COLERIDGE'S

SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS.

The object of this thesis is twofold: first, to attempt to understand the method and the critical assumptions in Coleridge's writings on Shakespeare, and secondly, to point out the exact nature of his contribution to English Shakespearean criticism. In order to assess his contribution, however, it is necessary to review Shakespearean criticism before his time. A discussion of this criticism reveals that the rational commonsense approach to the plays resulted in the splitting up of their organic unity. Besides, the predominant philosophical and psychological ideas of the time were not favourable to any profound apprehension of the nature of the poetic and dramatic experience, and the rise of scientific and empirical mental habits encouraged a naturalistic conception of character. A study of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, on the other hand, shows its profoundly systematic nature, and its intimate relation to his aesthetic theory. But there is a basic contradiction in the theory itself. Virtually Coleridge has two different theories of poetry: an emotionalistic theory which regards pleasure to be the end of poetry, and which he inherits from the eighteenth century, and the theory of imagination, which forms his own contribution. The latter theory does not confuse art with life or relegate poetry to the realm of pleasant unrealities, but offers a serious view of the nature and function of poetic imagination, and hence of Shakespearean drama. From Coleridge we have learnt that each play is an embodiment of the poet's vision of life, and has a serious meaning that bears a significant relation to reality. Because of his organic view of form Coleridge looks for this meaning, not in the constituent parts of a play separately or in isolation, but in the whole of it, in its plot, character, imagery and versification alike.
"Assuredly the way to improve the present is not to despise the past; it is a great error to idolize it, but a still greater to hold it in contempt."

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in references:

M.L.N.: Modern Language Notes.

The references to Shakespeare's text are all to the Globe edition.
I apologize that owing to a misunderstanding of my instructions the typist has inserted throughout an unnecessary comma before the place and date of publication of works alluded to in footnotes, as well as the unnecessary 'vol' and 'p' or 'pp' where the works consist of more than one volume - a practice which is contrary to the conventions recommended by the Review of English Studies. For the sake of the general tidiness of the thesis I have refrained from correcting these mistakes.
INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of this century David Nichol Smith suggested that the year 1765 — the year of the publication of Dr. Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare — marks the end of a stage in the history of Shakespearean criticism, that after that date a new mode of approach to Shakespeare set in. This new mode, he claimed, is similar to that of Coleridge. But in 1931, armed with an amazing amount of scholarship, R.W. Dabcock stepped forth with his study of the Shakespearean critics of the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In it he put forward the strange theory that when we have studied the works of these minor critics we find that strictly speaking there is nothing new in Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare. And in the meantime a great deal had happened in the world of English letters to turn the tide of taste. Early in the century the most influential T.E. Hulme attacked 'romanticism', which he labelled 'damp', and predicted a return to what he called 'dry' and 'hard' classicism. Since then the cause of 'dry' and 'hard' classicism has been championed by no less influential critics. This is not the place to point out how much there is really of 'classicism' in modern creative writing; but the reaction against the period which is usually called 'romantic' has been most violent in criticism. The word 'romantic' has come to acquire an unsavoury flavour, and indeed sometimes a downright derogatory sense. Critics
began to write about such topics as "The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal". And although at present it is no longer as violent as it was some years ago, the campaign against romantic criticism is by no means over. In a recent book a certain critic, who is also a great scholar, wrote: 'Romantic poetry died of old age many years ago, and it is more than time that Romantic criticism also received its decent and final interment.'

As the interest in Shakespeare at any given point of time has never been separate from the interest in poetry in general, the modern reaction against the romantic critics is clearly discernible in the field of Shakespearean criticism. For better or for worse the name of Coleridge is always linked with the word 'romantic'. Consequently as a critic of Shakespeare Coleridge suffered some disgrace at the hands of professed anti-romantic critics and scholars. On the whole the nineteenth century venerated Coleridge, and regarded him where Shakespeare is concerned almost as an infallible oracle - an oracle, however, whose advice was not always followed with anything like scrupulousness. In the twentieth century a return to Dr. Johnson's position is, at any rate, claimed to be the orthodoxy; and by reacting against the nineteenth century tradition, the twentieth has attempted to reject most of what it stood for. An authoritative critic once insinuated that the criticism of Coleridge on a particular Shakespearean play was not really an honest enquiry, but an attempt to present
Coleridge himself in an attractive costume. Another critic said that Coleridge's critical work "tells us nothing of what poetry is itself." A third responsible critic wished us to believe that Coleridge was, in fact, no critic, but a 'mystagogue'. I shall not stop to consider these statements here as I intend to deal with them later on in the proper place. But I have mentioned them only to show that an evaluation of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism seems to be more than due. As the heat of passion is well-nigh spent we can now in the calm of mind stop to ask ourselves: Was there after all any valuable contribution in Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare? Or was the bulk of his critical writings, marginal notes and lectures on the great poet merely, as Dr. Babcock suggests, a summarization, or at best, an intelligent elaboration of current or past opinions - the thing which one can quite safely say of, for instance, Dr. Johnson's Preface? To attempt an answer to these questions is the business of this work.

The object of the present study is therefore twofold: first, to attempt to understand the critical methods and assumptions in Coleridge's writings on Shakespeare, and, secondly, to define the nature of his contribution to the criticism of Shakespeare in England. But in order to arrive at a just appraisal of his contribution it is necessary to have some idea about the development of Shakespearean criticism until his time. In fact, an understanding of the critical methods and assumptions of his
predecessors among the Shakespearean critics seems to me to be positively helpful even in our inquiry into the nature of his own. To avoid distracting parenthesis, however, I have decided to divide the present work into two parts. In the first part I deal with Shakespearean criticism before Coleridge, while in the second I discuss the criticism of Coleridge itself. It will be found throughout that by explicit contrast, but more often by implication, the two parts generally illuminate each other. They are in effect complementary.

The method of the first part is somewhat historical. But it is not the method Augustus Ralli follows in his two large volumes on the history of Shakespearean criticism. My intention is not to take each of the eighteenth-century critics separately in a chronological order, summarize his views, and assess his individual contribution to Shakespearean criticism. It is rather to treat the whole of the eighteenth-century criticism of Shakespeare as one large, but single, body of critical opinion. It may be pointed out at the outset that this latter method has its drawbacks: for while it may do justice to the eighteenth-century Shakespearean criticism as a whole, and may help knit together several strands of opinions, which may at first seem loose and disconnected, it cannot do full justice to each individual critic. But the method happens to be more appropriate to my views on the subject which I hope to make clear in the first part of this work. I set out on this work, if I may
insert here an autobiographical detail, with the commonly accepted view that Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare has its roots in the criticism of the last quarter of the eighteenth century. But on examining the critical works of that period, which are generally assumed to embody what is basically Coleridge's approach to Shakespeare, I have discovered in them so many of the critical assumptions responsible for judgments in the previous writings on Shakespeare, that even those works themselves are not properly understandable without reference to what was written much earlier than Johnson's Preface. Often one has to go back as far as Dryden, sometimes farther still. What happened in the third or the last quarter of the century, I maintain, was not so much a basic change, as an accentuation of some elements in the earlier criticism – an accentuation which made the disintegration of the organic unity of Shakespearean drama more prominent than ever. As far as serious literary criticism, and not vague rapturous writing, is concerned, the eighteenth century criticism of Shakespeare, however varied it may appear in its interests, and into whatever stages historians may have divided it, represents in point of fact one main tradition. And it is the aim of the first part of this thesis to try to point out the main features of this tradition, discover some of the assumptions upon which it is based, and relate to it certain elements that may appear to constitute entirely new departures. What I am offering then in this part is not so much a historical
survey as an interpretation – an interpretation which raises several questions, so to speak. In the second part I discuss Coleridge's answers to these questions.

In the second part the method is predominantly analytical. There I attempt a more detailed and leisurely discussion of Coleridge's views; for, after all, this is primarily an essay on the criticism of Coleridge. Coleridge was not merely an impressionist critic; nor was he a man in whom the reality principle was sadly deficient, but who, however, was gifted with occasional flashes of psychological insight. On the contrary, it is my strong conviction that, at least in the field of Shakespearean criticism with which this study is concerned, what sets off his criticism from that of his predecessors is precisely its profoundly systematic nature. Coleridge had a theory of poetry which calls for serious analysis, and is not to be dismissed as mere rhetoric, the thing which we have seen done by some critics. I, therefore, start with an attempt to relate his aesthetical theory to his actual practice as a Shakespearean critic. My conclusion is that while he has inherited a great deal from his eighteenth century predecessors, far from being a mere echo to them, Coleridge has contributed both in theory and in practice something new and significant to English Shakespearean criticism. The nature of that contribution will be the subject of the second part of this work. It is no exaggeration to say that fundamentally the critical principles
underlying his new approach to Shakespeare are the very principles we are now working with. By going to the roots of problems, and by questioning basic assumptions in poetry and drama, Coleridge has raised many questions that are in fact still alive. In the second part, therefore, the reader will often find Coleridge's views compared and contrasted not only with those of his predecessors, but with those of modern writers on the subject as well. I have thought that it is only fair to place Coleridge sometimes among living critics, where he really belongs, discuss him in relation to them, and when necessary defend his position against theirs.

Finally it may be pointed out here that there are one or two things in particular, which this study does not attempt to do. First, it does not deal with the hazardous and tedious question of Coleridge's direct debts, except on one or two occasions and even then only casually. It does not offer any new evidence of, or clues to, Coleridge's acquaintance with his immediate predecessors. Of course of an omnivorous reader like Coleridge, it is extremely difficult to say for certain that he did not read this writer or that. On the other hand, there is not a single reference in his writings to critics like Whately or Morgann or Richardson. Besides, the omission of such a discussion of Coleridge's direct debts is really dictated by the nature of this work. For this is primarily a study in critical method; and as far as critical method is concerned Cole-
ridge's approach to Shakespearean drama is, as will be shown in the following, radically different from that of the eighteenth-century critics. Even if it were proved (which is by no means the case) that he owed this remark or that to this eighteenth-century critic or the other, the remarks together would never make up a system, but would remain a mere collection of disjointed remarks. But Coleridge's critical remarks clearly form an integral part of a whole approach. It is precisely because of this quality of 'wholeness' in Coleridge's criticism that the question of indebtedness, in spite of all its interest, seems to me to be of a decidedly secondary importance.

Secondly, this is not a plea for 'romantic' criticism. (How much is there of Coleridge's thought, ranging from the principle of the semantic gap to the origin of metre, in 'modern' criticism, which would certainly be loath to call itself 'romantic'?) In fact, I have tried in the following to avoid as far as possible the use of the terms 'romantic' and 'classic'. For my thesis is not on romanticism or classicism, or even on one aspect of them. Besides, the terms are somewhat misleading in a study of serious Shakespearean criticism, a field which is to some extent distinct from that of the history of ideas. Of course, the 'discovery' of Shakespeare was a major factor in the development of the romantic or preromantic consciousness. But this is really the case not so much in England as on the continent, where for several reasons the effect of the
introduction of his plays on the literary scene presents a relatively neat and tidy picture that can be traced by the literary historian. 1 In England, on the other hand, Shakespeare was always admired, even in the days when the influence of the French theatre was at its highest - although naturally not always for the same reasons. And when we stop to consider what Shakespeare meant to his late eighteenth-century enthusiasts on the continent we shall find that it was largely freedom of expression, superiority and intractability to rules - what I have preferred to call primitivism - a primitivism which no doubt arose in England itself in the latter part of the century, and which is best expressed by Edward Young's Conjectures on Original Composition, a book which had a revolutionary effect in Germany. 2

We know where the Sturm und Drang school laid the emphasis. 3 As for the French romantics themselves, Henri Fluchère tells us that when they cried frantically 'Shakespeare avec nous!' in the beginning of the nineteenth century, they 'could hardly bring out a reasonably valuable estimate of Shakespeare's genius.' What mattered to them 'was the genius, and what it stood for', and his name meant to them nothing more

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1. It has, in fact, been recently done systematically by Paul Van Tieghem: Le Préromantisme, La Découverte de Shakespeare sur le continent, (Paris, 1947).
2. See J.R. Robertson, Lessing's Dramatic Theory, (Camb., 1939), p.34.
than, again, 'liberty of expression, repudiation of the
unities, melange des genres and poetry.' But this was not
what Shakespeare meant to Coleridge. As the reader will see
later on, Coleridge did not share any of these excesses of
the primitivists. On the contrary, in his theory of the
imagination he clearly distinguished between the order of
a work of art and the chaos of experience.

But in order to show that my attempt to dispense with
the words 'classic' and 'romantic' here does not really
involve a facile or facetious dismissal of accepted and
possibly useful critical terms, I will provide one or two
of the numberless examples in which the neat distinction
between 'classic' and 'romantic' breaks down in our study of
the English Shakespearean critics. If classicism means
the apotheosis of the 'general' and romanticism that of
the 'particular', then we can call a critic like Dr. John-
son a classicist and another like Hazlitt a romantic. Didn't
the former proclaim that a Shakespearean character is always
a species and didn't the latter take him severely to count
for that very assertion? But under which category can we
put Coleridge, who obviously belonged to neither party, but
who explicitly stated that the virtue of a Shakespearean
character is that it is both individual and general at one

and the same time? If, on the other hand, the difference between the classical and romantic critics of Shakespeare lies in that the former often judges by reference to a system of rules and principles and the latter is a mere impressionist, then again, we may, to some extent be able to say that Johnson and Hazlitt are classical and romantic critics respectively. But then what of Coleridge who claims that serious criticism should be always based upon valid principles? But perhaps classical Shakespearean criticism should be taken to mean simply that which measures the plays of Shakespeare by the rules of antiquity as interpreted and applied in French drama, and romantic criticism that which does not take the rules to be absolute criteria. In that case we shall easily dispose of a Rymer or a later Gildon as classicists; but shall we really be justified if we put Farquhar, Dr. Johnson, Kames and Coleridge in the same category? It is to avoid this confusion that I have tried to do without these slippery terms in the following discussion. My plea is then not for Coleridge the romantic critic, whatever that may mean, but for Coleridge the critic of Shakespeare.
PART ONE
PART ONE

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CRITICISM OF SHAKESPEARE

In matters of art the eighteenth century tended to think in terms of pairs of opposite principles. In treatise after treatise in criticism we read about art and nature, reason and imagination, the sublime and the beautiful, and so forth. In their writings on Shakespeare, no less than on any other subject, the critics of the period never cease to apply these pairs of opposite principles, which indeed may possess more than literary significance. It would be convenient, perhaps, to begin by taking any one of these pairs, which are not totally unrelated to one another, as our focal point in approaching the body of Shakespearean criticism of the period. Our aim is to trace roughly the various issues involved, and to elucidate the way in which critics have attempted to solve their particular problems. I propose to consider here the antithesis between 'art' and 'nature'.
1. Shakespeare and the Rational Spirit

We first find the terms 'art' and 'nature' used in juxtaposition in connection with Shakespeare in Ben Jonson. In their Preface to the First Folio Heminge and Condell, it is true, describe Shakespeare as 'a happy imitator of Nature' and a 'most gentle expresser of it'; but 'nature' here simply means human nature as an object of dramatic imitation — a point which will be discussed later. What Jonson means by 'nature' is, as he himself tells us in Discoveries, where he deals with the requisites of a good poet, 'a goodness of natural wit.' By that is meant simply that a poet must have a gift or inspiration, to begin with, or, to put it in more modern terms, 'he must have something to write about'. The reference to Plato's description of the poet which immediately follows leaves us in no doubt regarding this meaning. In the dictum, which passed current for generations afterwards as Jonson's estimate of Shakespeare, i.e. that Shakespeare 'wanted art',

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Jonson's meaning seems to be that Shakespeare lacked learning, such as geographical knowledge, a censure which was to be levelled at him often well until the end of the eighteenth century. Jonson blamed Shakespeare for bringing in a play 'a number of men saying they suffered shipwreck in Bohemia wher yr is no Sea neer by some hundred Miles.' That for Jonson art often implies rules of writing, more precisely, classical rules, is, of course, indisputable. Yet, we must admit, in his poem To the Memory of Shakespeare there is not the slightest indication that 'art' is equated with 'classical rules'. Indeed Jonson, though he belongs to a different school of writing, has no illusion about the nature of Shakespeare's genius. Shakespeare may be at times careless; he has 'small Latin and less Greek', but, Jonson is careful to point out, he possesses art; and the sense of art here as a severe discipline to which the poet submits himself is made sufficiently clear:

For though the Poet's matter Nature be
His Art does give the fashion. And that he,
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses anvile ...

And again he says:

For a good Poet's made, as well as borne,
And such wert thou.

From the earlier part of the seventeenth century Jonson came to represent 'art' and Shakespeare 'nature'. There is

hardly a reference made to either without a contrast drawn between the two. Milton writes of 'Jonson's learned sock' and of 'sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child Warble his native woodnotes wild.' Suckling refers to 'the sweat of learn'd Jonson's brain and gentle Shakespeare's easier strain.' Thus far the antithesis is between 'learning' and 'goodness of natural wit'. But with the advance of the century 'learning' and 'art' came to be equated with 'classical rules'. Since Shakespeare failed to observe these, we find a man like Fuller, much earlier than 1662, writing of him:

He was an eminent instance of the truth of the Rule, *Poeta non fit, sed nascitur*, one is not made, but born a Poet ... *Nature itself was all the art which was used upon him.*

But already in 1640 Leonard Diggs suggested that Shakespeare is 'argument enough ' to prove the truth that 'Poets are borne not made.' Jonson's wise description of a good poet like Shakespeare as being 'made as well as borne' is now giving place to the erroneous conception of a poet born but not made. Shakespeare is becoming gradually drained of all conscious artistry; nature (some wild irregular power) and not he is responsible for his achievement.

1. L'Allegro, 11.131-134.
3. Shakespeare Criticism, A Selection by D.M. Smith, p.11.
Dryden, however, is nearer to Jonson, by whom he is considerably influenced. He censures Shakespeare, just as Jonson has done, for his occasional carelessness. But with Dryden we are entering into a new world quite different from that in which Shakespeare and Jonson lived. In Jonson's adverse criticisms of Shakespeare we see an individual artist censuring his contemporary for occasional lapses in his métier, but behind Dryden's there is the weight of a whole civilization, a civilization which is essentially different from Shakespeare's own and which was destined to become the modern civilization. And Dryden, amongst other things, is interesting in that, having lived in an age of transition, he was fully aware of the change, and that probably accounts for his continual uncertainty and experimentation. When transported by Dryden then, Jonson's ideas suffered a change, for so much of the Elizabethan tradition was lost not only in the sphere of drama, with the closing of the theatre and the hiatus in dramatic tradition caused by the necessity to start anew with foreign ideals almost ousting the old native ones. Hardin Craig has put the matter in the following terms:

Shakespeare lived in a Pre-Cartesian world... There is no doubt that the scientific method and attitude have deeply affected all the life of the mind. The Pre-Cartesian world is thus in some measure a lost world to modern culture. Fragments of it, even large fragments, are continually being found by scholars, but they seem usually to remain fragments. The spirit and temper, the essence of that world before the age of reason and science apparently made themselves known only to a few wise, patient and imaginative scholars and critics. 1

The Shakespearean world picture has then essentially altered. It is in the seventeenth century that the words 'rationalist' and 'rationality' make their first appearance in the English language, and it is in this century, the century of the 'noble elucitation of Truth', that Sir Thomas Browne finds the beginning of 'a new world of Knowledge'. The advent of this new world is considered by an eminent modern thinker the most important event in the history of the West: 'Since the rise of Christianity there is no landmark in history that is worthy to be compared with this.'

The world of the Renaissance, to which Shakespeare belongs, we have come to realize, bears closer affinity to the medieval world than we previously suspected, and its difference from the rational, scientific, secular and bourgeois civilization which coincided with the Restoration is indeed radical. The latter is essentially an urban and secular civilization. If, for instance, the eighteenth century, in which the seeds sown by the late seventeenth bore their fruits in almost every respect, was moral, its morality was of a specific nature. Morality then belonged to good taste, and came under the category of 'polite' manners. In his Characteristics, the influential Earl of Shaftesbury said that mis-

conduct is bad taste in morals, and that 'what is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable; what is harmonious and proportionable is true; what is at once beautiful and true is of consequence, agreeable and good.' As a modern critic puts it:

Though to the Augustan gentleman "vice is thoroughly contemptible", his virtue must "sit easy about him"; if he goes to Heaven (and he must, "without unseasonable passions" aim at it), he must go "with a very good mien".

The seriousness with which life could be taken, for instance, in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, and which, amongst other factors, made Shakespeare's tragedies possible, was now largely lost. In its place we find rationality, toleration, refinement in manners, decorum and all that goes into the making of a polite society. The Elizabethans were looked upon, naturally enough, as barbarous, vulgar and superstitious. With good manners and correct form language underwent a social refinement. In literature decorum came to acquire a social significance. Words, instead of being tested according to their power of expressiveness, were praised or condemned according to their social elevation or meanness. In fact, however much we may disapprove of its inadequacy, it is impossible not to accept some such phrase as Eliot's 'dissociation of sensibility' or Richards' turn

2. Ibid., ii, p. 266.
from the 'magical' to the 'scientific view', to indicate somehow the nature of this spiritual, moral, intellectual and social change.

I have dwelt in some length on this point only to emphasize the fact that this change is of paramount importance in literary criticism, no less than in other departments of knowledge. In the Shakespearean criticism of this period what matters most is not so much the insistence upon classical rules, (Sidney and Jonson had insisted upon them before) as the spirit in which that insistence was made, the spirit which was destined to pervade the Shakespearean criticism of the eighteenth century and which was there all the time, even when the critics themselves reacted against the rules. And my contention is that this spirit of rationality, which set in in the late seventeenth century and was carried on in the eighteenth, has in the field of literary criticism, with all due respect to the idolatry of individual critics, inevitably led to the disintegration of the organic unity of Shakespearean drama. The resolution of the 'soul' of a play, as it were, into its constituent parts without an eye on the wholeness or the unifying principle of it, is only paralleled by Hume's reduction of 'self' or 'substance' in philosophy to a mere 'bundle or collection of different perceptions which are in a perpetual flux and movement,' and the two events are intimately con-

nected with a mechanical view of the physical universe best formulated by Newton, then popularized throughout the eighteenth century.

When we hear Lisideius, who no doubt expresses the opinion of a considerable number of critics in Dryden's time, claim

I have observed that in all our tragedies, the audience cannot forbear laughing when the actors are to die; it is the most comic part of the whole play .... When we see death represented, we are convinced it is but fiction. 1

we realize how far indeed we have travelled from that world in which Shakespeare worked on the 'imaginary forces' of his audience. This is not simply a new way of presenting the Horatian rule:

Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi. 3

But the Horatian precept has acquired the full support of rationalism with its craving for verisimilitude.

The spirit of man cannot be satisfied but with truth, or at least verisimilitude. 4

What is more ridiculous than ... to see a duel fought, and one slain with two or three thrusts of the foils, which we know are so blunted that we might give a man an hour to kill another in earnest with them. 5

In Lisideius's argument we see the same rational spirit at work which makes Neander (who incidentally represents Dryden himself in the Essay) defend the Shakespearean sub-plot

2. Hen.Y., 1. i. 18.
3. De Arte Poetica, 1. 183.
5. Ibid.,v., i, p.62.
in these terms:

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. That similitude expresses much of the English stage. 1

Dryden here is trying to find a rational basis for the violation of the unities, just as the critics of the opposite school for the observation of them. But Dryden, the experimenter, kept on wavering between the two positions without finally taking either side. The sub-plot he defended in the Essay (1668) he attacked in The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy in his Preface to Troilus and Cressida (1679), and the unities of time and place he attacked through the person of Neander in the Essay he very nearly came to accept in the Defence (1668). And Dryden, who wrote in 1668 the famous encomium on Shakespeare which not only Johnson but even Hazlitt admired, in 1672 disposed of The Winter's Tale, Love's Labour's Lost and Measure for Measure as being 'grounded on impossibilities.' 'What there is in any poem,' Charles Gildon wrote in 1710, 'which is out of Nature and contrary to Verisimilitude and Probability, can never be beautiful, but abominable' for the busi-

1. Ker, i, p.70.
2. Ibid., i, pp.207-208.
3. Ibid., i, p.77.
4. Ibid., i, pp.130-131.
6. Ker, i, p.165.
ness of poetry is to 'observe Probability and Verisimilitude justly.' He therefore found the plot of The Merchant of Venice 'unnatural' and wanting in 'the Probability and Verisimilitude which is absolutely necessary to all the Representations on the Stage.' Although Shylock is 'well distinguished' yet the 'incidents' in which he reveals his character are 'so very romantick, so vastly out of Nature, that our Reason and Understanding are everywhere shocked.'

How far the rationalistic attitude can go in the process of draining Shakespeare's drama of all dramatic and poetic significance can at once be seen in Rymer's common sense criticism. In Rymer's opinion Othello is nothing but a heap of improbabilities: 'certainly, never was any Play fraught, like this of Othello, with Improbabilities.' 'The tragical part,' he says, 'is, plainly none other, than a Bloody Farce, without salt or savour.' He finds the characters inconsistent and unnatural and the fable improbable and absurd. The threefold moral which he arrives at purely from a rational analysis of the story is too well-known to be quoted here. Of course, it can easily be argued that Rymer is not representative, that his criticism has been rejected from the time of Dryden right down to that

4. Ibid., p.146.
5. Ibid., p.69.
of Morgann. This is true, although we find that a critic like Charles Gildon, who at first in his *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays* (1694) defends Shakespeare against Rymer's attack, ends by accepting almost wholesale Rymer's position. In his *Remarks on the Plays of Shakespeare* (1710) he writes: 'I must own that the Faults found in it (i.e. Othello) by Mr. Rymer, are but too visible for the most part.' Yet in a sense Rymer is representative. In kind, and not in degree, his criticism definitely belongs to the eighteenth-century rationalistic common sense tradition. Mr. Eliot is undoubtedly right in his remark that 'there is not seen 'any cogent refutation of Rymer's objections to Othello,' — a remark which has surprised some critics. And indeed on Rymer's own grounds there can be none. Rymer represents the logical conclusion of an attitude which regards 'the stage as only a stage' and 'the players as only players'; and it is interesting to note that the influence of Rymer has remained throughout the eighteenth century, though his manner has disappeared. Dr. Johnson, with all his sagacity,
could hardly free himself from it. Rymer had claimed that 'Shakespeare's genius lay for Comedy and Humour,' that in tragedy 'he appears quite out of his Element'. Johnson said that Shakespeare's tragedy 'seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct,' and even Malone, who was less bound than many others to the common assumptions of the time, followed Johnson, or rather Rymer, in his preference for Shakespeare's comedies. Rymer condemned the rhetorical speech of Cassio on Desdemona's safe landing as frenzy and nonsense, and indeed in the heat of his attack he wrote that 'in the neighing of an Horse, or in the growling of a Mastiff, there is a meaning ... and more humanity, than many times in the Tragical flights of Shakespeare.' Subsequent critics were never again to attack Shakespeare with such asperity and venom. But the charge of turgidity, inflation and false sublime remained a commonplace of eighteenth-century Shakespearean criticism. Dr. Johnson could

1. Rymer, A Short View of Tragedy, p.156.
2. Raleigh, p.19. Commenting on this remark, which really derives directly from Rymer Mr. Eliot writes: 'But why should Johnson have thought that Shakespeare's comic parts were spontaneous, and that his tragic parts were laboured? Here it seems to me, Johnson, by his simple integrity, in being wrong has happened upon some truth much deeper than he knew. For those who have experienced the full horror of life, tragedy is still inadequate.' A Companion to Shakespeare Studies, ed. Granville-Barker and Harrison, (Cam., 1943), p.295. It may be so. But we must remember that Johnson found it difficult to re-read King Lear, and actually preferred Tate's version, which provides a happy ending to the play.
3. Rymer, A Short View of Tragedy, p.110.
4. Ibid., pp.95-96.
5. See infra, pp.116 ff.
'scarce check his risibility' at the 'blanket of the dark' passage. If, as Nichol Smith maintains, William Cooke 'strikes the average of current opinion', then we shall see how strongly Rymer's tradition has influenced the average of current opinion when we compare his remarks on Cassio's speech already alluded to with Cooke's criticism of Othello's words on his reunion with Desdemona. In The Elements of Dramatic Criticism Cooke said that 'however the ... sentiments may be suggested by violent and inflamed passion, they are not suited to the satisfaction, however, great, we feel upon escaping danger.' The fact that Cooke in this judgment was really echoing Kames proves Nichol Smith to be right and enforces our point. And just as Rymer found fault with the character of Iago for failing to realize the typical qualities of the soldier, so as late as 1772 a writer in The Gentleman's Magazine complained that 'the sea language of the whole scene (of The Tempest), as I have been informed by those who are the most proper judges of it, is, in general, very inaccurate and unseamanlike.'

But perhaps it is in Francis Gentleman that Rymer's tradition appears most conspicuously. In his stricture on

1. The Rambler, No.163 (Oct. 26, 1751).
Hamlet, for instance, we are told that 'it is a little irreconcilable that Horatio, the particular and intimate friend of the Prince should be in Elsinour two days or more before he paid respects to his royal patron'; he complains that Hamlet's madness serves no other purpose than 'merely cajoling the King, distressing the Queen and Ophelia, bamming Polonius and the courtiers and giving great scope for capital acting;' and finds it difficult to believe that 'the complaisant English monarch should put to death the heir of the Danish crown upon mere request.'

Strange! (he proceeds) that he who found means to destroy his own brother in the plenitude of power and popular esteem, should take such a round-about method to dispose of a nephew he seems to fear; and full as strange is it that Hamlet, who has so much cause to suspect his uncle's intention, and who has such powerful motives for staying at home, should tamely, without objection go upon the voyage.

This is almost how Rymer, without his querulous manner, would have dealt with the plot of Hamlet. The Hamlet problem, viewed in the light of rational commonsense, is expressed thus:

We are to lament that the hero, who is intended as amiable, should be such an apparent heap of inconsistency; impetuous tho' philosophical; sensible of injury, yet timid of resentment; shrewd, yet void of policy; full of filial piety, yet tame under oppression; boastful in expression, undetermined in action; yet from being pregnant with great variety, from affording many opportunities to exert sound judgment, and extensive powers, he is as agreeable and striking an object as any in the English drama.

1. Francis Gentleman, The Dramatic Censor, (Lond., 1770), i, pp.52-55.
The baffling inconsistency which the rationalist critic finds between his judgment of the tragedy and his emotional experience of it is left unsolved. A contemporary rationalist critic, isolating the character from its dramatic context, in the same manner as plot has been here mainly isolated, has tried with the help of the 'ruling passion' psychology to resolve the problem in psychological terms.

