appearances been brought nearer to a thing of this world. Coleridge says that the accretion of objectivity in a Ghost that yet retains all its ghostly attributes and fearful subjectivity is truly wonderful. (LR II, 209-221) In *Othello*, the introduction of Roderigo in the first scene as the dupe on whom Iago first exercises his art, and in so doing displays his own character is an example of the admirable preparation characteristic of Shakespeare. The first three lines, in Coleridge's opinion, show in Iago the coolness of a preconceiving experimenter. (Lect II, 313)

In *King Lear*, the whole tragedy is founded on the first four or five lines, and all things are prepared. As to the triple division of the country, Coleridge observes that it is not unnatural. He carefully analyses the motive as a

mixture of selfishness, sensibility, and habit of feeling derived from, and fostered by, the particular rank and usages of the individual;—the intense desire of being intensely beloved,—selfish, and yet characteristic of the selfishness of a loving and kindly nature alone; — the self-supportless leaning for all pleasure on another's breast; — the craving after sympathy with prodigal disinterestedness, frustrated by its own ostentation, and the mode and nature of its claims;— the anxiety, the distrust, the jealousy, which more or less accompany all selfish affections, and are amongst the surest contradistinctions of mere fondness from true love, and which originate Lear's eager wish to enjoy his daughter's violent professions, whilst the inveterate habits of sovereignty convert the wish into claim and positive right, and an incomppliance with it into crime and treason;— these facts, these passions, these moral verities, on which the whole tragedy is founded, are all prepared for, and will to the retrospect to be found implied, in these first four or five lines of the play. (LR II, 186)

From this germ, all other parts grow organically to form the whole work. Coleridge is content to illustrate Shakespeare's mastery of plot by an examination of Shakespeare's opening scenes. He goes on to explain the characterisation, language, humour, and wit from the organic view point.

Norman Fruman points to Coleridge's failure to reveal the reconciliation of opposites or organic form in his Shakespearean criticism.²⁰ Coleridge's failure to analyse the organic unity of the plays is well explained by Simpson: "Changes in natural organisms occur at levels that are beyond question and often control; the mystery of the transition from caterpillar to butterfly merely enhances our tendency to wonder and to acquiesce."²¹

2 · ii Characterisation

Raysor, in his introduction to Coleridge's *Shakespearean Criticism*, suggests that "The unhappiness which turned inward his superb analytical powers and forced him to explore his own soul as few men ever have, created an introspective psychologist of supreme genius, and gave him the basis for a knowledge of human motives which no English critic has ever surpassed."²² It is true that Coleridge possesses a rare ability to analyse human psychology. In that respect, he was influenced by his British predecessors. But if we deal with his psychological insight independently, we are likely

²⁰ Fruman, Norman. "Ozymandias and the Reconciliation of Opposites." *Coleridge's Theory of Imagination Today*. 49-54, p.54.

²¹ Simpson. "Coleridge on Wordsworth and the Form of Poetry," p.215.

²² Raysor, *Shakespearean Criticism I*, p.lxi

to miss the genuine value contained in his analysis of characters, which derives from Coleridge's insistence that the characters should be studied in relationship to the play as a whole. As "in drawing his characters he(Shakespeare)"²³ regarded essential, not accidental relations"(Lect I, 319), so, in his character analysis, Coleridge never loses sight of the essential relationship to the whole. In dealing with Coleridge's analysis of characterisation, my focus is on two notions; one is the "universality in particularity" of characters, and the other is the organical relation of characterisation to the whole work.

I have said that Coleridge understood Shakespeare's poetic work as the symbol of ideas. Likewise in Coleridge's opinion, "Shakespeare's characters from Othello or Macbeth down to Dogberry are ideal: they are not (the) things but the abstracts of the things which a great mind may take into itself and naturalize to its own heaven."(Lect I, 351) He explains his notion of the ideal thus:

He explained the *ideal* beauty as being formed from observing what is common to all individuals of a class, taking away from each individual that which is the result of *accident* in him. This explanation resolves the ideal into universality and generality. I observed to Coleridge that I had remarked that the caricature is the converse of the ideal, being the individuality of the thing caricatured without the general character. As, viz. it would be a perfect caricature which should give a likeness of a person, which should resemble the *individual* and yet have nothing *human* in it....(TT II, 482)

The above passage is from Henry Crabb Robinson's account of Coleridge's criticism of a picture by Benjamin West. Elsewhere Coleridge claims that "All Genius is metaphysical. The ultimate end is ideal, however it may be actualized by incidental and accidental circumstances."(TT I, 11 August 1832, 322) The concept of the ideal is

²³ The words in parenthesis are mine.

closely connected with universality and generality. He also stated that “the universal is an Idea. Shakespeare, therefore, studied mankind in the Idea of the human race; and he followed out that Idea into all its varieties, by a *Method* which never failed to guide his step aright.”(TM, 27) Shakespeare

shaped his characters out of the Nature within—but we cannot so safely say, out of *his own Nature*, as an *individual person*.—No! this latter is itself but a *natura naturata*—an effect, a product, not a *power*. It was S’s prerogative to have the *universal* which is potentially in each *particular*, opened out to him—the *homme generale* not as an abstraction of observation (from a variety of men;) but as the Substance capable of endless modifications of which his own personal Existence was but one—& to use *this one* as the eye that beheld the other, and as the Tongue that could convey the discovery—No greater or more common vice in Dramatic Writers than to draw out of themselves—(Lect II, 148)

Coleridge says that “Shakespeare’s characters are all *genera* intensely individualized; the results of meditation, of which observation supplied the drapery and the colors necessary to combine them with each other.”(Lect II, 273)

It is Shakespeare’s peculiar excellence, that throughout the whole of his splendid picture gallery (the reader will excuse the confessed inadequacy of this metaphor), we find individuality every where, mere portrait no where. In all his various characters, we still feel ourselves communing with the same nature, which is every where present as the vegetable sap in the branches, sprays, leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruits, their shapes, tastes, and odours, Speaking of the effect, i.e., his works themselves, we may define the excellence of *their* method as consisting in that just proportion, that union and interpenetration, of the universal and the particular, which must ever pervade all works of decided genius and true science. (F I, 457)

In *Biographia*, he attacks materialism and insists that we are born idealists. He insists that the philosophers of the school of materialism or empiricism

know nothing, or despise the faith as the prejudice of the ignorant vulgar, because they live and move in a crowd of phrases and notions from which human nature has long ago vanished. Oh, ye that reverence yourselves, and walk humbly with the divinity in your own hearts, ye are worthy of a better philosophy! Let the dead bury the dead, but do you preserve your human nature, the depth of which was never yet fathomed by a philosophy made up of notions and mere logical entities. (*BL I*, 263)

Here, human nature is something like the divinity in our own hearts or some potential common to nature and human nature. His comparison of a plant in a hot house and the young Pitt depends upon this notion of human nature:

—A plant sown and reared in a hot-house, for whom the very air that surrounded him, had been regulated by the thermometer of previous purpose; to whom the light of nature had penetrated only through glasses and covers; who had had the sun without the breeze; whom no storm had shaken; on whom no rain had pattered; on whom the dews of heaven had not fallen!—A being, who had had no feelings connected with man or nature, no spontaneous impulses, no unbiassed and desultory studies, no genuine science, nothing that constitutes individuality in intellect, nothing that teaches brotherhood in affection! Such was the man—such, and so denaturalised the spirit, on whose wisdom and philanthropy the lives and living enjoyments of so many millions of human beings were made unavoidably dependent. (*IS*, 271)

Therefore, when Coleridge claims that we see human nature in Shakespeare, the nature he refers to is that which he describes as *natura naturans*. In all Shakespearean women, according to Coleridge, there is the same foundation and principle, in other words, human nature. The distinct individuality and variety are merely the result of the modification of circumstances, whether in Miranda, in Imogen or in Queen Katherine. Similarly, the character of Biron in *Love's Labours Lost*, for instance, in Coleridge's opinion, was seen again in the Mercutio of *Romeo and Juliet*, Benedick in *Much Ado about Nothing* and several others.

Though Coleridge suggests that Shakespeare's characters are the result of meditation

and observation, he gives the priority to meditation, as, for example, in his comments on the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*.

He appealed to the auditors whether the observation of one or two old nurses would have enabled Shakespeare to draw this character of admirable generalization?—No surely not: Were any man to attempt to paint in his mind all the qualities that could possibly belong to a nurse he would find them there. (*Lect I*, 307-8)

Drawing such a character is not just the result of the observation of several nurses but the result of observation and meditation. Such characters are different from those described by “(a man) going about the world with his Pocket book, noting down what he hears and observes and by practice obtains a facility of representing what he has heard & observed—” (*Lect I*, 306).

Coleridge finds a similarity between Shakespeare and Cervantes in that their characters are at once individual and general:

We know *Don Quixote*, as we do Hamlet: and yet they both partake so much of the permanent part of human nature that they are as fresh, and as probable, and as interesting, now in the 19th century, as they were, when they were first delineated, in the sixteenth. As the melancholy traits of *Hamlet*, too, are relieved, by the coarse humour, and low-bred common-sense of the grave diggers; so is *Don Quixote* relieved by Sancho; and in the exquisite contrasts, which these two characters bring out, we constantly see the superiority of moral refinement over the mixture of good humour and low cunning, which constitute genuine vulgarity. (*Lect II*, 165)

R.W.Babcock, in *The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry*, argues that the psychologizing of Shakespeare from 1766 to 1799 may be divided into two types: “the analysis of Shakespeare’s interpretation of the passion, and the application of the

concept of association to aspects of Shakespeare's art."²⁴ In Coleridge, the psychological analyses of characters are closely related to the unfolding and development of the form. For Coleridge tries to find the seeds of their behaviour in their character, searching for psychological motives. One of the great excellencies of Shakespeare, Coleridge says, is that he availed himself of his psychological genius to develop all the minutiae of the human heart.

In *Richard II*, according to Coleridge, Shakespeare contrived to bring the character Richard, with all his prodigality and hard usage of his friends, still within the compass of our pity. In *Bolingbroke*, Shakespeare is sowing seeds, the full development of which appears only in *Henry IV*. In *Richard III*, Richard's ambition is also psychologically explained. The inferiority of Richard's physical person makes him seek consolation in the superiority of his mind, so that Richard presents his very deformities as a boast.

The psychological interpretation of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth demonstrates Coleridge's critical insight in this respect. Macbeth finally murders King Duncan in

²⁴ Babcock, Robert Witbeck. *The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry 1766-1799*. New York: Russell & Russell, INC, 1964, p.157. Also see Henry Mackenzie. *Mirror* nos 99 and 100 (1780). Reprinted in *Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage*. Vol. 6., p.275. Like others, Mackenzie points to the complexity of Hamlet's character. However, as Babcock suggests, he locates Hamlet's character under the dominance of one particular passion, namely, melancholy. According to him, "*Hamlet*, from the very opening of the piece, is delineated as one under the dominion of melancholy, whose spirits were overborn by his feelings. Grief for his father's death, and displeasure at his mother's marriage prey on his mind, and he seems, with the weakness natural to such a disposition, to yield to their controul." Also see, "Unsigned essay on jealousy in Othello," op. cit. Vol.3, p.210. In this essay (Vickers conjectures the author to be Akenside), Othello is depicted as being dominated by jealousy: "I conclude, therefore, that our Poet has preserved his Character, has painted the Passion of Jealousy as it ought to be painted in such a Man; has copied faithfully, without exceeding or exaggerating; and has frighted us (which, by the way, is the very Essence of Tragedy) not with an imaginary Scene but with a real Spectacle of a wise and worthy Man made mad by Jealousy, and becoming a wild, ungovernable, brutal and bloody-thirsty monster; and yet accompanied with Circumstances that deservedly excite Compassion." Also see William Richardson, *A Philosophical analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters*. Reprinted in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*. Vol.6., p.120. Richardson sees the dominant passion of Macbeth as ambition. In *Macbeth*, according to Richardson, all the other principles seem to have undergone a violent and total change. "His ambition, however, has suffered no diminution. On the contrary, by having become exceedingly powerful, and by rising to undue pretensions, it seems to have vanquished and suppressed

spite of the inner voice of conscience. In Coleridge's opinion, "Macbeth mistranslates the recoilings—and ominous whispers of Conscience into prudential and selfish Reasonings." (*Lect I*, 529) After the murder, the terrors of remorse rise into fear, which in turn drives him to further murder and he suffers from the phantoms his inner conscience has made. In the case of Lady Macbeth, Coleridge rejects the prejudiced idea of Lady Macbeth as a monster. He remarks that she constantly makes efforts to bully her conscience. "Lady Macbeth",

like all in Shakespeare, is a class individualized;— of high rank, left much alone, and feeding herself with day-dreams of ambition, she mistakes the courage of fantasy for the power of bearing the consequences of the realities of guilt. Hers is the mock fortitude of a mind deluded by ambition; she shames her husband with a superhuman audacity of fancy which she cannot support, but sinks in the season of remorse, and dies in suicidal agony. (*LR II*, 244)

Compared to A.W.Schlegel's characterisation of Lady Macbeth, Coleridge's demonstrates his thoroughgoing understanding of human psychology and the play itself.

Romeo's love of Juliet at first sight is not the kind of love often ridiculed in Shakespeare. On the contrary, it is based on his understanding of human psychology and is also related to the progress of the plot. He defines love as not like hunger, not like an appetite under the influence of which a mere animal thinks of nothing but its satisfaction. Rather, love is something which gives to every object in nature a power of the heart without which it would be spiritless. So, Shakespeare did not begin by making Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first glance. Romeo first feels a sense of imperfection, which yearns to combine itself with something lovely. Romeo, he suggests, becomes

every amiable and virtuous principle."

enamoured of the ideal he has formed in his own mind and then recognises the first real being that he encounters as that which he has desired. His seemingly being in love with Rosaline is in truth his being in love only with his own idea. All these facts justify Romeo's sudden forgetting of Rosaline. Shakespeare then introduces Romeo to Juliet and makes it not only a violent but permanent love.

Coleridge, in Shakespeare's depiction of the jealousy of Leontes in the *Winter's Tale*, finds the philosophical meaning of jealousy:

the mind, in its first harbouring of it, became mean and despicable, and the first sensation was perfect shame, arising from the consideration of having possessed an object unworthily, of degrading a person to a thing—the mind that once indulges this passion has a predisposition, a vicious weakness, by which it kindles a fire from every spark, and from circumstances the most innocent and indifferent, finds fuel to feed the flame; this he exemplified in an able manner from the conduct and opinion of *Leontes*, who seized upon occurrences of which he himself was the cause, and when sparking of *Hermione*, combined his anger with images of the lowest sensuality, and pursued the object with the utmost cruelty. (*Lect I*, 555)

This kind of jealousy, for Coleridge, is totally different from Othello's. "Jealousy", of which he writes that it

does not strike me as the point in his passion; I take it to be rather an agony that the creature, whom he had believed angelic, with whom he had garnered up his heart, and whom he could not help still loving, should be proved impure and worthless. It was the struggle *not* to love her. It was a moral indignation and regret that virtue should so fall: 'But yet the *pity* of it, Iago!—O Iago! the *pity* of it, Iago! In addition to this, his honour was concerned: Iago would not have succeeded but by hinting that his honour was compromised. There is no ferocity in Othello; his mind is majestic and composed. He deliberately determines to die; and speaks his last speech with a view of showing his attachment to the Venetian state, though it had superseded him. (*TT & Om*, Dec.29, 1822, 33)

Hamlet, for Coleridge, is the character through whom we can trace "Shakespeare's

deep and accurate science in mental philosophy.”(LR II, 204) Coleridge like others explains Hamlet’s delay by reference to his character. He points out the lack of a due balance between the real and the imaginary world in Hamlet. His interpretation of Hamlet’s character might have been influenced both by German critics such as Goethe and the eighteenth-century English critics. But Coleridge’s interpretation of it shows his remarkable psychological ability to read Shakespeare’s characters. “His mind”

unseated from its healthy balance, is for ever occupied with the world within him, and abstracted from external things: his words give a substance to shadows: and he is dissatisfied with commonplace realities. It is the nature of thought to be indefinite: while definiteness belongs to reality. The sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward object, but from the reflection upon it: not from the impression, but from the idea. Few have seen a celebrated waterfall without feeling something of disappointment: it is only subsequently, by reflection, that the idea of the waterfall comes full into the mind, and brings with it a train of sublime associations. Hamlet felt this: in him we see a mind that keeps itself in a state of abstraction, and external objects as hieroglyphics. His soliloquy “O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,” arises from a craving after the indefinite: a disposition or temper which most easily besets men of genius; a morbid craving for that which is not. The self-delusion common to this temper of mind was finely exemplified in the character which Hamlet gives of himself: “It cannot be, but I am pigeon-liver’d, and lack gall, to make oppression bitter.” He mistakes the seeing his chains for the breaking of them: and delays action, till action is of no use: and he becomes the victim of circumstances and accident.(*Lect I*, 544)

Iago is another example. He has the coolness suitable for manipulating another person’s mind. He has a high self-opinion and thus contempt for whoever does not display intellectual power. In *Othello*, Iago’s motive for ruining Othello remains obscure. Though Coleridge defines the two passions which are made to act upon him as disappointed vanity and envy, his act is too fiendish to be explained by the two passions. Coleridge finds “motive-hunting for a motiveless malignity”(LR II, 260) when Iago

seeks to explain his own motivation.²⁵

Besides main characters, other minor characters, in Coleridge's opinion, have a no less important role in the construction of his work. The fool in *King Lear*, for instance, is not a comic buffoon to make the groundlings laugh. Coleridge insists that accordingly the fool is prepared for, that is brought into living connection with the pathos of the play, and with its suffering. (*Lect II*, 331)

2 · iii Language

Language, according to Coleridge, "is the armory of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of its past, and the weapons of its future conquests." (*BL II*, 30-31) In the Notes taken by J. Tomalin, Coleridge describes language as 'living words' "for words are the living products of the living mind & could not be a due medium between the thing and the mind unless they partook of both. 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 the thing by the person who used the

²⁵ *Othello* (I.iii, 377-396) Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;

For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
If I would time expend with such a snipe
But for my sport and profit, I hate the Moor;
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
H'as done my office. I know not if't true;
Yet I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety. He holds me well;
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio's a proper man, Let me see now;

...

The Moor is of a free and open nature
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;
And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
As asses are.

word.”(*Lect I*, 273)²⁶

In explaining the meaning of the word ‘poetry’, he notes.