2. What is Behind the Rules?

When Shaftesbury wrote in 1710 that 'the age is now so advanced, learning established, the rules of writing stated, and the truth of art so well apprehended and everywhere confessed and owned', he was apparently expressing something generally agreed upon at the time. Those rules of art were those of the antiquity, to be sure. Such was Dennis's certainty that there could be no other rules, that he dismissed categorically the possibility of Shakespeare's acquaintance with the ancients. For, he asked, 'if he was familiarly conversant with' the Greek and Roman poets, 'how comes it to pass that he wants Art?' But by now these rules had acquired a rational basis. Pope said that they were 'discovered' and not 'devised'; that they are 'nature' and that 'to copy Nature' is 'to copy them.' The object of the rules of Art, Gildon wrote, is 'to shew us what Nature is, and how to distinguish its Lineaments from the unruly and preposterous Sallies and Flights of an irregular and uninstructed Fancy.' 'All that pleases,' the same author said, is 'according to the Rules; and all that dis-

4. Ibid., 11.139.
gusts, or is insipid, wild or extravagant, contrary to them,' since the rules are those of 'good Sense and right Reason', and these are 'of all Countries.' While there is 'only one way to find [Order]' there are 'many to fall into Confusion.' Science had already discovered a mechanical order in the physical universe, and an attempt in the same direction was considered desirable in the sphere of morals. Newton himself predicted that 'if Natural Philosophy in all its Parts, by pursuing this Method shall at length be perfected, the Bounds of Moral Philosophy will be also enlarged.' This sentence, together with Pope's line 'Account for Moral as for Natural Things' appear therefore on the title-page of George Turnbull's Principles of Moral Philosophy (1740). Throughout the century the influence of Newton (and all that it means) is manifest in all departments of thought, including aesthetics – judging at least by the attempts made by Burke, Kames, and Beattie, to mention only a few, to establish taste on immutable laws in human nature. Everything in the universe was made to reveal a mechanical order, and with the earlier critics the rules in art came to represent the order in nature. There is an admirable illustration of this in John Dennis's essay, The

2. Loc. Cit.
There is nothing in Nature that is great and beautiful, without Rule and Order; and the more Rule and Order, and Harmony, we find in the Objects that strike our Senses, the more Worthy and Noble we esteem them. I humbly conceive, that it is the same in Art, and particularly in Poetry, which ought to be an exact Imitation of Nature. Now, Nature, taken in a stricter Sense is nothing but that Rule and Order, and Harmony, which we find in the visible Creation. The Universe owes its admirable Beauty, to the Proportion, Situation, and Dependance of its Parts. And the little World, which we call Man, owes not only its Health and Ease, and Pleasure, nay, the Continuance of its very Being, to the Regularity of the Mechanical Motion, but even the Strength too of its boasted Reason ... As Nature is Order and Rule, and Harmony in the visible World, so Reason is the very same throughout the invisible Creation. For Reason is Order, and the Result of Order. And nothing that is Irregular, as far as it is Irregular, ever was, or even can be either Natural or Reasonable.

In 1704, when he comes to write The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, we find that the concept of order gains even a religious significance. 'The great Design of Arts,' he says, 'is to restore the Decays that happen'd to human Nature by the Fall, by restoring Order.'

That is how the rules came to have a foundation in nature in the early eighteenth century. And by rationalizing the rules the antithesis between nature and art became very much sharpened. Shakespeare does not observe the rules of art, which have a rational basis, and yet he evinces formidable powers in moving us; so the only way to get out of this embarrassing critical dilemma is to adduce those powers to some wild, irregular and incompre-

hensible force which they called nature, and which, in a mysterious manner, has control over our poet. It is a strange paradox that the process of rationalizing the rules led to the supernaturalization of Shakespeare, to the making of him an inexplicable phenomenon. Gildon writes: "I must always think our Author a Miracle, for the Age he lived in."  

Rowe says:

Perhaps we are not to look for his beginnings, like those of other authors, among their least perfect writings; art had so little, and nature so large a share in what he did, that for ought I know, the performances of his youth, as they were the most vigorous, and had the most fire and strength of imagination in 'em, were the best.  

and he therefore naturally enough assumes that The Tempest is an early work.

Johnson was right in refusing to entertain such a preposterous notion. Johnson rejected the unities, but, like the other critics before him, his criteria in rejecting them were those of reason and common sense. Those who followed him either reproduced his naive common sense arguments or viewed the problem from not altogether dissimilar angles. The criteria were 'those only laws and Principles on which he wrote, Nature and Common Sense'. The rigidly formal

criticism had gone, but those principles which had made it acceptable were still held as the touchstones of criticism. As a proof of the truth of this assertion one has only to think of a man, who lived in the age of formal criticism, but who, not being a rigid formalist himself, had used substantially the same commonsense argument against the unities which was to be used by Johnson half a century later. Whether Johnson was consciously indebted to Farquhar or not, nearly all his arguments against the unities in the Preface of 1765 are foreshadowed in Farquhar's Discourse of 1702. A few quotations from the Discourse will suffice to show this:

The whole audience knows that this is Mr. Betterton, who is strutting upon the Stage, and tearing his Lungs for a livelihood. And that the same Person should be Mr. Betterton and Alexander the Great at the same time is somewhat like an Impossibility in my mind. 1

Now it is feasible, in rerum natura, that the same Space or Extent of Time can be three hours by your Watch and twelve hours upon the Stage, admitting the same Number of Minutes, or the same Measure of Sand to both? I am afraid, Sir, you must allow this for an impossibility too; and you may with as much Reason allow the Play the Extent of a Whole Year, and if you grant me a year, you may give me Seven, and so on to a Thousand. 2

So much for the Decorum of Time, now for the Regularity of Place. I might take the one as a Consequence of the other, and allege, that by allowing

2.
me any Extent of Time, you must grant me any Change of Place, for the one depends upon the other... Were you not the very minute before in the Pit in the English Play-house talking to a Wench, and now *praesto, pass*, you are spirited away to the Banks of the River Mile?

In fact, the assumptions behind Johnson's attack on the unities form part and parcel of the general rational assumptions of the age. It is not surprising then that all subsequent eighteenth-century Shakespearean critics, with the exception of Taylor and perhaps a few other dogmatic individuals, accepted without reserve his attack. The complex nature of the problem of the so-called dramatic illusion naturally cannot be fully perceived in a common sense rational approach. And the implicit assumption of verisimilitude, which Johnson has set out to remove, has not entirely disappeared. Blair, for instance, follows Johnson in thinking that the audience 'knows the whole to be an imitation only', but, he says, we 'require that imitation to be conducted with skill and verisimilitude'. Johnson himself allows the violation of the unities only between the acts.


2. See infra, pp. 63 ff.


Yet a historian of the Shakespearean criticism of the period writes that Johnson's arguments are 'so clear, so complete, so unanswerable, that the wonder is not that they were advanced, but that they had not been advanced before.' The same historian goes on to say that 'Johnson may be defective on the esthetic side, but when the problem is one that may be settled by reason, he is a thorough master of the situation.' True; but the problem here definitely belongs to the strict category of aesthetics. It would be more than foolish to underrate the value of Johnson's criticism, or to revert to some such estimate of Johnson as Macaulay's. But it is wise, I think, to point out that Johnson shared the limitations of the tradition he belonged to; within those limitations he was undoubtedly a master, but outside them, and the question of the so-called dramatic illusion is outside them, he does not afford us much help.

The application of reason alone, which we find in the criticism of Johnson and the rest of the eighteenth-century critics, has resulted not only in giving a false answer by shifting the problem to an alien level, the level of common sense, on which the problem ceases to exist, but also in disintegrating the unity of Shakespearean drama. From the time of Johnson we cease to hear about the unities, says Nichol Smith, which, one agrees with him, is a virtue; but

2. D.Nichol Smith, Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century, (Lond., 1927), p.75. The contribution of scholarship in this connection should not be overlooked. See infra, "The Role of Scholarship in the Late Eighteenth (cont.)
after Johnson we also cease to find any serious formal criticism, and that is not wholly a virtue. If our serious attention is shifted from plot to character, our attitude to drama has not ultimately changed very much. In our vision we are still isolating certain constituent elements to the dangerous neglect of others, which should lay equal claim on our attention.

Johnson overthrew the unities of time and place because these 'accidental prescriptions of authority' did not conform to 'the order of nature and operations of the intellect' and were not 'coeval with reason'. 1 Kames, who in his Elements of Criticism set out to follow, in the sphere of aesthetics, Newton's description of his twofold method of analysis and synthesis in the Preface to his Principia, 2 and so endeavoured to realize what was then the ideal criticism, i.e. 'rational criticism', 3 did very much the same thing, except that he did it more systematically and introduced historical considerations. His elaborate system has led him to the conclusion that, considering the structure of the English drama, the unities of time and place are not founded on the natural operations of the mind, the principles he has already established in the first part

Footnote 2 continued from page 34.

1. The Rambler, No.156, (Sept.14, 1751).
of his enquiry, whereas in Greek drama the very nature of its construction has made these unities 'a matter of necessity, not of choice.'

The unity of action, however, is a different story. Besides Aristotle's authority, it came to have a rational basis. Addison objects to the double plots on the ground that 'the grief of the audience is diverted upon another object, which weakens their concern for the principal action, and breaks the Tide of sorrow, by throwing it into different channels; ² and towards the end of the century we find Blair repeating almost literally his argument. ³ Upton even admits tragi-comedy if 'the unity of fable is preserved'. ⁴ Cooke stresses the necessity of the unity of fable, but his arguments are based on those of Kames, whom he often copies verbatim. ⁵ Johnson calls it 'more fixed and obligatory' than the other unities; he praises Shakespeare as 'the poet of nature' for keeping 'the order of real events'; in his plays 'one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence.' ⁷ The unity of action is 'conformable to the natural course of our ideas' ⁸

2. The Spectator, No.49.
6. The Rambler, No.156.
7. Raleigh, p.25.
and is therefore insisted upon by Kames. It reveals the famous law of associationism, which he considers to be fundamental to the human mind. Further, it is a manifestation of the Newtonian ideal of continuous smooth motion as it was popularly conceived. The rational basis of the unity of action was therefore unanimously accepted.

But that was not the fate of tragi-comedy. On this point the critics ranged themselves in two camps, but what is noteworthy is that each camp tried to establish its view upon the authority of nature. Johnson defended it, and even satirized those who attacked it in the figure of Dick Minim. But he used the common sense argument that Shakespeare's plays exhibit 'the real state of sublunary nature' and that 'drama pretends only to be the mirror of life'.

There is however a note of apology in his defence, particularly in the Rambler essay.

I do not however think it safe to judge of works of genius merely by the event ... Perhaps the effect even of Shakespeare's poetry might have been yet greater, had he not counteracted himself, and we might have been interested in the distresses of his heroes, had we not been so frequently diverted by the jokes of his buffoons.

1. The Idler, No. 60, (June 9, 1759).
2. Raleigh, p. 15.
3. The Rambler, No. 156.
This apologetic note, reveals the conflict in the critic between his rationalized rule, and his emotional experience. Such a conflict in a man of Johnson's sincerity was bound to burst eventually into a declaration of what amounts to the bankruptcy of the 'rules of criticism' of the time when applied to Shakespeare:

That this is a practice contrary to the rules of the criticism will be readily allowed; but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature.

If the rules of criticism are not meant primarily to clarify and assist our genuine responses to works of art, what other valuable end can they serve? Johnson's argument was substantially reproduced by later critics. Beattie, to take one example, tells us that 'Nature everywhere presents a similar mixture of tragedy and comedy, of joy and sorrow, of laughter and solemnity, in the common affairs of life.'

The old law of decorum, however, still persisted. Addison had called tragi-comedy 'one of the most monstrous invention that ever entered into a POST'S THOUGHTS'; Rowe described it as 'the common Mistake of the Age'. But in the course of the century it was being naturally increasingly rationalized. Cooke, for instance, considered it a corollary to the unity of action, the necessity of which he proved to

2. Spectator, No.40.
be indisputable (using Kames' argument, of course), 'in a tragic comedy there are two distinct actions carrying on together,' and he reached the conclusion that 'the very basis of this species of drama is egregiously unnatural.' Later Richardson, in what may be called a psychological theory of selective imitation, condemned it in psychological terms, reminiscent of those Addison used in his rejection of sub-plots. The mind, he believed, 'is pained by being distracted and harrassed', and this state of pain is created 'if opposite feelings though in themselves agreeable, are poured upon us at once or in immediate succession.' In fact, 'the tendency of these dissonant emotions is to destroy one another.' Such is the craving in the critic to rationalize his aesthetic view that he takes to be immutable laws in human nature those principles upon which he bases his arguments, and which are in fact simply postulated.

3. Taste and Genius

We have seen how the unities, which had acquired something like a rational justification in the former part of the eighteenth century, had by the time of Johnson on the grounds of reason and common sense been generally rejected. But the antithesis between art and nature in Shakespearean criticism, which had existed under their tyrannous reign, remained long after their dethronement — though in most cases it was disguised either by taking a different form or by giving rise to various apparently unrelated problems which were the preoccupation of many a Shakespearean critic in the rest of the century. Of course, the old form of the antithesis did not altogether disappear. For instance, what Addison meant when he said in 1714 that Shakespeare is 'produced by the spontaneous Hand of Nature, without any Help from Art,' or Pope when, in his Preface, to his own edition (1725), he described Shakespeare's poetry as 'Inspiration indeed', and Shakespeare as 'not so much an imitator, as an Instrument of Nature,' was virtually to be repeated by some critics well until the end of the century. Mrs. Montagu said in 1769 that he is 'so little under the discipline of art,' and that nature 'speaks in Shakespeare.' In 1783

4. Ibid., p. 98.
Blair described his 'natural genius' as a 'genius shooting
wild, deficient in just taste, and altogether unassisted
by knowledge or art.' Before them Johnson had not said
anything very different in his comparison between Addison
and Shakespeare, the stock comparison of the eighteenth-
century Shakespearean criticism popularized partly by Vol-
taire, but more clearly in his statement that 'His declama-
tions or set speeches are commonly cold and weak, for his
power was the power of nature.'

As an attempt to resolve the opposition between art
and nature in relation to Shakespeare, critics first impu-
ted his lack of art to the barbarous taste of the times.
Indeed, it was not primarily their experience of Shakespeare
that led them to adopt such an attitude towards his age. We
have seen that the change in every department of life had
contributed towards the enforcement of such a belief. Most
people believed that they belonged to a more civilized and
enlightened age, and, of course, in many respects they
actually did. Dryden, the Fontenelle of literature, record-
ing his awareness of the change, wrote of the Elizabethans
that 'The times were ignorant in which they lived. Poetry
was then, if not in its infancy among us, at least not
arrived to its vigour and maturity.' Dryden's opinion was

2. Raleigh, p.23.
to be repeated by every succeeding critic for over half a century. In his *Advice to a Young Author* Shaftesbury wrote that 'The British Muses' were 'in their mere infant state.' And in the prefaces to their respective editions of Shakespeare Rowe, Pope, Theobald and Hanmer expressed the same opinion. But there is no need to enumerate the critics of the early period as the evidence is rife wherever one looks. And for the rest of the century critics generally introduced only variations on this main theme. Dr. Johnson, it is true, started with the right principle when he said that 'in order to make a true estimate of the abilities and merits of a writer it is always necessary to examine the genius of his age and the opinions of his contemporaries.' And again he insisted on the importance of this principle both in the Proposals and in the Preface. Yet he still wrote that in Shakespeare's time the English nation 'was yet struggling to emerge from barbarity' and the public was 'gross and dark.' And it is significant that he considered the inferiority of Shakespeare's audience and their mental 'infancy' to lie in their 'childish credulity', in that they feasted their minds on 'the luxurious wonders of fiction' and

2. Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare, D.N. Smith, pp.32, 73, 94.
had no taste for 'the insipidity of truth.' Mrs. Montagu, writing her Essay in defence of Voltaire, who asserted that 'Shakespeare was a great genius, but he lived in a rude age,' still maintained that 'Shakespeare's plays were to be acted in a paltry tavern, to an unlettered audience, just emerging from barbarity.' And discussing Shakespeare's historical drama, she wrote:

The hurley-burley of these plays recommended them to a rude illiterate audience, who, as he says, loved a noise of targets. His poverty and the low condition of the stage (which at that time was not frequented by persons of rank), obliged him to this complaisance; and unfortunately he had not been tutored by any rules of art, or informed by acquaintance with just and regular dramas.

Francis Gentleman held the same view of the Elizabethan audience. It is therefore not a little refreshing to hear some isolated figure raising his voice to the contrary. Davies said:

To suppose that the art of acting was not amply, if not perfectly, understood and practiced, in the days of our Author, would be an injury to the feelings of every intelligent reader.

But he often found it hard to resist the strong current of contemporary opinion, and later in the same work he wrote that 'Shakespeare lived in the infancy of the stage.'

1. Raleigh, pp. 31-32.
4. Ibid., pp. 49 ff.
5. Francis Gentleman, Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays, (Lond., 1774), i, p. 3 and The Dramatic Censor, i, pp. 30, 139.
6. Thomas Davies, Dramatic Miscellanea, (Lond., 1784), i, p. 33.
7. Ibid., ii, p. 165.
Although that was a naive way of accounting for the irregularities of Shakespearean drama, critics found some satisfaction in it for some time and went on enjoying Shakespeare in their own fashion. The irregularities had been an incessant cause of worry and embarrassment to many a critic of the age. Perhaps we can get some idea of the critical frustration of the time, of the serious lack of adequate critical principles and concepts to account for the critics' experience of Shakespeare, from Charles Gildon's confession, which seems to me to be peculiarly significant. Even as early as 1710 Gildon wrote:

In spite of his known and visible errors, when I read Shakespeare, even in some of his most irregular Plays, I am surprized into a Pleasure so great, that my Judgment is no longer free to see the Faults, tho' they are ever so gross and evident. There is such a Witchery in him that all the Rules of Art which he does not observe, tho' built on an equally solid and infallible Reason, as entirely vanish away in the Transports of those that he does observe, as if I had never known anything of the matter. 1

No wonder that in the latter half of the century, when some critics had the courage to be more faithful to their responses to the plays, they had nothing to fall back upon except the notion of original genius, with its absolute freedom and intractability to any laws of criticism, which, in fact, meant the denial of all powers of criticism. However, by imputing his faults to the taste of the times on the one hand, and by following Longinus on the other, the

earlier critics could justify for themselves their enjoyment of Shakespeare. Addison in the beginning of the century had expressed his preference, with Longinus, for 'the Productions of a great Genius, with many Lapses and Inadvertencies' to those of 'an inferior kind of author, which are scrupulously exact and conformable to all the rules of correct writing;' and his idea was to be repeated throughout the whole century. In the next number of the Spectator he compared the effect of the Sublime in writing to 'what the Italians call the Gusto Grande' in architecture and statuary, and here again he set the fashion of drawing comparisons from the sister arts. Pope compared him to an 'ancient and majestic piece of Gothick architecture' as contrasted with a 'neat Modern building;' and Theobald drew a similar comparison. Dr. Johnson carried on the tradition, likening the works of Shakespeare to a forest and those of a regular poet to a garden, and Mrs. Griffith said that Shakespeare's writings resembled the 'ancient music which constituted in Melody alone, without regard to harmony.'

1. Spectator, No. 91.
2. Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare, D.N. Smith, p. 62.
3. Ibid., p. 63.
4. Raleigh, p. 34.
Later Mackenzie compared the effect of his plays to the 'noble irregularity of tractless mountains and impenetrable forests' as opposed to the orderliness of 'a pleasure garden.' In fact, the necessity of a certain degree of uncouthness and irregularity to produce a 'sublime' effect came to be asserted by writers like Burke in their treatises on aesthetics. 'The rudeness of the work,' said Burke, 'increases the causes of grandeur as it excludes the idea of art and contrivance.'

But with all the elaborate theories of Taste pouring from every direction in the second half of the eighteenth century, the opposition in Shakespeare's writings between art and nature, which had been baffling in the beginning, came eventually to be solved by some critics in rational terms. Burke, the object of whose treatise, was to find out 'principles, on which the imagination is affected, so common to all, so grounded and certain as to supply the means of reasoning satisfactorily about them' based his empirical enquiry on all 'the natural powers in men' which they employ in their intercourse with the external world. He found them in the senses, the imagination, and the judgment. The influence of Locke and Hume is easily discernible. Imagination is understood by Burke to mean nothing more than

1. The Mirror, No. 100, (April 22, 1780).
2. Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, (Lond., 1787), p. 139.
3. Ibid., p. 6.
'the representation of the senses.' The business of judgement is to find distinctions. The conclusion he arrives at is:

What is called taste in its most general acceptations is not a simple idea, but is partly made up of a perception of the primary pleasure of the sense, of the secondary pleasures of the imagination, and of the conclusions of the reasoning faculty concerning the various relations of these, and concerning the human passions, manners and actions.

The principles of taste are therefore common to all men, but 'the degree in which they prevail' varies according to the individuals, and that accounts for individual differences in taste. Burke attributes 'want of taste' to 'a defect in sensibility' and 'wrong and bad taste' to 'weakness in judgement'. The last may arise from 'a natural weakness of understanding' or, more often, from 'a want of proper and well-directed exercise.' The question of bad taste, according to Burke's theory, is then a question which comes within the province of reason alone. 'Where disposition, where decorum, where congruity are concerned,' he says, 'in short, wherever the best taste differs from the worst, I am convinced that the understanding operates and nothing else.' And it is precisely this point, upon

2. Ibid., p. 18.
3. Ibid., pp. 30 ff.
4. Ibid., pp. 32 ff.
5. Ibid., p. 37.
which towards the end of the century Burke's friend, William Richardson, bases his argument.

Richardson follows Burke's advice, and attaches to his essays on the characters of Shakespeare a chapter on Shakespeare's faults, quoting Johnson's apology that 'offences against taste are more dangerous in men of genius than in other persons.' His intention in the chapter is to show how Shakespeare, who is obviously 'a man of genius' can 'trespass against taste.' To Burke's two requisites of good taste, sensibility and judgment, Richardson adds a third, which in Burke's analysis really comes under the category of judgment; but he slightly alters Burke's terminology so that in his book they appear under the names of 'feeling', 'discernment' and 'knowledge', the function of the last being to detect offences against historical or obvious philosophical truths. A poet possesses taste so far as it depends on feeling; but he may want discernment, for whereas the former is a natural gift, the latter depends on culture for its perfection, and intellectual improvement is necessary for a perfect taste. Having established his theory of perfect taste, Richardson proceeds to apply it to Shakespeare. He finds that his main faults are caused by

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1. See Burke's Letter to Richardson printed as an appendix to the latter's book.
his lack of perfect taste, more specifically to his weak discernment and want of knowledge, but never to want of feeling:

The greatest blemishes in Shakespeare have proceeded from his want of consummate taste. Having no perfect discernment, proceeding from rational investigation of the true cause of beauty in poetical composition, he had never established in his mind any system of regular process or any standard of dramatic excellence. He felt the powerful effect of beauty; he wrote under the influence of feeling, but he was apt to be misled by those general maxims, which are often repeated, but ill-understood, which have a foundation in truth, but must be followed with caution. 2

And the main maxim he considers to be responsible for the 'enormities' in Shakespeare's drama, such as lack of decorum and mélange des genres, is that which requires a poet to 'follow nature'. Shakespeare is found to have followed nature too closely (sic!) and to have understood the maxim 'in a sense too limited'. Rationalization has therefore done the trick and Shakespeare has ceased, for Richardson at least, to be the mysterious phenomenon he was.

Whether the secret of Shakespeare's greatness is assumed to lie in feeling or in sensibility, he is still considered to be deficient in taste, at least in the particular element of taste which implies conscious artistry. Critics may by now have refused to accept Hume's harsh verdict that Shakespeare suffered from 'that want of taste which often prevails in his productions, and which gives way only by intervals to

3. Ibid., p.423.
Instead, they now assert that he wants perfect taste, and what they mean is that he is deficient in the element of taste, which they call judgment or discernment. But judgment was precisely the significance of the word taste before the appearance of the elaborate theories on the subject. The difference is only in terminology. Judgment used to be equated with taste, but now judgment is included amongst other elements in it, and in both cases it is found to be Shakespeare's weakest spot. The position has not fundamentally changed: it is still virtually Hume's position, although in their practical criticism some later critics have endowed Shakespeare with judgment. Subsequent writers on the subject are


2. One has to consider, however, the situation in which the word 'judgment' was used by the critics. Judgment was as a rule found in Shakespeare's delineation of character, a power which has never really been doubted at any time. Otherwise, the word was used by Daniel Webb, for instance, in connection with Shakespeare's poetry; but then, valuable as his remarks may be, there is hardly any awareness in them that the point at issue is dramatic poetry. As far as I am aware, the word was never used with reference to Shakespeare's general design of his form, plot, character and poetry at once—except perhaps by implication by Maurice Morgan sometimes. It is strange that Dr. Babcock should cite as evidence for the new emphasis on Shakespeare's judgment critics who explicitly attacked his taste, or who at best, like Gentleman and Richardson, found him deficient in it, simply because the word 'judgment' happens to have occurred once or twice in their voluminous criticism. (See R.W. Babcock, The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry, (Chapel Hill, 1931), pp.123 ff.) I cannot see how a critic can disapprove of Shakespeare's taste (in whatever sense that may be) and yet at the same time can really believe in his judgment. The

(cont.)
largely indebted to Burke, upon whom they have not advanced very much. For instance, Alexander Gerard, who finds 'barbarities mingled with Shakespeare's beauties', attributes 'incorrectness of taste' either to the 'dullness of our internal senses' or to the 'debility of judgment'. In his view, although genius 'is never found where taste is altogether wanting', yet it is not always 'attended with taste precisely equal and proportioned.' Blair is strongly influenced in his essay on taste by Hume's essay on the same subject: he stresses the part played by reason and the understanding in improving our taste. Elsewhere, he condemns Shakespeare for being 'deficient in just taste.'

Footnote 2 continued from page 50.

serious shortcoming of Dr. Babcock's method, in spite of his astonishing erudition, seems to me to lie in the fact that he relies, for the evidence in support of his thesis, largely on phrases and sentences abstracted from their context. There is no more striking example of this than in his references to Mrs. Montagu to prove his point. (Ibid., p.128) He quotes her essay three times, and yet could there be a book, more vitiated by the commonplaces and especially the limitations of the time? Mrs. Montagu herself says definitely (Op.Cit., p.xxiii): 'Nature and sentiment will pronounce our Shakespeare a mighty genius; judgment and taste will confess that he is far from being faultless.'

2. Ibid., p.132.
3. Ibid., p.172
4. Ibid.
6. Ibid., iii, p.356.
A closely related question to that of taste was Shakespeare's genius. Inquiries into the nature of his genius and of genius in general were made simultaneously with the appearance of treatises on taste. From the very beginning of the century the question of course occupied the critics when faced with Shakespeare. The opposition between art and nature which reached its climax during the predominance of the rationalized rules, resulted in the equation of Shakespeare with nature, in the sense of irregularity, wildness, artlessness or 'freedom from deliberate design.' There was only one deliberate design then, the neo-classical, and Shakespeare did not possess it. Shakespeare's genius then was understood in exactly those terms. We read that there is 'something nobly wild and extravagant in the great natural genius's' of whom Shakespeare is considered one. Addison contrasts the natural genius to the correct type of genius who risk 'not giving the full play to their own natural parts', and 'cramping them too much by imitation.' Again, still in the beginning of the century, we find Addison writing, 'an imitation of the best authors is not to be compared with a good original.' Pope said that Shakespeare is an instrument of nature which speaks through him.

2. Spectator, No.160.
3. Loc.Cit.
The qualities of Shakespeare's genius as explained by the earlier critics were intractability to the rules of art, or irregularity, originality and free self-expression, irrationality or lack of self-consciousness: the poet is not in control of his powers. It is these qualities which mainly formed the concept of Shakespeare's genius until the end of the century. Johnson himself made much of Shakespeare's originality, and Imlac in Rasselas 'soon found that no man was ever great by imitation.' In Young's Conjectures on Original Composition the main theme, as the title suggests, is that of the originality of genius. Originality throughout the book is assumed to be the greatest virtue in writing, and Shakespeare is hailed as a master in that respect. 'Shakespeare mingled no water with his wine, lowered his Genius by no vapid Imitation. Shakespeare gave us a Shakespeare.' He draws the stock contrast between Shakespeare, the 'original' and Jonson, 'the imitator' and concludes: 'Who knows whether Shakespeare might have thought less, if he had read more?' Genius, he writes

1. See Raleigh, p.39: 'Shakespeare has seen with his own eyes; he gives the images which he receives not weakened or distorted by the intervention of any other mind.'
2. Rasselas, Ch.X.
3. Edward Young, Conjectures on Original Composition, (Lond., 1759), p.73.
4. Ibid., p.81.
is a Master workman, Learning is but an Instrument, and
an Instrument, tho' most valuable, yet not always in-
dispensable. Heaven will not admit of a Partner in
the accomplishment of some favourite Spirits; but re-
jecting all human means, assumes the whole glory to
itself. 1

Young, therefore, does not find it difficult to conclude
that Shakespeare's genius 'comes out of Nature's hand, as
Pallas out of Jove's head, at full growth and mature.' 2

Mrs. Montagu likens Shakespeare's works to 'the prodigious
structure of Stone-Henge' because they 'will remain for
ever the greatest monuments of the amazing force of nature,
which we ought to view, as we do other prodigies.' 3

Shakespeare is then 'Nature's Darling', and

... as with honey gathered from the rock
She fed the little prattler, and with songs
Oft sooth'd his wondering ears, with deep delight
On her soft lap he sat, and caught the sounds. 5

In fact, this primitivistic attitude to Shakespeare's genius
was common in the eighteenth century. Even a writer like
William Duff, who attempted a rational investigation into
the nature of genius, associated genius in poetry with
primitive society.

The passivity of Shakespeare's genius was not always
expressed in such rapturous terms. But through the century

1. Edward Young, Conjectures on Original Composition,
2. Ibid., p.31.
6. William Duff, Essay on Original Genius, (Lond., 1767),
   pp.250 ff. Cf. p.257: 'Shakespeare is the only modern
   Author (whose times by the way compared with present are
   not very modern) whose importance of Originality, we can
   venture to compare with those eminent ancient Poets.'
it is implied in most if not in all the criticism written on him, even in that type of criticism which was supposed to be carried out according to scientific and philosophic principles. In one way, this idea of the passivity of genius was the logical conclusion of the prevalent mechanical associationistic philosophy. This is apparent from the way in which critics, in their treatises on the subject, have tried to explain rationally the nature of genius. Gerard, for instance, tells us that 'the first and leading quality of genius is invention.' He defines invention as that power which consists in a great extent and comprehensiveness of imagination, in a readiness of associating the remotest ideas that are in any way related. 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 connexion to it. As a magnet selects, from a gravity of matter, the ferruginous particles which happen to be scattered thro' it, without making an impression on other substances; so the 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. 1

Newtonianism which had been applied to the moral world was now transported to the world of aesthetics as well. Duff, analysing genius, also finds that it consists in 'a more vivid, comprehensive imagination' and in a 'superior quickness, justness and extent of the associating faculty.' 2

Even Whiter, with all his apparent modernity, belongs essentially to this tradition. Whiter's attitude to Shakespeare's imagery, based exclusively on the association principle,

2. Ibid., p.89.
implies the absolute passivity of the artist. Shakespeare here has a 'wild imagination' which in the heat of invention is subject to laws of association. If imagery with him has any significance it is only as a manifestation of one aspect of Shakespeare's mind, of the order in which it worked in its receptivity. The question whether imagery is an integral part of the structure of a play, whether it spontaneously arises from, and in turn reacts immediately or obliquely upon, a particular situation or character, and is ultimately fused into the organic structure of the whole play as a poetic and dramatic vision - that question does not arise. Instead, there is always the implicit, and explicit, assumption that the part played by Shakespeare in the imagery is wholly unconscious. Whiter himself writes that 'as these combinations (i.e. of images) were not formed by the invention, but forced on the fancy of the poet, he is totally unconscious of the effect and principle of their union.'