...as all languages perfect themselves by a gradual process of desynonymizing words originally equivalent, I have cherished the wish to use the word ‘poesy’ as the generic or common term, and to distinguish that species of poesy which is not *muta poesis* by its usual name ‘poetry;’ while of all other species which collectively form the Fine Arts, there would remain this as the common definition,—that they all, like poetry, are to express intellectual purposes, thoughts, conceptions, and sentiments which have their origin in the human mind,—(*MAL*, 44)

Coleridge’s criticism of Wordsworth’s Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* is based on his idea of language. He sets out the reasons why he does not agree with Wordsworth’s argument that from the objects with which the rustic hourly communicates, the best part of language is formed. Among the reasons given by him, the second reason presents his notion of language well:

Secondly, I deny that the words and combinations of words derived from the objects, with which the rustic is familiar, whether with distinct or confused knowledge, can be justly said to form the *best* part of language. It is more than probable, that many classes of the brute creation possess discriminating sounds, by which they can convey to each other notices of such objects as concern their food, shelter, or safety. Yet we hesitate to call the aggregate sounds a language, otherwise than metaphorically. The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived

²⁶ See Prickett, Stephen. *Words and The Word*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986, p.147. According to Prickett, the development of Coleridge’s view of language can be seen in three phases: “In the first, following Locke and Hartley, he was willing to accept a fairly simple and essentially a-historical view of the logical relationship between words and things. In the second, which we would associate with the influence of Horne Took, he became aware of the illogical complexities of etymology, and saw words primarily in relation to their supposed semantic roots rather than to external objects. In the third, he came to see language as a process of continual semantic change and evolution, with words related not so much to things as changes in human consciousness itself.” Also see Barfield. “Coleridge’s Enjoyment of Words.” *Coleridge’s Variety*. 204-218, p.212. “Coleridge’s feeling for words was an integral part of his whole deeply-felt philosophy of the true relation between words and thoughts, between thoughts and things, and thus, and thus only, between words and things. Language does not reproduce things; it gives ‘outness to thoughts’. Also see Wallace, C.Miles. “Coleridge’s Theory of Language.” *Philological Quarterly*.59(1980): 338-352, p.339. “Coleridge’s definition of “word” represents language as participating intimately in the complex relation between mind and world: the process of naming and the process of knowing (in the strict sense) are represented as a single process.”

from reflection on the act of mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man;...(*BL* II, 53-54)

In *Aids to Reflection*, he recommends that we reflect on the words we use: “—accustom yourself to reflect on the words you use, hear, or read, their birth, derivation and history. For if words are not THINGS, they are LIVING POWERS, by which the things of most importance to mankind are actuated, combined, and humanized.”(*AR*, 10)

This view of language is reflected in his Shakespearean criticism. Shakespeare’s thoughts, he says, “were harmony itself, and they naturally created a language suitable to themselves.”(*Lect* II, 275) The most conspicuous epithet for Shakespeare’s language which Coleridge uses is “the language of nature”, but this is not a language that denies historical or social difference, for “the different modes of expression it should be remembered frequently arose from dif[ference] of situation & education: a black guard would use very different words to express the same thing, to those a gentleman would employ and both would be natural & proper: the difference arose from the feeling: the gentleman would speak with all the polished language and regard to his own dignity which belonged to his rank, while the blackguard who must be considered almost a half brute and would speak like a brute having respect neither for himself or others.—”(*Lect* I, 366)

This view of language seems to reflect the neoclassicist’s theory of decorum. For the neoclassicists, a gentleman must use polished expressions. For Coleridge a gentleman only uses polished expressions if he is a ‘real gentleman’. The language in which the properties of the drama are expressed should not be “drawn from any set of fashion”(LR

II, 102) but from feeling, which distinguishes his from the neoclassist's sense of decorum. For Coleridge, one of Shakespeare's excellences

was in the *language of nature*, so correct was it that we could see ourselves in all he wrote; his style and manner had also that felicity, that not a sentence could be read without its being discovered if it were *Shakespearean*. (*Lect I*, 521)

In contrast to Shakespeare's language of "nature", he describes 'unnatural' language thus:

Language—it cannot be supposed that the Poet should make his characters say *all* that they would, or taking in his whole Drama, that *each Scene or Paragraph* should be such, as on cool examination we can conceive it likely, that men in such situations would say, in that order and in that *perfection!* & yet according to my feeling it is a very inferior kind of Poetry, in which—as in the French Tragedies—Men are made to talk what few indeed even of the wittiest men can be supposed to converse in, & which both is & on a moment's reflection appears to be the natural Produce of the Hot-bed of Vanity, namely an Author's Closet, who is actuated originally by a desire to excite Surprise & Wonderment at *his* superiority to other Men, instead of having felt so deeply on certain subjects or in consequence of certain Imaginations, as makes it almost a necessity of his Nature <to> seek for Sympathy—no doubt, with that honorable desire of *permanent action* which distinguishes &c—(*Lect I*, 85-86)

The language of nature, contrastingly, must be produced naturally from the character, without the impression that the author artificially devises it. If the language is not natural, the characters commonly use some particular tone and style in which we can feel the colour of the author. In the contrary case, the language the characters are using is inherent to each character's personality; i.e., his spirit, passion, status, and situation, and it is produced out of the inner necessity of the development of the plot or the character. Coleridge, though he honoured and loved Fielding, finds the soliloquies in the novel or the interview between Tom Jones and Sophia before reconciliation so unnatural

because the words are without spirit and thus are wholly incongruous and without any psychological truth. Contrastingly, for him, "Shakespeare would ever be found to speak the language of nature."(*Lect 1*, 309) But the language of nature is not necessarily the one which is commonly and daily used. If some particular language is used in some particular situations with effect, it is natural in that situation. Coleridge observed that "there was no form of language that might not be introduced by a great Poet with great effect in particular situations because they were true to nature and without an original they never could have existed."(*Lect 1*, 312)

Such a concept of the language of nature is neither the same as the neo-classical ideal of decorum nor the sentiment clothed in language that some critics such as William Duff and Lord Kames referred to. Duff also describes Shakespeare's language as the 'language of nature'. He means by this language, however, only the outpouring of passion. He says of Othello's language for example that "The tumult, the torment, and the fury of Othello's mind, after he had perpetrated the horrid murder, and was convinced of the innocence of his wife, are conveyed to us in the language of the most impetuous and distracting passion, abandoned to the most dreadful despair."²⁷ In a sense, his view is not totally different from Coleridge's in that both argue that Shakespeare's language is produced by the character's state of mind. But whereas Duff takes it as the immediate product of a tumultuous state of mind, Coleridge takes it as what is suitable for the composition of the whole play poetically as well as psychologically.

In this respect, Shakespeare's language is, Coleridge suggests, methodically connected to the whole drama. Shakespeare, Coleridge believes, "was himself

²⁷Duff, William. *Critical Observation on the Writings of the Most Celebrated Original Genius in Poetry.*,

Methodical in the delineation of character, in the display of Passion, in the conceptions of Moral Being, in the adaptations of Language, in the connection and admirable intertexture of his ever-interesting Fable.”(TM. 35-6) He denounces those who were critical of Shakespeare’s breaking the principle of decorum:

Purblind critics, whose mental vision could not reach far enough to comprise the whole dimensions of our poetical Hercules, have busied themselves in measuring and spanning him muscle by muscle, till they fancied they had discovered some disproportion. (TM, 31-2)

I have remarked that Coleridge describes Hamlet’s character as produced by an imbalance between the outside world and the inner world. Hamlet is himself, then, a character lacking method. Shakespeare, however, methodically connects Hamlet’s personality and his language. Hamlet, in describing his voyage to England and the events that interrupted it to Horatio, reveals his character, i.e., the tendency to generalise and to be meditative to excess:

Ham. ... —*Let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do fail: and that should
teach us,
There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.*(Hamlet V ii 7-11)²⁸

Such a tendency of Hamlet’s character is shown in that “all the digressions and enlargements consist of reflections, truths, and principles of general and permanent interest, either directly expressed or disguised in playful satire.”(F I, 452) Coleridge

p.159.
28 F I, 451-2.

points to a series of expressions that show such a tendency:

*I once did hold it, as our statist do,
A baseness to write fair, and laboured much
How to forget that learning;
...
As love between them like the palm, might flourish;
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear,
And many such like As's of great charge-...(Hamlet v ii 33-46)²⁹*

Hamlet's meditation at the grave also well reveals Hamlet's character.³⁰ This meditation, according to Coleridge, exhibits to us the character of Hamlet, flying from the sense of reality, and seeking a reprieve from the pressure of its duties, in that ideal activity, the overbalance of which, with the consequent indisposition to action, is his disease. (F 1, 455)

Coleridge's view of language is also demonstrated in Hamlet's first soliloquy (Hamlet I ii 129 : "O that this too too solid flesh would melt"). "The prodigality of beautiful words", in his analysis, is "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

²⁹ *The Friend* I, pp. 452-3.

³⁰ (Hamlet, V i 213-227)

Ham. To what base Uses we may return,
Horatio? Why may not imagination trace the
Noble Dust of Alexander, till'a find it stopping a
Bunghole?

Hor. T' were to consider too curiously to
consider so.

Ham. No faith, not a jot; but to follow him
thether with Modestly enough, and Likelihood to
lead it, as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was
buried, Alexander returneth to Dust, the Dust
is Earth; of Earth we make Loam: and why of
that Loam, where to he was converted might they
not stop a Beer-barrel?

Imperious Cacsar, dead and turn'd to Clay,

within.”(*Lect I*, 540)

As example of a character who lacks method in a quite different sense from Hamlet is the Hostess in *Henry IV, Part II*. Mrs Quickly, for Coleridge, is defined by an habitual submission of the understanding to mere events and images, independent of any power in the mind to classify or appropriate them. Shakespeare, according to him, correlates her character with her language³¹ methodically. If she were a methodical person, she would have realised that Falstaff made use of her both materially and physically throughout her life. But she mentions only the one incident of Falstaff’s false promise to her.

Horatio’s speech about old Hamlet’s spirit in arms is, Coleridge points out, “a perfect model of the true style of dramatic narrative;—the purest poetry, and yet in the most natural language, equally remote from the ink-horn and the plough.”(*LR II*, 217) Coleridge describes Horatio’s character as “high yet healthful-minded”(*F I*, 455). As Coleridge suggests, Horatio’s manner of speech, unlike Hamlet’s, is methodical with “due abatement and reduction”.³² Horatio’s speech notes the facts and gives his own

Might stop a Hole to keep the Wind away.

³¹ (*Henry IV*, part II, II i 82-95)

Falstaff. What is the gross sum that I owe thee?

Mrs. Quickly. Marry, if thou wert an honest man, thyself and the money too. Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire, on Wednesday in Wheesun week, when the Prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing-man in Windsor, thou didst swear to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me and make me my lady thy wife. Canst thou deny it? Did not goodwife Keech, the butcher’s wife come in then and call me gossip Quickly?— coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar: telling us she had a good dish of prawns, whereby thou didst desire to eat some, whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound?

³² (*Hamlet*, I ii, 195-212)

Horatio

Two Nights together had these Gentlemen,
Marcellus and Barnado, on their Watch,
In the dead Wast and Middle of the Night,
Been thus encount’red. A Figure like your Father,
Arm’d at Point, exactly Cap a pea,

opinion without digressions and reflections and generalisation.

Shakespeare's language is also natural for the situation. Coleridge gives as an example Hamlet's interview with the Ghost. Here are Hamlet's words:

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane. O answer me!
...
Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do? (I.iv, 18-37)

Shakespeare, according to Coleridge, "adapts himself to the situation so admirably (and as it were put himself into the situation) that though poetry, his language (is the language) of nature: no words, associated with such feeling, can occur to us but those which he has employed (especially) on the highest, the most august & the most awful subject that can interest a human being in this sentient world." (*Lect 1*, 387)

In *The Tempest*, in the first speech of Miranda, Coleridge suggests, the simplicity and tenderness of her character are laid open. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, he finds logic clothed in rhetoric in Biron's speech³³ and observes how Shakespeare, in his two-fold

Appears before them, and with solemn March
Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walked
By their oppress'd and Fear-surprised Eyes
Within his Troncheon's length, whil'st they, distill'd
Almost to Jelly with the Act of Fear,
Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful Secrecy impart they did,
And I with them the third Night kept the Watch,
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in Time,
Form of the Thing, each Word made true and good,
The Apparition comes. I knew your Father;
These Hands are not more like.

³³(*Love's Labour's Lost* IV, iii, 299-340)

being of poet and philosopher, uses it to convey profound truths in the most lively images. The images in themselves, in Coleridge's opinion, remain faithful to the character supposed to utter the lines, and the expressions themselves constitute a further development of that character. (LR II, 105) In *Richard II*, the scene of the quarrel between Bolingbroke and Mowbray exemplifies the characters of both Richard and Bolingbroke. For Coleridge, this scene seems to be introduced for the purpose of showing by anticipation their characters. In Bolingbroke, a decorous and courtly checking of his anger in subservience to a predetermined plan is observable, especially in his calm speech after receiving sentence of banishment³⁴. In Richard's speech³⁵, the selfish weakness of Richard's character opens. In the play from beginning to end, Coleridge says, Richard scatters himself into a multitude of images and in the conclusion endeavours to shelter himself from that which is around him by the cloud of

Other slow arts entirely keep the brain,
 And therefore, finding barren practisers,
 Scarce show a harvest of their heavy toil:
 But love, first learned in lady's eyes,
 Lives not alone immured in the brain;
 But, with the motion of all elements
 Courses as swift as thought in every power,
 And gives to every power a double power,
 Above their functions and their offices.
 It adds a precious seeing to the eye:
 A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind.
 ...
 And who can sever love from clarity?

³⁴ (*Richard II*, I iii 144-7)

Bolingbroke. Your will be done. This must my comfort be—
 That sun that warms you here shall shine on me,
 And those his golden beams to you here lent
 Shall point on me and gild my banishment.

³⁵ (*Richard II*, I iii 188-190)

King. Nor never by advised purpose meet
 To plot, contrive, or compost any ill
 'Ganst us, our state, our subjects, or our land.

his own thought. (*Lect I*, 382) In Iago's speech³⁶, Coleridge observes his passionless character, whereas Othello's speech³⁷ reveals a capacity for strong emotion quite different from the speech of Leontes to his true friend Camillo.

The characters' speech is also instrumental in developing the plot. The conversation between Brabantio and Iago about Desdemona's choice of Othello for a husband reveals Shakespeare's consciousness of the oddity of her choice. Shakespeare, to Coleridge's mind, suggests that Desdemona's falling in love with Othello is explicable only if she has been a victim of magic until Desdemona's speech persuades us otherwise.

In Shakespeare's work, he also notes the importance of particular words. He takes the conversation³⁸ between Oliver and Orlando in the wrestling scene in *As You Like It* for instance. For him, the word 'boy' naturally provokes and awakens in Orlando the sense of his manly powers. On the retort of the 'elder brother,' he grasps him with firm hands, and makes him feel he is no boy. Likewise, in Cordelia's speech³⁹, in *King Lear*, Coleridge points out that Cordelia's reply, 'nothing', shows Cordelia's feeling of disgust at the hypocrisy of her sisters, and some little faulty admixture of pride and sullenness. And her tone is well contrived to lessen the glaring absurdity of Lear's conduct. (*LR II*, 194)

³⁶(*Othello*, I iii, 319) Iago. Virtue? a fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus.

³⁷(*Othello*, I iii, 294) Othello. My life upon her faith!

³⁸(*As You Like It*, I i 55-58)

Oliver. What Boy!

Orlando. Come, come, elder brother, you are too young in this.

Oliver. Wilt thou lay hands on me, Villain?

³⁹(*King Lear*, I i 88-94)

Cor. Nothing, my Lord.

Lear. Nothing?

Cor. Nothing.

Lear. Nothing will come of Nothing, speak again.

Cor. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My Heart into my Mouth: I love your Majesty

Coleridge also finds the characteristics of a whole play in a single speech. In Romeo's speech⁴⁰ while he awaits his secret marriage with Juliet, for instance, there is a precipitance which Coleridge considers as the presiding characteristic of *Romeo and Juliet*. One of Coleridge's favourite characters, Mercutio, is also revealed by his speech.⁴¹ His speech, for Coleridge, both exhibits his witty character and serves to justify Romeo's passionate revenge on Tybalt.

In *Macbeth*, Coleridge observes the exquisite judgment of Shakespeare in the speeches of the characters. Macbeth's ambition is shown through Banquo's speech⁴². Banquo, not Macbeth, directs our notice to the effect produced on Macbeth's mind, rendered vulnerable by previously harbouring ambitious thoughts. (LR II, 239) For Coleridge, the witches are beings in whom the Fates and Furies of the ancient Greek drama are blended with the sorceresses of Gothic and popular superstition. They are mysterious natures: fatherless, motherless, sexless: they appear and disappear: they lead evil minds from evil to evil and have the power of tempting those who have been the tempters of themselves. Their speech is different when they talk with each other and when they talk to others. The former⁴³, according to Coleridge, displays a certain fierce

According to my Bond, no more nor less.

⁴⁰(*Romeo and Juliet*, II vi 6-8)

Romeo. Do thou but close our hands with holy words,
Then love-devouring death do what he dare,
It is enough I may but call her mine.

⁴¹(*Romeo and Juliet*, III i 97-99)

Mercutio. No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door but 't's enough: 'twill
serve. Ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man.

⁴²(*Macbeth*, I iii 51-54)

Ban. Good, Sir, why do you start, and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair?—I' th' name of truth,
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly ye know?

⁴³For example, (*Macbeth* I iii, 3-10)

1 Witch. A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,

familiarity, with grotesqueness mingled with terror, and the latter⁴⁴ is solemn, dark, and mysterious. (*Lect I*, 531)

2 · iv Metre

Coleridge did not insist that metre is necessary to poetry. He says that the writings of Plato and Bishop Taylor and the *Theoria Sacra* of Burnet give undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre. But if metre is superadded, all other parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part, which an exact recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. (*BL II*, 12-3) Whether it has metre or not, according to Coleridge, if an harmonious whole is to be produced, the parts must be in keeping with the poetry and this can only be achieved by a studied selection and artificial arrangement.

His interest in the metre of Shakespeare's work is a distinctive feature of his criticism. For him, the human mind naturally attempts to give balance to passion, which is the origin of metre. If we call the spontaneous effort to hold in check the workings of passion antagonism, the balance effected by the antagonism is organized into metre. From the principles of metre, Coleridge deduces two conditions:

And mounch'd, and mounch'd, and mounch'd: 'Give me,' quoth I:—
'Aroynt thee, witch!' the rump-fed ronyon cries.
Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o'th' *Tiger*:
But in a sieve I'll thither sail,
And like a rat without tail;
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

⁴⁴For example, the witches tell the fortune of Banquo as:
(*Macbeth*, I iii 65-68)

1Witch. Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

2Witch. Not so happy, yet much happier.

3Witch. Thou shalt get kings, though be none:

First, that as the *elements* of metre owe their existence to a state of increased excitement, so the metre itself should be accompanied by the natural language of excitement. Secondly, that as these elements are formed into metre *artificially*, by a *voluntary* act, with the design and for the purpose of blending *delight* with emotion, so the traces of present *volition* should throughout the metrical language be proportionally discernible.(*BL* II, 65)

In his practical criticism, he investigates how well these conditions are satisfied. He considers how well metre correlates to the character, i.e. his rank, his passion, his purpose. For him, even the prose has in the highest and lowest dramatic personage, whether the character is a Cobbler or Hamlet, a rhythm so felicitous and so severally appropriate, as to be a virtual metre.(*LR* II, 137) Coleridge judges *Love's Labour's Lost* as early work by "the frequency of the rhymes, the sweetness as well as the smoothness of the metre"(*LR* II, 103).

In his criticism of *Julius Caesar*, he points to the metre of Brutus's words : "A soothsayer bids you beware the Ides of March." He argues that; "If my ear does not deceive me, the metre of this line was meant to express that sort of mild philosophic contempt, characterizing Brutus even in his first casual speech."(*LR* II, 137) For Coleridge, in Shakespeare's metre, there is always some logic either of thought or passion to justify it. In Antony's speech, he points to some lines as not being Shakespeare's:

Pardon me, Julius— here wast thou bay'd brave hart;
Here didst thou fall, and here thy hunters stand
Sign'd in thy spoil, and crimson'd in thy death.
O world! thou wast the forest to this hart,

And this, indeed, O world! the heart of thee.

I doubt the genuineness of the last two lines;—not because they are vile; but first, on account of the rhythm, which is not Shakespearean, but just the very tune of some old play, from which the actor might have interpolated them;— and secondly, because they interrupt, not only the sense and connection, but likewise the flow both of the passion, and (what is with me still more decisive) of the Shakespearean link of association.(LR II, 140-141)

2 · v Pun

Lord Kames describes a play on words as ‘being low and childish’ and ‘unworthy of any composition, whether gay or serious, that pretends to any degree of elevation’⁴⁵ But Shakespeare, in his opinion, “when he descends to a play of words, is not always in the wrong”⁴⁶. Johnson was critical of Shakespeare’s wordplay. “A quibble”, he says,

is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his diction, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal *Cleopatra* for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it⁴⁷.

But for Coleridge, a pun is far more than a mere play on words. Punning links the word with the working of the human mind.⁴⁸ Punning for him, like other linguistic

⁴⁵Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Elements of Criticism*. Vol.1, p.514.

⁴⁶Ibid., p.516.

⁴⁷Johnson, Samuel. *Johnson on Shakespeare*. Ed. Walter Raleigh. London, 1949, pp.23-4.

⁴⁸See Fulford, Tim. *Coleridge's Figurative Language*. Basingstock: Macmillan, 1991, p.24.

effects, may reveal the inner mind of the characters:

Critics who argues against the use of a thing from its abuse, have taken offence to the introduction in a tragedy of that play on words which is called *punning*, but how stands the fact with nature? Is there not a 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; thus Old Gaunt, discontented with his relation, in the peevishness of age, when Richard asks "how is it with aged Gaunt," breaks forth.(*Lect I*, 564)

He explains that on a death bed there is feeling which may make all things appear but as puns and equivocations, so a passion carries off its own excess by plays on words as naturally, and therefore as appropriately to drama as by gesticulations, looks, or tones.(*LR II*, 172) He points out that something of Shakespeare's punning must be attributed to his age because at this time direct and formal combats of wit were a favourite pastime of the courtly and accomplished. He believes that "a pun, if it be congruous with the feeling of the scene, is not only allowable in the dramatic dialogue, but often times one of the most effectual intensives of passion."(*LR II*, 173)

He points out that Hamlet's play on words is not only logical but also an integral part of the play. Hamlet's plays on words⁴⁹, according to him, may be attributed either

Coleridge's idea of the function of pun is explained: "If the mind did produce alterations of meaning by making small alterations to the sound and spelling of existing words, then we should expect a similarity in sound and shape between words to indicate a similarity of meaning. However, if the process forming the new word from the old had occurred hundreds of years ago, then the similarity in meaning had often been forgotten. Poetry, however, could force recognition of that original similarity by using its licence to exploit the sound of words—a licence not given to prose or to the ordinary speech from which Wordsworth wanted to derive poetry. By punning, or by juxtaposing two similar-sounding or similarly spelt words of apparently different meaning, poetry did not just create a musical effect. These 'new combinations of language' allowed to poetry enabled it to suggest unexpected relationship between the meanings as well as the sounds and spellings."

⁴⁹ (*Hamlet*, I ii, 65-67)

Hamlet. A little more than Kin, and less than Kind.
Claudius. How is it that the Clouds still hang on you?

to an exuberant activity of mind, as in the higher comedy of Shakespeare generally, or to his suppressed passion, and especially to a hardly smothered personal dislike. Punning, he diagnoses, generally arises from a mixture of a sense of injury and contempt and it is a very natural way of expressing that mingled feeling. He argues that puns in Shakespeare are as natural as in the beginning of language. (*Lect 1, 292-3*)

2 · vi Wit

Coleridge considers wit an example of activity of thought. In his opinion, “wit consists in presenting thoughts or images in an unus(u)al connection with each other, for the purpose of exciting pleasure by the surprise” (*Lect II, 416*). In his comment on Donne, he explains wit: “Wit!—Wonder-exciting vigour, intenseness and peculiarity of thought, using at will the almost boundless stores of a capacious memory and exercised on subjects, where we have no right to expect it,—” (*MAL, 135*). He classifies wit into three kinds according to the manner of connection. First, when the connection is real and the conscious object is truth not amusement, he calls it scientific wit, in which Samuel Butler excels. The second kind is when the connection is apparent and transitory and produced by mere combination of words, of which Voltaire is an exponent. The third kind is when the connection is of thoughts, or by words or by images, which we often call fancy, and which constitutes the larger and more peculiar part of Shakespeare’s wit. (*Lect II, 416*)

Shakespeare’s wit, he observes, is blended with the other parts of his work and is by its nature capable of being blended with them and it is evident in all parts of his

works whether tragic or comic. The character of Falstaff, for example, is witty. He says that we can scarce turn to a single speech of Falstaff's without instances of it. Coleridge points out,

The speeches of *Falstaff* and *Prince Henry* would, for the most part, be equally proper in the mouth of either, and might indeed, with undiminished effect, proceed from any person. This is owing to their being composed almost wholly of wit, which is impersonal, and not of humour, which always more or less partakes of the character of the speaker. The Character of *Parson Evans*, on the other hand, is one of humour throughout. (Lect II, 178)

For him real wit always appeals to the understanding, and does not necessarily produce laughter.

Humour, for him, is of more difficult definition. Humour does not consist wholly in the understanding and the senses. No combination of thoughts, images, or words will of itself constitute humour unless some peculiarity of character can be indicated thereby. Parson Adams, for him is a good example of humour.

He points out that the greater part of what passed for wit in Shakespeare was not exquisite humour heightened by a figure and made humorous by being attributed to a particular character. He suggests Falstaff's comparison of a flea on Bardolf's nose to a damned soul suffering in purgatory as an example. The comparison is pleasurable not because it comes from a particular personality but from the images themselves. Coleridge suggests that the employment of wit is a norm which distinguishes an author of talent from one of genius. The former gives "a kind of electric surprize by a mere turn of phrase" and the latter produces "surprize by a permanent medium and always leaves something behind it which gratifies the mind." (Lect I, 295) The turns of phrases

employed by the man of talent please in company but pass away with the moment. He compares this kind of man to “a man who squandered away his estate in farthings but distributed so many that he needs must have been very rich.”(Ibid., 295)

He compares the wit of Shakespeare to the flourishing of a man’s stick when he is walking along in the full flow of animal spirits.

It was a sort of overflow of hilarity which disburdened us & seemed like a conductor to distribute a portion of our joy to the surrounding air by carrying it away from us. While too it disburdened us it enabled us to appropriate what remained to what was most important and most within our direct aim. (*Lect I, 294-5*)

He compares Shakespeare’s wit to salt in our meat, Ben Jonson’s, to salt instead of meat.

In this sense, Falstaff’s wit is crucial to the construction of the play. *Henry IV* Parts I and II belong to historical drama. “In order that a drama may be properly historical”, he says,

it is necessary that it should be the history of the people to whom it is addressed. In the composition, care must be taken that there appear no dramatic improbability, as the reality is taken for granted. It must, likewise, be poetical;— that only, I mean, must be taken which is permanent in our nature, which is common, and therefore deeply interesting to all ages. The events themselves are immaterial, otherwise than as the clothing and manifestation of the spirit that is working within. In this mode, the unity resulting from succession is destroyed, but is supplied by a unity of a higher order, which connects the events by reference to the workers, gives a reason for them in the motives, and presents men in their causative character. It takes, therefore, that part of real history which is the least known, and infuses a principle of life and organization into the naked facts, and makes them all the framework of an animated whole.(*LR II, 160*)

In this sense, such a character as Falstaff is necessary because his wit animates the

whole work like salt in meat.

Coleridge's idea of Shakespeare's poetic work is closely linked to his notion of nature. From his thought that poetry in its comprehensive sense is the reconciliation of nature and human consciousness, we can deduce his notion of Shakespeare's poetic work. For Coleridge, Shakespeare's poetic work is the embodiment of ideas organically united into a whole.

In Shakespeare, form is analogous to natural form, usually represented by Coleridge as a plant. The beginning of Shakespeare's plays is a kind of germ from which a sprout develops and grows into a mature tree. The characters of the plays are natural in terms both of their containing an essence congruent with nature and of their being natural ingredients for the whole. He describes Shakespeare's language as that of nature. The language of nature, for him, is the language innate to the characters, which reflects the character's personality, situation, feeling, and thought. In addition, the language of nature must not retain the trace of the author. Above all he showed how natural and appropriate each character's speech is for the purpose and the construction of the drama. Metre in Shakespeare's drama expresses the passion and mood of the characters. Coleridge pays attention to how Shakespeare commanded metre according to the passion or feeling of the characters in particular situations. Pun and wit, for Coleridge, are also important ingredients making up the whole. In Shakespeare's punning, his activity of thought is revealed.

Chapter 5. Appreciation of Shakespeare

To see or to read a drama is an emotional experience. Poetical theorists have always been interested in the impact dramatic poetry has on the reader or the audience. Plato admits the influence of drama on the feelings of the audience although he dismisses the audience's sympathetic reaction as disgraceful.¹ Aristotle, in *Poetics*, describes the emotional change wrought on the audience as 'catharsis'. Longinus, in *On the Sublime*, argues about the effect of elevated language upon an audience.

Theorists and critics, in other words, have tried to explain dramatic poetry in terms of its reception. Drama is peculiar in that it cannot be conceived of without the existence of the audience, although, strictly speaking, all criticism might be termed reception criticism in so far as the critics themselves constitute a kind of audience.

In this chapter, I would like to focus on Coleridge's exploration of the reception of Shakespeare's dramatic work by the audience as well as by himself as a professional critic. In doing so, I will discuss the question of whether or not he is appropriately termed a 'closet critic'. Some critics such as J.R. de J. Jackson and R.A. Foakes disagree with the notion². Critics such as Jonathan Bate, on the other hand, tend to accept it.³ My

¹ Plato. *The Republic*. Reprinted in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. Ed. Bernard F. Dukore. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974, p.30.

² See Jackson, J.J.de J. "Coleridge on Dramatic Illusion and Spectacle in the Performance of Shakespeare's Plays." *Modern Philology* 62(1964-65):13-21, pp.13-21. He challenges the assessment that Coleridge is hostile to theatrical performance. Also see R.A.Foakes, *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*, p.15. In response to the accusation of Coleridge's having no interest in the plays as performed on the stage, Foakes argues that "This is not strictly true, as his wrestling with the nature of dramatic illusion shows...and in fact he obviously enjoyed and appreciated good performances in the theatre".

³ See Bate, Jonathan. "The Romantic Stage." *Shakespeare: An Illustrated Stage History*. Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 92-111, p.93. He relates Coleridge's

own view is that Coleridge assumes that performance before an audience is constitutive of the dramatic genre. I will begin by examining his concept of theatre and his idea of the origin of tragedy. Then, I will look at his opinion of the Elizabethan stage and of the theatrical performance of his own times.

It must be accepted that Coleridge's dissatisfaction with the theatrical performances available to him leads him to choose to read Shakespeare rather than to see him, which contributes to his reputation as a 'closet critic'. But it does not follow that he rejects theatrical performance in itself. We need to recollect that his theory of illusion is largely focused on theatrical illusion though he also applies his theory to the experience of reading. His comparison of drama to dreams is distinctive despite the comparison being in itself so traditional. In order to reveal the complexity of the theory, the traditional Western notion of dream and illusion will be discussed. I will then assess the distinctiveness of Coleridge's argument. Finally, I will focus on Coleridge's idea of the audience. For Coleridge, the proper reception of dramatic work presupposes the reconciliation of the author and the audience. He, like the other Romantics, demands that the audience employ an active imagination. But in doing so, the author's intention still remains crucial in the triangular relationship of author-work-audience. Coleridge's notion of the relationship of author-work-audience is closely related to his notion of Shakespeare as a poet and of his poetic works.

1. The Concept of Theatre

idealism to his hostility to theatrical performance. According to Bate, for Coleridge, an idea of Hamlet, a thing-in-itself, is independent of its phenomenal manifestations in the particulars of individual performances.

In Coleridge's idea of theatre, there is the concept of co-experience or shared experience. In his *Lectures*, he defines theatre as, "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." (*Lect I*, 129) He further defines theatre as "a combination of several, or of all the Fine Arts, to an harmonious Whole, having a peculiar end of its own, to which the peculiar end of each (component part, taken separately) is made subordinate and subservient: namely, that of imitating real Objects or Actions under a semblance of reality, for the gratification of assembled Spectators." (*Lect I*, 129)

In this definition, we need to pay attention to such expressions as 'people assemble' 'entertained all at the same and in common,' 'a combination of all the fine arts to an harmonious whole' and 'imitating reality'. These expressions best sum up his idea of theatre or the stage. This definition reminds us of A.W.Schlegel's idea of drama though there is no direct link between them.⁴ Schlegel, in his *Lectures*, defines the object of drama as "to produce an impression on an assembled multitude, to rivet their attention, and to excite their interest and sympathy." (*CDAL*, 37) According to him, the tears the audience shed for persecuted innocence, or a dying hero, make friends and brothers of them all and the effect produced by seeing a number of others share in the same emotions is peculiarly powerful.

Coleridge's idea of theatre as something to be shared and as a composite art is also demonstrated in his opinion of the origin of tragedy. In addition, we know that he

was keenly interested in the spiritual impact theatrical performances have on the audience. In his *Lectures*, he explains that tragedy first appeared as the Hymn of the Goat, the victim offered to Bacchus. Bacchus, according to him, was one of the most awful and mysterious of deities. He is, in his earthly character, the conqueror and civilizer of India and at the same time, allegorically, the symbol of festivity. But more importantly he was worshipped as representative of the organic energies of the universe and as the cause or condition of skill and contrivance. Bacchus, aided by his traditional history as an earthly conqueror, was honoured as the presiding genius of the heroic temperament and character, which is considered something innate, divine, and possessing a felicity above and beyond prudence. (*Lect I*, 45)

R.A.Foakes has suggested the possibility that Coleridge could have found a similar account of the origin of tragedy in Thomas Franklin's *A Dissertation on the Ancient Tragedy* and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric*.⁵ Dr. Johnson, in *The Rambler*, also suggests that tragedy originated in a monody or solitary song in honour of Bacchus.⁶

Whatever the influence may have been, we can recognise some characteristics of public worship in Coleridge's notion of tragedy. Or, in other words, tragedy is defined as an organisational unity which is the concrete being of something spiritual. In Coleridge's opinion, in the earliest drama, actors, chorus and the audience were not divided. They all took part in celebrating the god. He points to the different voices in the hymn as the origin of dialogue. The narrative parts of the hymn were composed of the god's action and the reaction of those who feared or were rewarded by the god, and the

⁴ Coleridge's definition of theatre came before Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*.

⁵ See *Lect I*, p.44 n2

parts were narrated sometimes in chorus, and sometimes individually. As the performance was proceeding, the expressions of the spectator's excitement and curiosity began to be divided from the lyric or choral parts. In other words, sometimes the chorus expressed the excitement and curiosity of the narration from the position of spectator.

Coleridge explains the ancient Greek stage thus:

In the front of the Orchestra, directly over against the middle of the Scene, there stood an elevation with steps in the shape of a larger Altar, as high as the boards of the Stage/ this was named the Thymele, & recalled the origin & original purpose of the chorus, as an altar Song in honor of the presiding Deity.—Here and on these steps the (persons of the) Chorus sate collectively, when they were not singing, & attended to the Dialogue as Spectators, and as (what in truth they were) the ideal representatives of the real Audience, and of the Poet in his own character assuming the supposed impressions made by the drama in order to direct & guide them. But when the Chorus itself formed part of the Dialogue, then the Leader of the Band or Foreman, ascended the level summit of the Thymele, in order to command the stage & speak with the Dramatis Personae there acting.—(*Lect I*, 440)

Here, we need to keep our eyes fixed on his explanation of the chorus as the ideal representatives of the audience. Coleridge's ideal audience is an agent actively participating in the performance. Another symbolic role of the chorus is its embodying of the union of the poet and the audience, which pervades the performance.