What then is meant by imagination, which in all the treatises on genius is found to be 'indispensably necessary' in the 'composition of genius'? It certainly is not what we now understand by it. Burke had defined it as the power of the mind to represent voluntarily the images of things in

2. Ibid., p.71.
the order and manner in which they are received by the senses, or to combine them in a different order and manner. Burke's definition remained fundamentally valid during this period. It is a conception based upon Locke's sensationalist philosophy. Duff was not very much different in his definition.

Imagination is that faculty whereby the mind not only reflects on its own operations, but which assembles the various ideas conveyed to the understanding, by the canal of sensation, and treasured up in the repository of memory, compounding or disjoining them at pleasure.

The creative power of imagination, which is stressed by these critics, is only confined to varying the order of the ideas which the mind has received through the senses from the external world. From the infinite variety with which those ideas are combined, objects 'which never existed in nature' are exhibited. The creative power of the mind does not operate on a large scale by any means; in fact, its creativeness is not entirely unmechanical. Gerard's simile of the magnet is peculiarly significant.

The phrase 'creative imagination' has therefore to be interpreted very carefully. Considering the extremely limited nature of the creativity and the relation of the con-

3. Hugh Blair said that 'Genius always imports something inventive or creative' (Op.Cit., p.49), and Lord Lyttleton, to mention another example wrote in Dialogues of the Dead, (Dialogue XIV), that Shakespeare had 'so creative an imagination.'
cept of imagination to associationistic philosophy, it has ultimately a passive sense. In the eighteenth century creative imagination is never meant to indicate the whole imaginative conception of a work of art, or by implication, the serious business of recreating, and imposing an artistic shape upon, the chaos of experience. And in relation to Shakespeare, who more than any other poet was considered by the eighteenth-century critics to possess the power of creative imagination, the sense is even more specific. In this connection the creativity of imagination was confined to the ability to create supernatural characters. Irving Babbitt once said that 'the emergence of the phrase "creative imagination" marks a decisive step in the break with neo-classicism'. Yet strangely enough the values attached to Shakespeare's 'creative imagination' remained the same throughout the century, even when neo-classicism was at its strongest.

1. It was gratifying to see this conclusion, which was arrived at independently from a study mainly of critical utterances on Shakespeare in the eighteenth century, corroborated by the important findings of such scholars as L.P. Smith and A.S.P. Woodhouse, whose studies extend beyond the particular field of Shakespearean criticism to the general critical theories of the period. See, L.P. Smith, Four Words: Romantic, Originality, Creative, Genius, S.P.E. Tract No. XVII, (Oxf., 1924), p. 21, F.N.4: 'The notion that poetic creation was principally concerned with the creation of supernatural beings remained a commonplace of eighteenth-century criticism.' Also see A.S.P. Woodhouse, "Collins and the Creative Imagination", Studies in English by Members of Univ. College Toronto (Toronto, 1931), pp. 101-113. The exception to this generalization, one suspects, is William Blake. Indeed Professor Woodhouse thinks that in Blake 'we have the completion of that
In Joseph Warton’s essay, where he admires Shakespeare for his 'lively creative imagination' amongst other qualities, the significance of the phrase is very close to invention. An examination of his application of the idea will corroborate this. Of all the plays of Shakespeare Warton chooses The Tempest as 'the most striking instance of his creative power'. He goes on to explain his reasons for the choice: 'he has there given the reins to his boundless imagination, and has carried the romantic, the wonderful, and the wild to the most pleasing extravagance.'

Footnotes 1 and 2 continued from page 58.

1. The Adventurer, No. 93.
2. Loc. Cit.
The 'romantic, the wonderful and the wild' is Warton's own way of saying that Shakespeare has given us in *The Tempest* something above the order of ordinary human experience.

The scene (we are told) is a desolate island, and the characters the most new and singular that can well be conceived; a prince who practises magic, an attendant spirit, a monster the son of a witch, and a young lady who had been brought up to this solitude in her infancy, and had never beheld a man except her father.

At the head of his second essay on *The Tempest*, he quotes the words of Horace, the high priest of the neo-classicists, about the difficulty of forming a totally original character, and proceeds to show how Shakespeare has wonderfully succeeded in that respect and praises Caliban, who 'is the creature of his own imagination, in the formation of which he could derive no assistance from observation or experience.'

Indeed in the Advertisement to his *Odes* Joseph Warton writes that 'he looks upon Invention and Imagination to be the chief faculties of a Poet.', and the coupling of the two terms is significant. Of all the English poets Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton were considered by the eighteenth-century critics to possess the liveliest imagination. And yet what was commonly admired in the works of these poets were the scenes of horror and supernatural, such as those of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, the witches in *Macbeth*, *Errour* in the

2. Loc. Cit.
Faerie Queene and Sin in Paradise Lost.

That this view of Shakespeare's creative imagination is not really a new conception introduced by Warton, but a formulation of a long accepted opinion, becomes at once clear when we recall some instances of what previous Shakespearean critics said on the subject. Addison thought that 'it shews a greater Genius in Shakespeare to have drawn his Caliban, than his Hotspur or Julius Caesar' because 'the one was to be supplied out of his own imagination, whereas the other might have been formed upon Tradition, History and Observation.' He himself had borrowed Dryden's phrase 'the Fairy Way of Writing' to denote that kind of writing wherein the Poet quite loses sight of Nature and entertains his Reader's Imagination with the characters and Actions of such Persons as have many of them no Existence, but what he bestows on them. Such are Fairies, Witches, Magicians, Demons, and departed Spirits.

Following Horace, he discussed the supreme difficulty of this way of writing, 'because the Poet has no Pattern to follow in it, and must work altogether out of his own Invention.' Rowe, to take another example wrote:

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2. Spectator, No. 279.
3. Ibid., No.419.
But certainly the greatness of this Author's Genius does nowhere so much appear, as where he gives his Imagination an entire Loose, and raises his Fancy to a Flight above Mankind and the limits of the visible world. Such are his Attempts in The Tempest, Midsummer Night's Dream, Macbeth and Hamlet. And he praised Caliban for being 'a new character'. It is mainly this power of invention as related to what is beyond the ordinary level of human existence that critics in the rest of the century understood by Shakespeare's creative imagination. Duff, who devoted a whole treatise to the analysis of genius, imagination and the creative power, leaves us in no doubt as to the truth of the generality of this interpretation. In his discussion of characters, he divides them into three kinds: first imitations of models; secondly, the heroic and tragic characters; and thirdly, praeternatural characters. But it is in the third type of characters, above all others, the type which is 'altogether different from mere HUMAN characters,' that 'an original genius will most remarkably display his invention.' Colman defines the nature of creativeness in these terms:

To create, is to be a Poet, indeed, to draw down Beings from another Sphere, and endow them with suitable Passions, Dispositions, allotting them at the same time proper Employment; to body forth, by the Power of Imagination the Forms of Things Unknown, and to give to airy Nothing a Local Habitation and a Name, surely requires a Genius for the Drama equal, if not superior, to the Delineation of Personages in the ordinary course of Nature.

The praise of Shakespeare's power of creating supernatural characters has been, in fact, a common feature of Shakespearean criticism, ever since it was born. Dryden and Addison have admired their delineation as much as Morgann. Even the most dogmatic belated Rymer, Taylor, could not refrain from praising them. Dodd, who, contrary to the prevailing opinion, denied Shakespeare the privilege of 'creating a new world in his magic', still thought that his fictitious characters were excellent. Mrs. Montagu produced the best piece of appreciative criticism in her book - perhaps the only piece of her Shakespearean criticism worth reading - when she dealt with the Ghost in Hamlet, in the chapter on The Preternatural Beings.

Despite the excessive praise of Shakespeare's mastery in his treatment of the supernatural, the full dramatic significance of the element of the supernatural in the plays was naturally not realized in an enlightened age. David Hume said that 'Religious principles are a blemish in any polite composition, when they rise up to superstition.' In The Dramatic Censor Francis Gentleman therefore doubted 'whether such false creations of the brain',

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4. David Hume, Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects, (Lond., 1822), vol. i, p. 236.
as ghosts should ever be represented on the stage, since 'it is most certain that they play upon our passions in flat and absurd contradiction to our reason.' He condemned Hamlet for his belief in superstition, attacked the supernatural in Macbeth for its 'tending to impress superstitious feelings and fears upon weak minds,' and considered every dramatic piece that introduces a supernatural character to be unwholesome reading or spectacle for the young ladies and gentlemen who should be brought up in accordance with the pure light of reason. In his introductions and notes to Bell's Edition of Shakespeare he repeated his condemnation. By giving a self-contained rational account of the change in Macbeth's character Richardson attempted to explain away the influence of the supernatural agency in Macbeth:

The growth of Macbeth's ambition was so imperceptible, and his treason so unexpected that the historians of an ignorant age, little accustomed to explain uncommon events by simple causes, and strongly addicted to a superstitious belief in sorcery, ascribed them to praeternatural agency. 5

Tom Davies remarked of the 'visionary appearances' in Macbeth that they are 'but helps to the unaccomplished actor, and the ignorant spectator', for Shakespeare lived 'in the infancy of the stage when a rude audience demanded all the

2. Ibid., i, p.44.
3. Ibid., i, p.79.
4. See e.g. vol. i, pp.3, 15, 31, 34.
assistance which the poet could give them,' and he suggested producing Macbeth 'without such ghostly aid.' We should not forget that this suggestion was made by a man who generally objected very strongly to the alterations of Shakespeare's text.

We may or may not agree that in Shakespearean tragedy 'character is destiny'; but we cannot, for a moment, entertain any doubt about the vital dramatic significance of the supernatural in it. The rational view, on the other hand, in its zealous attempt to exorcise the supernatural from life, tends to lose sight of this significance. In it there is no room for the supernatural in any shape. The eighteenth century universe is in fact a universe occupied only by man and a rational God. As a result the supernatural in poetry is relegated to the realm of fantasy and reverie. It is on this level really that Shakespeare's supernatural characters appealed to the primitivistic tendency in the eighteenth-century mind, the tendency which gathered momentum in the course of the century. In the latter half of the century especially critics indulged in this form of primitivism in their writings on Shakespeare as well as on Spenser. In his Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser Thomas Warton wrote that 'however monstrous and unnatural' the Romances 'may appear to this age of reason and refinement';

2. Ibid., iii, p.146.
yet

above all, such are their Terrible Graces of magic and enchantment, so magnificently marvellous are their fictions and fableings, that they contribute, in a wonderful degree, to rouse and invigorate all the powers of imagination; to store the fancy with those sublime and alarming images, which true poetry best delights to display. 1

Later in his History of English Poetry he thought the Elizabethan age was 'most poetical' because in it there was 'a degree of superstition sufficient for the purposes of poetry' and men still believed

that spirits were yet hovering around, who brought with them airs from heaven, or blasts from hell, that the ghost was duly released from his prison of torment at the sound of the curfew, and that fairies imprinted mysterious circles on the turf by the moonlight ... Prospero had not yet broken and buried his staff, nor drowned his book deeper than did ever plummet sound. It was now that the alchymist, and the judicial astrologer, conducted his occult operations by the potent intercourse of some preternatural being, who came obsequious to his call ... The Shakespeare of a more instructed and polished age, would not have given us a magician darkening the sun at noon, the sabbath of the witches, and the cauldron of incantation etc... 3

Similarly Richard Hurd praised 'Gothic' superstitions, because they are 'awakening to the imagination': the 'current popular tales of elves and fairies' charm the mind 'into a willing admiration of the specious miracles which wayward fancy delights in', and the 'witchcraft and incantation' are striking and terrible. He therefore admired the witches in Macbeth and the magic in The Tempest. Shake-

3. Ibid., iv, pp.327, 328.
Speare, he said, portrays his supernatural 'with a terrible sublime (which not so much the energy of his genius, as the nature of his subject drew from him). But this interpretation of imagination, and this approach to Shakespeare's creative power, are really ultimately irresponsible if not frivolous.

1. Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry*, (1762), Letter VI.
Pope was expressing a common belief in his time when he said that 'the proper study of mankind is man.' In a sense, of course, quite different from the Renaissance sense, man was the centre of reality in the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century was the great age of moral philosophy and the age in which the study of psychology rapidly developed. If imitation was then considered to be the object of poetry, it was imitation of human nature first and foremost. In this respect Shakespeare was regarded as a supreme poet by the eighteenth-century critics, for Shakespeare imitated human nature so well that his characters feel, act and talk like human beings.

Imitation, however, was almost universally understood literally, and as usual the authority of Aristotle, as the eighteenth century understood him, was dragged in. The Aristotelian mimesis had then acquired a naturalistic sense: it came to mean direct copying. Strengthened by scientific influence, this meaning, which held ground throughout the century, was in a large measure responsible for the direction Shakespearean criticism took in the period. We have seen the effect of rationalism in the insistence upon literal truth and verisimilitude in drama and of common

2. See infra, pp. 192 ff.
sense in the denial of dramatic illusion. Drama was con­
dered by all the critics to be a copy of human life, and the
enjoyment the spectator obtains from it to be derived either
from this delusion, that is, from his mistaking it for
reality, or from his consciousness that it is only a copy
of it. The truth of the copy to the original was never
doubted, although the nature of this truth was not always
interpreted in the same way.

Shaftesbury, to take a few representative examples, said
in his *Advice to a Young Author* that 'poetry itself was de­
defined as imitation chiefly of men and manners; and was that
in an exalted and noble degree which in a low one we call
mimicry'; and in *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* he claimed
that 'Truth is the most powerful thing in the world, since
even fiction itself must be governed by it, and can only
please by its resemblance.' Burke believed that 'the
pleasure of resemblance is that which principally flatters
the imagination.' 'We have,' he said, 'a pleasure in
imitating and in whatever belongs to imitation merely as it
is such.' He saw in imitation one of the fundamental
principles of human nature, and he therefore found no diffi­
culty in account/for the importance of the arts, because
'herein they have laid one of the principal foundations of

2. Ibid., i, p.6.
4. Ibid., p.80.
their power.' And although he admitted that poetry is not strictly an imitative art, he still believed that 'all merely dramatic poetry is of this sort.'  

2. Gerard vaguely disapproved of too close an imitation of life; yet on the whole he shared the same idea of imitation. He considered that instrument of imitation 'the most perfect' which is 'capable of producing the most perfect likeness', and accordingly he concluded that statuary is 'more perfect than painting and the latter than poetry.' Yet, he admitted, that imperfection of instrument 'adds merit to the effect' because it shows more skill. But Gerard was undecided as to 'which principle is on the whole preferable, exactness of resemblance, or skill in painting.' Johnson denied the reality of the representation but did not doubt that we think of good drama 'as just picture of a real original.' In Johnson's view, a Shakespearean play is not an autonomous work of art, but its value is referential: it 'brings realities to mind'. The nearer a play brings these realities to mind the better it is. Johnson's position is not essentially different from that of Taylor, who said that a work of art is not mistaken for reality, but 'the more it resembles reality the more it will please and the more merit will it

2. Ibid., p.53.  
4. Ibid., p.54.  
5. Raleicb, p.28.
haye.* Blair, and Beattie held a similar position. Even Karnes was not different from the others in his views on imitation, although the systematic psychological method he applied throughout his enquiry led him to a more satisfactory analysis of a middle state between complete delusion and total incredibility. This middle state he called 'ideal presence' to distinguish it from real presence, and defined it as a 'waking dream' because it disappears the moment we reflect upon it. Based ultimately upon sensationalism and associationism, the theory assumes the power of ideas to raise perceptions, of 'language to raise emotions'. The reader's or spectator's emotions are not aroused, however, unless he falls into that state of 'ideal presence,

\[\text{till he be thrown into a kind of reverie, in which state, forgetting that he is reading, he conceives every incident as passing in his presence precisely as if he were an eye witness.}\]

Of all the means of producing ideal presence, Karnes considered 'theatrical representation the most powerful.' So while the performance lasts, while the state of ideal presence is sustained, the impression we receive is the same as that of reality, but the moment we awake from that dream we know that it is not true. But in order that this state

of ideal presence may be created in the recipient, a play
must possess 'verisimilitude'; it must be a detailed and
accurate copy of life. The imitation is deemed 'just' when
'this resemblance is preserved' 'because it is a just copy
of nature.' He praised Shakespeare's soliloquies because
they are 'accurate and bold copies of nature.' The famous
distinction he drew in Chapter XVI of his book between the
description and imitation of passion embodies the same view
of imitation as that which his contemporaries held.

This way of interpreting imitation influenced the
various accounts given by the critics for the peculiar plea-
sure we obtain from tragedy. Addison, who thought that
dramatic representations 'have always the greater Force, the
nearer they approach to Nature, and the less they shew of
Imitation', explained that the pleasure arises from 'the
sense of our own safety.' Burke adduced it to the effect
of imitation, which, as we have seen, he took to be the
principal source of pleasure to the imagination. Hume, and Kames after him, found it in the 'very eloquence with

2. Ibid., i, pp.505-508.
3. Ibid., vol.1, pp.455 ff.
4. Spectator, No.541.
5. Ibid., No.418.
7. David Hume, Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects,
   (Lond., 1822), 1, p.204.
which the melancholy scene is represented, though Hume added to it the pleasure derived from imitation. The pleasure of imitation and our admiration of the skill shown in it were again insisted upon by Gerard who added to these 'our implicit knowledge that the occasion is remote or fictitious.'

Dr. Johnson, who believed that the stage is only a stage, maintained that 'the delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more.' Mrs. Montagu, on the other hand, gave us an explanation which is logically consistent with the extreme view that drama is an exact copy of life:

> Experience informs us that even the inarticulate groans and involuntary convulsions of a creature in agonies, affect us much more, than any eloquent and elaborate description of its situation, delivered in the properest words and most significant gestures.

The nearer drama approaches reality, the better and more moving it is, which, is a view that robs drama of any serious value. If truth is better and more moving than fiction, on what grounds can fiction justify its existence? The confusion between the two experiences, that of reality and that of art, is, of course, never suspected. Taylor, naturally enough, offered a similar explanation.

2. Raleigh, p. 28.
Beneath all these accounts lies the assumption that drama imitates human life, in the sense of copying it, although the accounts themselves vary according to the degree in which the individual critic believes in delusion. That assumption is responsible for the attitude, which we find accentuated towards the end of the century, and which regards characters in Shakespearean drama as replica of human beings, sometimes as historic beings. Of course, there is a change in the treatment of these characters—a change from the general remarks on them to a more particular type of criticism which analyses in detail action, motive and sentiment. But there is no fundamental change in the attitude to imitation itself. That Shakespeare's characters are 'Draughts of Nature' or that they are 'so much Nature herself, that 'tis a Sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as Copies of her' has never been contested throughout this long period. Only there were two ways of

3. Shakespeare's power of characterization has been praised from the time of Dryden and earlier; and attempts at writing character sketches have been made from the very early stages of Shakespearean criticism. There is no need to illustrate the development of this point here, as enough work has been done already by scholars in this direction. See, e.g., D.N.Smith, Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century, (Oxf., 1923); T.M.Bayley, "The Study of Shakespeare's Character in the Eighteenth Century", M.L.N., XLII (Dec., 1927); R.W.Lubbock, The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry, (Chapel Hill, 1931), Ch.XI. I am concerned here rather with the assumptions underlying the eighteenth-century criticism of Shakespeare's characters.
interpreting human nature: human nature as the generic type, and human nature as realized in individuals.

In an essay On the Freedom of Wit and Humour (1709) Shaftesbury said that 'the good poet and the painter hate minuteness and are afraid of singularity, which would make their images, or characters appear capricious and fantastical', and that it is 'from the many objects of nature, and not from a particular one,' that men of genius 'form the idea of their work.' About the middle of the century Gerard made the same claim. Similarly Dr. Johnson, starting from the principle that 'nothing can please many and please long but just representations of general nature,' considered it a virtue that in Shakespeare's writings a character is 'commonly a species', while in those of other poets it is 'too often an individual.' He defended Shakespeare against the believers in decorum, like Dennis and Rymer, on the ground that he preferred preserving the essential to the accidental: 'His story requires Romans or Kings, but he thinks only on men.'

3. Raleigh, p.11.
4. Ibid., p.12. Cf. his Rasselas, Ch.X: 'The business of a poet is to examine, not the individual, but the species, to remark general properties and large appearances ... He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such striking features as recall the original to every mind; and must neglect the minuter discriminations, which one may have remarked, and another have neglected, for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness.'
5. Raleigh, p.15.
comparison between Shakespeare and Jonson wherein the former is extolled because 'Nothing less than general Nature, such as she has been from the first formation of Society, and will remain for ever, could satisfy the comprehensive mind of Shakespeare.' This ideal of generality, which incidentally was not confined to the domain of art, was peculiarly congenial to an age that placed its faith in reason and common sense. Poetry should express ideas that can be easily apprehended by all, for 'particular manners can be known to few.' The common sense of the reader, which is supposed to be the same in every reasonable, normally-constituted reader, is in the last resort the sole judge of all poetic merit. The poetry that is the product of common

2. Cf. Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art, Fourth Discourse: 'The works whether of poets, painters, moralists, or historians, which are built upon general nature live for ever,' and Shaftesbury, Op.Cit., ii, p.319: 'Were a man to form himself by one single pattern or original, however perfect, he should himself be a mere copy. But whilst he draws from various models he is original, natural and unaffected.' This ideal of generality is, in part, of a Cartesian origin. Descartes, in his fifth Meditation, writes that 'toutes les choses que je connais clairement et distinctement sont vraies.' The Cartesian clarity and distinction which came to be the catchwords of the eighteenth century art, could only lead to generalities, for clarity and distinction could only be realized in general, universal and immutable truths. Hence the fear of the particular, especially in the early part of the eighteenth century. Likewise, the influence of Shaftesbury's philosophy, which was strong, particularly in the first half of the century, cannot be ignored. A philosophy that considered universal good and not partial evil must tend towards the glorification of the general and the neglect of the particular.

3. Raleigh, p.11.
sense in the poet and that appeals to common sense in the reader cannot be but of a general nature. By reason and common sense you can arrive at generalities, ideas which are accepted by all and verified by common experience. This holds good in the other arts as well.

Critics of this school therefore went to Shakespeare for the generalities, which they demanded that their own writers should give them; and Shakespeare was ranked by them above all other English poets because he alone, 'draws such men as all nations and all ages will acknowledge to be kin of them.' But if the critics of this school insisted upon generality as the criterion of good character drawing, they still did not deviate from their conception of imitation as copying, which is a strange position indeed. Imitation could be selective in eighteenth-century aesthetics, but it was never understood to mean creation in accordance with an idea. It never ceased to be copying, even if it were only copying certain features and dropping others, preserving what is common to all and omitting what is singular and unique. In Richardson's theory of selective imitation the idea of copying is naturally implicit. The poet simply intensifies or diminishes some points in his original; he 'veils infirmities,' 'softens and conceals harsh and unbending features,' and at best adds from 'the store-house of fancy and observation' what will make a character more pleasing. Dr. Johnson, who more than any other eighteenth-

century critic, preached the ideal of generality, gave no meaning in his dictionary that would show a right understanding of the Aristotelian mimesis. On the contrary, his argument in defence of Shakespeare's mélange des genres, as we have seen, is naturalistic. According to the eighteenth century view of generality the creative process consists in observation and abstraction. Dryden himself had said of Falstaff that he is 'a miscellany of humours or images, drawn from so many several men.' In Gerard's opinion the Greek artists were 'not contented with imitating the most perfect individual they could meet with; but collecting the perfections of many they formed one general idea more complete than could be drawn from any single real existence.' In the same way Beattie said that 'it seems to be from observation of many things of the same or similar kinds, that we acquire the talent of forming ideas more perfect than the real objects that lie immediately around us.' It is as if Shakespeare created his characters by a process of induction. Because of the age's view of imitation it was not unnatural that even those critics who found Shakespeare's characters true to general human nature, still regarded them as

2. See supra, p.37.
3. Kez, 1, p.34.
Frail by constitution, hurt by ill-habits, faulty and unequal: but they speak with human voices, are actuated by human passions, and are engaged in the common affairs of human life. We are interested in what they do or say by feeling every moment, that they are of the same nature as ourselves. 1

And Pope could praise their individuality in terms, which even Hazlitt, the champion of the particular, found it fitting to quote in the introduction to his book on the characters of Shakespeare.

That is how the critics who believed in the criterion of generality looked upon Shakespeare's dramatic characters. But the views of those who believed in the particular do not differ materially from that. As early as 1753 we find Joseph Warton attacking general criticism especially with respect to Shakespeare for being 'useless and unentertaining'.

Morgann makes similar charges: 'General criticism,' he says, 'is as uninstructive as it is easy - Shakespeare deserves to be considered in detail; - a task hitherto unattempted.'

Kenrick writes that 'general admirers are caught by superficial attractions', and Whately remarks that 'general marks of distinction do not denote the individual but only shew the class he belongs to. Men differ as much in their minds as in their faces,' and he proceeds in his essay to

point out Shakespeare's excellence in portraying individuals.  
Kames before him has made a similar remark. But the critics 
who have set out to analyze Shakespeare's characters in de­
tail have arrived at similar conclusions concerning their 
nature. Morgann says:

If the characters of Shakespeare are thus whole, and 
as it were original, while those of almost all other 
writing are mere imitation, it may be fit to consider 
them rather as Historic than Dramatic beings.  

And in his book Richardson assumes that they are human 
beings; in fact, he tells us that he analyzes their 
passions and sentiments with the object of arriving at the 
fundamental principles of human nature.

The attitude that regarded Shakespeare's characters 
as human beings had been implicit from the very beginning. 
Pope himself said explicitly enough that 'Every single 
character in Shakespeare is as much an individual, as those 
in life itself' and 'it is impossible to find any two 
alike; and such as from their relation or affinity, in 
any respect appear most to be Twins, will upon comparison

tincture from every peculiarity of character.'
3. In his edition of The Critical Works of John Dennis, 
vol.II, (Baltimore, 1543), p.425, Edward Miles Hooker 
points out that as early as 1680 Tate could write of 
Shakespeare that 'He was a most diligent Spie upon 
Nature, trac'd her through her darkest Recesses,' and 
goes on to say: 'From 1709 to 1733 we find Steele, 
Hughes, Theobald, and Warburton subjecting the charac­
ters (of Shakespeare) to subtle psychological analysis, 
regarding them as creatures whose motives and emotions 
were as natural and understandable as those of living 
beings. Here, rather than in the second half of the 
century, do we see the real beginnings of the romantic 
criticism of Shakespeare's characters.'
be found remarkably distinct.1 And what Whately did, in fact, was only to prove in great detail this point with respect to Macbeth and Richard III. But the attitude was not so pronounced as it came to be towards the end of the century—a fact which has led some people to assume that it was born in that late period. And critics such as Morgann, Whately and Richardson, by their insistence on the novelty of their criticism, helped to foster such an erroneous idea. Of course, there are reasons to account for the misunderstanding. 'General' criticism, by virtue of its very nature, did not deal with Shakespeare's characters in details, and although 'particular' criticism, in a sense, mainly developed, and enlarged upon, certain aspects of it, it gave the impression of making a new discovery. At the same time the advance in psychology contributed towards the analysis of the inner man. There is a certain difference between Warton's analysis of Lear and that of William Richardson: the one is viewed externally whereas in the other there is a sophisticated analysis of the inner man. The tendency towards introversion in the analysis of characters is enforced by the development in the methods of acting from the external presentation of Cibber to the subtle psychological interpretation of Garrick, though the development itself is not so much a cause as a symptom of a wider movement.2

2. See infra, pp.192 ff.
By the middle of the eighteenth century psychology was becoming rapidly the basis of aesthetics. This, of course, was an outgrowth of attempts made much earlier in the century. What Shaftesbury had done in ethics was to be followed by critics in the domain of art as well. Shaftesbury himself a severe classicist in literature had yet admitted the value of enthusiasm in life, and, by implication of emotionalism in art. And Dennis had made the pathetic a fundamental factor in the sublime. In analysing the emotions connected with the sublime and the nature of their responses to it, the critics' attention was diverted from formal criticism to a consideration of the psychological element in the aesthetic experience. The favourable influence of Longinus, for whose popularity throughout the century Addison was chiefly responsible, cannot be exaggerated.

The analysis of passions - an analysis based upon the associationistic psychology of the time - came eventually to be established as the foundation of all criticism. Kames set out in the first part of his Elements of Criticism to

1. See Shaftesbury, Op.Cit., i, p.193: 'The study of human affection cannot fail of leading me towards the knowledge of human nature and of myself.' Richardson's analyses of Shakespeare's characters are motivated by the same conviction.
2. See his essay, A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm, (1708).
analyze human passions in an attempt to arrive at fundamental principles by which a work of art can be tested. Burke before him had done something similar in his *Enquiry*: 'I believe,' he wrote, 'that an attempt to range and methodize some of our most leading passions, would be a good preparative to such an enquiry as we are going to make in the ensuing discourse.' And the assumption that the main domain of art is passions gained universal acceptance. For instance, Blair said that 'to paint passion so truly and justly as to strike the hearts of the hearers with full sympathy, is a prerogative of genius given to few.' Of tragedy, Young wrote, 'Pathos is not only the life and soul, but the soul inextinguishable.'

Shakespeare had been praised all the time for his power of painting passions and of arousing them in the recipient. From the time of Dryden onwards critic after critic joined in the chorus of praise. Shakespeare, in Dryden's view, may have erred in many things, but never in his understanding of the passions. 'I cannot deny that he has his failings,' he says, 'but they are not so much in the passions themselves as in his manner of expression.' But before the intensive interest in passions and psychology,

4. Ker, i, p.224.
that praise was often couched in passing and general remarks by his critics. With the advance of the century, however, and the development of psychology, and aided at first by the wave of sentimentalism that swept over England quite early in the century, the critics began to direct their praise to individual plays or particular characters. Upton, for instance, in 1746 praises the birth, the gradual development and the violent climax of the passion of jealousy in Othello:

The art of the poet is beyond all praise, where he makes Iago kindle by degrees the flames of Othello's jealous temper, which bursting out into rage and fury, occasions first the destruction of his wife, and soon after his own. 1

Warton's _Adventurer_ essays on King Lear are too well known to be quoted. His aim, however, we may remind ourselves, is to consider singly the judgement and art of the poet in describing the origin and progress of the distraction of Lear, in which, I think, he has succeeded better than any other writer; even than Euripides himself, whom Longinus so highly commends for his representation of the madness of Orestes. 2

In Warton's papers there is a balance between the sentimental and the critic interested in the motives and inner working of character. He, in fact, occupies a middle position between the sentimental and psychological approach to character, between John Hughes, whose 'eyes were frequently filled with tears' by Shakespeare's tragedies, on

2. _The Adventurer_, No.113.
the one hand, and Kames and Richardson on the other.

Kames devotes the second chapter of his *Elements* to the treatment of 'Emotions and Passions', in which he attempts a psychological (and, naturally enough for an eighteenth century author, an ethical) analysis of them. As Shakespeare is 'superior to all other writers in delineating passions' and as he 'exceeds all the ancients and moderns in knowledge of human nature, and in unfolding even the most obscure and refined emotions', he therefore supplies Kames with the greatest bulk of illustrations in the course of his analysis. In Shakespeare's characters we find a lively 'imitation' and not a mere cold 'description' of passions, as in those of Corneille; they act and behave in accordance with the laws Kames discovers in his analysis of passions. A typical example of his treatment can be found in his analysis of pity. The pity we feel for the object of distress must be accompanied by our resentment against the author of it.

Pity, by interesting us strongly for the person in distress, must of consequence inflame our resentment against the author of the distress ... Shakespeare shows great art in the funeral oration pronounced by Antony over the body of Caesar. He first endeavours to excite grief in the hearers by dwelling upon the deplorable loss of so great a man; this passion interesting them strongly in Caesar's fate, could not fail to produce a lively sense of the treachery and cruelty of the conspirators; an infallible method to inflame the resentment of the people beyond all bounds. 

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2. Ibid., vol.1, p.503.
3. Ibid., vol.1, pp.73 ff.
Likewise, by the law of causality, pity is associated with love, again a point which is beautifully illustrated by Othello's speech, beginning with:

Her father lov'd me; oft invited me ...

The same example demonstrates the theory that one passion or more of a similar tone can lead easily to another of a related nature: 'Admiration concurred with pity to produce love.'

This method of Kames is more elaborately developed by William Richardson, who is largely indebted to him. Richardson, however, is primarily a moralist and a psychologist who is more interested in the study of the working of the mind and in the effect of that study in 'preventing the inroads of vice', than in the poetry of Shakespeare. He frankly admits that his intention is 'to make poetry subservient to philosophy and to employ it in tracing the principles of human conduct.' He chooses the characters of Shakespeare as objects of his empirical study of the mind only for reasons of convenience. The two methods of study hitherto employed, the one based upon 'reflections on our own feelings' and the one upon 'observations on the conduct of others', are exposed to difficulties and are consequently liable to error. Our passions are not subject to our will.

2. Loc.Cit.
4. Ibid., p.33.
5. Ibid., p.11-12.
and, when excited, the mind is too inflamed to observe im-
partially and to form a complete picture of what is happening.
On the other hand, mere observation of the conduct of others
does not enable us to see their 'internal feelings'. It
would therefore seem best to rely in our study upon 'that
class of writers that excel by imitating the passions,' and
of which Shakespeare is the finest example. Richardson
accepts the distinction Kames has drawn between the imitation
and description of passions, and affirms that 'no writer has
hitherto appeared who possessed in a more eminent degree
than Shakespeare the power of imitating the passions.'

What has often been an implicit assumption in Kames's
illustrations from Shakespeare is made only too explicit
by Richardson. With Kames Shakespeare's characters seem
to act and feel according to his conception of the passions
and of the operations of the human mind. Richardson, on
the other hand, proposes 'to analyse their component parts'
with the object of arriving at an understanding of the
nature of the passions. The method seems to be the reverse
of Kames's, but in fact, in his practice, Richardson's
method is the same. Like Kames he starts with an a priori
theory of the passions, then proceeds to analyse the parti-
cularly character in which his theory of the particular passion

2. Ibid., pp.30 ff.
seems to him to be sufficiently illustrated. Only his analysis is further complicated by the so-called theory of 'the ruling passion'.

The idea of the ruling passion seems to have been widely accepted in late eighteenth century psychology. Of course, it is an old conception that goes back to the humoral psychology and medicine, Jonson's dramatic theory of humours, and even much further. And Pope early in the century, made it central in his Moral Essays. But in the last quarter of the century, we find that several critics writing about the same time raise the concept of the ruling passions to the status of an all important psychological principle in their criticism of Shakespeare's characters. The main concern of even Moragn is to find 'the leading quality in Falstaff's character, and that from which all the rest take their colour', and to prove that it is something other than cowardice. Whately assumes that the ruling passion of Richard III is 'the lust of power', and Beattie, in his Essays on Poetry and Music as they affect the Mind, lays it down as a law that 'every personage introduced in poetry should see things through the medium of his ruling passion and his thoughts and language should

be tinctured accordingly.' 1 Henry Mackenzie finds the reconciling principle or the 'leading idea' in Hamlet's character in the 'extreme sensibility of his mind.' 2 The whole theory of the ruling passion represents, in fact, a rational attempt to reduce the complex personality to a point, viewed from which, every other point and trait in it becomes easily intelligible. It is a Newtonian attempt to transport the order of the physical to the moral universe and bring the apparent chaos of the inner cosmos to some shapeliness and form. It, therefore, implies a mechanical view of the passions - a thing which one feels in the very phraseology Richardson uses in his writings:

Shakespeare is most eminently distinguished by 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 the propensities, or by setting it aptly in opposition. 3

But it is a view that suffers from over-simplification. It loses sight of the mysterious nature of the passions, their complexity and their infinite possibilities. It could have an elaborate superstructure raised upon it - and nothing is more elaborate than, for instance, Richardson's analysis of the character of Falstaff - but it only becomes complica-

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ted: it never indicates a recognition of any degree of complexity or uniqueness. At bottom it offers a very clear picture of human nature as the result of a certain combination of a very limited number of passions, the combination varying in each individual. And the variation is simply a quantitative one, for the ruling passion is a mere intensification of any one of that limited number, and character, in the last analysis, is the product of the effect of that ruling passion upon the rest. Stripped of its frills and finery, it is ultimately the rationalistic view of character, which, again, could be found in Dryden, who, in his Preface to Troilus and Cressida (1679), maintains that 'confused passions make undistinguishable characters.' The Cartesian virtues, clarity and distinction, demand a tidy picture of human nature.

Richardson proceeds in his successive volumes to analyse Shakespeare's characters according to the principle of the ruling passion. In order to explain the extraordinary and violent change the character of Macbeth suffers 'we must consider the nature of the ruling passion, and observe its tendency.' Ambition is the ruling passion in him. As he is originally an ambitious man, his ambition 'becomes immoderate' because it is 'fostered by imagination and confirmed by success'. The opposing principles are the

1. Ker, i, p.224.
3. Ibid., p.45.
amiable and congenial sentiments of humanity and compassion, sense of duty and a regard to the opinions of mankind. ¹

This is a rough static picture of the forces in Macbeth's character. Now let us see them in action:

Ambition, grown habitual and inveterate in the soul of Macbeth, suggests the idea of assassination. The sense of virtue, compassion, and other kindred principles, are alarmed, and oppose. His ruling passion is repulsed, but not enfeebled. Resigning himself to the hope of profiting by some future emergency, he renounces the idea of violence. A difficulty appears, it renews, rouses, and inflames his ambition. The principles of virtue again oppose; but by exercise and repetition they are for a time enfeebled: they excite no abhorrence; he reflects, with composure, on his design. But, in reflecting, the apprehension of danger, and the fear of retribution alarm him. He abandons his purpose, is deemed irresolute: not less innocent for not daring to execute what he dares to desire, he is charged with cowardice: impatient of charge, and indignant; harrassed by fear, by the consciousness of guilt, and by humanity struggling to resume her influence, he rushes headlong to his bane. ²

After the murder the opposing principles rise to power again, being now without an adversary, they begin their long history of torment to his soul until his death; and his sensibility, instead of softening his heart, leads him to deeds of atrocious cruelty, by exaggerating to him the indignation of others and consequently his own fears.

There is, no doubt, a certain measure of truth in this, but it is truth too much simplified, and quite often, in spite of the ruling passion language, the treatment of

². Ibid., p.56.
Macbeth's problem is far too superficial, and in a way far too objective, to produce sound and sympathetic criticism. Apart from fundamental shortcomings like his complete blindness to the informing vision of the whole tragedy, and his total neglect of the poetry, there is the failure, all too common in that age, to realize the vital dramatic relation of the character to the whole context. The tragic irony of certain situations as well as the supreme irony of the whole as a tragedy, for instance, is never felt, and, of consequence, the element of the supernatural is simply explained away. The tragedy of Macbeth lies only in the mind of Macbeth. But this, in accordance with the psychology of the time, is viewed passively as the battleground of tremendous contending forces, though inside him, yet beyond his power; and the concluding remark of the essay, which incidentally is, perhaps, the best of his analytical essays, that 'the formation of our characters depends considerably upon ourselves, for we may improve, or vitiate every principle we receive from nature,' comes upon us by surprise.

The ruling passion explains to Richardson all the main characters of Shakespeare. In Hamlet he finds it in 'an exquisite sense of virtue, of moral beauty and turpitude;' it is 'the supreme and governing power of his constitution.'

2. Ibid., p.68.
3. Ibid., p.76.
4. Ibid., p.104.
which 'conducts, excites, justifies his passions;' and
'determines him again to examine his evidence, or endeavour,
by additional circumstances, to have it strengthened.' In
the character of Jaques he tries to prove, in a circuitous
manner, that the ruling principle is 'extreme sensibility';
in Imogen it is 'love ratified by wedlock;' and in Lady Anne
in Richard III it is vanity. In Falstaff we have 'the
desire of gratifying the grosser and lower appetites,' to
which his other passions are 'not only subordinate but sub-
servient.' Lear is the 'man of mere sensibility.' Mere
sensibility, unguided by reflection, leads to 'extravagant
or outrageous excess', caprice, instability and irresolution;
it explains everything that his character reveals, even his
madness. In fact, in the light of this explanation
Richardson finds in Lear's loss of mind a matter of psycho-
logical necessity:

Shakespeare could not avoid making Lear distracted.
Other poets exhibit madness, because they choose it,
or for the sake of variety, or to deepen the distress;
but Shakespeare has exhibited the madness of Lear, as
the natural effect of such suffering on such a charac-
ter. It was an event in the progress of Lear's mind,
driven by such feelings, desires, and passions, as the
poet ascribes to him as could not be avoided. 6

a conclusion more consistent with his passive psychology

5. Ibid, p.293.
than what we have seen in his treatment of Macbeth. As for Timon, the ruling passion in his conduct is 'the love of distinction.'

The same rationalistic view of character, which for the sake of clarity, tends to reduce its complex features to one main keystone, also conceives of human action as a close chain of causes and effects. In order to evade the embarrassing problem of the irrational in life, man's fate is conceived rather as the application of the law of causality which exists in the physical world. The effect of that upon drama and dramatic criticism reveals itself in the stress laid on motivation. The critic hunts for motives behind every action whenever they are likely to be found, and if he does not find any obvious ones he looks for those that are hidden and the 'policies not avowed.' For instance, in the Gentleman's Magazine we find a criticism of The Tempest in which Antonio's absence of motive is lamented:

The character of Antonio is that of an ambitious, perfidious, aspiring prince, thoroughly abandoned in principles, who scruples nothing to carry his point, but breaks through all the ties of nature and conscience to obtain it. Thus far, the character appears natural, and such as every court in every age could abundantly furnish: but, when he incites Sebastian to the murder of his brother, without proposing to himself any advantage from Alonso's death, he then, in my opinion, acts contrary to the actual course of nature, since there is no adequate motive to induce him to hold such a conduct ... The poet would, I think, have given him a proper inducement, had he represented him as bargaining with Sebastian for the abolishing of the tribute which Milan

paid to Naples, by way of reward for his notable piece of advice, and for the part which he himself offered to take in carrying it into execution. 1

Similarly Richardson finds 'no sufficient motive' for the behaviour of Buckingham in Richard III. Lord John Chedworth complains of the absence of 'sufficient motives' for Iago's 'excess of malignity', and concludes that the character 'must have been either mismanaged or neglected by the poet.' The reductio ad absurdum of this attitude is Rymer's suggestion that, in order to make Desdemona's marriage probable, Shakespeare should have mentioned that 'some way, or other, a Black-amoor Woman had been her Nurse, and suckled her: Or that once, upon a time, some Virtuoso had transfus'd into her Veins the Blood of a black Sheep.' 4 Almost at the close of the century Richard Hole claims that 'Iago's character before the play had been good, that Iago had reason to believe that Othello had seduced Emilia, that he suspected Cassio of the same crime and was jealous of Cassio's promotion' - only to make his villainy wholly justifiable.

Such criticism makes us recall Morgann's wise remark, which, however, Morgann himself does not strictly follow, that 'we are by no means so rational in all points as we could wish.'

4. Thomas Rymer, A Short View of Tragedy, p. 151.
5. See R.W.Daboll, The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry, p. 141. Cf. Francis Gentleman's remark in Bell's Edition of Shakespeare, i, p. 178: 'the author has made Iago very properly advert to his jealous suspicions of the Moor, as a leading motive for his villainous revenge.'
It is the isolation of character from its dramatic context, which causes critics to discuss its conduct before the play begins. Morgann has done with Falstaff what Richard Hole does with Iago; only we tend to forgive him because he has done it in a more subtle manner and expressed himself in more eloquent prose. Of course, Morgann has his virtues as a critic, and it is precisely because of his virtues that he, in fact, presents a peculiarly sad case in the history of Shakespearean criticism. Starting from the opposite premise that in dramatic composition the impression is the fact, Morgann finds less difficulty than any other critic of his time in reconciling his feeling with his judgment. Unprejudiced by any rigid a priori criteria, he is able to say of Shakespeare's drama:

All the incidents, all the parts, look like chance, whilst we feel, and are sensible that the whole is design. 1

He attacks the rational view; yet he still shares some of its assumptions. Although he realizes the distinction between a dramatic character and a historic one:

The reader will very easily apprehend that a character, which we might wholly disapprove of, considered as existing in human life, may yet be thrown on the stage into certain peculiar situations, and be compressed by external influences into such temporary appearances, as may render such character for a time highly acceptable and entertaining. 3

2. Ibid., p.221.
3. Ibid., p.290. Davies is sometimes conscious of the dramatic exigencies of character: 'perhaps Caesar was to be lessened in order to aggrandize Brutus,' Dramatic Miscellanies, vol.ii, p.198, but he is very dimly so; besides in the bulk of his criticism he is not different from the others.
he still treats Falstaff as a historic being. It is a fine, sympathetic treatment, to be sure, embodying a fresher vision of Shakespeare than any we encounter in the eighteenth century - but it is a treatment based on the inadequate assumption that character is a strict imitation, and that, abstracted from the formal pattern which alone gives it life, it could be treated as a human being. Because of the psychological truth of Shakespeare's characters, because of the 'roundness and integrity of his forms' Morgann sets out to 'account for their conduct from latent motives and from policies not avowed,' and therefore spends so much labour speculating on the past of Sir John Falstaff, and on what Shakespeare does not intend to show us in his drama. Had Morgann concentrated more on the 'relation' of character rather than on its 'independence', to use his own terms, we would probably have had a uniformly valuable piece of Shakespearean criticism. As it stands, his essay contains largely hints and suggestions of what could have been.

The fascinating psychological analysis of Shakespeare's characters has diverted the attention of the critics from the other constituent parts of drama. Character soon became the conditio sine qua non of drama. Whately writes:

2. Loc. Cit.
Variety and truth of character are indispensably necessary to all both to comedy and to tragedy, and none of them deserves their name any further than this merit belongs to them.  

The 'unity of character', as it was termed in the latter part of the century, which was held to be the prerogative of the moderns, has usurped the place of the old unities in the writings of the critics. Character drawing is now considered to require 'the highest exertion of poetical talents.' Both in theory and in practice the criticism of Shakespeare's characters has become naturally the highest object of Shakespearean criticism. George Colman, for instance, declares that character is the 'most essential Part of the Drama.' William Richardson claims

2. See, for instance, a review of a comedy by Mrs. Sheridan called The Discovery in the Theatrical Review, 1st March, 1763, p.123: 'In respect to the three great unities, recommended by the antients, Mrs. Sheridan has been sufficiently conformable, and as to the additional one of the moderns, that of unity of character, we have already given a very favourable opinion.' Mrs. Griffith, apparently not well read in the periodical literature of the time, writes in her book (Op.Cit., p.26) that although Shakespeare 'sports' often with the three unities of Aristotle, time, place and action, he seldom sins against a fourth, which I am surprised the critics have not added, as being worth them all - namely, that of Character, the tenor of which is generally preserved from first to last in all his works.'
that the 'two essential powers of dramatic invention', which are to be found in Shakespeare, are 'that of forming characters, and that of imitating, in their natural expressions, the passions and affections of which they are composed.' Thomas Whately considers character criticism to be 'more worthy of attention than the common topics of discussion'.

5. The Explicit Moral

If Shakespeare's characters were treated as human beings, then it was only natural to discuss their actions with reference to moral standards, particularly in the age of the great moralists. The moral approach to literature is not new either to English criticism in that period, or, for that matter to European criticism. But the moral element in criticism gained peculiar importance in eighteenth century England. Throughout this long period the stress on morality in dramatic criticism is too pronounced to be illustrated at length here. In the early part of the eighteenth century, as a result of the still fresh battle over the immorality of the stage of which Collier was as much a cause as a symptom, the naive doctrine that the stage provides us with examples of virtue to imitate in our lives was again and again asserted especially in the periodicals of the time. For example, in the Universal Spectator 1 we read that

Tis not doubted that the Stage, well regulated, is of considerable service to the Publick: A good Play, finely acted, leaves upon the Mind a strong Bias towards whatever appears worthy of our Imitation, as well as a lasting Aversion for whatever is shewn to be ridiculous or detestable.

and in another periodical we are told that drama is 'to soften the Rigours of Morality and give a smile to the Face of Virtue.'

1. No. 218, (9 Dec., 1732).
From the very beginning the question of poetic justice occupied the minds of critics, and it remained an object of discussion throughout the century. Shakespeare was censured for failing to observe it, not only by Dennis or Johnson, but by Mrs. Montagu and Gentleman. Shakespeare's plays were sometimes badly mutilated in order to square up with prevalent moral doctrine and promote the cause of virtue. Even Morgan tried to find in the final rejection of Falstaff an act of poetic justice. And although in his time Addison formed a single exception in attacking this doctrine, and in preferring Shakespeare's Lear to Tate's version of it, he still approached Shakespeare from the point of view of the moralist, and he went to his plays for moral edification. In the Tatler he wrote that 'This admirable author seems to have had his mind thoroughly seasoned with religion, as is evident by many passages in his Plays.' In fact, we have been shown by a recent scholar that although Addison attacked poetic justice and Dennis defended it, yet the two critics only 'quarrelled over words', for they both 'agreed that tragedy is a vehicle of morality and that the

1. It is true that when he came to write the life of Addison, Johnson altered his views on poetic justice. Against the observation of it he introduced the naturalistic argument that 'wickedness often prospers in real life,' and that poetry aims at imitating reality. (Lives of the Poets, E.L., i, p.356). But it is safe to say that in his approach to literature Johnson remained a severe moralist who could only acknowledge an explicit moral.

2. One of the self-imposed limitations of this essay is that it does not attempt any discussion of the altered versions of Shakespeare's plays - a subject, however, which may be peculiarly revealing on this point.

3. The Spectator, No.40. 4. The Tatler, No.111.
catastrophe of a tragedy should administer justice at least
to all of the important characters in the plays.' And
not only minor critics like Gildon, but no less a mind than
Johnson preferred Tate's version. The latter, which was to
be slightly modified later by Garrick, held sway throughout
the century, in fact until 1823. The concern of the
average eighteenth century reader over poetic justice is an
expression of an attitude of mind which wanted the moral in
a work to be explicitly stated. Upton was perhaps truly
representative in his remark that 'the moral should shine
perspicuous in whatever aims at the sublime.'

The critics' craving for an explicit moral in drama is
clearly seen in their interpretation of Shakespeare's plays.
To Shaftesbury Hamlet 'is almost one continued moral: a
series of deep reflections drawn from one mouth, upon one
single accident and calamity.' In a letter on Falstaff
which appeared in The Weekly Register (1731) we find a little
character portrait drawn mainly to point a moral to 'the
modern Pretenders to Patriotism': 'he (in his final disgrace)
forewarns them of the same Fate.' In the Gentleman's Magazine
in 1748 a critic praises Shakespeare for being unequalled
in his 'tendency to promote the cause of virtue, which is

1. See Edward Niles Hooker's notes to his edition of The
5. The Weekly Register, No.59, (May 29, 1731).
essential to epic and dramatic poetry. 'In him,' he writes, we find the most instructive lessons, enforced with all the art imaginable. For instance, in King Lear, who does not at once see the fatal consequences of filial ingratitude, and that great error of parents, who resign their power and trust to their children, for support in the decline of life, upon so slender a foundation as flattering promises, and extravagant professions of affection and duty? In Othello the calamitous effects of Jealousy are represented; in Richard III and several others, those of Ambition; Measure for Measure contains an argument for the exercise of compassion towards offenders, the most powerful that can be thought of, the frailty of human nature ... But, above all, Macbeth teaches us a lesson the most important, namely, the fascinating power and insensible progress of vice ... A precept more interesting, or of greater importance than this story furnishes, surely never was inculcated by any moral or dramatic writer.

In the following month the same periodical published an article in which Shakespeare is claimed to have been 'perfectly skilled in the moral science,' and consequently he knew 'how to delineate so resplendent a form as virtue.'

If we turn from periodical and casual criticism, of which only a few examples are given, to the major and more specific writings, we shall still find the same way of approaching Shakespearean drama. Joseph Warton, for instance, tries to make Ariel serve a moral purpose. Dr. Johnson, despite his sympathetic portrait of Falstaff, writes:

The moral to be drawn from this representation is that no man is more dangerous than he that, with a will to corrupt, hath the power to please; and that neither wit nor honesty ought to think themselves safe with such a companion, when they see Henry seduced by Falstaff.

and in his note on *Macbeth* he says that in this play 'the danger of ambition is well described.' He considers it Shakespeare's first fault that he 'sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose.' He condemns him because 'his precepts and axioms drop casually from him.' In other words, Shakespeare is blamed for not explicitly stating his moral. With the exception of very few individuals like Davies and only in odd remarks scattered in their writings, the eighteenth century critics generally could not conceive that literature can have a moral effect without professing an obvious moral purpose, without employing the crude machinery of morality. And Davies himself defends Shakespeare against Johnson on the issue of his deliberate morality:

Of all the dramatic authors, ancient and modern, Shakespeare is the most moral. Dr. Johnson, in his admirable preface to our author, is of opinion, that his frequent moralizing did not proceed from premeditated intention or design. I should imagine that it must have formed one part of his general plan in the writing of his dramas, otherwise he could not have adopted that mode of writing.

2. Davies, in his essay on Richard II, (*Dramatic Miscellanies,* vol. 1, pp. 144 ff.) replies to Hume's assertion that 'there is scarce any mention of civil liberty' in Shakespeare's History Plays: 'Tragedy owes its rise to the passions; and though it may involve, as it ought, a topic in which all mankind are intimately concerned, yet by experience we find those plays, which are most fraught with sentiments in favour of public liberty, are least admired and followed. How often is Cato acted? What is become of Dennis's Liberty asserted? ... But Hume wanted to prove, from Shakespeare, that in the reign of Elizabeth, the common rights of subjects were no object of public discussion. But is not the scene between Richard and York (Act 2, Sc. 1) more interesting
In his essay on *King Lear* he is inclined to believe in the doctrine of poetic justice, and he therefore prefers Tate's happy ending, though, to be fair to Davies, one has to mention that the grounds of his preference are as much psychological as moral:

Who could possibly think of depriving an audience, almost exhausted with feelings of so many terrible scenes, of the inexpressible delight which they enjoyed when the old King in rapture cries out—

Old Lear shall be a king again. 1

If the function of drama is 'the effecting of certain moral purposes, by the representation of a fable,' then the critic's first job is to hunt for the moral in every play, lay his finger on it and bring it forward to the attention of the reader. Francis Gentleman writes that 'it is necessary to enquire for the moral, without which no dramatic piece can have intrinsic worth.' 3 Shakespeare is hailed as a great moral philosopher, since almost all his

Footnote 2 continued from page 104, and footnote 3.

to an audience than all the laboured arguments of political oratory? ... Warm expostulations of this kind are of the very essence of tragic dialogue; but a train of sentiments upon civil liberty is fitter for a discourse than a play.'


2. Mrs. Montagu, *op.cit.*, p.xv. She tries to prove (pp. 6-7) that of the two greatest forms of poetry, the epic and tragedy, the latter is the more 'happily constituted for the purpose' of pointing a moral.

plays could yield the required moral. Mrs. Montagu com-
plains that 'We are apt to consider Shakespeare only as a
poet, but he is certainly one of the greatest moral philo-
sophers that ever lived.' 1 'Admirable as he is to be re-
garded as a poet,' Kenrick writes, 'there is also another
light in which he is seldom presented to us, tho' he
appears in it, if possible, to still greater advantage.
This is that of a moral philosopher.' 2 The moral Gentle-
man can deduce from Hamlet is that 'murder cannot lie hid,
and that conscience ever makes a coward of guilt.' 3 A
similar moral the author of the Miscellaneous Observations
on the Tragedy of Hamlet finds in the play:

    Though a Villain may for a Time escape Justice, and
    enjoy the Fruits of his Wickedness, yet divine
    Providence will at length overtake him in the Height
    of his Career, and bring him to condign Punishment. 4

Although he disapproves of the supernatural in Macbeth,
for 'moral tendency is the first great indispensable
merit of any piece written for the stage,' Gentleman
still finds that it contains a moral:

    The moral is the same as that of Richard III, shewing
    that a guilty conscience is a constant tormentor, and
    that a royal, as well as a private murderer, is ob-
    noxious to punishment. 5

4. Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Hamlet,
    (Lond., 1752), p.10.
6. Ibid., i, p.106.
Othello has an excellent moral which it 'forceably inculcates all along'; it shows the fatal effects of jealousy and 'the very dangerous consequences of indulging, even upon the most probable proofs, such pernicious and ungovernable prejudices in the human heart.' 1 In Romeo and Juliet he finds 'some very instructive lessons' such as the danger of disobedience in children and of family quarrels. Kemble rejects Whately's distinction between Macbeth and Richard the Third on the point of personal courage, because if upon analysis it can be proved that Macbeth possesses that quality, 'the sentiments of the hero will more effectively serve ethics.' 2

Hamlet's behaviour has been found by many to be extremely immoral. Dr. Johnson condemns it. Akenside thinks that it is 'unnatural and indefensible' unless we regard him as 'a young man whose intellects were in some degree impaired by his own misfortunes.' 5 Steevens is convinced that he does not deserve 'the pity of the audience,' for he 'cannot be said to have pursued his ends by very warrantable means,' and he therefore concludes that 'if the poet when he sacrificed him at last, meant to have enforced such a moral it is not the worst that can be deduced from the play.' 6 Richardson, who admits that he is primarily a moralist, never fails to

2. Ibid, i, p.188
5. Loc.Cit.
point a moral at the end of his sophisticated analysis of
every character. He concludes his essay on Macbeth by warning
against the 'fatal consequences of indulging a ruling pas-
sion.' The instruction Hamlet gives us is that:

Persons formed like Hamlet, should retire, or keep
aloof from situations of difficulty and contention;
or endeavour, if they are forced to contend, to brace
their minds, and acquire such vigour and determination
of spirit as shall arm them against malignity. 2

Of Falstaff he writes:

The mean sensualist, incapable of honourable and
worthy thoughts, is irretrievably lost; totally,
and for ever depraved. An important and awful lesson. 3

Richardson concludes his study of Shakespeare's char-
acters with the remark that 'the two sciences of ethics and
criticism appear to be intimately and very naturally con-
ected.' 4 Indeed they would be with the 'rational'
critics. Dr. Johnson's dictum that 'he that thinks reason-
ably must think morally' is peculiarly telling. The moral
approach to poetry and drama in this period is closely re-
lated to the rational view of life. The point of poetic
justice which is one manifestation of that approach, like
that of motivation, is largely an outcome of the late
seventeenth and the early eighteenth century belief in reason.

2. Ibid., p.120.
3. Ibid., p.286.
4. Ibid., p.436.
reasonable person can refuse Tragedy to be a moral
piece of composition.'
The two points actually meet in a writer like Upton when he says that 'Whenever a human creature is made to deviate from what is fair and good, the poet is unpardonable if he does not shew the motives which led him astray.' Of course, the doctrine of poetic justice does not date as late as the eighteenth century in England. The germ of it could be found in both Sidney and Ben Jonson, although significantly enough it was 'given its complete expression' by Rymer, who in turn imported it from the French. But it was peculiarly congenial to the intellectual and moral temper of the time. The optimistic Weltanschaung which found a supreme order, achieved by a rational God, in the universe, the moral no less than the physical, demanded that drama should show such an order in its ideal form.

If whatever is is right, then

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All Nature is but Art unknown to thee,
All Chance Direction, which thou canst not see;
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and the poet's duty is to bring forth the effect, not of chance, but of direction, not of partial evil, but of universal good. Though the good may fail to prosper and the bad may pass unpunished in this world, the poet should see to it that his work must reveal only the design of the rational Creator. In drama the good must be rewarded in the end, and the bad must meet with the most condign punishment.

'Tis observable, that both in a Poetical Fiction and an Historical Relation, those Events are the most entertaining, the most surprizing, and the most wonderful, in which Providence most plainly appears ... The Good must never fail to prosper, and the Bad must be always punish'd; Otherwise the Incidents, and particularly the Catastrophe which is the grand Incident, are liable to be imputed rather to Chance, than to Almighty Conduct and to Sovereign Justice. The want of this impartial Distribution of Justice makes the Coriolanus of Shakespeare to be without Moral. 1

The fate of characters should be worked out with almost mathematical precision; it should follow as closely as possible the law of causality as it is realized in the physical universe. To preserve the order enacted by Providence, man must bring about his own fate through his own action. It is therefore significant that Mrs. Griffith, the moralist, praises excessively Iago's words to Roderigo:

'Tis in ourselves that we are thus, or thus describing them as containing 'both sound philosophy and useful admonition.' 2

Drama and poetry in the rational view should therefore express universal truths, and dramatic poetry is considered simply a very convenient medium for instruction. Its value becomes of consequence referential. What decides the merit or demerit of a play is whether or not it contains a good moral lesson. The result of such a view is a dangerous disregard of the formal element in criticism. Kemble, accordingly, opens his essay with the following

Plays are designed, by the joint powers of precept and example, to have a good influence on the lives of men. Enquiries into the conduct of fable in the drama were useless to this end. The regular, or irregular, disposition of parts in a play is an artificial praise, or blame, that can contribute nothing to the improvement, or depravation of the mind; for the cause of morality is promoted only, when, by a catastrophe resulting from principles natural to agents, who produce it, we are taught to love virtue, and abhor vice. 1

The emphasis on content and subject matter as separate from form or technique which we find alongside the view that Shakespeare is a moral philosopher is, therefore, not due to chance. That emphasis on subject matter was not confined to Shakespearean criticism: it could be felt in other branches of criticism as well. It was enforced by the eighteenth century theory of the sublime as embodying chiefly an element of terror, and the naive practice of introducing subjects of terror in poetry in order to produce a sublime effect. The critical view that concentrates on the content of art has become quite prevalent by the end of the century. If Shakespearean drama is considered only as a medium for preaching a moral, then alongside with technique, the poetry is relegated to a very secondary place. It becomes only an 'embellishment'; something to sugar the pill, as it were, and to endow the stern moral lesson with a more pleasing shape.

1. *Macbeth Reconsidered*, p.3.
The eighteenth century demand for explicit moral teaching becomes absurd in a person like Mrs. Griffith, as it is more intensified, crude and mechanical. But it is none the less typical of the general craving in the other critics. Johnson had said that from Shakespeare's works may be collected a 'system of civil and economical prudence,' and Kenrick, in his Introduction to the School of Shakespeare, developed Mrs. Montagu's remark that Shakespeare is 'the greatest philosopher that ever lived,' saying that his works contain 'a practical system of ethics.' Mrs. Griffith, with these remarks apparently in mind, and Mrs. Montagu as an example to follow, set out to explore this point. She did not attempt any reconstruction of that system of ethics, but instead she searched for morals; and whenever a play did not yield easily a moral to her, she

1. The Morality of Shakespeare, p.ix: 'I have ventured to assume the task of placing his Ethic merits in a more conspicuous point of view, than they have hitherto been presented to the Public.' It may be argued that Mrs. Griffith's book is without any worth as a critical work on Shakespeare, and, indeed, it is; but, as an event in the history of Shakespearean criticism it is very significant. It only accentuates an element that has always existed in the more valuable criticism of the period. The favourable reviews with which the book met corroborates our point. See R.W. Babcock, The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry, p.134, 'Mrs. Griffith received complimentary reviews in the Critical Review, (XXIX, 1775), the Monthly Review, (LIII, 1775), and the Universal Magazine honored her even more by printing her book serially.'