Coleridge's idea of the origin of tragedy, dialogues, and chorus is interestingly similar to Friedrich Nietzsche's. According to him,

Original tragedy is only chorus and not drama at all. Later an attempt was made to demonstrate the god as real and to bring the visionary figure, together with the transfiguring frame, vividly before the eyes of every spectator. This marks the

⁶ Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, No. 156, Sept. 4, 1751. *Selections from Dr. Johnson's 'Rambler'*. Ed. with pref. & notes Hale White. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907.

beginning of drama in the strict sense of the word. It then became the task of the dithyrambic chorus so to excite the mood of the listeners that when the tragic hero appeared they would behold not the awkwardly masked man but a figure born of their own rapt vision.⁷

It is unlikely that Nietzsche could have been directly influenced by Coleridge. Rather, their ideas belong to the common trend of Romantic thought lasting through the century. Nietzsche defines tragedy as the Apollonian embodiment of a Dionysiac insight and powers, or of something like the powerful approach of spring which penetrates with joy the whole frame of nature. He also compares drama to "the Apollonian dream state, in which the daylight world is veiled and a new world-clearer, more comprehensible, more affecting than the first, and at the same time more shadowy-falls upon the eye in ever-changing shapes."⁸ Tragedy, in his interpretation, is a transformation into defined shape of some energetic power pervading the universe. Coleridge's idea of Bacchus as symbol of the organic energy of the universe is clearly very similar.

Nietzsche's and Coleridge's interest in tragedy is focused on tragedy as a concrete shaping of something spiritual and on the impact it has on the assembled spectators. According to Coleridge, Christian drama reveals the same truth. In the establishment of Christianity, some Scriptural history was adapted to drama. Coleridge argues that after the darkness of the Middle Ages, drama recommenced in England in religion as it did in Greece. People were not able to read the Bible and the priests wanted the people to know Scriptural history. Therefore they presented it in scenes, which were developed into the Mystery plays. To have their effect on the people the mysteries must be not only

⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Reprinted in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, p.824.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.824.

instructive but also entertaining. And when the mysteries became so, the people began to enjoy taking part by acting the roles themselves. As in the Greek drama, in the beginnings of drama in England, the roles of the actor and the audience were not divided

In the mysteries, the Devil and vice were awful but, at the same time, ludicrous and they developed into the harlequin and clown. Coleridge, disagreeing with Malone, insists that such scenes as the vice leaping upon the Devil's back caught people's attention and made them laugh heartily. In the mixture of high seriousness and mirth in the mystery plays, in his opinion, can be found the origin of tragi-comedy in the English theatre. From the period of the mysteries drama in England has adopted itself to new circumstance and has become, in his words, "a representation of human Events more lively, more near the truth, & permitting a larger field of moral instruction, a more ample exhibition of the recesses of the human Heart under all the trials & circumstances that most concern us, than was known or guessed at by Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides——"(Lect 1, 52)

In the account of the beginnings of the Greek drama and English drama, and of their evolution, we can find the germ of Coleridge's idea of theatre, the audience, and the purpose of drama. Interestingly, the ritualistic aspect of drama continues to engage modern critics. Robert J. Nelson points out that "the religious origins of drama have in recent years predisposed many students of the theatre to think of dramatic art in varying

degrees of identification with ritual.”⁹ J.L.Styan suggests a similarity between the theatre or cinema and the church :

The congregation in a church and the audience in a cinema may both be a mixture of all sorts of people, but their purpose in meeting together in a church for worship and in a cinema for entertainment affects everything. Since in church it is important to know what to expect, the service takes a ritual and repeated form; in a cinema it is just as important *not* to be able to anticipate the pattern of the ceremony. In a church, the building is so arranged and lit that there is every inducement to participate in the service; in a cinema we sit in darkness and submit to the illusion of the bright screen.¹⁰

This view is an echo of Coleridge’s or Schlegel’s though they do not explicitly compare theatre and church.

2. Elizabethan Stage versus the Contemporary Stage

It is clear from his account of the origin of theatre that Coleridge recognises performance before an audience as integral to drama. It is because of this that a dramatist needs to be something more than a poet. Shakespeare, in Coleridge’s opinion, learns to be a dramatist only after he has proved himself a poet.(*Lect I*, 82) This view is implicit in Coleridge’s comments on the Elizabethan stage. He describes the Elizabethan stage as ‘the infant stage’. For Coleridge, like Wordsworth, the word ‘infant’ has a positive meaning, suggesting the powerful imagination that distinguishes childhood, simplicity, and comparative freedom from the rigidity of the laws regarding dramatic form. He often emphasises the absence of artificiality in the Elizabethan

⁹ Nelson, Robert J. *Play within a Play*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1971, p.3.

¹⁰ Styan, J.L. *The Dramatic Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, p.15.

theatre and the 'nakedness' of the stage. The Elizabethan stage, he says, 'had nothing but curtains for its scenes, and the Actor as well as the author were obliged to appeal to the imagination & not to the senses'. (*Lect I*, 348-9) The actor frequently addresses the audience directly and his implied demand is that the audience should listen to him with its minds, not with its eyes on the scenery. (*Lect II*, 122)

Coleridge's preference for the infant stage is of a piece with his rejection of empiricism, but it was the product, too, of his disgust with the contemporary state of the stage. "It was natural", he says

that Shakespeare should avail himself of all that imagination afforded. If he had lived in the present day & had seen one of his plays represented, he would the first moment have felt the shifting of the scenes—Now, there is so much to please the senses in the performance & so much to offend them in the play, that he would have constructed them no doubt on a different model—"We are grateful" said Coleridge "that he did not—since there can be no comparative pleasure between having a great man in our closet & on the stage. All may be delighted that Shakespear did not anticipate, & write his plays with any conception of that strong excitement of the senses, that inward endeavour to make everything appear reality which is deemed excellent as to the effort of the present day. (*Lect I*, 228-229)

Since 'the infant stage', the English stage has seen the development of stage machinery and spectacular stage sets had become the major attraction for audiences. Commercial rivalry prompted productions to resort to other attractions than good acting to appeal to their audiences.¹¹ The fashion for sentimentalism might be one reason that the English stage seemed undesirable to some critics such as Addison.¹² Oliver

¹¹ See Dobson, Michael. "Improving on the Original." *Shakespeare: An Illustrated Stage History*. Eds. Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.45-68, pp.59-60.

¹² Addison, Joseph. *The Spectator*, 40(April 16, 1711). Reprinted in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. P.389. Addison criticises the English stage thus: "There is also another particular, which may be reckoned among the blemishes, or rather the false beauties, of our English tragedy: I mean those particular speeches

Goldsmith criticised the immorality and corruption of the stage of his time and offered an argument similar to that of the romantics: “the reader receives more benefit by perusing a well written play in his closet than by seeing it acted.” He also criticised the revival of Shakespeare’s works as harmful to Shakespeare.¹³

The Romantics share a dislike of the theatrical performance of Shakespeare’s plays. Hazlitt, himself a theatre reviewer, is often critical of Shakespearean actors. Hamlet, for example, in his opinion, is a character hardly capable of being acted, even by the best of contemporary actors.¹⁴ For Hazlitt, whether a drama is a suitable to be played or not, depends on whether the characterisation can be fully expressed on the stage. *King Lear*,

which are commonly known by the name of *rants*. The warm and passionate parts of a tragedy are always the most taking with the audience; for which reason we often see the players pronouncing in all the violence of action, several parts of the tragedy which the author writ with greater temper, and designed that they should have been so acted. I have seen Powell very often raise himself a loud clap by this artifice. The poets that were acquainted with this secret, have given frequent occasion for such emotions in the actor, by adding vehemence to words where there was no passion, or inflaming a real passion into fustian. This hath filled the mouths of our heroes with bombast; and given them such sentiments as proceed rather from a swelling than a greatness of mind. Unnatural exclamations, curses, vows, blasphemies, a defiance of mankind, and an outraging of the gods, frequently pass upon the audience for towering thoughts, and have accordingly met with infinite applause.

¹³ Goldsmith, Oliver. ‘Of the STAGE’ in *An Enquiry into Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759). Reprinted in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*. Vol.4, p.373. He argues that “the revival of those pieces of forced humour, far-fetch’d conceit, and unnatural hyperbole which have been ascribed to Shakespeare, is rather gibbeting than raising a statue to his memory; it is rather a trick of the actor, who thinks it safest acting in exaggerated characters, and who by out-stepping nature chuses to exhibit the ridiculous outre of an harlequin under the sanction of this venerable name.”

¹⁴ See Hazlitt, William. *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, and Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*. London: Bell, 1884, p.81. According to him, “Mr. Kemble unavoidably fails in this character from a want of ease and variety. The character of Hamlet is made up of undulating lines; it has the yielding flexibility of “a wave o’th’ sea.” Mr. Kemble plays it like a man in armour, with a determined inveteracy of purpose, in one undeviating straight line, which is as remote from the natural grace and refined susceptibility of the character, as the sharp angles and abrupt starts which Mr. Kean introduces into the part. Mr. Kean’s Hamlet is as much too splenetic and rash as Mr. Kemble’s is too deliberate and formal. His manner is too strong and pointed. He throws a severity, approaching to virulence, into the common observations and answers. There is nothing of this in Hamlet. He is, as it were, wrapped up in his reflections, and only *thinks aloud*. There should therefore be no attempt to impress what he says upon others by a studied exaggeration of emphasis or manner; no *talking at* his hearers. There should be as much of the gentleman and scholar as possible infused into the part, and as little of the actor. A pensive air of sadness should sit reluctantly upon his brow, but no appearance of fixed and sullen gloom. He is full of weakness and melancholy, but there is no harshness in his nature. He is the most amiable of misanthropes.”

for example, according to him is not possible to be acted not merely because the machinery with which the storm is mimicked is not adequate but because 'the greatness of Lear is not in the corporal dimension, but in the intellectual'¹⁵. *Richard III*, however, in his opinion, can be considered as a proper stage-play because Richard can be successfully represented on stage though the characterisation might be differently rendered by different actors. He compares Kean with Cooke: the former is more refined than the latter; more bold, varied, and original than Kemble.

Though Hazlitt points out the limits of the stage for a full presentation of Shakespeare's dramas, he is not hostile to stage performance. Another contemporary critic, Charles Lamb, however, argues that Shakespeare's dramas are almost impossible to be acted. Like Hazlitt, he points out that the profundity, complexity, and subtlety of Hamlet cannot be represented on the stage. 'In fact', he says,

the things aimed at in theatrical representation, are to arrest the spectator's eye upon the form and gesture, and so to gain a more favourable hearing to what is spoken: it is not what the character is, but how he looks ; not what he says, but how he speaks it....Hamlet would still be a youthful accomplished prince, and must be gracefully personated; he might be puzzled in his mind, wavering in his conduct, seemingly-cruel to Ophelia, he might see a ghost, and start at it, and address it kindly when he found it to be his father; all this in the poorest and most homely language of the servilest creeper after nature that ever consulted the palate of an audience; without troubling Shakespeare for that matter: and I see not but there would be room for all the power which an actor has, to display itself.¹⁶

In Lamb's opinion, the actor's performance not only does not present the original intention of the dramatist but sometimes distorts the character. For instance, if an actor

¹⁵ Ibid., p.124, quoted from Charles Lamb's "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare" in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*. Vol.1, p.107.

taking the role of Hamlet expresses a vulgar scorn and contempt 'in its very grossest and most hateful form' at Polonius and cruelty to Ophelia, it will degrade Hamlet's gentility and genuine feeling. In acting Richard III, actors usually emphasise nothing but his crime, cruelty, and wickedness. But Richard in Shakespeare's drama is a complex figure in whom we feel horror blended with the admiration induced by 'his wit, his buoyant spirits, his vast knowledge and insight into characters'.

He remarks that the full complexity of Shakespeare's characters is available only through reading. Lear, for example, is impossible to be represented on a stage. Whereas we can see only 'corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage' on the stage, when we read the play, we become the king.¹⁷ According to him, 'upon the stage, the imagination is no longer the ruling faculty, but we are left to our poor unassisted senses'.¹⁸ He points out,

It requires little reflection to perceive, that if those characters in Shakespeare which are within the precincts of nature, have yet something in them which appeals too exclusively to the imagination, to admit of their being made objects to the senses without suffering a change and a diminution,—that still stronger the objection must lie against representing another line of characters, which Shakespeare has introduced to give a wildness and a supernatural elevation to his scenes, as if to remove them still farther from that assimilation to common life in which their excellence is vulgarly supposed to consist.¹⁹

On stage, to give the representation more reality, the emphasis is placed on comparatively trifling things: for example, though Mrs. Siddons's dismissal of the

¹⁶ Lamb, Charles. *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*. Vol.I. Ed. E.V.Lucas. London: Methuen, 1903, p.101.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.107.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.108.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.108-109.

guests in the banquet scene in *Macbeth* was enthusiastically applauded, the scene is not very important for the overall meaning of the drama. Thus, in acting, non-essentials are likely to be unduly raised in importance.

In his view of the contemporary stage, Coleridge echoes Hazlitt and Lamb:

those who went to the Theatre in our own day, when any of our poet's works were represented, went to see *M^r Kemble* in *Macbeth*,—or *M^{rs} Siddons' Isabel*, to hear speeches usurped by fellows who owed their very elevation to dexterity in snuffing candles since all inferior characters, thro' w^h our poet shone no less conspicuously & brightly, were given them to deliver. (*Lect I*, 254)

Here, Coleridge points out the danger we are often apt to fall into; firstly, we tend to go to see actors not the play itself. Secondly, he opposes the adaptation or sometimes distortion of the plays that follows from the fashion for allowing the star actor to appropriate all well-known speeches even if they had been allotted by Shakespeare to minor characters. In Coleridge these feeling hardened into a general contempt for theatrical performance:

he never saw any of Shakespear's plays performed, but with a degree of pain, disgust, and indignation. He had seen Mrs. Siddons as *Lady*, and Kemble as *Macbeth*— these might be the Macbeths of the Kembles, but they were not the Macbeths of Shakespear; he was therefore not grieved at the enormous size and monopoly of the theatres, which naturally produced many bad and but few good actors; and which drove Shakespear from the stage, to find his proper place, in the heart and in the closet;.... (*Lect I*, 563)

But it does not follow that Coleridge is appropriately considered a 'closet critic'. His objection is not to performance, but to performance that distorts the plays.²⁰

Coleridge, in distinguishing the English drama from the Greek drama, emphasises 'the accidents of the English stage' that appealed to the imagination and that gave rise to Shakespeare's dramas. He comments that the stage was then itself as near as possible to a closet. In other words for the Elizabethan audience the disparity evident in Coleridge's time between the experience of reading a play and seeing it performed did not yet exist.

The fact that he is not merely a 'closet critic' is evident from his theory of illusion, for his theory of illusion is surely based on his understanding of dramatic illusion.

3. Coleridge's Idea of Illusion

The problem of illusion and reality is perennial in literature, philosophy, and theology. In drama, especially, the relationship between the two is a recurrent topic. Calderon's *Life is a Dream*²¹ is a good example. Sigismundo, after having been confined in a tower because of a prophecy that he would revolt against the king and ruin the country suddenly finds himself the Prince of Poland. After tasting the luxury and pomp of life in a palace for a while, he is taken back to his cell, and when he awakens

²⁰ See Jackson, J.R.de J. "Coleridge on Dramatic Illusion and Spectacle in the Performance of Shakespeare's Plays." p.16. Jackson's position is that Coleridge is not anti-theatrical. He argues that "Coleridge is preferring an imaginative reading in the closet, not to all productions on stage, but to the inappropriate and often ludicrous adaptations of the contemporary theater." See also p.20, op.cit. He says that "It is evident that Coleridge's complaints about the performance of Shakespeare's plays and his advocacy of the closet as a more appropriate place for them are not intended to be antitheatrical in any general sense. Nor do they imply the belief that Shakespeare's plays are more suitable for reading than for acting." Also see Carson, Julie. "An Active Imagination: Coleridge and the Politics of Dramatic Reform." *Modern Philology* 86(1988):22-33, p.23. Carlson argues that Coleridge believes in the function of drama which has the power to revive the British Public's imagination. But he finds that his contemporary theatres fail to live up to his theoretical expectations.

from a drugged stupor, he realises that life is but a dream: 'What is life? An illusion, / fiction, passing shadow,/ and the greatest good the merest dot,/ for all of life's a dream, and dreams/ themselves are only part of dreaming.' (Act II, Sc.ii)

The idea that 'life is a dream' is implicit in the concept of *theatrum mundi*, which itself gives Shakespeare one of his favourite topics. Jaques in *As you Like It* is one of several characters to conclude that life is but a stage. Another favourite Shakespearean technique, the play within a play carries similar implications.

Coleridge's interest in illusion lies in the mental process by which illusions are entertained during the theatrical performance rather than in the thematic problem of illusion. Frederick Burwick argues that, in spite of Coleridge's debt to Schlegel, his concern with illusion in Shakespeare's works is distinctive. "Where Schlegel was fascinated by Shakespeare's making illusion a part of the plot, Coleridge attempts to explain illusion in terms of the poetic imagination."²² "Illusion", according to Gombrich, "is hard to describe or analyse, for though we may be intellectually aware of the fact that any given experience *must* be an illusion, we cannot, strictly speaking, watch ourselves having an illusion."²³

For Coleridge, drama is an imitating of reality under a semblance of reality. He explains the production of illusion thus:

²¹ Calderon de la Barca, Pedro. *Life is a Dream*. Tr. Edwin Honig. New York: Hill & Wang, 1970.

²² Burwick, Frederick. *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era*, p.192. Also see Burwick, "Illusion and Drama." *Romantic Drama*. Ed. Gerald Gillespie. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: J.Benjamins Pub.Co.,1994. 59-80., p.62. According to Burwick, Schlegel insists that "By thematizing illusion, Shakespeare secures the audience participation in the illusion-making process."

²³ Gombrich, E.H. *Art and Illusion*. London: Phaidon, 1977, p.5.

a ⟨Forest—⟩ Scene is not presented to the Audience as a Picture ⟨of a Forest,⟩ but as a Forest; and tho' we are not actually deceived by the one ⟨more or less⟩ than by the other, yet our feelings are differently affected in the two cases. In the former there is *analogon* of deception, a sort of temporary Faith which we encourage by our own Will, because we know that it is at any time in the power of our will to see it as it is, and no longer as that which it presents to us. Its end is to produce illusion, as far as the nature of the Thing permits, and the true stage Illusion both in this and in all other Things consists not in the mind's judging it to be a Forest but in its remission of the judgment, that it is not a Forest—(Lect I, 130)

Burwick argues that the major elements of Coleridge's theory of illusion are all implicit in the 1808 lectures from which the above passage is taken. In Coleridge's view of illusion, two characteristics are crucial: the first point is that 'illusion is 'a sort of temporary faith' encouraged by 'our own will', the second is that true stage illusion consists in the mind's remission of the judgment that it is not a forest'.