2. Raleigh, p.12.

simply forced one upon it. Dr. Johnson had intimated that Shakespeare is full of precepts and axioms; she therefore made it her task to collect all the passages which contain some moral precept or other, irrespective of the dramatic significance of the passages, or even of their relation to the speaker. But the way had already been paved earlier on in the century for such an approach. For example, in his remarks on Hamlet, (1710) after pointing out the morality of some of the speeches in the play which won his approval, such as 'the Advice of Laertes to his Sister', which 'is very moral and just, and full of prudential caution', and 'that of Polonius to his son; and that of the same to his Daughter', Charles Gildon provided a list of quotations from the play, which he gave under the headings: 'Virtue and Lust,' 'Ambition', 'On man', 'On Players and Plays', 'Death', 'Calumny' etc. ...

Mrs. Griffith describes her method in her essay on Measure for Measure:

I shall proceed to collect together the dispersed maxims, sentiments or morals, which may be gathered from the field at large; and which I shall arrange under their several heads, without regard to the order of the drama, as this method may best serve to give them an united force, and enable them to act more strongly on the minds of my readers.

Thus of Gloucester's words 'as flies to wanton boys are we to the gods ... etc.' she exclaims with moral indignation:

This is a most impious and unphilosophic reflection ... Such a sentiment must certainly surprise us, in Shakespeare when uttered by a person of so good a character as Gloster - It could not so offend, in the mouth of Edmund, tho' better not spoken at all. ¹

Of Iago's speech to Roderigo beginning with 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus, or thus,' she writes:

I wish that whenever my readers remember the speech, they could contrive to forget the speaker. ²

With that, together with the tendency to collect the beauties of Shakespeare, the process of disintegrating the unity of Shakespearean drama is completed.

² Ibid., p.521.
6. The Beauties of Shakespeare

The tendency to collect the beauties of Shakespeare is a complex phenomenon; but it has grown naturally out of certain prevalent ideas, attitudes and influences regarding the nature and the history of language and poetry. The great change in life which took place round the Restoration naturally enough demanded, and was accompanied by, a change in the attitude to language and poetry. One of the key words which keep on cropping up in the writings of the period, and which throw a considerable light on the mind of the age, is the word 'refinement'. Practically every writer will have us believe that a great process of purification has come over English civilization, and the idea is reiterated almost ad nauseam by the eighteenth century authors. The rise of the middle class, with its belief in the status quo, a belief sanctioned by such philosophies as Shaftesbury's which find a pre-established harmony in the universe, and consider this to be the best of all possible worlds - accounts in part for this general acceptance of the idea of refinement. Apart from other considerations, it was difficult for the eighteenth century public, just as it is difficult even now for some of us, to form any clear conception of the problem of poetry and belief. The ration-

1. See supra., pp.16-19.
alist reader, who had done with many of the tenets of the 'rude' and 'unenlightened' Elizabethan audience, often con-
founded the issue, and disposed of Shakespeare as a rude
poet simply because the framework or the raw material of
the Shakespearean drama appeared to him to conflict with
the lucid picture of the universe he could rationally con-
ceive. Further, the subtle, but intimate relation between
an age's ideas about the universe and its criteria of good
style cannot be exaggerated. Hence the patronising and
condescending attitude adopted towards Shakespeare and the
Elizabethans, which we encounter in the Shakespearean
critics, even during the last decades of the century and in
most of those who admire him this side idolatry.

Dryden, significantly enough, is one of the first to
tell us about the occurrence of this refinement. In his
'Defence of the Epilogue to the Second Part of The Conquest
of Granada' (1673) he assures us that

Wit's now arriv'd to a more high degree;
Our native language more refin'd and free. 1

The times in which Shakespeare, Jonson and Fletcher wrote, he
claims, were 'ignorant' and 'Poetry was then, if not in
its infancy among us, at least not arrived to its vigour
and maturity', implying that both the vigour and maturity,
which were lacking in Shakespeare's poetry, have been
attained in his own time. In Dryden's opinion, the inferiority

2. I., i, p.165.
of the Elizabethan to the Restoration plays lies not only in their irregular plots, but in the 'sense and language', for there is not 'a page together' in them 'which is correct in both.' And although Shakespeare 'many times has written better than any poet, in any language,' yet 'never did any author precipitate himself from such height of thought to so low expressions, as he often does.' He is, Dryden sums up in his judgment, 'the very Janus of poets; he wears almost everywhere two faces, and you have scarce begun to admire the one, ere you despise the other.' Again in his preface to Troilus and Cressida (1679) he tells us that it must be allowed to the present age, that the tongue in general is so much refined since Shakespeare's time that many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole style is so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure.

Obviously the secret of Shakespeare's style has by the time of Dryden been largely lost. In fact, Dryden's object in rewriting the Troilus and Cressida of Shakespeare is to 'refine' his language, and 'to remove that heap of rubbish under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly buried.'

Addison in his Account of the Greatest English Poets (1694) which incidentally does not so much as mention the name of Shakespeare among the greatest poets of England, says of the age of Spenser (between whom and Cowley no poet

2. Ibid., i, p. 172.
3. Ibid., i, p. 203.
figures on the roll-call of poets) that it is a 'barbarous age':

An age that yet uncultivate and rude,
Wher'er the poet's fancy led, pursued
Thro' pathless fields, and unfrequented floods,
To dens of dragons and enchanted woods.
But now the mystic tale, that pleased of yore,
Can charm an understanding age no more.  

Addison, according to Joseph Warton, declared that he had never read Spenser when he wrote these lines: he was merely echoing the opinion of the times. The lines therefore may lose their critical value as the genuine expression of an individual response to Spenser, but their representative force of the current opinion in Addison's days is enhanced. They show how low the Elizabethans have already sunk in the eyes of the understanding age, even before the seventeenth century wears off. In No. 39 of the Spectator, he expresses his opinion of the style of the Elizabethan poets. The sense he finds to be 'either trifling or very common while the language is often noble and sonorous' and when our Thoughts are great and just they are often obscured by the sounding phrases, hard metaphors, and forced expressions in which they are clothed. Shakespeare is often very faulty in this particular...

In Shakespeare 'the affectation of greatness often hurts the perspectuity of the Stile' which is 'the first and most necessary qualification in any stile.'  

admires Otway for having little pomp and 'in the language of his tragedy' he praises him beyond 'any of our English Poets'. Shaftesbury, after referring to the Elizabethan and Jacobean predilection for 'the figurative and florid manner', 'the high-sounding phrase', 'the far-fetched comparison' and the play on words, puts the issue rather bluntly before us:

It must either be confessed that in respect of the preceding age we are fallen very low in taste, or that, if we are in reality improved, the natural and simple manner which conceals and covers art is the most truly artful, and of the gentlest and best studied state. But Shaftesbury's notorious remarks about the barbarity of the Elizabethan poetry and of Shakespeare, like Hume's harsh verdict, are too well known to be quoted, and are too extremist to be truly representative. The latter, we may remind ourselves, describes both Shakespeare's genius and Jonson's art equally as 'rude'. Yet it is startling to find that by the first quarter of the eighteenth century Shakespeare's style should present to a well educated man the difficulties Dr. Atterbury describes in his letter to Pope: Dr. Atterbury writes:

I protest to you in a hundred places I cannot construe him; I do not understand him. The hardest part of Chaucer is more intelligible to me than those scenes, not merely through the faults of the edition, but the obscurity of the writer, for obscure he is, and a little (not a little) inclined now and then to bosh whatever apology you may have contrived on that

head for him ... I protest Aeschylus does not want a
comment to me more than he does. 1

Warburton, in his preface to his Edition, trying to
defend Shakespeare's style, tells us that

the public taste was in its infancy, and delighted (as
it always does during that state! in the high and
turgid; which leads the writer to disguise a vulgar
expression with hard and forced construction, whereby
the sentence frequently becomes cloudy and dark. 2

Joseph Warton finds the Augustan age in England in the
reign of Queen Anne and the last days of King William's,
'when the arts and polite literature were at their height
in this nation'; 3 and Goldsmith, in an essay entitled 'An
Account of the Augustan Age of England', expresses the same
opinion: 'It was then that taste was united with genius.' 4

Conscious of his belonging to Dryden's tradition, he writes
that 'the English tongue, as it stands at present, is
greatly his (Dryden's) debtor. He first gave it regular
harmony and discovered its latent powers.' 5 Dr. Johnson,
both in his Preface and in his Lives, again and again reminds
us of the refinement achieved after the Elizabethans. For
instance, in the Life of Denham he writes that

1. Letter of Dr. Atterbury, the Bishop of Rochester to Pope,
(Aug. 2, 1721), The Works of Alexander Pope, ed. Elwin-
Courthope (1871-99), ix, pp. 26-27.
4. The Bee, Nov. 24, 1793.
5. Loc. Cit.
Denham is deservedly considered as one of the fathers of English poetry, and quotes approvingly Prior's words that 'Denham and Waller improved our versification and Dryden perfected it'. He finds in a passage from Congreve's play, 'The Mourning Bride', 'the most poetical paragraph in English Poetry'.

Gentleman, Mrs. Montagu, Blair and other sympathetic critics of Shakespeare all found the Elizabethan taste in poetry rude and barbarous. Their ignorance of the Elizabethan literature and dramatic tradition has unquestionably not a little to do with the prevalence of such an opinion; but at the same time it is not wholly responsible for it. The gradual rise of scholarship with the advance of the century, has contributed towards the rejection of the absurd notion that the age was totally rude; but it has not made it much easier to recognize the function of some objectionable elements in the style of Shakespeare. Learned scholars, who attempted writing histories of English literature, like Thomas Warton for instance, still believed in a more or less uniform progress in English poetry towards an ideal of perfection, which began with Waller, was accelerated by

2. Gentleman, unawares, produces the conclusive counter argument to the accepted view of the barbaric taste of the Elizabethans. 'If Shakespeare's audience absolutely required such pitiful dialogue, such puppet-show wit, taste must have been in a very Gothic state truly; and the question naturally follows, how the admirers of such peddling dialogue, could relish the sublimier flights of his genius; we might as well suppose one ear to be equally delighted with a solo by Giardini, and the braying of an ass, the picking of grindstone, or whetting of a saw'. Dramatic Censor, vol.1, p.139.
Dryden, and which culminated in Pope. Dr. Johnson's Lives significantly deal primarily with the living eighteenth century poetic tradition, the tradition of Denham, Waller, Dryden and Pope. If it opens with Cowley and a general criticism of the metaphysical poets, it is only to set off that tradition against what a critic like Leavis calls 'the line of wit'. Other, and perhaps deeper, factors than the mere ignorance of the critics are therefore apparently involved.

What we now regard as one of the greatest virtues of Shakespeare's style, namely, the enormous power it reveals of thinking in images, or the amazing command of metaphor, is exactly the point on which an eighteenth century critic would vehemently disagree with us. Eighteenth century criticism did not preach the exclusion of all metaphors from poetry; but its conception of metaphor limited its possibilities and levelled out its complexity. Cartesian rationalism insisted upon clarity above any other quality. "Perspicuity," Addison tells us, "is the first and more necessary qualification of a good style." But the ideal of clarity confined the function of metaphor to illustration

1. See René Wellek: The Rise of English Literary History, (Chapel Hill, 1941), p.130: 'His [Harton's] scheme is still largely the conception of a progress from "rudeness to elegance", the idea of a uniform advance from barbarism to refinement. The first page of the Preface enlarges on the conscious pride, on the "triumph of superiority" with which we "look back on the savage condition of our ancestors," and throughout the book War ton loves to indulge in the current metaphors of light and darkness.' Also see infra, Section 7.

2. Spectator, No.295.
and embellishment. If metaphor is necessary to the main
tenor of writing then it should have an obvious illustrative
function. Otherwise, it becomes simply a means of decoration
or ennoblement, an added grace. In his Dictionary, Dr. John­
son defines metaphor as 'a simile comprised in a word,'
and simile as 'a comparison by which any thing is illustra­
ted or aggrandized.' And if imagery is conceived of as
'an ornament of diction' then it is considered 'out of
nature in Tragedy'. For 'what can be added to the sublime
of sentiment?', one critic asks. 'To the sublime of
sentiment,' which it is the business of tragedy to provide,
'images are superfluous' since sublimity arises from 'the
greatness of the idea, joined to the preciseness and sim­
plcity of the expression' and 'its native grandeur' there­
fore gives it 'greater dignity than any amplification can
bestow.' Karnes writes that 'in expressing any severe
passion that totally occupies the mind, metaphor is un­
natural.' Shakespeare's metaphors, we now know, do not
just illustrate or embellish; they are of a far more com­
plex nature. And it is failure to recognize this complexity
that has instigated the universal attacks on Shakespeare's
style in the eighteenth century.

2. Ibid., p. 100.
messes as faulty Macbeth's speech on sleep immediately
after the murder of Duncan. (Macbeth, II. ii. 35-40).
From the time of Dryden onwards the highly figurative style of Shakespeare had been a constant trouble to the critics. Dryden's complaint is that Shakespeare 'often obscures his meaning by his words and sometimes makes it unintelligible.' He, therefore, condemns Shakespeare's catachreses and his coinage of new words, which, again, reveals to us his dynamic handling of the language. Dryden hastens to explain his position:

It is not that I would explode the use of metaphors from passion, for Longinus thinks them necessary to raise it: but to use 'em at every word, to say nothing without a metaphor, a simile, an image, or description, is, I doubt, to smell a little too strongly of the buskin. 2

This criticism of Dryden is reiterated in substance by the succeeding critics, though the censure is softened by the more sympathetic ones. Shaftesbury's defence of clarity and simplicity of style and his condemnation of puns need no longer be stressed and Addison's attacks on the pun in Shakespeare, and the Elizabethan and Jacobean literature in general, are well known. Pope, Rowe, Dennis, Warburton, Upton, Johnson, Mrs. Montagu, Gentleman and Whirl and Whately—all took part in the attack, and most of them tried to defend Shakespeare by adducing this defect to the fault of the times. Dr. Johnson's praise of Shakespeare's style, we have to remind ourselves, is confined to the

1. Ker, i, p.224.
2. Ibid., i, p.224.
4. Spectator, Nos. 61, 62.
comedies:

There is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides, and where this poet seems to have gathered his comick dialogue. and where alone the sense is unhampered by 'idle conceits or contemptible equivocations', and 'reason, propriety and truth' are not clogged by 'poor and barren quibbles'.

In tragedy, however, we are told that 'whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumour, tediousness, and obscurity,' that 'trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas disappoint the attention, to which they are recommended by sonorous epithets and swelling figures.'

If the use of metaphor is either to illustrate or to embellish, then mixed metaphors are tabooed in writing, the plain meaning, which an eighteenth century reader could get from a passage without troubling himself about the metaphors, being the essential thing both writer and reader are concerned with. In a world where truth alone is the object of a writer, the value of poetry lies in the truths it sets out to convey to the reader. It is a referential view, in which the content alone matters, and the figures and metaphors, if they do not directly and explicitly illustrate, are mere trappings. Mixed metaphors by their very nature are vicious; they seem to divert the attention of the

1. Raleigh, p.20.
2. Ibid., p.23.
4. Ibid., p.22.
reader from the content to the words themselves, and, what is unpardonable, they thereby obscure the content. Even Karnes, in spite of his advocacy of the particular, is really at one with his contemporaries when it comes to metaphor. He writes, for instance, that a metaphor 'ought not to be crowded with many minute circumstances' for 'in that case it is scarcely possible to avoid obscurity,' and that 'a metaphor drawn out to any length, instead of illustrating or enlivening the principal subject, becomes disagreeable by overstraining the mind.' Of mixed metaphors he says that 'such complicated figures, instead of setting the principal subject in a strong light, involve it in a cloud.' Again he warns that 'the jumbling of different metaphors in the same sentence, beginning with one metaphor and ending with another, commonly called a mixt metaphor, ought never to be indulged.' He finds the cautionary example in the words of Hamlet's soliloquy, 'Or to take arms against a sea of troubles.' Hugh Blair, another champion of the particular at times, advises that

Particular care should be taken that the resemblance which is the foundation of the Metaphor, be clear and perspicuous, not far-fetched, nor difficult to discover. The transgression of this rule makes, what are called harsh or forced metaphors, which are always displeasing.

I. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the Poets, vol. i, pp. 29 ff. 'The force of metaphors is lost when the mind by the mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied.'
because they puzzle the reader and instead of illustrating the thought, render it perplexed and intricate.

After he expresses his approval of Johnson's 'excellent criticism' of the metaphysical poets, he goes on to condemn mixed metaphors which he calls 'one of the grossest abuses of this figure,' and produces the stock example from the soliloquy of Hamlet: 'to take arms against a sea of troubles.'

The anxiety of the critics and editors over this mixed metaphor has driven them to suggest various emendations, the object of which is to level out its complexity, and make the point of likeness rationally clear. Pope therefore reads 'siege' instead of 'sea' and Warburton has no doubt that Shakespeare wrote 'to take arms against assails of troubles.' The emendations reveal the same principle at work that made Johnson, in the famous speech for Macbeth, propose to read may for way in the lines:

my way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,
-a thing on which the best comment is that of Raleigh when he said that Johnson wanted to make him speak like Pope.

And when the original reading 'to take arms against a sea of troubles' was defended by Dodd, the argument produced was that 'propriety in his metaphors was never one of the concerns

2. Ibid., vol.1, p.365.
of our Author, an argument which contained in itself the same disparaging judgment of mixed metaphors. Some years later a certain writer in the Gentleman's Magazine attempted to defend this mixed metaphor, simply by referring to similar examples in Aeschylus, his intention being to shew from the example of a genius as bold and eccentric as his own, that the harsh constructing of a metaphor, or the jumbling of different ones in the same sentence is not peculiar to Shakespeare, nor sufficient reason to authorize an alteration of his text.

In neither case has analysis been made to show whether or not the mixed metaphor is functional, or could be justified on critical grounds. It is only the much neglected Capell whose defence of the expression can be described at all as functional. 'Sea in this place,' he writes,

does the office of an epithet, and should be considered in that light only: the arms are taken up against 'troubles' that come on like a sea, under which are comprehended — their violence, their incessant beating, and the multitude of them; making in the whole a magnificent idea, which these amendments (such as 'siege' or 'assail') deprive us of.

But Capell himself was not completely free from the limitations of the tradition to which he belonged. He still considered many of Shakespeare's puns to be 'faulty'.

In the eighteenth-century view then a metaphor, when it is allowed, should be first of all simple, and the point of

4. See infra., p.179.
likeness between the tenor and vehicle in it should be reasonably obvious. Kames therefore condemns lines like:

He cannot buckle his distempered cause
Within the belt of rule. (Macbeth, V.ii,15-16).

because 'there is no resemblance between a distempered cause and any body that can be confined with a belt,' and

Steep me in poverty to the very lips. (Othello, IV.ii,50).

because 'Poverty here must be conceived a fluid, which it resembles not in any manner.' He finds 'exceptionable' the superb hyperbole in Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's barge on the river Cydnus (Antony and Cleopatra, II.ii. 198-199) because 'it is easy,' he says, 'to figure the winds wreaking their resentment against their enemies, by destroying houses, ships, etc,' but 'to figure them love-sick, has no resemblance to them in any circumstances.' Similarly he thinks the personification of the air later in the same passage (Antony and Cleopatra, II.ii.217-219) 'carried beyond all bounds.'

And just as a poet should avoid mixed metaphors, he should not heap them on one another either, since then they 'produce a confusion somewhat of the same kind with the mixed metaphor.' Colman, who did much to revive interest in the contemporaries and immediate successors of Shakespeare,

2. Ibid., ii, pp.249 ff.
and acknowledged the beauty of their style, still censured them for their being "apt to give too much into conceits";

they often pursued an allegorical train of thought too far; and were sometimes betrayed into false, unnatural, quaint or gigantic expressions. 2

Although he granted that 'no other author, ancient or modern, has expressed himself with more ease and in a vein more truly poetical than Shakespeare,' he still claimed that in his works 'every one of these errors may be found'. The criticism has been levelled against Shakespeare from the time of Dryden onwards.  

The lines from The Tempest

The charm dissolves apace,
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle Their clearer reason.

are attacked by Blair because of their obscurity, in terms strongly reminiscent of Johnson's analysis of the discordia concors in metaphysical poetry, except that Blair's criticism is devoid of the Johnsonian critical acumen:

So many ill-assorted things are here joined, that the mind can see nothing clearly; the morning stealing upon the darkness, and at the same time melting it; the senses of men chasing fumes, ignorant fumes, and fumes that mantle. 3

We remember Pope's famous emendation of the word 'golden' into 'goary' in Macbeth's words:

Here lay Duncan;
His silver skin laced with his golden blood;

2. Loc.Cit.
the ultimate object of which is to avoid the accumulation of figures. Dr. Johnson rejects Pope's emendation, saying that 'it may easily be admitted that he who could on such an occasion talk of lacing the silver skin, would lace it with golden blood.' But, the Doctor adds, 'No emendation can be made to this line, of which every word is equally faulty, but by a general blot.'

Clarity and distinction, the virtues to which figures and mixed metaphors are inimical, are in fact the properties of abstract thought. It is therefore understandable that in the rational view the criterion of the 'general' plays such an important role. The core of Dr. Johnson's criticism of the metaphysical poets really lies in this remark:

The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to the last ramifications, by which he loses the grandeur of generality; for of the greatest things the parts are little; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous. Thus all power of description is destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration, and the force of metaphors is lost, when the mind by mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied. 2

And since 'great thoughts are always general', then the description of Dover cliff in King Lear is considered to be marred by the enumeration of such details as 'the

1. Raleigh, p.172.
3. Ibid., p.12.
choughs and crows, the sapphire-man and the fishers.

The general or the constant cannot be realized without the elimination of the accidental and the particular; it aspires towards the abstract. Descartes, who was largely responsible for this rational attitude, and who established it upon the firm basis of an inclusive system of the universe, found the beautiful in the form of the permanent and absolute. Hence the geometrical spirit that invaded both literature and criticism, and the insistence upon the abstraction of the permanent and general from the irregular and particular. Language was judged advanced or primitive according to the degree of its clarity and its capacity to express abstract ideas. The highest form of language then was the language of mathematics, and it is not without significance that some linguists thought language should always aspire in clarity and precision to the ideal of mathematics, which is the language of universal concepts par excellence. This, however, is an extreme view which would end in the negation of all artistic merit in poetry. In England, apart from solitary writers like John Wilkins, and James Harris, the plea for a universal language has not met with much approval, and Locke has shown the impossibility of a universal grammar. Yet,

1. Raleigh, p.159.
although critics did not generally pursue such an assumption to its logical extreme in some of their critical ideas and pronouncements, they did not really deviate from it. They still believed in the criterion of the general and attached much importance to grammatical correctness. It was a commonplace in eighteenth century Shakespearean criticism to complain about the grammatical inaccuracies in Shakespeare's style, and it was scarcely realized that in poetry a highly complex dramatic experience may demand a logic of its own, sometimes transcending and subjugating the logic of formal grammar. Besides, it was still held that a clear and lucid style marks an advanced stage of civilization, and the age of Queen Anne was regarded as the heyday of English letters. The patronizing attitude to Shakespeare's style, so common in the eighteenth century, was then established upon a theory of the development of language, which considered the rise from the figurative and concrete to the abstract and general an undoubted progress in the human mind.

Whatever the evaluation of that development of language might be poetically, and the critics themselves differed in that, as they moved from the general to the particular, the development itself was more or less universally accepted as a plausible hypothesis. Blackwell, Harris, Hartley, Priestly, Burke, Kames, Duff, Blair and Adam Smith—all directly or indirectly believed in it. In the more rational critics the condemnation of the figurative is naturally more
pronounced. Warburton, with his typical self-assurance, claimed that metaphors are due to obscurity of thought and to a 'rusticity of conception', and Goldsmith in an essay on Eloquence, wrote that 'it has been remarked, that the lower parts of mankind generally express themselves most figuratively.' Even late in the century Robert Potter wrote in his book, The Art of Criticism (1789), that 'a figure of speech' is only 'the adoption of one ambiguity to explain another.'

The condemnation of metaphors also arises from the distrust of emotions, so common in the early eighteenth century; for this theory of the origin of language is mainly an emotional one. Under emotional stress, primitive man expresses himself in a figurative manner, being unable to think clearly and subjugate his emotions to his reason which is the higher part of his being. Blair, for instance, gives us a highly coloured description of the process. Of men in the infancy of society, he writes:

They meet with many objects, to them new and strange; their wonder and surprise are frequently excited; and by the sudden changes of fortune occurring in their unsettled state of life, their passions are raised to the utmost, their passions have nothing to restrain them: their imagination has nothing to check it. They display themselves to one another without disguise: and converse and act in the uncovered simplicity of nature. As their feelings are strong, so their

2. The Bee, Nov. 17, 1759.
language, by itself, assumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they describe everything in strongest colours; which of course renders their speech picturesque and figurative. Figurative language owes its rise chiefly to two causes: to the want of proper names for objects, and to the influence of imagination and passion over a form of expression. Both these causes concur in the infancy of society.

And in his Observations on Tragedy, Hodson, to take another example, writes that 'the nations are the farthest they are removed from civilization, and the nearer they are to the state of nature,' 'as they are more violent in their disposition and subjects to greater extremes of passion, so their language is more bold and figurative.' In support of this view he quotes the songs of Ossian and the poetry of Persia and Arabia.

Thus figurative language, primitivism, wild imagination and passions are mysteriously bound up in the eighteenth century mind. But all these elements are in fact embodied in the idea of the 'sublime and the pathetic', and are likewise considered to be essential qualities in the concept of 'original genius'. It now becomes clear how in the eighteenth century criticism of the poetry of Shakespeare all these elements are strangely integrated. Shakespeare's poetry is described as sublime and pathetic, in contradistinction to the correct and civilized type of writing.

2. W. Hodson, Op. Cit., p. 100. It is not my intention to discuss the full implication of this conception of language, which makes of primitive people a giant race of unconscious poets. For a clear refutation of this conception, however, the reader may turn to Owen Barfield: Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning (Lond., 1928), pp. 55 ff.
The division between the two views of poetry, which
dates back to the late seventeenth century, was being inves­
tigated and clarified in the course of the eighteenth. But
sharp as that division was, the eighteenth century critics,
with their capacity for thinking in terms of pairs of oppo­
sites, somehow managed to hold both ideas at the same time,
and with much less feeling of inconsistency than we are
normally apt to imagine. Both Shakespeare and Pope existed,
each in his own right, in spite of the fact that the one
violated the rules advocated by the other. This polarity
of interest in poetry is found in Dryden, and perhaps in
a more striking manner in Addison, and the tradition was
carried on by most of the subsequent Shakespearean critics
of the eighteenth century. It was Blair himself, from whose
critical dissertation one of the above quotations comes,
who attacked Shakespeare's metaphorical style so violently.
Only a few critics, and these only in some of their criti­
cal pronouncements, did attempt some sort of synthesis,
which in reality consisted not so much in co-ordinating these
disparate views of poetry as in equating the one (with all
its faults and excellences) with genuine poetry, and rele­
gating the other to a lower rank.

Upton, following the Longinian attitude of Addison, 1

1. Addison himself relates puns to 'natural genius'. In No.
61 of the Spectator, he writes, 'The seeds of punning are
in the mind of all men, and tho' they may be subdued by
reason, reflection, and good sense, they will be very apt
to shoot up in the greatest genius, that is not broken
and cultivated by the rules of art,' and he gives a pri­
mitivistic view of its origin: 'The first race of
authors who were the great heroes in writing, were (cont.)
prefers to a 'faultless mediocrity' the 'inaccuracies of
language and the faulty sublime,' which he finds to be
'properly the error of great geniuses.' Shakespeare, he
writes:

labouring with multiplicity of sublime ideas often
gives himself no time to be delivered of them by
rules of slow endeavouring art: hence he crowds
various figures together, metaphor upon metaphor,
and runs the hazard of far-fetched expressions,
whilst intent on nobler ideas he condescends not
to grammatical niceties.  

Duff, the spokesman of the primitivist movement in criti-
cism, is more emphatic. He finds that the style of an
original genius in poetry to be 'for the most part
FIGURATIVE and METAPHORICAL.' Original genius, he says,

Indeed will frequently be apt to exceed in the use of
this ornament, by pouring forth such a blaze of ima-
gery, as to dazzle and overpower the mental sight;
the effect of which is, that his writings become
obscure, if not unintelligible to common readers.  

Webb, in his outstanding essay, believes that the principal
beauties in poetry spring 'from the force or elegance of
its images' which are 'founded on comparisons, either
direct or implied.'  

The original genius, according to
him, is one who is distinguished principally by 'the fre-
quency and degree of these beauties'; he contrasts Shake-

Footnote 1 continued from page 136.
destitute of all rules and arts of criticism; and for
that reason, tho' they excel later writers in greatness
of genius, they fall short of them in accuracy and
correctness.'

1. John Upton, Critical Observations on Shakespeare,
(Lond., 1748), p.123.
2. William Duff, Essay on Original Genius, (Lond., 1767),
pp.143 ff.
3. Daniel Webb, Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry, (Lond.,
1762), p.69.
4. Ibid., p.70.
5. Ibid., p.74.
Shakespeare's metaphors, however, appealed to those enthusiastic critics mainly on one level. In spite of Burke's revolutionary attempt at demonstrating that words do not call up distinct images in the mind, the appeal of metaphor to these critics was largely visual. The conception of poetry as a 'speaking picture' was popular in Renaissance and Elizabethan criticism; but, with the rise of sensationalist philosophy and psychology, the interest was shifted from the allegorical meaning. The stress on the visual education is marked from the very beginning of the century, and it has been considered by a modern critic 'one of the consequences of the Cartesian psychology with its high valuation of sight.' Its manifestations, however,

3. The outstanding exception here is Webb, On.Cit., p.79: 'Great images seem to me, to bear some resemblance to those drawings of the Capital Painters, in which, though the parts are rather hinted than made out, yet the ideas are complete; they both give a delightful exercise to our minds, in continuing and enlarging the design.' He then comments on an example from the Queen's speech to Hamlet:
   Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off. 'This metaphor seems, at first, to reach no farther than the gloominess of Hamlet's dress; but if our ideas go along with the poet's, we shall extend it to the melancholy of his mind.' The comparison drawn from painting is, however, significant.
are easy to perceive throughout the century. The visual element in Addison's influential papers on The Pleasures of the Imagination is very striking. 'By the pleasures of the imagination,' he writes, 'I mean only such pleasures as arise originally from sight.' He divides these into primary and secondary pleasures. The primary pleasures 'entirely proceed from the objects as are before our eyes', and the secondary pleasures 'flow from the ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious.'

The descriptive, we know, was a major kind in eighteenth century poetry. And Spenser, no less than Shakespeare, was praised by the eighteenth century critics for his 'painter-like genius'. John Hughes thought that in Spenser 'the Embellishments of Description are rich and lavish ... beyond any comparison' and that 'this is the most striking part of Poetry, especially to young Readers'; Samuel Richardson admired his 'invention', 'painting' and colouring', and Aaron Hill 'such Descriptions as the Image of Death.'

While Shakespeare's Lear was being altered to suit the contemporary taste of the public, the omission on the grounds

2. Ibid. The influence of Locke & Hobbes here is easily.
of 'utter improbability' of Gloucester's leap from Dover Cliff was deemed necessary by the critic, but it was thought that the description of the cliff itself should be retained. Pope himself appended to his Edition of Shakespeare a separate index to the 'Descriptions or Images' that occur in the plays.

Gray, who deliberately tried to write a highly metaphorical type of poetry, defended Shakespeare's language and pointed out that 'it is one of his principal beauties', and the reason he adduced for his judgment was that 'every word in him is a picture.' 2 Kames after him condemned the abstract style in favour of the concrete and particular;

Abstract or general terms have no good effect in any composition for amusement; because it is only of particular objects that images can be formed. Shakespeare's style in that respect is excellent: every article in his descriptions is particular, as in nature. 3

But it was Joseph Warton and Blair, who insisted that images and figures should be particular, although the latter, notwithstanding his excessive praise in this respect of Ossian poems, strangely enough often condemned Shakespeare for overloading his style with figures. When writing on

Shakespeare's style he seemed to have forgotten his words in the 'Dissertation'.

No description that rests in generals can possibly be good; it can convey no lively idea, for it is of particulars only that we have a distinct conception. 1

But Blair, like many others, combined, the two attitudes at one and the same time. In the sentence immediately following this quotation he expressed the traditional belief in decorum: 'No strong imagination', he said, 'dwells long upon any one particular; or heaps together a mass of trivial ones.' Warton was far more emphatic and consistent in his view of the particular. 2 Throughout his Essay on Pope he used it constantly as a criterion of poetic judgment. He condemned Pope's Pastorals and praised The Seasons of Thomson by reference to this standard. 'All the views and prospects in Homer appear fully and perfectly to the eye.' Shakespeare and Homer are to him the two great poets who support his critical view:

What distinguishes Homer and Shakespeare from all other poets, is, that they do not give their readers general ideas; 4

2. See his Essay on Pope, vol.ii, pp.152-168, where he discusses the 'particular' and defends it against the upholders of the theory of the general. He ends his discussion with the remark, 'I have dwelt the longer on this subject, because I think I can perceive many symptoms, even among writers of eminence, of departing from these true, and lively, and minute representations of nature, and of dwelling in generalities.' I presume Warton had Dr. Johnson, amongst others, in mind when he wrote this.
4. Ibid., vol.1, p.318.
Amongst the English poets, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, are the three poets who exhibit perfectly the power to call up distinct images. The grouping of these three poets is interesting. It is these three poets whom Warton, in the Dedication to Dr. Young and throughout the Essay, describes as the 'only three sublime and pathetic' poets in English.

In his division of the English poets, into four classes and degrees, Joseph Warton places the sublime and pathetic poets in the first class, and relegates the Drydens and Popes to the second. He even claims that 'the sublime and pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poetry', and excludes from the category of genuine poetry the moral, the didactic, and satiric. Yet in Warton's view the sublime is still inevitably associated with the traditional faults. If a poet's chief force lies in 'the warmth and vigour of imagination', he will be distinguished by his 'fanciful luxurious descriptions, the colouring of which will, perhaps, be too rich and glowing;' but he will also be 'hurried into obscurity or turgidity, and a false grandeur of diction.' The faults of Shakespeare who is the sublime and pathetic poet are then faults in correctness.

2. Ibid., p.vii.
3. Ibid., p.vi.
4. Ibid., vol.i, p.255.
5. Ibid., vol.i, p.99.
Even the sympathetic author of *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Hamlet* believed that Shakespeare 'did not bring Tragedy to the utmost Perfection.'

The ideal of correctness which was so widely held by the rational neo-classicists particularly in the beginning of the century, was as much the result of the principle of the general (what oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd) as the product of refinement in manners. Correctness in poetry was the expression of an order of civilization which believed in 'good form'. When Dryden tells us that in his time language has become 'more refined and free', the word 'refined' itself defines in part the nature of the improvement we are asked to believe, and points to one angle from which the problem of language was then approached. The improvement is as much social as it is rational, and it is in the direction of an urbane kind of civilization. One has only to glance at the contents of the collected works of either Denham, Waller, Dryden or Dryden's followers, to realize how much social and occasional verse bulks in their creative output. Dryden himself illustrates the improvement that has taken place in the English language by the fact that, in their conversation, the ladies and gentlemen of his time 'speak more wit' than the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets have been able to write.

Walsh's advice to Pope was that the only way still left open for him in order to excel his predecessors was that of correctness. And Pope himself versified the satires of Donne who was considered to be 'more rough and rugged than any of his age', both in versification and diction. Prior before him had done the same with the ballad of Nut-brown Maid in his Henry and Emma, and Dryden had reworked the theme of Troilus and Cressida. In the numerous adaptations of Shakespeare's plays the original text was mangled in order that, not only the subject and theme might tally with the current taste of the public, but also the diction might suit the critical criteria of the times. The number of Elizabethan texts that were 'improved' in the eighteenth century is striking and the vogue for 'refining' continued well until the end of the century.

The process of refinement of necessity limited the use of the language. Diction, we know, had to conform to a certain code parallel to that of manners; and the eighteenth century poetry reveals to us the degree in which decorum was meticulously observed. Shakespeare (and to a lesser degree the Elizabethan poets in general) who handled the English language dynamically as if he were the first poet to use it, and to whom the expressiveness of a word was what

mattered most, naturally did not fulfill the requirements of eighteenth century decorum. His diction did not respect the class distinction in words, upon which the eighteenth century poets and critics insisted so much. Hence we find Dr. Johnson writing that before the time of Dryden there was no poetical distinction, no system of words at once refined from the coarseness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From these sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions, or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things.

His famous remarks on Lady Macbeth's invocation to the night 'Some thick night ... Act. I, Sc. v', (which incidentally he gives to Macbeth) are made in strict conformity with this principle of decorum. The passage on the whole, Johnson admires: 'In it,' he says, 'is exerted all the force of poetry'; but his consciousness of the socially mean or trivial association of particular words mars his enjoyment:

What can be more dreadful than to implore the presence of night, invested, not in common obscurity, but in the smoke of hell? Yet the efficacy of this invocation is destroyed by the insertion of an epithet now seldom heard but in the stable, and dun night may come and go without any other notice than contempt.

2. Rambler, No. 168.
Similarly the word 'knife' being the name of 'an instrument used by butchers and cooks in the meanest employments', weakens the sentiment and arouses 'aversion rather than terror'. Johnson realizes 'the energy of the sentiment', but can hardly 'check his risibility' at the words Heaven 'peeping through a blanket'. How the energy of sentiment can be separated from the words it is not easy to see; but the eighteenth century critics cared more for things than words, for a rather thin content abstracted from expression. Before Johnson Pope had, in his edition of Shakespeare, silently degraded to footnotes several lines which obviously contain mean images. For instance, in Macbeth, lines like 'sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,' or 'What, all my pretty chickens and their dam At one fell swoop' do not appear in the text.  

Francis Gentleman echoes Johnson's censure on this passage from Macbeth, both in The Dramatic Censor, where he writes, 'We must offer some doubt whether the word "blanket of the dark", does not convey a low and improper idea,' and in Bell's Edition of Shakespeare. He prefers to read 'curtain' for 'blanket', and says it 'is evidently better'. He carries on the same tradition in his criticism of Macbeth's

3. Ibid., vol.1, p.19, Footnote.
soliloquy (Act. I, Sc. 7): 'To embody intention, that ambition may be a spur to prick its side, leans towards the burlesque.' He therefore suggests ending the speech at the words 'the deep damnation of his taking off.' Like all eighteenth century critics, from Dryden to Kames, Johnson, Whately and Mrs. Montagu, he also fails to understand the use of rhetoric in Shakespearean drama. The tradition which preaches rationality and simplicity naturally finds in the rhetorical speeches of Shakespeare mere sound and fury. He therefore condemns, after the example of Rymer, for instance, Othello's speech: 'Whip me ye devils ...' for being bombastic.

The eighteenth century critical attitude which regarded Shakespeare as an incorrect poet emphasized the necessity of admiring his 'beauties and heights without falling after him into his carelessness.' This naturally enough led to the separation of these beauties from the 'false sublime'. Rowe, for instance, enumerated the beauties of The Tempest; and Pope, in his edition, marked what he considered to be 'the most shining passages' by comma's in the margin, and prefixed a star to a scene if the whole of it happened to conform to his idea of beautiful poetry. In Hamlet, there is not one single scene marked with a star, and in Othello only the third scene of the third act is chosen; but a play

2. Ker, i, p. 176.
like Macbeth fared much better. With the influence of Longinus in the ascendant, it was not unnatural that Shakespeare came to be judged by his beauties rather than his faults, and that his beauties should be collected together. This could be seen not only in the printed collections of Shakespeare's shining passages, but apparently in the stage representations of the plays in the early part of the eighteenth century. On the stage the beauties were isolated from the context by the actors and given especial emphasis in delivery, as if they were detached arias. Mr. Butt tells us that 'it appears that what Pope was doing in his edition, Booth, the chief actor of the day, was doing at Drury Lane.' According to Aaron Hill, Booth 'would dwell with Energy upon the Beauties' while sliding over the rest of the verse 'with a kind of elegant Negligence.'

Apart from its being the natural result of the existing theories of language and poetry we have already discussed, the tendency to collect the beauties of Shakespeare arose from another assumption concerning poetic drama. Although the eighteenth century critics often talked of the organic nature of drama, in their treatment of Shakespeare they did not sufficiently show a deep recognition of it. Otherwise, both the adaptations and the 'beauties' could not have seen the light. Kames's plastic comparison of tragedy to a set of

2. Loc.Cit.
historic paintings, was in fact more in keeping with their practice. If every act, and by analogy every scene, is conceived as a picture, then it becomes easy to detach it from the whole context and view it separately. It is failure to realize the organic nature of Shakespeare's works, amongst other factors, that was responsible for such absurd suggestions as the one made by Gentleman that Shakespeare's editors should produce what amounts to a précis edition of his works. But it is fair to Dodd, whose name, more than any other's, is always connected with the 'beauties of Shakespeare', to admit that he was vaguely aware that there are some passages 'so closely connected with the plot and characters, and on which the beauties so fully depend' that he was compelled to exclude them from his collection. But on the whole the passages are collected not for their dramatic merit which makes them integral parts of their context, but for other extraneous virtues. They usually contain either a good description, or a moral truth. This becomes at once clear if we look

2. Francis Gentleman, *Dramatic Censor,* vol. i, pp. 149 ff: 'Indeed it is to be wished that instead of so many syllable hunting editions of Shakespeare as have appeared, a committee of able critics had united their abilities to strike out the insignificant and offensive passages which so often occur; this would bring his merit into a more compact uniform view; considerably lessen the heavy public tax, arising from extending his works, at least three volumes more than are creditable to himself, or useful to his readers.'
cursory at the contents of a typical book that appeared anonymously as late as 1792 under the title *A Select Collection of the Beauties of Shakespeare*. The book consists of quotations from the plays given under the general headings: 'Adversity', 'Anger', 'Authority', 'Beauty', 'Content', 'Deer Wounded', 'Discontent', 'Doubt', 'Fear of Death', 'Fortitude', 'Ingratitude', 'Hypocrisy', 'Old Age' etc. ...

Very few critics indeed claimed that Shakespeare's poetry reveals a uniform conscious artistry and substantiated their claim by their practice. One feels that Morgan might have proved his claim if only he set out to analyse in detail Shakespeare's style; but unfortunately he left us nothing of the kind, with the exception of a few lines relegated to a footnote in defence of 'the fatal Cleopatra', introducing only one quotation in support of his claim. Daniel Webb, however, is the critic who has done most to elevate Shakespeare the poet to the rank of conscious artist. But he deals with him as a poet, hardly as a dramatic poet, and compares his versification with that of Pope, to the latter's disadvantage. Pope had drawn an

1. *A Select Collection of the Beauties of Shakespeare*, (York, 1792).
2. Daniel Webb, *Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry*, p. 36: 'I shall never be brought to consider the beauties of a poet in the same light that I do the colours of a tulip.'
unhappy and illegitimate distinction between Shakespeare's poetry and drama when he said that 'Most of our Author's faults are less to be ascribed to his wrong judgment as a poet, than to his right judgment as a player.' In Webb's treatment the right judgment of Shakespeare as a poet is ex­tolled. He sees excellence, not only in the mechanism of his verse, but in what he calls 'sentimental harmony'. He finds Shakespeare to be 'equal, if not superior to any other English poet'. What he means by 'sentimental harmony' is the coordination of rhythm and sense. Sentimental harmony lies, 'in bringing the sound or measure of the verse to correspond with, and accompany the idea.' The variety in Shakespeare's versification is not, as was often judged, a sign of weakness and inequality, but, on the contrary, it is a conscious means to achieve the desired effect. Of the dramatic function of the poetry, of the relationship between rhythm and imagery to character and to the whole we are told nothing by Webb.

With the character critics, on the other hand, the poetry of Shakespeare is often passed over in silence.

Richardson, whose intention was to make poetry subservient to

1. Preface to Shakespeare, Op. Cit., p. 51. This pronounce­ment occasioned a reply from an indignant actor, printed under the name An Answer to Mr. Pope's Preface to Shake­speare by a Strolling Player, in which he said (p. 6), 'Poet and player, in his (Pope's) thoughts are inco­sistent.'
3. See infra, pp. 48-50 ff.
philosophy, naturally found in Shakespeare's poetry simply an 'embellishment'. At his hands the poet in Shakespeare may be said to have completely vanished. This is not true, however, of all character critics. Whately, for instance, is much nearer to the text of Shakespeare, judging at least by the number of quotations we find in the course of his essay. Besides, he makes an interesting attempt at showing how the poetry, or, rather, certain key words can help to direct us in our interpretation of character:

Shakespeare who had much variety of phrase at command, does not repeat the same without design. An example has already been given of a particular meaning conveyed by frequent use of words. Macbeth makes of the same terms, in asserting his pretensions to the character of manliness. Another instance, of the like kind, is the repetition by Richard of the same words, off with his head, upon three or four different occasions. The readiness and the certainty of his resolutions are expressed by them. 1

This is a laudable move towards the text in the right direction. But on the whole Whately shares the general indifference of the character critics to the poetry.

The conclusion, I hope, is clear. The rational attitude in Shakespearean criticism has led to the splitting up of the organic unity of the plays. The plot is long dead and lies buried; the poetry dissociated from the drama, and its merits and demerits are discussed in vacuo without relation to the character and to the whole. The character

looms in the foreground unrelated to either, with the psychological critics busy excavating in it for their truths about the human heart; and the particular vision of human existence, realized in the plays and expressed as dramatic poetry, has completely evaporated.

Of course, in the study of each particular element (with the exception of plot) critics have made no small progress, but they have not fully realized the mutual relationship of these elements. Johnson had said that Shakespeare's real power 'is not shewn in the splendour of particular passages,' that 'he that tries to recommend him by select quotations, will succeed like the pedant in Hierocles, who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.' But, in practice, the critics concentrated mainly on analysing the beauty of some of these bricks. It remains now to be seen whether Coleridge has simply developed these elements separately as he found them, or, for various reasons, has adopted a new attitude to Shakespearean drama. But before we embark on Coleridge's own criticism of Shakespeare we must pause for a while in order to see whether the scholars of the period - and what period is more impressive in the number of its indefatigable

1. Raleigh, p.12.
Shakespearean scholars than the latter part of the eighteenth century? — did what the critics themselves failed to do. A word, therefore, on the contribution of scholarship to Shakespearean criticism in that period will not, I trust, be out of place here. Our concern is, of course, limited to aesthetic criticism, and we shall deal with scholarship only in so far as it has affected aesthetic criticism as such.
7. The Role of Scholarship in the Late

Eighteenth-Century Shakespearean Criticism.

In 1789 a popular handbook appeared under the title of *Cursory Remarks on Some of the Ancient English Poets*. The author, a certain P. Neve, who voiced some of the common opinions of the time, wrote of Shakespeare that

> his poetical character has, in every part of it, been by them (i.e. the commentators) so deeply explored and so fully illustrated, and his beauties and allusions with so much taste and judgment pointed out, that it would be difficult to make any just observation respecting him that is not to be found among their collections and remarks.  

This large claim, which incidentally forms part of the thesis of Dr. Babcock's book, was also made by John Monck Mason, himself another commentator on Shakespeare. In his volume of comments on the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, he maintained that the tide of fame had 'flowed for these thirty years past, with amazing rapidity in favour of Shakespeare.' He attributed that to the genius of Garrick and to 'the judgment and authorities of Johnson, the industry and abilities of Malone and Steevens, assisted by the ingenious suggestions of several others who were not professed commentators.' Shakespeare's works, we are invited to be-

4. Loc. Cit.
There is no need, of course, to doubt such contemporary evidence. Shakespeare certainly became far more famous, much more easily available and much more widely read in the latter part, than in the beginning, of the eighteenth century. One has only to think of the innumerable volumes of commentaries written then on the steadily increasing editions of his works, both by scholars, leisured clergymen and others, to be convinced of the rapidly growing fame of Shakespeare. What is doubtful, however, is the purport of our first quotation, whether the Shakespearean scholars and commentators did really advance Shakespearean criticism to the extent the statement implies. It is, therefore, the business of this section to assess the contribution of scholarship to Shakespearean criticism in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The first and most important contribution of the late eighteenth century scholars is, of course, the immense stride they took towards the restoration of Shakespeare's text. Obviously before you can arrive at any sound criticism of Shakespeare you must first have the proper text of his plays. And although the late eighteenth-century scholars did not actually restore the text (in fact it cannot be said with certainty that even now we possess Shakespeare's own words), and although the methods they pursued are often proved by modern scholars to be inadequate and at times misleading, yet they deserve our greatest respect for their full reali-
zation of the importance of the work they started. The history of the textual criticism of Shakespeare, however, is a vast and independent field of enquiry, with which the present work does not attempt to deal. It is sufficient here, perhaps, to say summarily on the authority of qualified scholars that on this point our indebtedness to the eighteenth century scholars 'is greater than can be acknowledged.' We may, therefore, move on to their other important contributions which have a direct bearing upon the aesthetic criticism of the plays. I propose to touch here upon what seem to me to be the four major contributions beside their attempt to restore the text — namely, their researches into the origin of English drama, their study of the English stage, their discovery of Shakespeare's sources as well as their paving the way for a more detailed knowledge of Shakespeare's contemporaries and predecessors.

We have seen how the critics in the early eighteenth century found fault with Shakespearean drama because of its irregularity, its not conforming to the classical drama, which they either presumed Shakespeare to have known, but in his desire to please the populace deliberately and against his better judgment not to have followed, or else in his ignorance not to have been acquainted with at all. which/

The researches have culminated in the discovery of the

indigenous origin of English drama have been particularly valuable, because they managed on scientific grounds to silence such objections, at least among the fairly educated part, if not all the public, even if their fruit did not really appear until a later date. By the discovery of the native origin of English drama the futile assessing of Shakespeare's plays by classical criteria was shown to have no historical justification.

As early as 1744 Dodsley published his Select Collection of Old Plays, in the preface to which he called the oldest English plays in the collection 'mysteries', thus indirectly drawing the attention of scholars to the religious ancestry of English drama. In his edition of Shakespeare of 1747 Warburton tried to explain 'that mongrel species, unknown to Nature and Antiquity' which was 'begot in an evil hour', i.e. tragi-comedy, by pointing out its possible development from the old 'Morality' in England. In 1754 Thomas Warton had already criticised Walpole's assertion that The Mirror for Magistrates was responsible for the fashion of writing historical plays, particularly for Shakespeare's Histories, making the remark that 'the custom of acting HISTORIES seems to have been very old on our stage.' But although he quoted Stowe's Survey of London, he was not certain whether

Stowe had considered them 'improperly as a distinct species of drama.' A few years later Johnson observed in his Preface (1765) that Shakespeare's plays are a species different from either comedies or tragedies, and that the classical formal criticism therefore should not apply to them. In the same year came the first important contribution on the subject, viz. Bishop Percy's 'Essay on the Origin of the English Stage.' Percy made use of the findings or conjectures of his predecessors in the field, but he went further than any of them had gone, wove their opinions as well as his own into what became the first systematic history of the English drama, and remained for a long time the basis for subsequent research in the century.

The scheme he drew for the development of English drama is a pretty simple one. He traced it back to its origin in religious dramatic representation, i.e. in 'mysteries' and 'moralities'. His theory was that from the mysteries there arose the historical drama, and from the serious parts of the Moralities there developed the tragedy, whereas the interludes or the comic parts of the Moralities gave rise to comedy. 'The popular dramatic poets,' he says, regarding Shakespeare certainly as one of them, 'seem to have made this sacred species their models.'

3. *Ibid., vol. i*, p. 120.
finds the germs of tragedy in Everyman and of comedy in Hick Scorer:

We see then that the writers of these Moralities were upon the very threshold of real Tragedy and Comedy; and therefore we are not to wonder that Tragedies and Comedies in form soon after took place, especially as the revival of learning about this time brought them acquainted with the Roman and Grecian models. 1

Percy reminds us that even after the people had been accustomed to Tragedies and Comedies, 'Moralities still kept their ground' for a long time. As for the historical plays, which in his day, 'were confounded with Tragedy and Comedy', they were considered in the Elizabethan age a species 'quite distinct' from them. In his view they were modelled on the old Mysteries 'which ceased to be acted after the Reformation'; they resemble them in being representations of a series of events in the order in which they happened in history, and they differ from tragedies 'as historical poems differ from epics.' And just as the mysteries lent them their plan, the Mirrour for Magistrates might have easily afforded them their copious material.

What is the direct bearing this history has upon the actual criticism of Shakespeare? Percy concludes from the factual evidence he has gleaned, that the Historical plays of Shakespeare constitute a distinct species of drama, and that

2. Ibid., vol.1, p.125.
this distinction deserves the attention of the critics; for if it be the first canon of sound criticism to examine any work by those rules the author prescribed for his observance, then we ought not to try Shakespeare's HISTORIES by the general laws of Tragedy or Comedy.  

But it is not difficult to find where Percy's critical training belongs. With the example of Addison before him, he endeavours in a naive manner to make Everyman fit the classical rules of drama. He finds it remarkable that in this 'old simple drama' 'the fable is conducted upon the strictest model of the Greek tragedy', that in it the unity of action is observed, and that the time of action is the same as that of representation. When he looks for resemblances between Shakespeare's Historical plays and the old Mysteries, his attention is focussed on the question of the unities: The Historical plays resembled the old Mysteries in representing a series of historical events simply in the order of time in which they happened, without any regard to the three great unities.

In fact, strictly speaking, Percy's concern is to defend the loose form Shakespeare's historical drama presented to his age by explaining its essential difference from the classical drama, by pointing out its independent origin. The defence, however, is never extended so as to embrace the

2. See Addison's criticism of the ballad of Chevy Chase in the Spectator, No.70.  
4. Ibid., vol.1, p.126.
comedies and tragedies as well. It is only Shakespeare's Histories that we ought not to try by the general (i.e. the classical) laws of Tragedy or Comedy. With his tragedies and comedies it is apparently a different matter.

Percy's scheme for a history of the English drama is illustrated by Thomas Hawkins, who in his three volumes of The Origin of the English Drama (1773), gives concrete specimens from the earliest writers of 'its various species, viz. mystery, morality, tragedy and comedy.' In the preface to the Collection Hawkins accepts Percy's account, elaborates upon it and discusses such plays as Gammer Garton's Needle, Corboduc, Kyd's Spanish Tragedy, Peele's David and Bethsabe, Dekker's Return from Parnassus, etc. He even goes a step further, points out the fact that several nations like the Chinese, the Russians and the Indians had their own drama independently of the Greeks, and he draws an essential distinction between the 'ancient' and 'modern' drama. He maintains that modern drama, whether in France or in England, 'was a Distinct Species of itself, and not a Revival of the ANCIENT Drama, with which it cannot be compared, and must never be confounded.' Having attempted to establish the distinction between

2. Ibid., vol.i, pp.i-i.
3. Ibid., p.i.
the 'classic' drama and the English drama of Shakespeare which is "of a Gothic original," he goes on to say that this distinction 'should prevent a great deal of idle criticism.' If we keep this distinction in mind, we 'shall place our admirable SHAKESPEARE beyond the reach of criticism,' meaning by criticism, of course, the criticism based upon the rules of the ancients. Accordingly we cannot consider the classical drama 'the only model of the drama.' He also points out how Shakespeare's clowns are 'genuine successors of the old VICE,' in the Morality plays. Yet he still speaks of the "pure and finished compositions" of the tragedies of the ancients, and tells us how to please the more popular audiences the revived classical tragedy was 'debased with an intermixture of low gross humour, which has long continued under the name of TRAGIC-COMEDY.'

By the time Thomas Warton wrote his History of English Poetry (1774-1778) it was deemed 'certain that these MIRACLE PLAYS were the first of our dramatic exhibitions.' The use of allegorical characters as Charity, Sin, Death, Hope, Faith in the miracle plays eventually resulted in the birth of the Moralties which were formed entirely of such

2. Ibid., p.i.
3. Ibid., p.xv.
4. Ibid., p.ix, footnote.
5. Ibid., p.xv.
6. Ibid., p.ix.
personifications, and with the Moralities we have 'the
dawnings of the dramatic art' as 'they contain some rudiments
of a plot, and even attempt to delineate characters, and
paint manners.' The sacred origin of English drama was
then established, and with it its autonomy and independence
of classical drama. With the recovery of ancient learning
the attention of 'our more learned poets' was directed to
the study of classical drama, and shortly imitations in the
vernacular of Euripides and Seneca were produced, but, says
Warton, 'I do not find that it (referring to Jocasta, an
imitation of Euripides) was speedily followed by any original
composition on the same legitimate model.' Yet in spite
of his attachment to the Gothic, which incidentally later
on in life he much regretted, when he was brought to his
'classical' senses by Reynolds's painted window at New
College, Oxford, his strictures on Gorboduc may be summar­
ized in that the play has failed to follow the classical
pattern. We are told that in it 'the unities of time and
place are eminently and visibly violated'; he praises it
because 'the greater part of this long and eventful history
is included in the/presentation', and observes that the death
of Porrex is only reported, not because, as he obviously

1. Thomas Warton, History of English Poetry, (Lond.,
1824), vol.ii, p.175.
2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.184; vol.iii, p.201.
3. Ibid., vol.iv, p.196.
4. Thomas Warton, Verses on Sir Joshua Reynolds' Painted
Window, (Lond., 1784).
believed, 'to kill a man on the stage was avoided as a spectacle shocking to humanity, but because it was difficult and inconvenient to be represented.' Failure to observe the unities of time and place, he could still say, is 'a defect which Shakespeare so frequently commits, but which he covers by the magic of his poetry.'

As far as the beginnings of the English drama are concerned, Malone, the next important figure in this connection, mainly relies upon the historian of English Poetry, to whom he acknowledges his debt in his 'Historical account of the English Stage.' He explodes the false opinion, apparently still held by some that 'Shakespeare was the first poet that introduced Historical drama,' and he therefore places this form of Shakespearean drama in the tradition to which it belongs.

I have elsewhere observed that every one of the subjects on which he constructed his historical plays, appears to have been dramatized and brought upon the scene before his time.

He also explains the role of Vice in the ancient religious plays, and of the clown, its parallel in modern drama.

How far the realization of the non-classical origin of English drama was common at the turn of the century, may be judged by a cursory look at Waldron and Bibdin's book A

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3. Ibid., vol.i, Part II, p.31.
4. Ibid., vol.i, Part II, p.20.
Compendious History of the English Stage, which was professed to be a 'sort of Dramatic Vade Mecum, serving to refresh the memory of the frequenters of the theatre, assisting occasionally to correct mistakes that may occur in conversations on dramatic subjects.' 1 Waldron and Dibdin begin their history of English drama by discussing its beginning in mysteries and moralities. 2 It is thanks then to the painstaking research of the scholars that we have come to realize the ecclesiastical origin of English drama, although it was not yet ascertained that religious drama itself did not derive from vapid imitations of Euripides and Terence, whether in Constantinople, as Warton following Voltaire believed, or elsewhere, but in the attempt 'to bring home to an unlettered people the reality of the chief events connected with the Christian religion.' 3 The scholars, themselves, as we have seen, did not make much use of their knowledge in the criticism of Shakespeare's plays, with the possible exception of the Histories; it was left for another generation to stress the distinction between the two kinds of drama, and to find that Shakespearean drama in toto had its own laws.

Far more satisfactory as regards its effect upon criticism is the scholars' second contribution, i.e. their study of the Elizabethan stage. It was of indubitable

1. Advertisement to A Compendious History of the English Stage, (Lond., 1850);
2. Ibid., pp.102.
importance to discover the truth about the Elizabethan stage conditions and the type of medium Shakespeare worked in, in order to understand him and to know what he was about.

Capell, whose achievement is often underestimated, relates the structure of the Elizabethan stage to the tradition of mysteries and moralities. He explains how the platform of the stage was double, the back part of it rising slightly higher above the front and serving as chambers or galleries, e.g. 'for Juliet to hold discourse with Romeo, and for Cleopatra to draw up the dying Antony.' He shows how this form is derived from the primitive stage on which the religious drama was produced, and which had yet a third platform raised above the second, the highest one being used for the 'Pater coelestis' to appear on, attended by the angels, the middle one for 'patriarchs and glorified persons', and the lowest for 'meer men', and in which Hell was represented by a 'great gaping hole on the side of the platform, that vomited something like flames, out of which their greatest jokers, the devils, ascended at times, and mixed with men; and into which they were driven in heaps at the drama's conclusion.' With the disappearance of the mysteries, Capell says, Heaven, the highest platform, and also Hell went, leaving the other platforms which constituted the Elizabethan stage.

Having pointed to the closer affinity Shakespeare's

stage bears to the early Morality tradition rather than to the modern realistic stage, Capell goes on to note another feature of it which influenced Shakespearean drama considerably. He tells us that scenes were unknown then and that 'all its decorations were - certain arras or tapestries'.

The result was that

the spectator had nothing to aid him, or contribute to his deception; fancy pieced out all these defects, as well as it could; and its powers were called out upon, - to imagine the same unchangeable spot to be a hall, a chamber, a palace, a cottage, a ship, lawn, field of battle, etc.

The dramatists of the time had to resort to this 'active power' of their audience, and that enabled them to bring things upon the stage which 'cannot be represented on any stage, not even upon the present under all its improvements.' Capell finds in this detail of the Elizabethan stage an explanation and a justification for the improbable elements in Shakespearean drama to which the eighteenth century critics, Johnson not excepted, objected, since 'his imposing was not by eyes but by ears.' But Capell can go astray when he lets the scholar in him dictate to, instead of guiding, the critic. He therefore finds that the custom of boys playing the parts of women characters is one principal reason why Shakespeare 'has brought so few women into his plays; has made the characters trifling, and of no great importance, of some of that he has brought.'

One wonders

2. Ibid., vol.1, Part I, p.51.
how Capell could have forgotten such major characters as Portia, Beatrice, Cleopatra or Lady Macbeth.