As Burwick suggests²⁴, we can perceive Coleridge's notion of illusion through his annotation to Richard Payne Knight's *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*. Knight quotes Burke's argument that "the nearer tragedy approaches the reality, and the further it removes us from all idea of fiction, the more perfect is its power." Burke compares theatrical and real execution, and argues that no staged death can excite the same strong sympathy as the real execution of a king or princess does. Coleridge retorts that the comparison itself is totally wrong because

²⁴ See Burwick, Frederick, *Illusion and Drama*, pp.222-223. According to Burwick, "In reaction to Richard Payne Knight's associationist account of illusion as passive response, Coleridge argued that the aesthetic experience depends upon a willing and active awareness of illusion as illusion. Knight described the mind reacting in sympathy with increasing emotional stimulation until the reason surrenders to the force of the passions. Coleridge argues that dramatic illusion is not a passive response, nor even a voluntary surrender to illusion. It involves, rather, a deliberate choice *not* to compare and contrast, but to accept the experience in the artist's own terms; not to judge, but to witness the judgment of the artist. Judgment is a balance of observation and meditation. It appeals primarily to the imagination, rather than merely to the senses. The spectator engages the work as "waking dreams" or "half-dream." Through a "half-faith" or "temporary Faith which we encourage by our Will," we arrive at "a negative Belief" in

whatever may be our sensations when the attention is recalled to a scenic representation how farsoever we may then lose sight of its being a mimic show, we know perfectly at the time, when we are going to see it, or when assembled at the Theatre in expectation; that it is nothing better or worse. It is possible, that the mind during the representation of a tragedy may have fits of forgetfulness & deception and believe the fiction to be the reality, but the moment you suppose it in a condition to make a choice of this kind, all sense of delusion vanishes.(CM III, 404-405)

From this passage, we can note that Coleridge never allowed that drama and real life could be directly compared. In drama, according to Coleridge, we know that the events we witness are a representation but we feel that they are reality.(CM III, 406) Coleridge tries to explain the apparent contradictory experience that occurs when we read drama or during its theatrical performance.

Coleridge often explains illusion by comparing it to a dream. Probably the best way to understand his idea of illusion is first to examine his idea of dreams.²⁵

3 · i Illusion and Dream

In discussing the differences between Coleridge's idea of imagination and those of his English predecessors, I pointed out the autonomy of imagination as its ground. For Coleridge dreams are also an important clue to explain the autonomy of the mental

illusion. As Thomas McFarland has shown, Coleridge's effort to revise Hume's analysis of belief into an argument of faith led to his decisive formulation of "poetic faith" as "the willing suspension of disbelief."

²⁵ See Ford, Jennifer. *Coleridge on Dreaming: Romanticism, Dreams and the Medical Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.33. According to her, "Coleridge often referred to his dreams as being like dramas, with their own characters, costumes, settings, and temporal and spatial conventions. The most essential quality likening dreams to drama was that both required the suspension of volition. From his earliest recorded thoughts on dreams, Coleridge considered the suspension of volitional as one of the fundamental qualities of dreaming. Following from this, the illusory qualities inherent in watching a play are similar to the illusory qualities of a dream. He also often perceived his dreams as being performed on a stage- a space within which the actions and characters of the dream unfolded. He

faculties. Coleridge's view of dreams can be considered from two apparently contradictory dimensions: one is symbolical and the other phenomenal. The two dimensions for him are dialectical, not contradictory.

Dream as a conduit for vision is familiar in Western thought. Dreams in the Bible are usually represented as offering symbols or knowledge of the future such as Jacob's and Joseph's dreams in *Genesis*. In literature, dream vision has been an important device for centuries. Dante's *Divine Comedy*, for example, is a kind of dream vision. So is Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. In both, dreams are not illusions but rather reveal visions of truth. The Romantics inherited these traditions. For them, dreams are phenomena especially useful in explaining the mystery of mental activity. 'Dreams', according to J.R. Watson,

are extraordinary examples of the private and unexpected workings of the individual mind; they have a mysterious and involuntary quality about them, an unpredictable and inconsequential mode of operation which suggests that the mind is stranger, freer, and more resourceful than any mechanical account would allow; and they operate in symbols. The symbolic operation of dreams links them with the working of the poetic imagination, which can allow one thing to stand for another, and can transform abstraction into symbol. It is not difficult to see why the Romantic poets were fascinated by dreams.²⁶

Thus, the Romantic poets often use dreams in their poetry. Wordsworth, in Book V of *the Prelude*, describes a dream of an Arab bearing two books, one of them being called "Euclid's Elements" and the other being a shell from which he heard 'A loud prophetic blast of harmony'. According to the Arab, the one holds stars and weds soul to

termed this theatrical dreaming space 'Somnial or Morphean Space' (*CW* IV 5360), and carefully recorded many of its features throughout his lifetime."

soul in purest bonds of reason, undisturbed by space or time; that is, the book reveals the everlasting truth of the principle of the universe. The other is a god or many gods with voices more than all winds, with power to exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe through every clime, the heart of human kind; namely, the book in its spiritual aspect. In the dream the Arab holding these two books is changed to the knight of Cervantes and sometimes becomes himself again, sometimes is neither the one nor the other, sometimes is both at once. The knight wanders the desert to find a place to bury the two books and the poet himself yearns to join the knight's enterprise. Wordsworth's allegory clearly has to do with the nature of truth and the possibilities of its representation, and it is significant that he should offer his account of these things within a dream vision.

Keats, in 'Lamia', gives a particular meaning to dream. When, with the help of the snake, Hermes is able to see the nymph he was looking for, the poet comments, 'It was no dream; or say a dream it was,/ Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass/ Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.'(LL.126-28) Keats here desires divine experience in which there is no contradiction between dream and reality. The story of Lycius goes on to indicate that human experience is defined by their incompatibility. But in 'The Eve of St. Agnes', the love Madeline dreams of and the flesh and blood lover who has appeared himself in her room are 'melted' together, as if in privileged moments of mutual passion, or, perhaps, only in poetry, human experience may itself become divine.

Shelley is also attracted to the form of the dream vision. *Queen Mab*, for example, is a kind of dream vision in which Queen Mab offers Ianthe a dream in which the true

²⁶ Watson, J.R. *English Poetry of the Romantic Period 1789-1830*. London and New York: Longman,

nature of reality is revealed to her. It is a dream from which she awakes reborn. Shelley suggests that Ianthe's awakening will be spiritual rather than simply physical: 'Yes! she will wake again,/ Although her glowing limbs are motionless,/ And silent those sweet lips,/ Once breathing eloquence/ That might have soothed a tiger's rage,/ Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror./ Her dewy eyes are closed,/ And on their lids, whose texture fine/ Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,/ The baby Sleep is pillowed:' (I, 31-40).

Coleridge himself follows the tradition of dream vision as is evident from 'Kubla Khan''s subtitle, 'A Vision in a Dream', and from its preface in which Coleridge claims that the poem occurred to him in a dream. In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge employs dream to explain the two distinct types of mysticism.²⁷ There Coleridge understands dreams both symbolically and phenomenally; that is, dreams are shaped by past experiences but at the same time, they have the power to modify waking experience.

1985, p.56.

²⁷ *AR*, pp.391-392. He takes the mysterious experiences of two different men in a desert : a pilgrim, by chance or by his genius, comes to an oasis or natural garden where he happens to see snow-white blossoms, through which the green and growing fruits may be seen and the ripe golden fruits glowed. The impressions are so deep, vivid, and faithful that they are inscribed in his memory. However, he hurries back to the desert, scared by the roar heard from the desert. While hurrying back, shadows and imperfectly seen and vivid fragments of things distinctly seen blend with the past and present shaping of his Brain. Coleridge comments thus: 'Fancy modifies Sight. His dreams transfer their forms to real Objects; and these lend a substance and an *outness* to his Dreams.' He illustrates the second sort of mystic endowed with equal gifts of nature. The difference from the first is that the gift is developed and displayed by all the aids of education and the mystic is accompanied by well guarded merchants and fellow pilgrims on the established track. Instead of the light of a lantern, the full moon rises and chance leads him to the same oasis. He also experiences all kinds of bliss in nature. The moonlight modifies the things around him and Coleridge offers the moonlight as a symbol of the modifying power of the imagination;

But the Moonshine, the imaginative Poesy of Nature, spreads its soft shadowy charm over all, conceals distances, and magnifies heights, and modifies relations, and fill up vacuities with its own whiteness, counterfeiting substance; and where the dense shadows lie, makes solidity imitate Hollowness; and gives to all objects a tender visionary hue and softening. Interpret the Moonlight and the Shadows as the peculiar genius and sensibility of the Individual's own Spirit: (*AR*, 393)

Coleridge did not remark whether the second mystic actually dreamed or not, but he says that 'the Delightful dream, which the latter tells, is a Dream of Truth'.

Coleridge also tries to explain dreams scientifically, but without rejecting the notion that a spiritual faculty is at work in dreams. Coleridge's interests in dreams may have been strengthened by Andrew Baxter's *An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul* and Erasmus Darwin's *Zoonomia*.²⁸ But it was also for him a personal interest. His notebooks often record his dreams.

Fri. Morn. 5^o clock—Dosing, dreamt of Hartley as at his Christening—how as he was asked who redeemed him, & was to say, God the Sou/ he went on, humming and hawing, in one hum & haw, like a boy who knows a thing & will not make the effort to recollect it—so as to irritate me greatly. Awakening (gradually I was able to completely detect, that) it was the Ticking of my Watch which lay in the Pen Placc in my Desk on the round Table close by my Ear, & which in the diseased State of my Nerves had *fretted* on my Ears—I caught the fact while Hartley's Face & moving Lips were yet before my Eyes, & his Hum & Ha, & the ticking of the Watch were each the other, as often happens in the passing off of Sleep—that curious modification of Ideas by each other, which is the Element of *Bulls*. I arose instantly, & wrote it down—it is now 10 minutes past 5.(CN I 1620, October 1803)

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud suggests that dreams might come from external sensory stimuli and produces some case studies to illustrate this. He quotes from Jessen (1855) that a peal of thunder might set us in the midst of battle and, from Meier(1758), that 'he was overpowered by some men who stretched him out on his back on the ground and drove a stake into the earth between his big toe and the next one. While he was imagining this in the dream he woke up and found that a straw was sticking between his toes.'²⁹ Freud explains such phenomena as demonstrations that we are in

²⁸ See Watson, pp.57-60 and Schneider, Elizabeth. *Coleridge, Opium and Kubla Khan*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1953, p.96.

²⁹ Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Tr. James Strachy. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976, p.84.

contact with the extra-corporeal world even in sleep. Coleridge, too, is, as the passage quoted above suggests, particularly interested in dreams in which the internal and external worlds merge or blur to curious effect.

Coleridge, however, tries to search for the fact that images and thought have their own power by analysing this dream; that is, by examining 'the curious modification of ideas by each other.' He tries to find the clue of the principle of unity as in *Bulls* by explaining the working of the dream. His reflections on dream even illuminate for him the mystery of evil. He writes: "do not the bad Passions in Dreams throw light & shew of proof upon this Hypothesis?—Explain those bad Passions: & I shall gain Light, I am sure—A Clue! A Clue!"(CNI 1770 Dec. 1803).

Coleridge, in *Aids to Reflection*, rewrites *Pilgrim's Progress*, in a manner that focuses attention on the superimposition of dream on reality:

Awakened by the cock-crow, (a sermon, a calamity, a sick-bed, or a providential escape), the Christian pilgrim sets out in the morning twilight, while yet the truth (the νόμος τέλειος ὁ τῆς ἐλευθερίας) is below the horizon. Certain necessary *consequences* of his past life and his present undertaking will be *seen* by the refraction of its light: more will be apprehended and conjectured. The phantasms that had predominated during the hours of darkness, are still busy. Though they no longer present themselves, as distinct Forms, they yet remain as formative Motions in the Pilgrim's soul, unconscious of its own activity and overmastered by its own workmanship. Things take the signature of Thought. The shapes of the recent dream become a *mould* for the objects in the distance; and these again give an outwardness and a sensation of reality to the Shapings of the Dream.(AR, 35-36)

Andrew Baxter suggests that the fact we are not conscious of the activity of the soul does not necessarily mean that it is inactive and that, in fact, "it is far from being true

that the soul then(during dreams)³⁰ is only percipient, exclusive of being active; for it is just as active as it would be in like circumstances, when the person is awake."³¹ Besides, according to him, during our sleep, our volition is suspended, but "the ideas of the mind are by habit much more frequently connected with sensation than with volition; and hence the ceaseless flow of our ideas in dreams."³² These arguments of Baxter probably had an impact on Coleridge's notion of the autonomy of ideas and images, and of the activeness of our soul during sleep.

Coleridge's thoughts on dream are clearly related to his thoughts on illusion, and related in turn to his notion of dramatic illusion:

It is among the feeblenesses of our Nature, that we are often to a certain degree acted on by stories gravely asserted, of which we yet do most religiously disbelieve every Syllable— nay, which perhaps, we happen to know to be false. The truth is, that Images and Thoughts possess a power in and of themselves, independent of that act of the Judgment or Understanding by which we affirm or deny the existence of a reality correspondent to them. Such is the ordinary state of the mind in Dreams. It is not strictly accurate to say, that we believe our dreams to be actual while we are dreaming. We neither believe it or disbelieve it— with the will the comparing power is suspended, and without the comparing power any act of Judgment, whether affirmation or denial, is impossible. The Forms and Thoughts act merely by their own inherent power: and the strong feelings at times apparently connected with them are in point of fact bodily sensations, which are the causes or occasions of the Images, not (as when we are awake) the effects of them. Add to this a voluntary Lending of the Will to this suspension of one of it's own operations (i.e. that of comparison & consequent decision concerning the reality of any sensuous Impression) and we have the true Theory of Stage Illusion—equally distant from the absurd notion of the French Critics, who ground their principles on the presumption of an absolute *Delusion*, and of Dr Johnson who would persuade us that our Judgments are as broad awake during the most masterly representation of the deepest scenes of *Othello*, as a philosopher would be during the exhibition of a Magic Lanthorn with Punch

³⁰ The words in the parenthesis are mine.

³¹ Baxter, Andrew. *An Enquiry into the Nature of Human Soul*. Vol.2. London: Printed for A.Millar, 1745, p.22., The words in the parenthesis are mine.

³² Darwin, Erasmus. *Zoonomia; or the Laws of Organic Life*. Vol.I. Dublin, 1794-1796, p.216.

& Joan, & Pull Devil Pull Baker, &c on it's painted Slides.— Now as extremes always meet, this Dogma of our dogmatic Critic and soporific Irenist would lead by inevitable consequence to that very doctrine of the Unities maintained by the French Belle Lettrists, which it was the object of his strangely over-rated contradictory & most illogical Preface (to Shakespear) to overthrow.—(CL IV, May 13, 1816)

Here, the autonomy of images and thoughts as revealed in dreams is the crucial clue in the explanation of illusion, authorising a theory of dramatic illusion that allows him to reject each of the diametrically opposed views that he ascribes to Johnson on the one hand and the French critics on the other.

Coleridge, up to a point, shares this view of illusion with contemporary critics such as Lord Kames and Erasmus Darwin. Kames argues from the nature of dramatic illusion against the unities of time and place.³³ But he emphasises the forming of illusion during the performance:

When a play begins, we have no difficulty to adjust our imagination to the scene of action, however distant it be in time or in place; because we know that the play is representation only. The case is very different after we are engaged: it is the perfection of representation to hide itself, to impose on the spectator, and to produce in him an impression of reality, as if he were a spectator of a real event; but any interruption annihilates that impression, by rousing him out of his waking dream, and unhappily restoring him to his senses.³⁴

³³ Home, Henry (Lord Kames). *Elements of Criticism*. Vol. II. p.415. In his opinion, "Where the representation is suspended, we can with the greatest facility suppose any length of time or any change of place: the spectator, it is true, may be conscious, that the real time and place are not the same with what are employed in the representation: but this is a work of reflection; and by the same reflection he may also be conscious, that Garrick is not King Lear, that the playhouse is not Dover cliffs, nor the noise he hears thunder and lightening. In a word, after an interruption of the representation, it is no more difficult for a spectator to imagine a new place, or a different time, than at the commencement of the play, to imagine himself at Rome, or in a period of time two thousand years back. And indeed, it is abundantly ridiculous, that a critic, who is willing to hold candle-light for sun-shine, and some painted canvasses for a palace or a prison, should be so scrupulous about admitting any latitude of place or of time in the fable, beyond what is necessary in the representation."

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.418.

Darwin, in his *Botanic Garden*, also denies the state of continuous delusion

We must not confound our sensations at the contemplation of real misery with those, which we experience at the scenical representations of tragedy. The spectators of a shipwreck may be attracted by the dignity and novelty of the object; and from these may be said to receive pleasure, but not from the distress of the sufferers. But at the exhibition of a good tragedy, we are not only amused by the dignity and novelty and beauty of the objects before us; but, if any distressful circumstances occur too forceable for our sensibility, we can voluntarily exert ourselves, and recollect, that the scenery is not real: and thus not only the pain, which we had received from the apparent distress, is lessened; but a new source of pleasure is opened to us, similar to that which we frequently have felt on awaking from a distressful dream; we are glad that it is not true. We are at the same time unwilling to relinquish the pleasure, which we receive from the other interesting circumstances of the drama; and on that account quickly permit ourselves to relapse into the delusion; and alternately believe and disbelieve, almost every moment, the existence of the objects represented before us.³⁵

Kames and Darwin, in some important respects, anticipate Coleridge's views on dramatic illusion. For example, like Coleridge, both insist on the volition and the consciousness of the audience so that theatrical illusion as properly described by them as a waking dream. But their arguments reveal certain differences from Coleridge's.

Kames focuses on the moments when the illusion is suspended in order to argue his case that the obligation to preserve unity of time and place is unfounded. But during the performance, he suggests, the audience is likely to surrender more or less completely to the dramatic illusion. In other words, the audience is not likely to be conscious that it is watching a drama. Drama for him is a waking dream in that it offers a dream state while awake, therefore, it is like somnambulism, as is suggested by the thought 'any

³⁵ Darwin, Erasmus. *The Botanic Garden* (1791). Menston: Scolar Press, 1973, p.87.

interruption annihilates that impression, by rousing him out of his waking dream, and unhappily restoring him to his senses'. In the case of Darwin, though he admits the volitional activity of our mind, volition comes into operation only when the illusion is too powerful to be enjoyed. At the time, the audience is represented as fully surrendering to the illusion.