Malone's *Historical Account of the English Stage* is, as one should expect, much fuller and more detailed. Except for the mistake on the front stage curtain it is basically a sound account. To Capell's sketch he adds the traverses, and the inner stage, the public and private theatres and the difference between them both in the standard of their audiences and in the fact that in the latter plays were produced by candlelight. Like Capell, he denies the Elizabethans knowledge of scenes and asserts that the stage was merely decorated with curtains, and arras and tapestry hangings. Like him, he also stresses the fact that the imagination of the audience was 'little assisted by scenical deception' and that Shakespeare's dramas 'derived very little aid from the splendour of exhibition.' Thus the basis for the recognition of the essential lack of verisimilitude in the structure of Shakespearean drama was surely laid by the scholars, although they themselves did not recognize this feature in their actual commentary on the individual plays.

2. Ibid., vol.1, Part II, pp. 49-53. It is interesting to note that such details have crept into Waldron and Dibdin's popular reference book (pp. 3-5).
4. Ibid., vol.1, Pt. II, p. 66.
5. Ibid., vol.1, Pt. II, p. 100.
The great achievement of eighteenth century scholars is no less manifest in the discovery of the sources of the plays. Langbaine had referred to Shakespeare's debt to Boccaccio in his Account of the English Dramatic Poets (1691); and early in the eighteenth century Theobald showed us that Shakespeare had made use of North's Plutarch and of Holinshed's Chronicle. In the middle of the century Mrs. Lennox suggested the sources for twenty-two plays in her Shakespeare Illustrated; and Farmer in defence of his thesis that Shakespeare was not acquainted with classical literature wrote his Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare, in which he pointed to the books and translations Shakespeare had read. The extremely important findings of Farmer as well as those of the rest of the late eighteenth century scholars have put modern scholarship under a lasting obligation to them; but they are too numerous to be mentioned here. Indeed there would be no place for them in this section, since my aim is not to assess the contribution of scholarship as such. What is pertinent to my subject, however, is what use was made of the knowledge of these sources. Theobald makes no attempt at genetic criticism, and Charlotte Lennox's aim is clear: it is to prove that Shakespeare lacked invention, the much prized quality then, and often used his original only to make a poor job of it. Mrs. Lennox can hardly be called a critic: she is both unperceptive and unsympathetic from the outset. Yet it is fair to mention that, besides her contribution to our knowledge
of Shakespeare's sources, we are indebted to her for her pioneering work in the genetic method. It is true that she is not concerned with anything deeper than the plot of the work in question, but she has certainly pointed the way to the method of comparing Shakespeare's play with his sources and of inquiring into the reasons for, or the effects of, his deviating from them. Two years after the publication of Mrs. Lennox's book, there appeared anonymously an English translation of the novel from which the Play of the Merchant of Venice written by Shakespeare is taken, in the Preface to which the author states that had she known this novel, Mrs. Lennox would have commended Shakespeare for his arrangement of the main characters of his plot and for his substitution of the caskets, an episode itself taken from another source, for although the chief hinge on which the plot turns may please in a novel, or in the closet, it would hardly have been borne with on the stage.

This method Malone applies in his defence of the moral character of Hamlet against Steevens' severe attack. By reference to the source of the play, he points out how Shakespeare probably meant to make Rosencranz and Guildenstern, 'the representative of Fenton's two faithful ministers' equally acquainted with the purport of their message, so that

1. London, 1755.
Hamlet may be absolved from the murder of the innocent courtiers. Likewise, he shows how in the conclusion of his drama 'the poet has entirely deviated from the fabulous history' presumably in order to avoid the horrors Hamlet commits to perpetrate his revenge.

But this comparative method is used sparingly and never in a fully detailed manner. Without any critical analysis of particular passages Capell is satisfied only with saying that

Shakespeare has, with much judgment, introduced no small number of speeches in these plays (i.e. Julius Caesar, Coriolanus, Antony & Cleopatra, and parts of Timon) in the very words of the translator, turning them into verse: which he has so well wrought up, and incorporated with his plays, that what he has introduc'd, cannot be discovered by any reader, 'till it is pointed out for him. 1

Yet it is symptomatic of the effect of scholarship that Mackenzie, who was a critic and no scholar, goes back to the source of Hamlet to enforce his thesis, and that in a periodical, not in a book of commentary on Shakespeare.

Mackenzie's comparison between the Hamlet of Shakespeare and the character of Amleth as told by Saxo-Grammaticus reveals to him the latter's greater cunning in the accomplishment of his revenge. Amleth counterfeits madness only to avoid suspicion, whereas Shakespeare

wishing to elevate the hero of his tragedy and at the
same time to interest the audience in his behalf,
throws around him, from the beginning, the majesty
of melancholy, along with that sort of weakness and
irresolution which frequently attends it. 1

Similarly he observes the absence of the Ghost incident
from the Danish legend, and suggests that Shakespeare in­
troduced it partly for stage effect, partly to help unfold
Hamlet's character, for

in the communication of such a visionary being, there
is an uncertain kind of belief, and a dark unlimited
horror, which are aptly suited to display the wavering
purpose and varied emotions of a mind endowed with a
delicacy of feeling that often shakes its fortitude,
with sensibility that overpowers its strength. 2

Another example of a non-scholarly attempt was made
by Wolstenholme Parr, who primarily for purposes of criti­
cism, was 'desirous of examining the sources from which
Shakespeare derived the outlines of his story.' 3 Being a
soulful sentimentalist who somehow managed to find some
similarity between Rousseau and Shakespeare, he believed
that those plays of his based on authentic history are 'in­
finitely less interesting, if not inferior in point of com­
position, to those drawn from Romance or from his own
imagination', 'the lighter productions of his fancy' 'which

2. Ibid.
3. Loc. Cit.
4. Wolstenholme Parr, The Story of the Moor of Venice
   translated from the Italian with Two Essays on
   Shakespeare, (London, 1795).
6. Ibid., p.65.
were the inspirers of his youthful dreams." Whereupon he dismissed Coriolanus for being "a minute and exact copy of historical detail, in which the action has acquired no additional interest or solidity from the art or combination of the poet," and praised the character of Othello which "proved" by the preceding novel to have been almost wholly created by the imagination of Shakespeare." This, to be sure, by no means sounds like good criticism, but what is material to us is the fact that the principles of the comparative or genetic method have been established. Even the motives which led Shakespeare to borrow from a certain source have been probed into. For instance, James Plumptre, in his two books: Observations on Hamlet (1796) and Appendix to Observations (1797), discusses "the motives which most probably induced Shakespeare to fix upon the story of Amleth from the Danish Chronicle of Saxo Grammaticus for the plot of that tragedy," evolving the fantastic theory that in Hamlet Shakespeare intended "an indirect censure on Mary Queen of Scots." This, of course, is no literary criticism, unless we hold that a political meaning may add to the multiple meanings of a play.

When Douce then in the first decade of the nineteenth century gives us a comparative study of Shakespeare and his

2. Ibid., p. 22.
3. Ibid., p. 69.
sources in Measure for Measure, we realize that he is writing in the tradition of his predecessors among the scholars. Douce strongly rejects Mrs. Lennox's strictures on Shakespeare for 'almost every supposed deviation from the plot of Cinthio's novel, and even for adhering to it in sparing Angelo.' He declares that, on the contrary, in his alterations Shakespeare 'has, with some exceptions exerted a considerable degree of skill and contrivance', and consequently he has furnished a rich and diversified repast for his readers, instead of serving up the simple story in the shape of such a tragedy as might have suited a Greek audience, but certainly would not have pleased an English one in his time.

Douce substantiates his claim by a thorough comparison of the two plots. Elsewhere he merely praises Shakespeare's power of transforming his sources into something great, either in a sentence or a phrase. His comment on the character of Apemantus in Timon is just that 'he is a highly finished portrait after a very slight sketch by Plutarch.'

The same desire to understand Shakespeare which prompted the scholars to hunt for the sources of the plays, was also responsible for the amazing amount of reading they did on his background and in the works of his contemporaries and

1. Francis Douce, Illustrations of Shakespeare, (Lond., 1807), vol.i, pp.158-159.
2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.69.
In order to explain the obscurities of his construction Theobald had initiated this historical method, and both in his Proposals and his Preface as well as in his Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, Johnson emphasized its importance. Capell too pointed to the 'utmost necessity' of some acquaintance with the writings of the contemporaries and predecessors of Shakespeare for 'a right comprehension of his language,' and his own volume of The School of Shakespeare was explicitly an attempt to answer such a need. Besides, in these writers, he wrote, will be found examples of 'words and modes of expression which many have thought peculiar to Shakespeare, and have been too apt to impute to him as a blemish.' Malone asserted 'I scarcely remember ever to have looked into a book of the age of Queen Elizabeth, in which I did not find somewhat that tended to throw a light on these plays,' his object being 'to illustrate his phraseology by comparing it with that of his contemporaries and to explain his fugitive allusions to customs long since disused.' Whenever that was possible it was carried out admirably by the scholars. Very often their business was just to restore the original reading and explain its meaning without committing themselves

1. For the full effect of that reading see E.R. Wasserman, Elizabethan Poetry in the Eighteenth Century, (Urbana, 1947).
2. Preface to The School of Shakespeare, (Lond., 1783).
to a critical judgment. But when they did pass a judgment, it is not difficult to see what their assumptions were about Shakespeare's style.

Malone indeed condemns the 'wretched taste' of the audience in the early part of the eighteenth century when the 'contemptible alterations of his (Shakespeare's) pieces were preferred to the originals.' Of the liberties the editors of the time took with the text Steevens writes that the majority of them were the result of their belief that Shakespeare was a correct writer, but corrupted and interpolated by the players, and Malone echoes him in his 1790 Preface. Malone has no doubts about the greatness of Shakespeare's style; Shakespeare, in his opinion, was 'the great refiner and polisher of our language,' and he quotes approvingly a comment by Dryden on Shakespeare, who without learning almost miraculously performed so much.

He defends Macbeth against the charge of bombast levelled at it/Dryden and others. But, on the other hand, he finds 'harshness of diction' in The Winter's Tale and Troilus & Cressida; he retains in his edition Johnson's brief critical

2. 'Advertisement to the Reader', The Plays of William Shakespeare, Johnson & Steevens, (Lond., 1795), vol.1, pp.73-74.
4. Ibid., p.lxxvii.
remarks on the plays, and thinks very highly of his Preface. Furthermore, he believes with him that Shakespeare's 'natural disposition' led him to comedy.

The scholarly method no doubt contributed in many cases to the removal of misunderstandings concerning Shakespeare's style. For instance, Johnson found that the simile in

King John

Be thou as lightning in the eyes of France;
For ere thou canst report, I will be there:
The thunder of my cannon shall be heard. (I.i.24-26)

'does not suit well; the lightning indeed appears before the thunder is heard, but the lightning is destructive and the thunder innocent.' But by quotations from several other plays of Shakespeare Ritson disproves the impropriety, suggesting that the thunder 'was not thought to be innocent in our author's time.' Applying the historical method Douce defends the lines

O beat away the busy meddling fiend
That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul.

(Hen.VI, Pt.2,III,iii.21-22)

by reference to 'the forms and ceremonies of the Romish Church', showing Shakespeare's strict adherence to the manners of the times' and hoping the note might exculpate him

2. Ibid., vol.1, Pt.1, p.294.
from the charge of 'personifying the fiend, on the supposition that the poet's language is merely figurative.'

But often, in their historical explanations, when their sense of propriety and decorum is offended, there is a note of apology, some such qualification as 'as genius and critical exactness are, in many respect discordant qualities, we are not always to look for them together.' or Shakespeare's metaphors are often careless and confused.'

At times even sympathetic scholars like Douce could say of the lines:

Ulysses. Let Mars divide eternity in twain
And give him half. (Troilus & Cressida,
II.iii.243-244)

'How Mars was to accomplish this, the metaphysicians must decide. The idea is an odd compound of grandeur and absurdity.' Capell found Shakespeare's play on words, which is 'almost a distinguishing mark of him' in many instances 'faulty'. Ritson said that 'Shakespeare's highest or lowest characters are never without a quibble,' and that 'no situation can exempt Shakespeare's characters from the vice of punning.' Thomas Warton still considered the

4. Ibid., ii, p.39.
'chief blemishes of the scenes of Shakespeare' to be the 'false sublime', the 'exaggerated imageries' and 'pedantic metaphors' by which he and his fellow poets 'found it their interest to captivate the multitude.' Johnson himself would have said just as much.

Among the scholars, who very often are conservative people, Dryden's tradition persisted much more strongly than is commonly realized. Writing of the Elizabethan poets Warton said that 'every man indulged his own capriciousness of invention' and that Shakespeare in the same scene 'descends from his meridian of the noblest tragic sublimity, to puns and quibbles, to the meanest merriments of a plebeian farce,' and that he 'seems not to have seen any impropriety in the most abrupt transitions from dukes to buffoons, from senators to sailors, from counsellors to constables, from kings to clowns.' It is the old story of Shakespeare possessing (or rather being possessed by) genius, but lacking in good taste. Even Douce, who believed that Johnson, unlike Steevens, Malone, Tyrwhitt and Mason, was 'unskilled in the obsolete customs and expressions', approved entirely of his 'masterly' preface, and found his characters of the plays of Shakespeare 'sound and tasteful'.

3. Ibid., vol.iv, p.331.
He objected to the glaringly loose form of *Winter's Tale* and *Pericles*, and some others of Shakespeare's dramas; and quoted Dr. Johnson on the supposition that Shakespeare was 'fully sensible of the absurdity of showing battles on the theatre, which, says, Johnson, is never done but tragedy becomes a farce.' He collected the anachronisms and other incongruities of Shakespeare, in which admittedly he did not think him any 'more culpable than most of his contemporaries;' but it is significant that in the plays he found lapses in decorum which 'are often extremely ridiculous'.

This is not to mention disreputable people like Seymour, who virtually belonged to the early school of editing, and who, haunted by an ideal of correctness, in the neo-classical sense, went about with a scalping knife, pruning and correcting whatever is ungrammatical or irregular, lopping off whole scenes (sometimes dismissing whole plays) on the ground that they were interpolations, apparently unconscious of the functional value of such parts and of the organic unity of the great Shakespearean plays.

The eighteenth century scholars, then, were very much influenced by the critical assumptions of the age. Of all of them it is perhaps Malone who suffered least from the bondage of these assumptions, but even he, we have seen, was

3. Ibid., ii, pp.284 ff.
not altogether free from the shortcomings of the tradition. In questions of facts about Shakespearean drama, of the authenticity of a certain reading, he is extremely reliable, of course within the limits of his knowledge; for he combines learning with scientific honesty and a zeal for truth. But in matters that demand taste, appreciation and critical judgment we have to go somewhere else. The contribution of the scholars was indeed immense, but they seemed not to have been fully aware of the implications of their findings, and their interest was largely antiquarian. It was left to future generations to make a sound critical use of the knowledge of the form of Shakespearean drama, of Elizabethan stage conditions, of Shakespeare's sources, of his idiom, and of his place in the English dramatic tradition. Although we should, and quite rightly we do, extol the abilities of the late eighteenth century Shakespearean scholars as scholars, let not our gratitude and admiration for their scholarship blind us to their serious shortcomings as critics.
PART TWO
PART TWO

CHAPTER ONE

The Relation Between Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism and his Aesthetics

When we turn from the main bulk of the eighteenth century Shakespearean criticism to the criticism of Coleridge, we realize immediately that we are undergoing a radically different experience. His writings are at once alive and life-giving. We feel more akin to Coleridge even though we may disagree with some of his critical utterances, and that is not solely because we are closer to him in time. In the writings of the majority of those tireless and voluminous eighteenth-century critics and scholars we wade through a morass of pages in the hope that we may come across some illuminating remark or an important fact to encourage us to proceed on our laborious journey. But it is different with Coleridge. He may not give us the important fact, and as a rule he rarely does; yet invariably we are amply rewarded in other ways.

The strength of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, fragmentary as it is, lies in its profoundly systematic nature; and it is precisely in this quality that the eighteenth century criticism most painfully fails. Here we encounter a vigorous mind playing freely, and a keen
sensibility that is not altogether lacking in discipline.
The impression, true enough, is the starting point; but it
is often translated into an intelligible statement, which in
turn is referred back to some basic principle. In other
words, Coleridge's strength as a critic consists in his
being a philosophic critic. Not content with recording his
impressions alone, as the worst of the romantic critics do,
or with forcing a work to fit in with a rigid, preconceived
formula, as the eighteenth-century critics often try to do,
he arranges his various impressions into some sort of system
- a system that has its place in a larger system of mind.

Opinions may vary as to whether the study of philosophy has
ekilled the poet in Coleridge; but there is no doubt that
his philosophical preoccupation has helped to make him the

1. That a man can possess a disciplined sensibility and may
at the same time suffer from digressiveness is, I take
it, beyond dispute.
2. See Letter to Sotheby (Sept. 1802): 'Be minute, and assign
your reasons often, and your first impression always,
and then blame or praise, I care not which, I shall be
'On Criticism' in his Table Talk, (William Hazlitt, The
214-215), which is in parts an indirect attack on Cole-
ridge. Hazlitt objects to the 'modern or metaphysical
system of criticism' which 'supposes the question, Why?
to be repeated at the end of every decision.' As an im-
pressionist he believes that 'a genuine criticism should
reflect the colours, the light and shade, the soul and
body of a work.' (Ibid., p. 217). The result is that in-
stead of criticism Hazlitt often provides us with a
genre of rhapsodical writing which tells us more about
the critic than about the work.
3. See I. A. Richards, Coleridge on Imagination, (Lond.,
1950), p. 5.
critic he is. One has to admit that, even if one rightly or wrongly may dismiss a great part of the philosophy itself as a mystifying mixture of fog, imitē and moonshine. Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare remains in a profound sense systematic if only we make allowance for some important facts. Coleridge did not publish his criticism himself; but the great bulk of it has reached us in the form of lecture notes, marginalia and other fragments. The limitations imposed by the form of lecturing, often improvised lecturing which, however, in the opinion of Godwin, Robinson and others, fell infinitely below his conversation in private company, have also to be taken into consideration. Admitting that repetition and digressiveness are among Coleridge's mental habits, still a considerable part of the digressions and repetitions may be excused on this score. Likewise his failure to acknowledge some of his debts may be due to the inconvenience of so doing in a public lecture room in the presence of a mixed audience of varying intellectual standards and backgrounds.

Yet some critics have propagated the misleading notion that in his practical criticism, or at least, in his best criticism, Coleridge disregards his theories or principles, as if his criticism had in fact no bearing upon his aesthetical theory, as if the latter belonged categorically to the rest of his philosophizing, which being in parts incoherent,

obscure and sometimes confused, should not be taken heed of.
How strange it is to accuse a man, who in all places and at
all times emphasised the need to return to fundamental
principles, of taking himself little notice of such principles.
How can one hold such a view in the face of overwhelming
evidence to the contrary? The underlying theme of The Friend,
Biographia Literaria, even The Aids to Reflection, is a plea
for a re-examination of contemporary basic principles in
morality, politics, philosophy and criticism, and an attempt
to rest all of them upon secure foundations. Coleridge de-
defines the aim of The Friend in the following terms:

To refer men's opinions to their absolute principles,
and thence their feelings to the appropriate objects,
and in their due degrees; and finally to apply the
principles thus ascertained, to the formation of sted-
fast convictions concerning the most important questions
of politics, morality and religion - these are to be
the objects of his work. 1

And in a letter to J. Colson he claims that his intention
in the periodical is

to establish, elucidate, and recommend principle in-
stead of mere expedience - and therefore principles:
principles in taste (poetry, prose, painting, music,
dress, etc. etc. etc.,) principles in private morality
- principles in general religion, ... etc. 2

The Friend, of course, did not live long enough to fulfil
all of these large claims. In the sphere of aesthetic,
criticism and the fine arts, for example, with the exception
of few stray remarks on genius and talent and the part of the

fine essay on Method, it completely fails our expectations. But in the other subjects the attempt is definitely made, and it is sufficient for our purpose to note from what standpoint the periodical is written, and what its explicit intentions are. In his plan for a successful review Cole-ridge emphasizes that the essential desideratum is that it 'should be started upon a published code of principles, critical, moral, political and religious.' Aids to Reflection is designed for 'all who, desirous of building up a manly character in the light of distinct consciousness, are content to study the principles of moral architecture on the several grounds of prudence, morality, and religion.' Whether the book carries out its promise convincingly or not is not my business; my concern is to show how Coleridge in almost everything he wrote felt the need to refer to basic principles, and that in spite of his obscurities which are frequently not unjustly complained of. Or per-haps it is because of his incessant desire to go back to such principles, which with him becomes as much a haunting need and a vice as a virtue, that he is often tortuous, involuted and obscure.

1. T.T., June 7, 1830.
Biographia Literaria, rambling as it is, stresses the value of principles in literary criticism. In it one of the main aims of Coleridge is to point to the chaos in critical writings, both in literary reviews and elsewhere, and the dangers of 'the substitution of assertion for argument', and to advocate a kind of 'philosophical criticism' which sets out by defining its principles. Before he embarked upon the actual criticism of Wordsworth's poetry he thought it wise to explain what he meant by philosophical criticism. I shall quote the passage in full for its importance.

I should call that investigation fair and philosophical, in which the critic announces and endeavours to establish the principles, which he holds for the foundation of poetry in general, with the specification of these in their application to the different classes of poetry. Having thus prepared his canons of criticism for praise and condemnation, he would proceed to particularize the most striking passages to which he deems them applicable, faithfully noticing the frequent or infrequent recurrence of similar merits or defects, and as faithfully distinguishing what is characteristic from what is accidental, or a mere flacking of the wing. Then if his premises be rational, his deductions legitimate, and his conclusions justly applied, the reader, and possibly the poet himself, may adopt his judgment in the light of judgment and in the independence of free-agency. If he has erred, he presents his errors in a definite place and tangible form, and holds the torch and guides the way to their detection.

This is the method which Coleridge follows in his criticism not only of Wordsworth but of Shakespeare as well. Everywhere he asserts the importance of principles, and he is constantly referring to them. But he applies them with the

utmost tact, revealing his complete awareness that they are not hard and fast rules, but useful tools to guide and clarify his responses to every individual work. The critic is not one who voices his own personal 'opinions', which 'weigh for nothing'; he is the one who writes about a work 'in such a form, as is calculated either to effect a fundamental conviction, or receive a fundamental confutation.'

Far from being desultory and impressionistic in his critical pronouncements on Shakespeare, Coleridge practically in every course of lectures on the subject starts by defining his principles. Some of these principles are involved in his definition of poetry to which he often devotes the two initial lectures. This is significant. It is not sufficient to explain away the fact by reference to Coleridge's habit of repeating himself. Nor would it be convincing to say that the impecunious Coleridge found it easy to fill up two lectures with matter which became so familiar to him that it no longer required of him any fresh preparation or previous labour. We may find a great many faults in Coleridge's character, but I do not think we can charge him with insincerity in this respect. Besides in almost every course of lectures he gave he had more material than he could

1. See Inquiring Spirit, ed. Kathleen Coburn, (Lond., 1951), p.156; 'first principles of criticism, which can indeed neither create a Tastemor supply the want of it but yet may conduce effectively to its cultivation and are perhaps indispensable in securing it from the aberrations of caprice and fashion.'

dispose of in the allotted number of lectures, and he often
found it necessary to add one or more lectures free of charge
to the number originally planned. It is more probable, and
more in keeping with his habits of thought, that Coleridge
started his courses on Shakespeare with the discourse on the
definition of poetry because of the importance of such a
definition, because of the immediate relevance of it to
the subject at hand. In fact his interest in his principles,
and his belief in the intimate relation between them and
the main subject of lectures were such that occasionally
one feels that his object in discoursing on Shakespeare was
to illustrate his principles of criticism and his aesthe-
tical theory. Such a feeling would seem to be not alto­
gether unjustified, since he himself explicitly states in
the Prospectus to one of his courses that the lectures
would be given 'in illustration of the Principles of
Poetry'. In one of the lectures he admits that his object
'is not so much to illustrate the character of Shakespeare
as to illustrate the principles of poetry.' It seems
therefore necessary that any study of Coleridge's Shake-
spearean criticism should start with an examination of his
definition - just as Coleridge himself thought that his
study of Shakespeare ought to begin with a definition of
poetry. It seems equally necessary that in order to know
the exact nature of Coleridge's contribution to Shakespearean

3. Ibid., vol.ii, p.90.
criticism, we should study the relation of that definition to previous critical theory. It will not be amiss therefore to provide at this point a short sketch of the ancestry of Coleridge's definition.

In a sense Coleridge was writing in the English critical tradition when he maintained, as he often did, that the end of poetry is pleasure. As far back as Bacon's time poetry was connected with pleasure. Bacon, in his essay 'Of Truth', had claimed that poets 'make lies for pleasure'—although in his view as a philosopher and logician it is a pleasure which should not be indulged in. In the *Advancement of Learning* he tells us that 'it is not good to stay too long in the theatre.' There is an implicit opposition in his words between poetry which has pleasure for its object, and philosophy, human and natural, which is by far the superior occupation, and which should be approached 'with more reverence and attention'.

Bacon, in some ways the father of modern thought, believed that the only true way of searching into and discovering truth is that which 'derives axioms from the senses and particulars'. By setting a great value on the role

played by the senses he influenced the general trend of subsequent English thought considerably. In this respect he is the originator of English sensationalism. From him Hobbes, Locke and Hume and Hartley derive a direct descent. Hobbes tells us that 'there is no conception in a man's mind, which hath not at first, totally or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of sense.' 1 Imagination is nothing but a 'decaying sense', and differs in no way from memory. His 'simple' and 'compounded' imagination passed over to Locke and by him they were christened 'primary' and 'secondary' 'ideas', while sense was style 'impression'. These impressions and ideas of Locke had enormous influence in the field of literary theory and practice - much greater than one would at first suppose. It is to the influence of sensationalism, much more than to any other factor, that the rise of naturalism, both in criticism and in creation, can be attributed. This could be easily seen about the middle of the eighteenth century, although the germs of the movement

2. Ibid., Part I, ch.11.
3. This theory of the rise of naturalism, which is offered tentatively in the following pages, I have discovered later, bears a certain degree of resemblance to that which Mr. W.J. Bate expounds in detail in his book From Classic to Romantic, (Harvard, 1945), and which establishes a close and important connection between empiricism and the movement from the general and universal to the particular. As my conclusions were arrived at independently and before seeing Mr. Bate's book, I have not attempted to alter my mode of presenting them.
were born much earlier. Of course in the early years of the century Hobbes and Locke could be read by every educated reader, and we have seen Addison's debt to both thinkers in his Papers on the Pleasures of the Imagination. Dryden before had once expressed his belief that he was satisfied as long as his poetry succeeded in exciting pleasure in the reader. But it is after sensationalism had become indeed popular, with the advent of the once influential Dr. Hartley the eighteenth century behaviourist, who attempted an all-embracing explanation of all the departments of knowledge— that the immediate repercussions of the philosophy were felt everywhere. It is not irrelevant here to remember that it is about this time that Garrick was gaining the unanimous applause of all the theatre-goers by his deliberately naturalistic acting of Shakespeare. Of his performance of the character of Richard the Third at Goodman's Fields in 1741 Murphy writes:

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... Everything he discovered was almost reality... In all this, the audience saw an exact imitation. 2

But it was in Lear's madness, Murphy goes on, that 'Garrick's genius was remarkably distinguished'. Murphy is careful to

1. See supra, p. 139.
point out that Garrick 'acquired the hint that guided him' from a friend of his who went mad over the loss of a beloved daughter of two, whom he dropped while fondling at his dining room window. Garrick used to say therefore: 'I copied nature.'

Emotionalism, it is true, had set in in English criticism early in the century with critics like Dennis and Hughes; but at the time the neo-classical tradition, with its high evaluation of formal elements, was at its strongest, and sensationalism had invaded by then only certain quarters. Sensationalism, which as we shall presently see, gave rise to the conception that poetry is, at its best, a close imitation of life, had already by the early years of the century determined the age's view of imitation. Drama was considered a copy of life, but, on the other hand, the belief in decorum and the criterion of generality remained unshaken. As the century proceeded, however, the uncomfortable contradiction became less striking, although it never quite disappeared until Coleridge attempted some kind of reconciliation between the general and the particular. Whenever the critic was left to his own individual responses to Shakespeare there is no doubt what he would say, but as soon as there occurred any occasion to call forth in him his literary education and training he would fly over to the ideal

2. See supra. Part I, Section 4.
of generality. But the contradiction became less noticeable in the latter half of the century, because for the production of a thoroughgoing naturalistic theory of poetry it was necessary that an emotionalistic conception of poetry and a sensationalistic psychology and philosophy should concur.

This unholy alliance took place about the time of Hartley, and can be best studied in the work of the critics who came under his influence - or, rather, of those who were more directly and considerably influenced by him, since, practically every author on the subject was in some measure affected by his then extremely popular Observations on Man. For an application of Hartley's principles to literary theory we may conveniently go to Joseph Priestley, another popular writer of the same period. In the Preface to his

1. The whole thing is foreshadowed in Hume. Hume had already arrived at the conclusion that the 'very essence' of Beauty consists in its power of producing pleasure (David Hume, The Philosophical Works, London, 1826, vol. iv, pp. 208 ff). Applying his empirical psychology, he rules out the possibility that pleasure is a consequence of, or an accompanying element in, the perception of beauty, and announces his firm conviction that pleasure is its very essence, (Ibid., ii, pp. 31 ff). The pleasure arises from our own realization of a conformity in the object either to what pleases the primary constitution of our nature, meaning of course our physical nature (which is the physicalist view expounded at length in the greater part of Burke's treatise on the Sublime and the Beautiful), or to what by custom or caprice gives us pleasure (which is the germ of associationist aesthetic) (Ibid., ii, p. 31). Hume concludes his discussion of the subject by drawing a broad distinction between Taste and Reason. Taste is the faculty that gives us pleasure or pain; whereas reason is that which conveys the knowledge of truth and falsehood (Ibid., iv, pp. 375 ff). It is only a step from this to arrive at the opposition between science and poetry.
book, *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* Priestley admits that he has decided to publish his book 'partly with a view to the illustration of the doctrines of the association of ideas, to which there is a constant reference through the whole book.' and as a result of his attempt to draw attention to the principles of human nature as advocated by Dr. Hartley. Priestley, of course, owes another debt to Lord Kames, the author of *Elements of Criticism*, himself another propagandist for the naturalistic theory.

Priestley finds that the end of poetry is to give pleasure. His crude psychology, which he has derived from Hartley, has led him to the belief that the intellectual pleasure which poetry excites in us, like all our intellectual pleasures 'consists of nothing but the simple pleasures of sense combined together'. The pleasures of the imagination or the more delicate sensations which we feel when we read poetry, says Priestley, following his Hartley faithfully, are

nothing more than a congeries or combination of ideas and sensations, separately indistinguishable, but which were formerly associated either with the idea itself that excites them, or with some other idea, or circumstance, attending the introduction of them.