For Coleridge, as for Kames and Darwin, drama prompts a waking dream but he defines it differently. Interestingly he places the audience in a mediate state using expression such as temporary half-faith, or half-waking, half-sleeping, or invoking the analogy of nightmare. All stage presentations, he says, produce a sort of temporary half-faith, which the audience encourages and supports by a voluntary contribution on its own part. (*Lect I*, 133-134) His own experience of watching drama and of nightmares enables him to elaborate on his predecessors' theories.

He supposes that ordinary dreams and nightmares are different in that in ordinary dreams we do not take the dream as reality whereas in nightmare we are in a more complicated state. Nightmares have their origin in some corporal discomfort. At this time, mind, with or without our distinct consciousness, attributes the painful sensation to a correspondent agent, for example, an assassin stabbing at the side, or a goblin sitting on the breast. To that are added the impressions of the bed, curtains, and room received by the eyes when they open. The mind adds vividness and appropriate distance to the dream-image which returns when the eyes close again. And thus we unite actual perceptions with the phantoms of the inward sense and so confound the half-waking, half-sleeping reasoning power that we pass a positive judgement on the reality of what we see and hear though often accompanied by doubt and self-questioning. (*Lect I*, 135-

136) It is Coleridge's focus on the middle state between the conscious and the unconscious, the state of half-sleeping and half-waking, that distinguishes his view from that of Kames or Darwin.

According to Burwick, Coleridge extends his notion of stage illusion to aesthetic illusion.³⁶ In Lecture 1 of the 1818-1819 lecture series, he focuses on a comparison between dreaming and reading though he does not separate reading illusion from theatrical illusion clearly. The state we are in while dreaming and that while we are reading a deeply interesting novel, for Coleridge, differ not in kind but in degree: firstly, because all outward impressions on our senses are excluded, the images in sleep are more vivid; secondly, during sleep, the sensations and with these the emotion and passions which they counterfeit are the causes of our dream images while, in our waking life, our emotions are the effects of the images presented to us. Thirdly, in sleep our will and comparative power are suddenly suspended.

The first two points are related to the autonomous activity of our mental faculties. As in dreams, so in reading, the images are produced in our minds by the operation of our mental faculties. As to the third point, dreaming and reading are similar to each other in terms of the suspension of comparative power. Coleridge, however, points out the difference between dreams and reading or seeing plays. In an interesting play, read or represented, according to him, we are induced to suspend our comparing power very much as we do in dreams, but importantly, by means of the art of the poet and the actors and with the consent and positive aid of our own will. (*Lect II*, 265-266)

³⁶ Burwick, *Illusion and the Drama*, p.223.

Coleridge's theory of illusion as a 'temporary half-faith' secured by the audience's 'willing suspension of disbelief' depends upon his notion of the artistic work as an imitation.³⁷ For Coleridge, "Drama is an *imitation* of reality not a Copy—"(*Lect II*, 264). He emphasises that "philosophically we understand that in all imitation two elements must coexist, and not only coexist, but must be perceived as coexisting. These two constituent elements are likeness and unlikeness, or sameness and difference, and in all genuine creations of art there must be a union of these disparates."(*MAL*, 45) He points out how disgusting it is if there be likeness to nature without difference. For him, "the more complete the delusion, the more loathsome the effect."(*MAL*, 45) He links his theory of imitation to his notion of stage illusion:

The end of Dramatic Poetry is not to present a copy, but an *imitation* of real life. Copy is imperfect if the resemblance be not, in every circumstance, exact; but an imitation essentially implies some difference. The mind of the

³⁷ See Foakes, "Shakespeare and the Use of Stage Illusion," p.109. According to him, under Coleridge's analysis of illusion "lies a very important distinction he made between an imitation and a copy, observing that our pleasure in an imitation, as in a landscape painting, comes from our consciousness of difference as well as likeness, whereas a copy strives to be identical with the original. Naive theories of stage illusion start from a confusion between imitation and copy, as in the image of holding the 'mirror up to nature'." Also See J.R.de J.Jackson, "Coleridge on Dramatic Illusion and Spectacle," p.18. Jackson argues that Coleridge "is firm in his insistence that we do not watch the drama in order to witness reality, that we wish rather to see it represented in its essence through the medium of *imitation*. Also see Burwick, *Illusion and the Drama*, p.212-213. Burwick also explains Coleridge's notion of illusion under the context of the difference between imitation and copy. He explains Coleridge's notion thus: "...the effect of art can never be, and should never be, a confusion with reality. Our willing acceptance of the "truth" of art never lapses into a belief that it is real...Indeed, he amplifies this crucial aspect of imitation by defining various degrees of illusion that result from the exposition of difference. Domestic tragedy and opera provide the two extremes of the scale. In domestic tragedy, the difference is minimal and the effects may be "too real to be compatible with pleasure." In opera, the sense of reality is minimal, but the use of music and dance in "explaining some tale" can "deeply affect and delight an audience."

spectator, or the reader, therefore, is not to be deceived into any idea of reality, as the French Critics absurdly suppose; neither, on the other hand, is it to retain a perfect consciousness of the falschood of the presentation. There is a state of mind between the two, which may be properly called allusion, in which the comparative powers of the mind are completely suspended; as in a dream, the judgment is neither beguiled, nor conscious of the fraud, but remains passive.(*Lect II, 277*)

For Coleridge, Shakespeare offered “an Imitation of human Actions in connection with sentiments, passions, characters, incidents and events for the purpose of pleasurable emotion; so that whether this be shewn by Tears of Laughter or Tears of Tenderness, they shall still be Tears of Delight, and united with intellectual Complacency.”(*CM III, 894*)

For Coleridge theatrical representations are ideal.(*Lect I, 211*) Here we can find a common point where the author and the audience is likely to meet; that is, communicating the ideal and receiving it. Sharing feeling seems to be Coleridge’s early interest. In a note, he writes, “The effort of the spectator to enter into the feelings of the person [? however fully/ principally] & the effort of the person principally concerning, to bring down the expressions of his feelings to the probable emotion of the Spectator.”(*CN I, 155, 1796*)

For Coleridge, illusion is produced ‘by the Art of the Poet and the Actors, and with the consent and positive Aidance of our Will.’ If there is anything which prevents the mind from placing itself or from being gradually placed in the state of illusion in which images have negative reality, it is a defect. And consequently anything that forces itself on the auditors’ minds as improbable not because it is improbable but because it cannot but appear to be so is also a defect.(*Lect II, 266*)

His theory of 'unity of interest' can be better understood from the point of view of the audience or the reader of a drama. When our interest is sufficiently engaged, we are more likely to be in a state of illusion, in which we are ready to take the narrow stage for 'the vasty field of France'. The interest continues to exist when all parts of a drama are harmonised into a whole, which, in his own words, helps to maintain our 'willing illusion'.

In reading Hamlet or Lear (also), though we are frequently sensible that the story is fictitious, yet in other moments we do not (less) doubt of the things having taken place than when we read (in History) about Pompey or Julius Caesar, we question the truth of the general story. Yet in Lear and Hamlet we have the unrealizing accompaniment of Metre. Nevertheless we believe: Our situation at a Theatre is undoubtedly very different, and the question before me now is to determine whether (as there can be no doubt that (we) have (various degrees of) continuous belief in the truth of fictitious stories in verse) whether by the helps which representation supplies the delusion (can) be carried still further, and we may we be made to believe even for a moment that the scene before us is not the representation of a transaction, but the transaction itself, is not a shadow or reflexion but a substance. In our attempt to answer this question let us first ask if there be anything in the representation of a play that will tend to strengthen or prolong the first species of delusion which undoubtedly exists (in reading it), viz that of the facts represented or feigned having actually occurred. I believe the answer will be no; the Playhouse, the Audience, the lights, the scenes all interfere with that deception and above all the (persons) gestures, and voices of the Actors which so immediately tell us that it is M^r or M^{rs} Such a One. These matters of fact, while consciously before us, are insuperable bars to the Imagination. (*CM* III, 405-406)

This argument seems to focus on the futility of aspiring to complete delusion in theatrical performance especially by means of advanced stage equipment rather than constituting an attempt to distinguish theatrical performance from reading drama in its effect on the audience. 'The scenes' he points to are those in which a disparity between

the event and its representation is inevitable: "the Powers of Nature, Storms &c, and the means employed to represent them (and in like manner, with respect to the supernatural agencies.)"(Ibid, 406) However, he points out that "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."(Ibid., 406) In his view, the machinery on which the contemporary stage relied might heighten the delusion of the simple minded but will produce a contrary effect on refined minds.(Ibid., 406)

In *Biographia*, Coleridge extends his distinction between illusion and delusion to all fiction:

That *illusion*, contradistinguished from delusion, that *negative* faith, which simply permits the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their existence by the judgment, is rendered impossible by their immediate neighbourhood to words and facts of known and absolute truth. A faith, which transcends even historic belief, must absolutely *put out* this mere poetic Analogon of faith, as the summer sun is said to extinguish our household fires, when it shines full upon them. What would otherwise have been yielded to as pleasing fiction, is repelled as revolting falsehood. The effect produced in this latter case by the solemn belief of the reader, is in a less degree brought about in the instances, to which I have been objecting, by the baffled attempts of the author to *make* him believe.(*BL* II, 134)

Coleridge finds an example of producing illusion in *The Tempest*. The material of *The Tempest* is quite improbable; the magician, Prospero, his raising the tempest, Caliban, and Ariel, etc. However, what matters is not whether the story is probable or not, but its capacity to appeal to the audience's 'inner eye'. For Coleridge, illusion

addresses itself entirely to the imaginative faculty; and although the illusion may be assisted by the effect on the senses of the complicated scenery and decorations of modern times, yet this sort of assistance is dangerous. For the principal and only genuine excitement ought to come from within,— from the moved and sympathetic imagination; whereas, where so much is addressed to the more external senses of seeing and hearing, the spiritual vision is apt to languish, and the attraction from without will withdraw the mind from the proper and only legitimate interest which is intended to spring from within. (*Lect II*, 268-9)

Coleridge here seems to echo Schlegel's celebration of the bareness of the Shakespearean stage:

he (Shakespeare)³⁸ left to the imagination to fill up the intervals agreeably to the speeches, and to conceive all the surrounding circumstances. This call on the fancy to supply the deficiencies supposes, indeed, not merely benevolent, but also intelligent spectators in a poetical tone of mind. That is the true illusion when the spectators are so completely carried away by the impressions of the poetry and the acting, that they overlook the secondary matters, and forget the whole of the remaining objects around them. (*CDAL*, 453)

Like Coleridge, Schlegel insists that the illusion is completed only by the active agency of the imagination of an audience who are "not merely benevolent, but also intelligent spectators in a poetical tone of mind".

4. The Audience

³⁸ The word in the parenthesis is mine.

For Coleridge, the audience takes a key role in the construction of a poetic work. What audience does he imagine? How freely can the audience understand the artistic work? His consciousness of the audience is demonstrated not only in his criticism but also in his poetic works themselves. As his theory of illusion embraces both dramatic and reading illusion, so his idea of an audience extends to readers of poetic works as well as to spectators of theatrical performances.

First of all, Coleridge himself, as a poet, needs the audience and his consciousness of the audience is shown directly and indirectly in his poetic works. John Spencer Hill describes Coleridge's conversational poems, for example, "as dramatic monologues—a generic term which stresses the dynamic interaction that exists in these poems between the speaker and the person, whether present or imagined as present, to whom the speaker is addressing himself."³⁹ Coleridge's conversational poems, however, are distinguished from such dramatic monologues as Browning's or Eliot's in that the speaker and the poet are not different persons. The crucial relationship is not that between poet and speaker, but between speaker and listener. In his conversation poems, he has several kinds of listener; an intimate listener, an absent listener, a potential listener, and a captive listener.

In "The Eolian Harp", Sara is an intimate listener, who reacts to what he says, when she disapproves of his more daring metaphysical speculations. "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" addresses an absent listener, his friend Charles Lamb. In this poem, he tries to share with his friend his recognition that 'nature never deserts the wise and pure'. His 'gentle-hearted Charles' is the listener to whom 'every sound of nature tells of life'.

Though Lamb is not a present listener, the rook acts as a kind of messenger between them. In "Frost at Midnight", his listener is his baby, a potential listener. He needs some companion in order to escape from abstruse musings. Though his baby cannot comprehend him, the poem is addressed, as it were, to the listener's future self. In "The Nightingale" he speaks to an unidentified listener, Wordsworth or his sister or his baby, offering an admonition that they should not profane 'nature's sweet voices, always full of love and joyance'.

In other poems such as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," we can see his awareness of an audience. In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the listener is the wedding guest, a captive audience. The mariner, from amongst other guests, chooses one as his listener and compels him to hear the mariner's tale. The mariner says to the wedding guest, 'I pass, like night, from land to land;/ I have strange power of speech;/ That moment that his face I see;/ I know the man that must hear me:/ To him my tale I teach.'

Whatever sort of listener he or she might be, we notice the poet needs an audience and he has this in common with the other Romantic poets. Andrew Bennet has spoken of the 'romantic anxiety for a reader', produced, he argues, by 'the breakdown of the patronage system, the increase in commercial printing, and the growth of a large reading public'. These changes, according to him, resulted in the alienation of writers from their audience in the later eighteenth century. The fact that the poets in the Romantic era could not expect the homogeneous audience which their predecessors

³⁹ Hill, Johnson Spencer. *A Coleridge Companion*. London: Macmillan Press, 1983, p.20.

addressed prompts the Romantics to look for some special audience.⁴⁰ Bennett locates in the romantics at once a desire to retreat into a private poetry and to reach out to an audience:

On the one hand the Romantics increasingly sought redemption in an ideological defence of solipsism, private vocabularies and mythologies, a redescription of audience as posterity, and an idealization of the Artist. On the other hand there is, articulated in Romantic poetics, an intense desire to be read and to be understood, a belief in the revolutionary redemptive powers of literature itself. Romantic figures of reading might be understood as attempts to integrate these conflicting poetic ideologies through the use of more or less trustworthy narrators, embedded narration, *mise en abyme*, narrative parody, and a self-conscious exhibition of narrative anxiety: the anxiety of audience provides important generative energies for Romantic narrative form.⁴¹

Garrett Stewart, on the other hand, takes interlocution in the Conversation poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge as “a metatope of that natural interanimation that is often the poem’s topic, as if all physical presence, all natural energy, were in a dialogue for which a given human exchange might at any moment serve as metaphor.”⁴² He says that the figure of conversation is instance and symbol, both metaphor and metonymy for the saturated company with other selves, especially with nature.

⁴⁰ Bennett, Andrew. *Keats, Narrative and Audience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp.25-26. According to him, “the Romantics presented themselves as writing specifically for and towards close friends and family, this alienation from and aesthetico-moral confusion about the ‘reading public’ simply complicates the problem and increases what Coleridge calls the ‘anxiety of authorship’ (*BL*, vol.I., p.233). During the early years of the nineteenth century, the need to ‘figure’ the reader—to determine as far as possible the addressee—becomes urgent. One aspect of this attempt at redefinition involves the Romantics’ dissatisfaction with the ‘passive’ reader: Coleridge is most explicit on this point in Essay Two of *The Friend* and in his concept of the ‘co-operating power’ of poetry. Characterizing the Romantic prose writer, John R. Nabholz speaks about all types of Romantic discourse when he says that the writer, ‘sought to engage the reader as an active participant, often as the protagonist.’”

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

⁴² Stewart, Garrett. *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*. Baltimore, Md and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p.30.

Both arguments are persuasive. However, it is also possible to explain Coleridge's idea of an audience in the context of 'the reconciliation of opposites'. Roughly speaking, for Coleridge, a poet is one who has more than common sensibility, more than ordinary activity of mind, and a more vivid recognition of the truths of nature and the human heart. In Coleridge's view, author, reader, and work are all three constitutive elements in the production of a work of art. Thus, he needs a creative audience or reader in order to produce creative work .

His idea of an audience is well demonstrated in the Dedication to the second edition of *The Friend*. The dedicatee is Mr. Gilman but the person he addresses as his friend is also his ideal reader.

Friend! were an Author privileged to name his own judge—in addition to moral and intellectual competence I should look round for some man, whose knowledge and opinions had for the greater part been acquired experimentally; and the practical habits of whose life had put him on his guard with respect to all speculative reasoning, without rendering him insensible to the desirableness of principles more secure than the shifting rules and theories generalised from observations merely empirical, or unconscious in how many departments of knowledge, and with how large a portion even of professional men, such principles are still desideratum. I would select, too, one who felt kindly, nay, even partially, toward me; but one whose partiality had its strongest foundations in hope, and more prospective than retrospective would make him quick-sighted in the detection, and unreserved in the exposure, of the deficiencies and defects of each present work, in the anticipation of a more developed future.(F' 1, 4)

His ideal audience, as shown in the above passage, is expected to have some special ability to direct as well as to understand him. Books, according to him, have descended from the status of religious oracles to that of venerable preceptors, and then to the rank of instructive friends, and then even lower to that of entertaining companions, and now

they are degraded into culprits to hold up their hands at the bar of every self-elected, yet nonetheless peremptory, judge. He describes the judge as 'self-elected' because he does not have any title to authority and gives verdicts arbitrarily.

Coleridge points out that the same gradual retrograde movement has occurred in the relation which the authors themselves have assumed towards their readers. From the lofty address to readers, there was a gradual sinking evident in terms of address such as "learned readers", "candid readers" to the situation in which "the amateurs of literature collectively were erected into a municipality of judges, and addressed as THE TOWN! And now finally, all men being supposed able to read, and all readers able to judge, the multitudinous PUBLIC, shaped into personal unity by the magic abstraction, sits nominal despot on the throne of criticism".(BL I, 59)

He is especially unhappy with the reading public of his own times:

as to the Devotees of the Circulating Libraries, I may not compliment their Pastime, or rather *Kill-time*, with the name of *Reading*. Call it rather a sort of beggarly Day-dreaming, in which 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, which (*pro tempore*) fixes, reflects & transmits the moving phantasms of one man's Delirium so as to people the barrenness of a hundred other trains under the same morbid Trance, or "*suspended Animation*", of Common Sense, and all definite Purpose. We therefore altogether disjoin (from) the genus "*Reading*" this species of mental Pre-occupation, or rather Preventive Substitutes of occupation, and place it in the class, which has for its common distinctive character the charm of reconciling the two contrary yet co-existent propensities of men, the Indulgence of Sloth with the Hatred of vacancy: and which Class, besides Novels, containing in it, *Gambling*, Swinging or Swaying on a Chair, Spitting over a Bridge, Smoking, quarrels after dinner between Husband & Wife, when *tête à tête*, the reading word by word all the advertis[em]ents of a Daily Advertiser in a Public House on a rainy Day,....(*Lect I*, 124)

His unhappiness with the reading public is not simply an expression of elitism. Rather, it is another way of expressing his desire for a creative audience. He classifies readers into four kinds:

1. Sponges: persons who absorbed what they read and returned it nearly in the same state only a little dirtied.
2. Sand-glasses who permitted everything to pass away and were contented to dose away their time in actual idleness—
3. Strain-bags, who retained only the dregs of what they received—
4. Great Mogul Diamonds who were equally rare and valuable.(*Lect I*, 203-4)

The classification is not class-based, but determined by the mental activity of readers. The first class of reader is passive: he or she receives everything without his(her) own mental activity. The second class of reader is the one who reads to kill time. The third class of reader is perhaps the worst kind of reader. For Coleridge, reading is a job which requires thinking, reasoning, and imagination. The ideal audience that he will call his 'friend' is equipped with a powerful imagination. As the comparison to a diamond suggests, he is 'rare and valuable'.

These ideas are also reflected in his idea of the audience of Shakespeare's work. Though the audience of the Elizabethan age was not completely homogeneous, the author could anticipate what kind of audience he would have. Shakespeare, he says,

lived in an age in which from the religious controversies carried on in a way of which we have no conception. There was a general energy of thinking, a pleasure in hard thinking & an expectation of it from those who came forward to solicit public praise of which, in this day, we are equally ignorant. Consequently the judges were real amateurs. The author had to deal with a learned public, & he had no idea of a mixed public—it was divided, in truth, between those who had no taste at all & who went merely to amuse themselves—and those who were deeply versed in the literature to which they gave encouragement.(*Lect I*, 228)

The two kinds of audience were both satisfied. The one enjoyed nothing but ‘the jokes and what was externally ludicrous’ and, for the other, the performance was ‘a profitable employment’. Coleridge’s favourite audience, needless to say, is the latter, judging from his emphasis on Shakespeare’s appeal to the imagination. ‘Shakespeare’, in his opinion,

never gives a description of rustic scenery merely for its own sake, or to show how well he can paint natural objects: he is never tedious or elaborate, but he now and then displays marvellous accuracy and minuteness of knowledge, he usually touches upon the larger features and broader characteristics, leaving the fillings up to the imagination. (*Lect II*, 245-6)

Schlegel’s ‘poetical spectators’ can be understood similarly. He takes a scene in *Richard III* as his example:

We see Richard and Richmond in the night before the battle sleeping in their tents; the spirits of the murdered victims of the tyrant ascend in succession, and pour out their curses against him, and their blessings on his adversary. These apparitions are properly but the dreams of the two generals represented visibly. It is no doubt contrary to probability that their tents should only be separated by such small space; but Shakespeare could reckon on poetical spectators, who were ready to take the breadth of the stage for the distance between two hostile camps, if for such indulgence they were to be recompensed by beauties of so sublime a nature as this series of spectres and Richard’s awaking soliloquy. (*CDAL*, 438)

Here, the poetical spectators are equivalent to Coleridge’s ideal audience. A handful of warriors in mock armour can be taken as crowds of soldiers fighting at Agincourt for what Schlegel calls ‘the willing imagination of the spectators’.

5. Author-Audience-Work

Do the audience use their imagination arbitrarily? E.S. Shaffer tries to link Coleridge and Schleiermacher in the establishment of hermeneutics. Schaffer argues that Coleridge was influenced by Schleiermacher and applied Schleiermacher's hermeneutics in writing his *Biographia Literaria*, and especially in his reading of Shakespeare and Wordsworth. According to her,

Within the *Biographia Literaria* the climax is attained not with the definitions of Fancy and Imagination, but with their exemplary 'proof' in the depiction of Shakespeare as the model of the creative consciousness. Both the argument for aesthetic idealism, and its demand for 'proof' embodied in a work of art, were based on Schelling's response to Kant especially as set forth in *Das System des transcendentalen Idealismus*; Coleridge was able to fulfill that demand. Shakespeare was both an established writer and a provocative contemporary, whose status and significance as a 'universal genius' was created by Romantic criticism, not least Coleridge's own.⁴³

As we have seen, Coleridge requires his audience as his creative co-operator who can understand and sympathise with him. Robert DeMaria, Jr. distinguishes Johnson's, Dryden's, and Coleridge's notions of readership. For Dryden, the ideal reader is a representative of mankind but, in a less general sense, he belongs to the intellectual upper class, "the judicious reader". Johnson's ideal reader is the perfect representative of all mankind, though an ordinary man. The reader is common in the same sense as the heroes in *Everyman* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* are. He is abstract, timeless and judgmental. DeMaria argues that Coleridge sees himself as an ideal reader, especially of

Shakespeare. Unlike Johnson, he represents a personal and particular and he is involved in what he receives.⁴⁴ Timothy J. Corrigan also points out Coleridge's emphasis on the active participation of the reader in the forming of meaning. Corrigan writes, "Certainly a penetrating and incisive reader, Coleridge is likewise an expansive reader. For him, the margins—of the text and of the mind—are always wide."⁴⁵ As DeMaria and Corrigan insist, Coleridge himself may be the symbol of his ideal reader.

In Coleridge's view, the audience's or reader's imagination must be employed to understand and sympathise with the author. Here, primary imagination and secondary imagination might be applicable to the audience's reception of a work. Especially, in some particular audience such as Coleridge himself, the secondary imagination must operate. This notion is demonstrated in his comparison of the audience to a guest invited by the host, the author. His desirable and undesirable reader are compared to guests at a banquet:

A reader should sit down to a book, especially of the miscellaneous kind, as a well-behaved visitor does to a banquet. The master of the feast exerts himself to satisfy all his guests; but if after all his care and pains there should still be something or other put on the table that does not suit this or that person's taste, they politely pass it over without noticing the circumstance, and commend other dishes, that they may not distress their kind host, or throw any damp on his spirits. For who could tolerate a guest that accepted an invitation to your table with no other purpose but that of finding fault with every thing put before him, neither eating himself, nor suffering others to eat in comfort. And yet you may fall in with a still worse set than even these, with churls that in all companies and without stop or stay, will condemn and pull to pieces a work which they have never read. But this sinks below the baseness of an *informer*, yea, though he were a false witness to boot! The man, who

⁴³ Shaffer, E.S. "The Hermeneutic Community: Coleridge and Schleiermacher." *The Coleridge Connection: Essays for Thomas McFarland*, Richard Gravil and Molly Lefebure (eds.) London: Macmillan, 1990. 200-229, p.207.

⁴⁴ De Maria, Robert Jr. "The Ideal Reader: A Critical Fiction." *PMLA* 93(1978): 464-74, pp.464-468.

⁴⁵ Corrigan, Timothy J. "Coleridge and the Reader: Language in a combustible Mind." *Philological Quarterly* 59(1980):76-94, p.91.

abuses a thing of which he is utterly ignorant, unites the infamy of both—and in addition to this, makes himself the pander and sycophant of his own and other men's envy and malignity.(FI, 15-16*⁴⁶)

The claim here is that the reader or audience has an obligation of politeness. DeMaria argues that Coleridge's ideal reader surrenders his right to evaluate when he is performing a sort of co-operation with the author.⁴⁷ But this does not mean the reader is merely the author's captive. His dislike of mere captivatedness is evident in chapter three of *Biographia Literaria*. There, we can see that his ideas of the poet, the poetic work, and the audience are closely related to one another.

For Coleridge, the audience's creative understanding of the author seems to mean to perceive *natura naturans* in the poetic work. His notion of the different kinds of auditor supports thus:

The man of no talent is swallowed up in surprise: and when the speech is ended, he remembers his feelings, but nothing distinct of that which produced them—(how opposite an effect to that of nature and genius, from whose works the idea still remains, when the feeling is passed away—remains to connect itself with other feelings, and combines with new impressions!) The mere man of talent hears him with admiration—the mere man of genius with contempt—the philosopher neither admires nor contemns, but listens to him with a deep and solemn interest, tracing in the effects of his eloquence the power of words and phrases, and that peculiar constitution of human affairs in their present state, which so eminently favours this power.(EOT I, 224-225)⁴⁸

Such a view is related to his idea that “the consciousness of the Poet's mind must be diffused over that of the Reader or spectator—but he himself, according to his Genius,

⁴⁶ Coleridge notes that this passage is a translation of his Motto.

⁴⁷ De Maria, “The Ideal Reader: A Critical fiction,” p.468.

⁴⁸ Here, the speaker is Mr. Pitt, the Prime Minister of that time. Coleridge writes that Pitt suffers from lack of imagination and that “Not a sentence of Mr. Pitt's has ever been quoted, or formed the favourite phrase

elevates us, & by being *always in keeping* prevents us from perceiving any strangeness, tho' we feel great exaltation." (*Lect I*, 86-87) As the human mind works consciously in writing, so it does in reading. 'In reading a poem', according to him,

we look not only for a just description of material objects, or human affections, but we expect to find them represented in such constant activity of mind, arising from the poet himself, as shall give a greater pleasure to that which is already pleasurable & shall bring within the bounds of pleasure that which otherwise would be painful. (*Lect I*, 222)

Coleridge himself makes an ideal audience of Shakespeare's work. In his criticism of Shakespeare he consistently occupies the position of the audience. The ghost scene of *Hamlet* is an example. First, he illustrates the state of mind in which people see ghosts or visions by illustrating several cases. The ghost seers commonly were in a state of cold and chilly damp from without and of anxiety inwardly. Such is the state of Francesco. In the scene, Coleridge pays attention to the effect that a cliché such as 'Not a Mouse stirring'⁴⁹ has on the audience thus:

...it has likewise its dramatic use and purpose/ for its commonness in ordinary conversation tends to produce the sense of *reality*, and at once hides the Poet and yet approximates the Reader or Spectator to that state in which the highest poetry will appear, and in its component parts tho' not in whole composition really is, the language of Nature. If I should not speak it, I feel that I should be thinking it—the voice only is the Poet's, the words are my own—. —That Shakespear meant to put an *effect* in the Actor's power in the very first words—*Who's there*—is evident from the impatience expressed in the words that follow—

Nay, answer me: stand and unfold yourself. A brave man is never so peremptory, as when he fears that he is afraid. The gradual transition from the silence—and the recent habit of listening in Francesco's—I think, I hear them—and

of the day". The above notion of different kinds of auditors seems not to be confined to the reaction of Pitt's speech but to be extended to general reaction to auditors.

⁴⁹ *Hamlet* I,i,7.

the more cheerful call out, which a good actor would observe, in the stand, ho! Who is there—(*Lect II*, 138-9)

From the ghost scene, according to Coleridge. “The audience are now relieved by a change of scene to the royal court, in order that Hamlet may not have to take up the leavings of exhaustion.”(*LR II*, 214)

Coleridge explains Shakespeare’s dramaturgy as functioning to generate the necessary dramatic illusion. The first scene of *The Tempest* does not demand anything from the audience. It serves merely as an introduction for what is to follow. In the second scene, Prospero’s speech is intended to excite the audience’s interest; it is a retrospective speech which informs the audience what has happened in the past. Coleridge’s attending to the process by which the audience acquires its ‘poetic faith’ is congruent with his admiration of Shakespeare’s judgement for unfolding of plot.

Coleridge’s overall description of *Romeo and Juliet* is another example of his sense of the author’s feeling for his audience:

With his accustomed judgment, Shakespeare has begun by placing before us a lively picture of all the impulses of the play; and, as nature ever presents two sides, one for Heraclitus, and one for Democritus, he has, by way of prelude, shown the laughable absurdity of the evil by the contagion of it reaching the servants, who have so little to do with it, but who are under the necessity of letting the superfluity of sensoreal power fly off through the escape-valve of wit-combats, and of quarrelling with weapons of sharper edge, all in humble imitation of their masters. Yet there is a sort of unhired fidelity, an *ourishness* about all this that makes it rest pleasant on one’s feelings. All the first scene, down to the conclusion of the Prince’s speech, is a motley dance of all ranks and ages to one tune, as if the horn of Huon had been playing behind the scenes.(*LR II*, 151) .

In *Richard II*, Coleridge shows how the author-audience relationship is formed.

Shakespeare represents our moral nature through “the absolute universality of his

genius”(LR II,175). The audience, in turn, reacts to Shakespeare’s intention: “...Shakespeare has carefully shown in him(Richard)⁵⁰ an intense love of his country, well-knowing how that feeling would, in a pure historic drama, redeem him in the hearts of the audience.”(LR II, 175) In *Henry V*, Act.iv.sc.5. Coleridge also measures Shakespeare’s intention and its effect on the audience:

Ludicrous as these introductory scraps of French appear, so instantly followed by good, nervous mother-English, yet they are judicious, and produce the impression which Shakespeare intended,—a sudden feeling struck at once on the ears, as well as the eyes, of the audience, that ‘here come the French, the baffled French braggards!—And this will appear still more judicious, when we reflect on the scanty apparatus of distinguishing dresses in Shakespeare’s trying-room.(LR II, 184)

In *King Lear*, Shakespeare’s judgement and Coleridge’s imagination meet thus:

...—from *Lear*, the *persona patiens* of his drama, Shakespeare passes without delay to the second in importance, the chief agent and prime mover, and introduces Edmund to our acquaintance, preparing us with the same felicity of judgment, and in the same easy and natural way, for his character in the seemingly casual communication of its origin and occasion. From the first drawing up of the curtain Edmund has stood before us in the united strength and beauty of earliest manhood. Our eyes have been questioning him.(LR II, 189)

Whether Coleridge’s appreciation of Shakespeare’s works is truly congruent with the author’s intention or not might be arguable. But, in appreciation of Shakespeare’s work, he seems to stick to his principle; that is, there is an essential universality in Shakespeare’s works and that this must be understood creatively as well as in accord with the author’s intention.

⁵⁰ The word in parenthesis is mine.

In this chapter, I have focused on the problem of whether or not Coleridge can appropriately be described as a 'closet critic. In the Romantic era, the privileging of mental activity over sensory perception led in some cases to a general hostility to theatrical representation. Some critics have represented Coleridge as an exemplification of this tendency.

But I have attempted to show that he was not fundamentally antipathetic to theatrical representation. Shakespeare, as Coleridge knew, wrote his plays to be performed. In Shakespeare's theatre, performance insisted that the audience use their imagination, so that they co-operated actively in the creation of the play. The elaborate stage sets, scene-shifting, and the concentration on star actors rather than dramatic characters that characterised the theatre of his own day all seemed to him to render the audience passive, with the consequence that the best possible way to appreciate Shakespeare in Coleridge's own time, he thinks, is to read him in a closet, not to see him in the theatre.

But Coleridge's account of the origin of the theatre proves the importance he attached to performance. In his explanation of the origin of the Greek tragedy, and of the beginnings of the English drama, he insists on the links between theatre and religious ritual; that is, the audience in the theatre shares a spiritual experience. Though Shakespeare's dramas are much more complex than the Greek drama or indeed a church service, Coleridge required that theatrical performance retains a link with its ritual origins.

He often applies his theory of illusion not only to theatrical illusion but to illusion as an aspect of the reading experience. In doing so, he explains it by comparing it to dreams. At first sight, his comparison might appear to be simple, but it is more complex

than it might seem. The concepts of illusion, theatre, and dreams are traditionally linked with each other. Before I discussed Coleridge's comparison of theatrical illusion to dreams, I tried to look at other views of the relationship; for example, the view that 'life is a dream' might emphasise the fact that life is after all evanescent or futile. Or it may mean that what we believe to be reality is in fact illusion. The link between theatre and dreams, as Ortega y Gasset suggests, could be found in the human aspiration to become other, or to overcome one's confinement.

In creating theatrical illusion or illusion in reading, another important thing to be considered is how much the subjectivity of the audience operates. For Coleridge, the creative reception of an artistic work does not necessarily presuppose an absolute identification of the audience with the author. Rather it is better to say it amounts to a creative interpretation of the work. But the important presupposition is that there is a universality that unites author and audience. This view is echoed by an idea in "audience-oriented criticism". Susan R. Suleiman, in her introduction to *The Reader in the Text*, points out that a common theory shared by rhetorical, semiotic, and structural approaches is that 'the author and the reader of a text are related to each other as the sender and the receiver of a message.'⁵¹ Naomi Schor takes interpretation of a fiction to be synonymous with imagination. She says that it is a "creative" rather than critical activity: the reader or spectator is not content merely to encode and decode, rather she or he delights in filling in the gaps, piecing together the fragments, adding something of his

⁵¹ Suleiman, Susan. "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism." *The Reader in the Text*. Eds. Susan Suleiman & Inge Crosman. Princeton Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp.7-8.

or her own to the texts in hand.⁵² Wolfgang Iser suggests that creation and interpretation are inseparable:

Although creation defies cognition, it nevertheless is conditioned by the context to be decomposed, which links it to the form of interpretation it is meant to disrupt. Interpretation, in turn, though basically a cognitive operation, has to bridge a gulf between cognition and the incommensurable, which requires an imaginative leap, creative in nature. There is a cognitive conditioning operative in the creative act as well as an imaginary force in interpretation, though each of these qualities is differently proportioned according to the purpose it is meant to fulfil.⁵³

As Shaffer notes, Coleridge allows in his Shakespearean criticism for just such a leap of the imagination, a leap that was, in Shakespeare's own time, taken by the audience of his plays in the theatre, but which in Coleridge's day is more easily accomplished by the reader alone in his study.

⁵² Schor, Naomi, "Fiction as Interpretation." *The Reader in the Text*. 165-82, p.171.

⁵³ Iser, Wolfgang. "The Interplay between Creation and Interpretation." *New Literary History* .15(1984): 387-395, p.395.

Conclusion

This thesis has dealt with Coleridge's representation of Shakespeare as an artist, his artistic works and the audience's reception of them. Before embarking on Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare, I traced the traditions of criticism with which he worked. This task was a preparatory study designed to indicate Coleridge's originality and, to characterise his criticism as a transformed accumulation of the past. In doing so, my aim was to reveal that Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism is neither a repetition of his predecessors nor simply an English translation of German criticism. I found in Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism a fulfilment of the ideal described by Northrop Frye: "Criticism, rather, is to art what history is to action and philosophy to wisdom: a verbal imitation of a human productive power which in itself does not speak."¹

One of the crucial words in Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism is 'nature'. Like other aesthetic terms, 'nature' must be understood historically. I tried to see what is distinctive in the Coleridgean notion of nature not only because I thought it is a central idea underpinning the overall argument but a key term which differentiates him from his predecessors who also frequently used the epithet 'natural' in describing Shakespeare.

Walter Pater, in his *Essays on Literature and Art*, offers his appreciation of Coleridge's notion of the essence of criticism, his refinement of a philosophy of nature into a theory of art, and his subtle co-ordination between the ideas of the mind and the laws of the natural world. According to Pater, Schelling's *Philosophy of Nature*, which had an important impact on Coleridge, is a constant tradition in the history of thought.

Pater notes that it embodies a permanent type of the speculative temper, which can be traced from the Greeks. This speculative temper, united with an inwardness of temperament, as in Jakob Boehme and in Coleridge, gives the old Greek conception of nature as a reflex of the intelligence of man a new impetus. Pater finds a clue to the Greek mind in Coleridge in anecdotes of his schooldays:

At fifteen he is discoursing on Plotinus, and has translated the hymns of Synesius. So in later years he reflects from Schelling the flitting tradition. He conceives a subtle co-ordination between the ideas of the mind and the laws of natural world. Science is to be attained not by observation, analysis, generalization, but by the evolution or recovery of those ideas from within by a sort of *ἀνάμνησις*, every group of observed facts remaining an enigma until the appropriate idea is struck upon them from the mind of Newton or Cuvier, the genius in whom sympathy with the universal reason is entire.²

Pater also clarifies the relationship between the mind and nature in Coleridge thus:

Gradually the mind concentrates itself, frees itself from the limits of the particular, the individual, attains a strange power of modifying and centralizing what it receives from without according to an inward ideal. At last, in imaginative genius, ideas become effective; the intelligence of nature, with all its elements connected and justified, is clearly reflected; and the interpretation of its latent purposes is fixed in works of art.³

Pater, however, points out the limits of Coleridge's artistic theory when he suggests that he tries to derive everything from 'a power within, to which he gives a fanciful Greek name'. He finds Coleridge's explanation of organic unity, or the unity of interest

¹ Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, p.12.

² Pater, Walter. *Essays on Literature and Art*. Ed. Jennifer Uglow. Dent, London, Rowman and Littlefield, Totowa, N.J.: J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., 1973, p.14.

³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

obscure and unconcrete. He also finds Coleridge's description of Shakespeare as 'Nature Humanized' the product simply of the obscure German metaphysics that he had studied. He takes the Coleridgean notion of imagination to be an extended and more complicated associative power. He writes that the "associative conceptions of the imagination, those unforeseen type of passion, would come not so much of the artifice and invention of the understanding as from self-surrender to the suggestions of nature".⁴

Pater criticises Coleridge in that he "has not only overstrained the elasticity of his hypothesis, but has also obscured the true interest of art."⁵ "Coleridge's criticism,"

Pater writes,

may well be remembered as part of the long pleading of German culture for the things 'behind the veil'. It recalls us from the work of art to the mind of the artist; and after all, this is what is infinitely precious, and the work of art only as the index of it. Still, that is only the narrower side of a complete criticism.⁶

For Pater, 'natural susceptibility to moments of strange excitement' and 'the talent of projection, of throwing these happy moments into an external concrete form' are what constitute an artistic gift. These two aims, according to him, form the concrete side of criticism and Coleridge neglected this. He insists that Coleridge sees in a picture only the rules of perspective. He points to an excessive inwardness in Coleridge. "That exaggerated inwardness," he argues,

is barren. Here, too, Coleridge's thoughts require to be thawed, to be set in motion, He is admirable in the detection, the analysis and statement, of a few of the highest general laws of art-production. But he withdraws us too far from what we can see, hear, and feel. Doubtless, the idea, the intellectual element, is the spirit and life of

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.17.

art. Still, art is the triumph of the senses and the emotions; and the senses and the emotions must not be cheated of their triumph after all. That strange and beautiful psychology which he employs, with its evanescent delicacies, has not sufficient corporeity.⁷

Does Pater evaluate Coleridge rightly? Is his aesthetic theory too lacking in concreteness? Mary Anne Perkins answers that "He is *not*, we have seen, one who ignores facts in favour of 'Fictions and generalities'."⁸ Though his notion of nature can be traced from ancient Greek thought and was influenced by the German naturphilosophen, he develops his own unique system distinguished from theirs. Coleridge, in his system, tries to explain the formation and operation of the universe based on the polarity of the constituent powers of nature.

Pater is right to see that Coleridge's artistic principles are closely related to his concept of nature. His definition of art, artistic form as an organic unity, his principle of reconciliation of opposites, and imagination all can be understood in the context of his notion of nature. But Coleridge's concept of art is not an insubstantial rhetoric. As he argues in "Poesy or Art," an artistic work is produced when man perceives the power of nature and expresses it in a concrete form whether in the form of a poem, or a painting, or a piece of music. His theory of imagination is not a more complex theory of association nor does it recommend simply a surrender to the power of nature. It is an active agent similar to divine creativity. The secondary imagination is peculiar to artistic creation which is accompanied by an exercise of the artist's conscious will.

Carefully considering these artistic principles, it is not correct to say that Coleridge's criticism by its excessive inwardness fails in concreteness. Moreover,

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

nothing is further from the truth than to say that his Shakespearean criticism is driven to vagueness by a misty metaphysical concept of nature. As Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria*, defines poetry by his definition of the poet, his understanding of Shakespeare lies behind his analysis of Shakespeare's works. What is particular in Coleridge's notion of Shakespeare is that Coleridge strenuously emphasises not merely Shakespeare's intuitive power but his conscious realisation of it in a concrete form. When Coleridge describes Shakespeare as "Nature Humanized", he doubly focuses on Shakespeare's conforming with the spirit of nature and at the same time on his possession of a consciousness which does not exist in nature. When Coleridge defines Shakespeare as a genius, genius means, first of all, the power to master the inner law or inner principle of nature. Secondly, he means the conscious activity of the faculties of the mind in producing creative works. As we see through his demonstration of several qualities of genius in Shakespeare's early poetry, his main concern is not only with the idea or general rule behind an artistic work but with how a central idea is harmoniously embodied in a concrete image or a series of images. Obviously colour, tone, feelings matter to Coleridge insofar as they are congruent with the central idea. His intense interest in the process of artistic production leads him to conclude that judgment is not a separate faculty from genius but rather that the latter appears in the former.

For Coleridge, Shakespeare employs method both poetically and psychologically. Here, method is the way of nature. But in doing so, the active mental faculties need to come into operation. The organic form and unity of feeling or unity of interest which Coleridge finds in Shakespeare's works are not the products of Coleridge's obscuration

⁸ Perkins, Mary Anne. "Coleridge and the Other Plato." *European Romantic Review* 8(1997): 25-40, p.30.

of the true interest of art. He carefully pays attention to how methodically Shakespeare's plays are formed and how organically parts are united into a whole. I have already discussed Coleridge's opinion of form, characterisation, language, metre in Shakespeare's works. In discussing form, Coleridge tries to show how exquisitely Shakespeare plants a germ in the beginning scenes for the future development of the play. Characterisation itself is closely related to the whole. In studying the psychology of the characters, Coleridge does not confine his focus to some disposition or humour of the characters such as jealousy in *Othello* or ambition in *Macbeth* but tries to see how character is related to the unfolding of the form. For Coleridge, language itself is a concrete form. Language in Shakespeare's plays, according to him, is a crucial medium through which a central idea is condensed sometimes through the character's speech and sometimes through powerful images.

The two artistic gifts which Pater mentioned, namely, a natural susceptibility to moments of strange excitement' and 'the talent of projection' are as a matter of fact integral to Coleridge's concept of imagination. 'A natural susceptibility to moments of strange excitement' is apparent at those moments when the primary imagination operates more powerfully than at ordinary times and 'the talent of projection' is expressed in artistic creativity through the secondary imagination.

It is true that Coleridge's principal interest is in locating idea behind an artistic representation. However, as his principle of the reconciliation of opposites demonstrates, he never neglects the senses and the emotions. For him, the ideal metaphysician needs supreme sensibility and powerful emotions. The importance he attributes to the senses and emotions is above all displayed in the vivid and concrete

images of his own poems but also in his analysis of the imagery of Shakespeare's poems and plays. His psychology is far from being evanescent. Rather, as we see in his analysis of *Lady Macbeth* or *Othello*, his psychology is based on his subtle and substantial insight into human psychology.

His theory of illusion or of audience reception is also based on both his understanding of human faculties and on his actual experience as a member of an audience and as a playwright. His elaboration of the theory of illusion based on 'imitation' and his comparison of illusion to dream represent a genuine advance. In the production of an artistic work, there must be a reconciliation between the artist and the audience. Neither the author's will nor the audience's will is exclusively the agent. Coleridge presupposes a universality of nature which the artist and the audience share. If an artist represents an idea in a concrete form, the audience will respond to it through their shared nature. Coleridge constitutes himself as the ideal audience for Shakespeare.

George Saintsbury evaluates Coleridge's status as a critic thus:

So, then, there abide these three, Aristotle, Longinus, and Coleridge. The defects of the modern, as contrasted with the ancient, man of letters are prominent in Coleridge when we compare him with these his fellows: and so we cannot quite say that he is the greatest of the three. But his range is necessarily wider: he take in, as their date forbade them to take, all literature in a way which must for centuries to come give him the prerogative. It is astonishing how often, when you have discovered in others of all dates, or (as you may fondly hope) found out for yourself, some critical truth, you will remember that after all Coleridge in his wanderings has found it before, and set it by the wayside for the benefit of those who come after.⁹

⁹ Saintsbury, George. *History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*. Vol.3. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and sons, 1904, pp.230-231.

Both in his general criticism and in his Shakespearean criticism, his status seems to be firmly established. Of "his stature as literary critic," according to Emerson R. Marks,

There is hardly any longer room to doubt. For the best of what he wrote in that capacity there is simply no substitute. If his Shakespeare criticism were destroyed, the loss could not be repaired even from the admittedly brilliant appreciations of the very Schlegel he "plundered."¹⁰

T.S.Eliot denies a sense of progress in the history of Shakespearean criticism except for advances in archival research; i.e., advances in editing, increased knowledge of personal aspects of Shakespeare, and the theatrical circumstances of his age. For Eliot, any criticism is the product of its age, though each age produces its own representative critics. From the Romantic period down to the present day, according to Eliot, Coleridge is "the greatest single figure in Shakespeare criticism"¹¹ and such critics as Hazlitt, Lamb, and De Quincey only make a constellation about the primary star of Coleridge. Eliot suggests that Coleridge's writings about Shakespeare should be read entire,

for it is impossible to understand Shakespeare criticism to this day, without a familiar acquaintance with Coleridge's lectures and notes. Coleridge is an authority of the kind whose influence extends equally towards good and bad. It would be unjust to father upon him, without further ceremony, the psycho-analytic school of Shakespeare criticism; the study of individual characters which was begun by Morgann, to the neglect of the pattern and meaning of the whole play, was bound to lead to some such terminus, and we do not blame Morgann for that. But when Coleridge released the truth that Shakespeare already in *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* gave proof of a 'most profound, energetic and *philosophic mind*' he was

¹⁰ Marks, Emerson R. "Perverse and Inspired Genius." *The American Scholar* 57(1988): 291-305, pp.301-302.

¹¹ Eliot, T.S. "Shakespearean Criticism," p.299.

perfectly right, if we use these adjectives rightly, but he supplied a dangerous stimulus to the more adventurous. 'Philosophic' is of course not the right word, but it cannot simply be erased: you must find another word to put in its place, and the word has not yet been found. The sense of the profundity of Shakespeare's 'thought', or of his thinking-in-images, has so oppressed some critics that they have been forced to explain themselves by unintelligibles.¹²

Northrop Frye agrees with Eliot in that there is no clear notion of progress in Shakespearean criticism but rather a succession of monuments to contemporary taste. He notes that "In Shakespearean criticism we have a fine monument of Augustan taste in Johnson, of Romantic taste in Coleridge, or Victorian taste in Bradley."¹³ As Frye points out, Coleridge, like all the critics, is representative of his age.

However, as Eliot argues, Coleridge's criticism is not confined to his own age but extends to the present day in terms of its influence. James McKusick identifies Coleridge as the inventor of practical criticism. His treatment of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* are a result of its application. Emerson R. Marks finds the importance of Coleridge's role as a critic in I.A.Richards's description of Coleridge as 'the Galileo of criticism' and in "a recent Coleridgean who sees in Coleridge the progenitor of the main Anglo-American critical approaches of the last 150 years and, to cap it all, of the current antagonism between deconstructionists and their opponents."¹⁴ Marks divides Coleridge's followers into two schools; the philosophical and the practical and he suggests that Kenneth Burke and I.A.Richards belong to the first and Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, W.K.Wimsatt, R.P.Blackmur and John Crowe Ransom belong to the second.

¹² Ibid., pp.298-299.

¹³ Frye. *Anatomy of Criticism*, p.8.

¹⁴ Marks. "Perverse and Inspired Genius," p.302.

As to Coleridge's influence on Richards, quite a few critics set forth their views. A.C. Goodson argues that with Coleridge as his model and with Coleridge's responsive attitude in mind Richards developed a method of paralinguistic reading as the basis of Cambridge English and that "Richards's semasiology actually extended Coleridge's commitment to poetic intelligibility, with the difference that language makes."¹⁵ Anne E. Berthoff suggests that "Early and late, Coleridge was a presence in Richards's work: it was in Coleridge's criticism that he found his principal "speculative instruments," the concepts we think with."¹⁶ According to her, Richards's greatest importance for us is that he makes us to see the pedagogical implications of organic conceptions of language and thought as they were implied in Coleridge's theory of imagination. She even insists that "Richards's pragmatism sharpened his recognition of what Coleridge's practical criticism could model."¹⁷

However, Marks points out that Richards only takes account of one aspect of Coleridge's comprehensive studies and jettisons valuable theoretical cargo, which makes his reading of Coleridge reductive. McKusick classifies modern Coleridgeans into two types: one attempts to "uncouple the boxcars of Coleridge's practical criticism from the locomotive of Schellingian metaphysics" and the other "has contented itself with stealing the goods out of the boxcars and then poking fun at the engineer."¹⁸ The former include such critics as George Saintsbury and T.M. Raysor who try to minimise the metaphysical dispositions in his criticism and highlight his own native genius. The

¹⁵ Goodson, A.C. *Verbal Imagination: Coleridge and the Language of Modern Criticism*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p.25.

¹⁶ Berthoff, Anne E. "Coleridge, I.A. Richards, and the Imagination." *The Educational Legacy of Romanticism*. Ed. John Willinsky. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990. 55-72, p.61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.63.

¹⁸ McKusick. *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language*, p.88.

latter include critics such as Murray Krieger and Lentricchia who accuses Coleridge of neglecting the function of language in the creation of poetry. McKusick notes that for them “Coleridge’s preoccupation with metaphysics blinded him to the concrete specificity of language as a poetic medium; only a phenomenological approach can achieve the required concreteness.”¹⁹ In the case of Lentricchia, McKusick admits that he is right in his claim that Coleridge’s critical method is based on metaphysics but comments that he is mistaken “in his view of Coleridge as an indolent aesthete, so rapt in his contemplation of a shimmering ideal that he loses touch with the real world of men, history, politics, and ordinary speech.”²⁰

McKusick refutes their claim by calling attention to Coleridge’s theory of desynonymization and his commentary on the language in Shakespeare’s works. Coleridge, in distinguishing fancy and imagination, explains desynonymization thus: “it is equally true that in all societies there exists an instinct of growth, a certain collective, unconscious good sense working progressively to desynonymize those words originally of the same meaning, which the conflux of dialects had supplied to the more homogeneous languages, as the Greek and German: and which the same cause, joined with accidents of translation from original works of different countries, occasion in mixt languages like our own.”(*BL* I, 82-83) As I have discussed in chapter four, Coleridge describes language as comprised of ‘living words’. For him, words are the living products of the living mind and they partake both of the human mind and the world of things. Coleridge shows a keen interest in the process of the desynonymization of words as in the word ‘poesy’. He tries to display how this view of language is reflected in

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.88-89.

Shakespeare's language. He characterises Shakespeare's language as 'the language of nature'. In Shakespeare's works, for Coleridge, there is a constant interrelationship between the language and the whole work. For every subtlety and every delicacy of the situation, Shakespeare uses appropriate words. Seamus Perry notes, "The evident reality of Coleridge is a thinker dominated by divisions and differences, rather than unification and totalised wholes" and by way of supporting his argument, he recalls the Coleridgean saying: "bring me two things that seem the same, & then I am quick enough to shew the difference, even to hair-splitting".²¹

Whether or not subsequent critics acknowledge Coleridge, his influence is evident in their work. R.A.Foakes argues that the remarkable feature of Coleridge's criticism is

his ability to keep in view simultaneously many different aspects of a play; thus in the incisiveness of some of his psychological analyses he can be seen as a forerunner of A.C.Bradley, while in his minute attention to language and imagery he can be seen as anticipating the twentieth-century critical emphasis on poetic language and imagery.²²

Barbara Hardy, however, insists that "He is really the father not of Bradley but of Stoll, Wilson Knight, L.C.Knights, and the other modern critics who have so ably demonstrated what Coleridge himself insisted on in his *Essay on Method*, that 'Shakespeare was pursuing two Methods at once; and besides the psychological

²⁰ Ibid., p.89.

²¹ Perry, Seamus. "Coleridge's Turtle: Coleridge and the Divisibility of Life." *The Wordsworth Circle* 28(1997):27-34, p.27.

²² Foakes. Editor's Introduction." *Lect 1*, p.lxxv.

Method, he had also to attend to the poetical."²³ However that may be, the importance of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism is best indicated by the general recognition of his successors that it is not possible to escape its influence.

²³ Hardy, Barbara. "I Have a Smack of Hamlet": Coleridge and Shakespeare's characters." *Essays in Criticism* 8(1958): 238-255, p.238.

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