By reducing the end of poetry to pleasure, the emotion it arouses in the recipient, and by interpreting pleasure in these terms momentous conclusions follow. Our passions are

engaged, Priestley concludes quite rightly from his premises, 'in proportion to the vividness of our ideas of those objects and circumstances which contribute to excite them.' Perhaps the question would be made clear if we reconstructed the process of the genesis of naturalism roughly in the following steps: First, we can only experience sensations. Secondly, what we call ideas are really forms of combinations of these sensations, only fainter in their impact. Thirdly, poetry arouses in us sensations of similar nature to those we obtain in perception: 'Reading a romance is nearly the same thing as seeing so much of the world and of mankind.' With the exception of a certain amount of pleasure that attends on our realization of skill in imitation, the main pleasure of poetry arises from the sensations associated with the objects it presents or describes. Fourthly, the mark of good poetry therefore is its presentation of objects as close as possible to objects in the real world, so that the most vivid sensations, or ideas as near as possible to impressions may be produced in the recipient. Priestley provides the best illustration of the theory in his words:

With regard to the conduct of the passions, to represent things to the life, in order thoroughly to affect and interest the reader in the perusal of a composition, it is of singular advantage to be very circumstantial, and to introduce as many sensible images as possible.

2. Ibid., p.83.
3. This is precisely the principle of 'ideal presence' Kames puts forward in his Elements. Cf. supra, pp.71 ff.
The power of art have no other means of exciting our passions than by representing such scenes as are found to excite them in real life. Now in nature and real life, we see nothing but particulars, and to time ideas alone are strongest sensations and emotions annexed. 1

The poet should introduce 'the proper names of persons and things, which have a more immediate connection with scenes of real life.' The mention of time, place and person excites more determinate ideas; and the more precise and vivid are our ideas, with the greater strength do they excite all the emotions and passions that depend upon them. The mention of these particulars makes a relation to resemble real and active life. 2

Consequently Shakespeare is praised because more than any other dramatic poet, he arouses the reader's passions, because he 'copies nature and real life in this prospect more closely than most others'. 3 Under such despotism of the senses, to use a Coleridgean phrase, the production of Shakespeare on the stage could be nothing but naturalistic, with every minute detail reproduced faithfully in the stage décor.

The belief that poetry has pleasure for its aim - and all that the belief involves - soon became predominant. It invaded even the strictly rationalist circles. Beattie who was once a staunch advocate of the immutability of Truth, himself had no doubt that one end of poetry is "TO GIVE

2. Ibid., p.85.
3. Ibid., p.87.
PLEASURE". The Horatian utile dulce causes him for a moment to waver in his conviction; but he soon waives the difficulty maintaining that pleasure is still 'undoubtedly the immediate aim' of poetry. An 'agreeable' piece of writing may be poetry although it contains no instruction, for a poet must do everything he can in order to please. The conclusion of a long chapter he devotes to a discussion of the subject is:

Let this therefore be established as a truth in criticism, That the end of poetry is, TO PLEASE.

But in order that poetry may fulfil its aim, which is to please, it must be naturalistic, it must 'exhibit real matter of fact, or something like it; that is in other words, must be either according to truth, or according to verisimilitude'. 'To a poem mere morality is not essential as accurate description'. Not only poetry, but every art 'whose end is to please must be natural.' This is what Beattie wrote in 1762. By 1783 he had been won over or almost to the opposite camp of Hartley. In Dissertations Moral and Critical he could lose himself in absurd irrelevancies like any thoroughgoing associationist when he attempted the task of analysing certain objects taken to

2. Is it altogether fanciful to suggest that Coleridge, who entertained a high opinion of Beattie, owes, perhaps unconsciously, something to this discussion? Meeting with the same difficulty in his discussion in the B.L. Coleridge ends by asserting that pleasure is at least 'the immediate end' of poetry. (B.L., ii, pp.9-10).
4. Ibid., p.33.
5. Ibid., p.23.
be beautiful. To point out such irrelevancies is not my object; the point I wish to make clear is the intimate connection between the rise of sensationalist philosophy and psychology and the spread of naturalism in art, and consequently in the discussion of Shakespearean drama. I do not wish to imply that there is any logical relation between sensationalism and naturalism; but the absence of such relation (if it indeed be absent) does not invalidate the evidence that there was a historical connection between the two events.

Subsequent writers on the subject adopted both sensationalism and the pleasure principle. The main concern of Alison's book on taste is what he called 'the emotion of taste', and Knight was certain that 'the first and most essential merit of poetry is to be pleasing'. In their respective studies of taste the principle of association assumes an overwhelming importance. For Knight 'all the pleasures of intellect arise from the association of ideas'; consequently, the pleasure the object of poetry is to produce is enhanced in proportion to the increase in 'the materials of association'. Naturalism went together with this attitude. Alison calls the emotion of pleasure which it is the aim of the fine arts to produce an 'emotion of

2. Richard Payne Knight, Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste, (Lond., 1805), p.117. Knight condemns Paradise Lost for its 'want of the power to please and amuse.'
3. Ibid., p.122.
taste' in order to distinguish it from the 'simple emotion' which an object in everyday life may excite. But this emotion of taste is in reality nothing but the 'simple emotion' (i.e. the pleasure we derive from a pleasing object) plus the 'emotion of imagination'. Since the latter is only the pleasure we may find in indulging in reveries and daydreams, for such is the extent of the function with which he seems to endow imagination, the importance of a naturalistic representation which offers objects capable of arousing 'simple emotions' becomes at once clear. Likewise, Knight presents a clearly naturalistic view of poetry. Truth, he writes

\[\text{is naturally circumstantial, especially in matters that interest the feelings; for that which has been strongly impressed upon the mind, naturally leaves precise and determinate ideas.}\]

Exactitude in detail he, therefore, praises as a great virtue in poetry. Similarly in drama naturalism demands accuracy of detail in the human characters presented on the stage. Since its birth was connected with a passive view of the mind, naturalism makes it its aim to render everything on the stage as sensible as possible. In it there is not enough room left for the creative imagination of the audience: 'In dramatic representations there can be nothing left indeterminate for the imagination to work upon.'

2. Ibid., p.49.
4. Ibid., p.291.
Consequently symbolic or non-human characters in Shakespearean drama, which cannot anyhow be represented naturalistically, lose their effect for a naturalistically minded spectator. For Knight the Witches in Macbeth lose 'totally their grandeur' by being exhibited on the stage. On the stage what is needed is 'a detailed adherence to the peculiarities of a common individual nature' and the most 'affecting' tragedies are found to be those 'taken from the events of common life.'

Coleridge's view that poetry has pleasure for its end has thus a long history behind it. Indeed, we need not say with Raysor that he obtained it from the article by the Enquirer in the Monthly Magazine, since it was a view commonly held at the time. Besides, the author of the article was only really interested in the question whether or not verse is essential to poetry, his thesis being that the opposition between prose and poetry is ill-grounded. The reply to this article written by a 'Philo-Rhythmus' in the following number, which maintains that the distinction between poetry and prose should be made 'as clear and distinct as possible', shows where the real issue of the article lies. It would therefore blur the problem Coleridge was concerned with to relate his definition to this article,

2. Sh.Crit., vol.i, p.163, P.M.
4. Ibid., p.533.
instead of placing it in the larger context of critical opinion. After all the Enquirer himself was influenced by Blair, another emotionalistic critic, and the distinction he drew between poetry and philosophy was made on the assumption that the proper office of the poet is to 'amuse', and that of the philosopher is to 'instruct', the world — the very assumption we have been considering. The opposition between poetry and science in Coleridge's definition is the product of the eighteenth-century poetics which equated poetry with pleasure. The opposition itself exists in the harbinger of empiricism, Bacon, and is clearly marked in Hume and in Beattie, amongst others.

In Coleridge's critical theory the pleasure principle was accompanied by its corollary in eighteenth-century criticism, namely, naturalism. Dr. Richards, writing as 'a materialist trying to interpret the utterances of an extreme idealist', and intent on showing the sensational non-Kantian heritage that has surreptitiously entered into Coleridge's system, says that 'in the final theory what he has learnt from each (Hartley and Kant) came together.' This is indeed true, although we cannot understand this 'coming

2. Ibid, p.496.
together in Richards's sense. The two elements were not fused 'imaginatively' by Coleridge (How can they ever be?), but were, so to speak, held loosely and separately. In fact if anything, there is a cleavage between them rather than a co-ordination. There is a great deal of the eighteenth century in Coleridge's theory and practice of which he himself seems to be unaware. The definition of poetry as having pleasure for its object is a case in point, and with it the tendency in his practical criticism to look upon Shakespeare's characters as living human beings. In Shakespeare's play, he says, 'you meet people who meet and speak to you as in real life,' they are 'flesh and blood individuals.' When he came to defend Shakespeare's tragi-comedies his argument was just as naturalistic as that of the eighteenth-century critics: 'Shakespeare is the Poet of Nature, portraying things as they exist.'

But this is only half the story. And to think that Coleridge's conception of poetry is all included in this definition, which is based upon the opposition between truth and pleasure, is to misunderstand Coleridge completely. It is because a purist like J. Bronowski saw only this half of the story that he could write:

Coleridge believes that man answers every question when he understands the pleasures which he takes in himself. The study of these pleasures was Coleridge's step in

psychology. In making it, Coleridge did able and pioneer work in this social science. He did as able pioneer work in seeing that poetry was a good field for experiments in this science. But his work tells us nothing of what poetry is itself.

Besides, as we shall see presently, the principles underlying this definition are impossible to reconcile with those upon which his more valuable theory of imagination is founded. Poetic imagination is conceived by him primarily not as a pleasure-giving faculty, but as one which provides a mode of apprehending reality. But in order to realize the inadequacy of Coleridge's definition and his own sense of it we must analyze the definition in some detail.

Having attempted the distinction between poetry and science on the grounds of the pleasure-truth opposition, he was perceptive enough to realize that his definition would include all manner of writing which has not truth for its object. Pushed for a closer definition he found himself trapped in the pleasure psychology. And having erected his theory of poetry upon the basis of pleasure he felt the necessity to distinguish between poetry and prose by reference to a quantitative and a relational scale of pleasure more in keeping with the eighteenth-century mind than with his own philosophical position. Poetry, we are told, 'permits a pleasure from the whole consistent with a consciousness of pleasure from the component parts'; perfect

poetry communicates 'from each part the greatest immediate pleasure compatible with the largest sum of pleasure on the whole'. Supposing that pleasure is the criterion, why this should not apply equally to a well written novel or prose drama is not clear. If Coleridge happens to be thinking of metre as the element responsible for the pleasure we derive from the parts, which is what Richards suggests and what Coleridge elsewhere seems to mean, then this is hardly a true description of poetry, since metre exists in good as well as bad verse and certainly in the latter we feel no more pleasure in the parts than in the whole. As Coleridge himself says on another occasion, 'rhymes and finger-metre render poor flat prose ludicrous, rather than tend to elevate it, or even to hide its nakedness.' But he realizes that he has been trapped by his premise. In Biographia Literaria, when he comes to discuss the same point, suddenly the whole discussion collapses and he undermines his own grounds when he declares that 'poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre and even without the contradistinguishing objects of a poem', meaning, of course, that poetry may exist in writings which do not propose pleasure for their object. And very soon he shifts the argument from the point of view of the reader and recipient.

to that of the poet. For, he tells us, after all, what distinguishes poetry is not the pleasure we feel in reading it, but 'that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the act of composition.'

'What is poetry?' he writes in Biographia Literaria, '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.'

Once the argument is shifted from the point of view of the reader to that of the writer, however, and Coleridge concentrates on an analysis of the poet's mind during the creative process, we detect elements other than pleasure surreptitiously intruding in the argument and in fact directing it. In order to understand the nature of the excitement the poet suffers during the act of creation, which is after all the thing that distinguishes what is poetry from what is not, Coleridge seems to ask the reader to put himself in the poet's place, and to try to recreate for himself what the poet actually undergoes. He must first of all possess 'more than common sensibility'. By that is meant that he must feel 'a more than common sympathy with the objects, emotions, or incidents' which form the subject of the poem. In other words, whatever object may happen to be the subject-matter of a poem must obviously mean something to the poet. Secondly, he must possess 'a more than ordinary

3. Sh. Crit., vol.i, p.156; 'The most general and distinctive character of a poem originates in poetic genius itself.'
activity of the mind in respect of the fancy and imagination', which means, in plainer language, that the field of the poet's experience must be broad and inclusive (fancy being the aggregative and collective power) but however widely disparate the component parts of the experience may be, they must be reduced to a real unity of some sort, a unity of vision or interest as Coleridge prefers to call it (imagination being the unifying power). What then results from the coupling of more than usual sympathy with objects and more than ordinary activity of fancy and imagination? A 'more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and of the human heart', which is due to the working of sympathy (for sympathy from the latter part of the eighteenth century onwards becomes a means of recreating the objects upon which it is directed). These 'truths of nature and of the human heart', however, are not reproduced objectively as they exist in the chaotic world of every day life, but they are rather 'modified and corrected' by the poet's activity of fancy and imagination, sympathy, as it were, directing the poet's fancy to collect and reproduce the material, and imagination reducing the collected material into a unified and organic shape. Coleridge, indeed, in this particular con-

1. Cf. e.g. Letters, p.405: 'Fancy or the aggregating faculty of the mind, not imagination or the modifying and condensing faculty.'

2. See Sh.Crit., vol.1, p.209: 'the starts and strange far-flights of the assimilative power on the slightest and least obvious likenesses presented by thoughts, words, and objects, and even, by this very power, the after as strange but always certain return to the dominant idea.'

3. On 'sympathy' see W.J.Rate, From Classic to Romantic, pp. 132 ff.
text does not state that it is the poet's imagination which modifies the truths, but rather says that the truths are modified by 'that sort of pleasurable emotion which the exertion of all our faculties gives in a certain degree.' But from his frequent utterances on the role of imagination it is beyond doubt what it is that accomplishes the modification. Besides, the pleasurable emotion is only the result of the 'exertion of all our faculties', of the full working of sympathy, fancy and imagination, and it only takes place after all these powers of the mind have done their job in altering the objective world.

As a result of this brief analysis we realize that 'pleasure' is only a catchword which confuses the aim of poetry with its result, or what attends the fulfilment of its function. Poetry is primarily a passionate apprehension of reality. Its object is to recreate human experience imaginatively, to set forth 'values', 'the truths of nature and of the human heart' not as they are in the flux of the world, but reduced to a unified and meaningful pattern - meaningful both to the poet and to the reader. Coleridge himself is aware of this when he forgets about his pleasure principle. There is no stronger proof of the truth of that than his own theory of the imagination. It will be remembered that in the famous formal definition the secondary imagination, i.e. the poetic, is described as 'identical with the primary in the kind of its agency'. The primary is stated

to be 'the prime Agent of all human perception'. Now whatever meaning we may attach to the primary imagination, one thing is certain in the mind of Coleridge, and that is the importance of imaginative activity in human perception, whether the role of the activity is limited to imposing a pattern on the manifold of sensations making them one concrete unified whole, according to the Kantian system, or is assigned itself the supreme importance in the act of perception as Schelling claims. By making the poetic imagination not only identical with, but even higher than, the primary, Coleridge bestows on poetry an overwhelming importance. Far from being trivial, as Bacon thought, or mere play, as some of Coleridge's contemporaries, like e.g. Schiller saw it, the poetic imagination is related by Coleridge to the serious business of life. The function of imaginative poetry is to create a unified and meaningful pattern of the chaos and welter of experience. That is precisely why, as Coleridge says, the whole personality of the poet is engaged in the imaginative process. In imagination, we remember, the moral will is concerned, whereas in fancy it is only what Coleridge calls 'choice', which in his terminology, is something very different from the moral will. Whereas imagination, therefore, is a serious activity, fancy is mere play: it 'plays with counters'. Of the unsatisfactory defi-

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1. See D.C. James, Scepticism and Poetry, (Lond, 1937), pp. 18 ff.
2. See J. Shawcross's Introduction to B.L., pp. lx ff.
nition of poetry in *Biographia Literaria* Shawcross complains saying that 'instead of reaching a clear definition of poetry he contents himself with a description of the poet, which in its turn resolves itself into an enumeration of the characteristics of imagination.' But this is exactly the point about Coleridge's theory of poetry. While he would not abandon the eighteenth-century conception of poetry as having pleasure for its object, somehow at the back of his mind he feels the inadequacy of the conception, and so he always ends his definition by giving a description of the poet in terms of his theory of poetic imagination. We must believe Coleridge when he writes in the same place that his own 'conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part anticipated in the preceding disquisition on the fancy and imagination.' But it is remarkable that Coleridge did not realize that what he said about imagination is incompatible with the view that poetry is opposed to science in having pleasure and not truth for its object.

When, however, we turn to the more strictly aesthetical essays, we find that Richards is understating when he diagnoses only 'some lack of confidence' in Coleridge about the equation of the end of poetry with pleasure. In the first essay on the *Principles of Genial Criticism* he writes that

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2. Ibid., vol. ii, p. 12.
'the common essence of all (the fine arts) consists in the
excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure
through the medium of beauty.' Here we find a new element
introduced in the discussion, namely beauty. And unless
'beauty' could be reduced in the last analysis to that
which arouses pleasure, pleasure would cease to be the
real differentia of the fine arts. So a word on Coleridge's
conception of beauty will perhaps render his position clear.
In the second essay of the same series Coleridge tells us
that

the Apollo Belvedere is not beautiful because it pleases,
but it pleases because it is beautiful. 2

This precisely is the crux of the problem, for beauty, and
not pleasure is the real differentia of the fine arts.
Pleasure is only what accompanies the perception of beauty,
for 'the Beautiful not originating in sensations, must be-
long to the intellect.' 4 And

when we declare an object beautiful, the contemplation
or intuition of its beauty precedes the feeling of
complacency, in order of nature at least.

Not only that, but the pleasure itself is an accidental
accompaniment dependent upon a variety of contingent and
fugitive factors:

in great depression of spirits (beauty) may even exist
without sensibly producing it (i.e., pleasure). 5

2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.224.
3. 'Beauty which may be present in a disagreeable object,'
No one knew that better than the author of the Dejection Ode himself. Conversely a good deal of the pleasure occasioned by a work of art may not be caused by the work of art itself, but may arise from purely personal associations. Again nobody realized that more forcibly than the great opponent of associationism:

So far is the Beautiful from depending wholly on association, that it is frequently produced by the mere removal of associations.  

In his analysis of beauty the discussion, we notice, veers significantly towards his conception of the secondary imagination. 'The Beautiful, contemplated in its essentials, is that in which the many, still seen as many, becomes one.' The general definition of beauty is 'Multeity in unity', it is the reconciliation of the one and the many; it is essentially 'Harmony'.

The Beautiful arises 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.

So he writes at the conclusion of his essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism. It is interesting to note that pleasure is not mentioned as an essential in this recapitulation of his thoughts on the subject, but only as an attendant on that perception:

2. Loc.Cit.
As light is to the eye, even such is beauty to the mind, which cannot but have complacency in whatever is perceived as pre-figured to its living faculties. 1

And the faculty of taste in his treatment at this stage becomes very close—indeed to that of imagination.

Taste is the intermediate faculty which connects the active with the passive powers of our mind, the intellect with the senses ... 2

As Coleridge's thoughts on the subject develop, and as he comes under the influence of Schelling, the unity of the manifold, which has constituted his conception of beauty, becomes essentially an organic unity, which it is the privilege of imagination alone to create. Art then stamps the elements it combines into unity 'in the mould of a moral idea'. The 'common definition of the fine arts' then becomes: 'that they all, like poetry, are to express intellectual purposes, thoughts, conceptions, and sentiments which have their origin in the human mind', 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. 5

At this moment we cease to hear of pleasure altogether.

Of course, Coleridge's conception of pleasure is not as crude as that of the eighteenth-century literary theorists. The empiricist and associationist idea of pleasure was fraught with all kinds of foreign matter. Even as great a

5. Loc.Cit.
mind as Hume could not see the distinction between art and utility. And as late as Coleridge's own time the confusion still persisted. It is to be found in Alison, Dugald Stewart, Richard Payne Knight and Jeffrey, the editor of the Edinburgh Review. Coleridge, on the other hand, tried to point out the disinterested nature of poetic pleasure. In this respect his pleasure is more strictly aesthetic and closer to Kant's conception than to Hartley's. Following the Critique of Judgment he went to great pains to distinguish between the beautiful, the agreeable and the useful. At times indeed, in his treatment, pleasure became a feeling of spiritual joy, almost the reverse of what the empiricists and associationists understood by it. In Biographia Literaria he expressed his dissatisfaction with the use of the word 'pleasure' in this context: 'The term, pleasure, is unfortunately so comprehensive, as frequently to become equivocal.'

But still the definition suffers from making the end of poetry an emotion. The result is that when he comes to providing a criterion of excellence in poetry he is continually referring to what is beyond pleasure or mere emotion. When faced with an unsophisticated and straightforward presentation of his theory in George Dyer's Preface to his own Poems, namely, that 'the immediate object of poetry is to please,' he indignantly exclaims in a marginal

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note: 'Damned nonsense!' and writes, 'The poet must always
aim at pleasure as his specific means; but surely Milton
did, and all ought to aim at something nobler as their
end.' And in a MS note, recently published by Mr. House
we read:

Not the mere quantity of pleasure received can be any
criterion, for that is endlessly dependent on accidents
of the Subject receiving it, his age, sensibility,
moral habits, &c. — but the worth, the permanence, and
comparative Independence of the Sources, from which
the Pleasure has been derived. 2

The Sources turn out to be none other than Reason, Arbitra-
ment, Judgment, Fancy, Imagination and sensations all opera-
ting 'in due proportion and harmony.' Parts of Collins's
Ode on the Poetical Character'inspired and whirled him
along with greater agitations of enthusiasm than any of
the most impassioned scenes in Schiller or Shakespeare',
and yet he regarded the latter as the 'more valuable poetry',
and it is not really clear why he should think so, granting
that pleasure is the criterion. Gray's poem, The Bard, once
'intoxicated' him, but that is no proof that it is a good
poem: in fact he later came to think it is positively a
poor piece of writing. Pleasure therefore is no criterion
of poetic excellence. To a mature mind, if it takes place at
all, it arises only as an attendant on the understanding of a
poem. On the other hand, to a 'mind in its simplicity' the

4. Kathleen Coburn, Inquiring Spirit, p. 156; cf. T.T.,
   Oct. 23, 1833.
pleasure is greatest when poetry 'is only generally and not perfectly understood,' when, in other words, the reader's response is made up more of his own imagining than of what a poem has to offer. As Coleridge himself said, as early as 1796, poetry, even that which deals with abstract truths is 'deemed impassioned, by him who reads it with impassioned feelings.'

Coleridge realized that the end of poetic drama is something more than an emotion. Poetic drama is first and foremost a 'kind' of poetry, and as such it has not for its end the mere arousing of emotions. In fact he blames his contemporary dramatists precisely for their being satisfied with the excitement of emotions in their spectators, irrespective of whether their works should or should not embody a philosophy of life or a vision of existence. The ancient dramatists both in England and in France, he writes in The Friend, considered both comedy and tragedy as 'kinds of poetry'. Their excellence is that

they excite the minds of the spectators to active thought and to a striving after ideal excellence. The soul is not stupefied into mere sensations by worthless sympathy with our own ordinary sufferings, or an empty curiosity for the surprising, undignified by the language or situations which awe and delight the imagination. 4

1. See Appendix A.
4. Ibid., vol. ii, p. 158.
The moderns, on the other hand, 'sought in comedy to make us laugh merely' and in tragedy they 'condescended to wheedle away the applause of the spectators, by representing before them facsimiles of their own mean selves in all their existing meanness, or to work on the sluggish sympathies by a pathos not a whit more respectable than the maudlin tears of drunkenness.

Mere laughter and tears are not the ends, or the criteria of comedy and tragedy. Coleridge's spirit/attack in his lengthy critique on Maturin's popular tragedy, Bertram, is directed against its emotionalism, no less than against its immorality and subversion of the natural order of things. To Klopstock's remark that the criterion of a good tragedy is 'its power of exciting tears' Coleridge replied that 'nothing was easier than to deluge an audience, that it was done every day by the meanest writers.' Of that criticism of his own tragedy, The Remorse, which arraigned it because of its lack of pathos, he wrote to Robert Southey:

As to the cry that the Remorse is not pathetic (meaning such pathos as convulses in Isabella or The Gamester) the answer is easy. True! the poet never meant that it should be. 3

It is because he saw that the end of poetry is not an emotion that he rejected Garrick's version of Romeo and Juliet. Garrick had altered the catastrophe of Shakespeare's play, and, following the English translation of Bandello, which

1. B.L., Ch.xxiii.
was not used by Shakespeare, made Juliet awake the very moment Romeo has taken the poison. In his surprise Romeo forgets what he has done, and transported with joy both he and Juliet 'break out in a strain of rapture'. But their bliss does not last long; for soon the poison works on him and he dies at her feet. The 'scene of bliss is changed to grief and anguish' and Juliet soon stabs herself to death. In his criticism of this alteration Coleridge says that 'a narrative is one thing and a drama another, and that Shakespeare's judgment revolted at such situations on the stage.' If the end of tragedy were purely emotional, what difference would there be between a tragedy and a blunt razor, which can equally produce tears 'by shaving the upper lip'? Against such a verdict it may be illuminating to set a typical emotionalistic comment. Murphy regrets that Shakespeare had not seen this translation of Bandello, for otherwise 'he would have known how to make the best use of these extraordinary circumstances.' By his alteration, Murphy believes, Garrick 'roused a variety of passions: we are transported with joy, surprise, and rapture, and by a rapid change, we are suddenly overwhelmed with despair, and grief and pity. Every word pierces to the heart, and the catastrophe, as it now stands, is the most affecting in the whole compass of the drama.'

2. Arthur Murphy, The Life of David Garrick, vol. i, pp. 151-152. Also contrast with Coleridge's attitude to drama the emotionalism of Hazlitt and its effect on his conception of tragedy. Hazlitt believes that in a tragedy the human soul is, or should be, absolutely crushed. Intent on squeezing a situation of every possible drop of emotion, he denounces Greek tragedy. (cont.)
But such is the natural result of the belief that the end of poetry is an emotion.

Great drama, undoubtedly, should affect us; but it should do so 'in union with the activity both of our understanding and imagination.' Immediately the understanding and the imagination are introduced we realize that it is not merely a matter of producing an emotional attitude.

Coleridge's view of the origin of metre, we must remember, is that although metre demands passion as the stuff and raw material of the experience it also arises from the need to impose order upon that passion. He once described music as 'poetry in its grand sense', because in it we get not only passion, but passion and order at once; and in hyper-

Footnote 2 continued from page 219.

Sophocles, in his opinion, did not write real tragedies: in his dramas 'the mind is not shaken to its centre, the whole being is not crushed or broken down.' Unlike modern tragedians, he does not present to us heroes whose souls are 'utterly subdued, or even convulsed and overthrown' by misfortune and passion. See Elizabeth Schneider, The Aesthetics of William Hazlitt, (Philadelphia, 1933), p.134. According to Hazlitt we go to see tragedies 'for the same reason' as we read newspaper accounts of 'dreadful fires and shocking murders' and 'frequent executions and trials', and that is 'because there is a natural tendency in the mind to a strong excitement, a desire to have its faculties aroused and stimulated to the utmost.' William Hazlitt, The Complete Works, ed. P.P. Howe, vol. 5, p.213. Cf. e.g. Mrs. Montagu, supra, p. 73

1. Coleridge agrees with Wordsworth that poetry implies passion, but the definition he offers of passion by no means confines it to feelings: 'Passion must be understood in its general sense, as an excited state of the feelings and faculties.' B.L., ii, p.55.

2. Ibid., vol. ii, pp.49-50.

bolic language he called poets 'Gods of Love who tame the 
1 chaos.' 'All other men's worlds are the poet's chaos,' he 
said on another occasion. Poetry then is not just the ex-
2 pression of, nor does it result in, mere emotion. It primarily 
consists in imposing a meaningful pattern upon the flux and 
chaos of the emotions. In Coleridge's view great poetry is 
not just 'interesting' or 'entertaining'. Indeed the reporter 
of his 1811 lectures was right when he wrote of his treatment 
of poetry:

To those who consider poetry in no other light than 
as a most entertaining species of composition, this 
gentleman's mode of inquiring into its principles may 
want attraction. 3

Without a 'most profound, energetic and philosophical mind,' 
Shakespeare might have become a 'very delightful poet, but not 
the great dramatic poet.' 4 In Biographia Literaria we are told 
that without 'depth and energy of thought' poetic powers 
'could scarce exist in a high degree.' 5 In the verses from 
Orchestra, in which Coleridge finds an analogy to the working 
of poetic genius, the final destination of the activity is not 
the 'senses' but the 'mind': poetry, as it were, in Coleridge's 
own words, 'steals access through our senses to our minds.' 6

Coleridge's definition of poetry on the ground of the

1. A.E., p.95.
Crit., p.100. Fn 2.
truth-pleasure opposition has, however, been once more emphasized by a recent critic. In his book on Coleridge Mr. Humphry House has made a special plea for the reinstatement of the emotional element in Coleridge's theory. As a reminder that the modern trend which insists upon nothing but meaning can go too far, his attempt is both sound and laudable. 1 On the other hand, an emphasis on the emotional side in Coleridge's literary theory cannot lead to fruitful results in the field of literary criticism. Mr. House himself admits that The Ancient Mariner and Kâbîlâ Ka,n, poems which he values very highly, 'are only tolerable if they carry a weight of important meaning.' 2 And in his enlightening discussion of these two poems his approach can hardly be described as that of one who believes that the end of the poems is pleasure, and who sets out with the object of analyzing the sources of that pleasure. Ignoring other material, he seems to pin his discussion of Coleridge's literary theory on his attempted definition of poetry in terms of the pleasure-truth opposition. He even forces the distinction between imagination and fancy to yield him the emotional element which, at least in theory, he is looking for.

2. Ibid., p.155.
3. Mr. House's view of imagination is meant to counteract Livingston Lowe's 'equation of imagination with ordinary thinking even scientific thinking "which curbs and rudders"'. (See J. Livingston Lowe, The Road to Xanadu, ch.xxii). The general import of it seems to be that whereas in fancy the activity engaged in is purely conscious (it consists in 'selective acts of will') (cont.)
Even apart from its historical association with naturalism, the opposition between science and poetry on account of truth, is a false and misleading one. It can only hold water if we mean by truth only scientific truth, but that is indeed inadmissible. We have no reason to believe that the kind of truth we arrive at by means of science is Truth, particularly as it does not pretend to possess any certainty. Furthermore the

Footnote 3 continued from page 222.

in imagination it is the unconscious that preponderates. From a discussion of the working of memory and association, in which Coleridge maintains that 'either "bodily feeling" or "emotion" acts as a determining principle by which certain images or other material from memory are brought to the consciousness rather than others' (see Coleridge, p.143), he deduces the importance of the emotional element in imagination. But it must be remembered that Coleridge is here concerned with memory (not with any particular type of memory operative only in imaginative activity): 'Renew the state of affection or bodily Feeling, same or similar - sometimes dimly similar / and instantly the trains of forgotten Thought rise from the living Catacombs!' (Coleridge, p.143 & A.P., p.8) And selective memory operates as much in fancy as in imagination, if anything more in the former, since the former is after all 'a mode of memory.' But because he accepts the view that the end of poetry is an emotion, and because he unreservedly relegates fancy to the power of 'writing verses' (p.145), Mr. House has to stress the emotional element in imagination.

1. Coleridge, of course, could not know that. Following Kant, he believed that scientific truth is immutable and certain. In works of science he found 'truth absolute and demonstrable.' (D.L., ii, p.9; see his definition of science in Aids, p.135). The whole of the Kantian system of pure reason was erected on the assumption, commonly held until the advent of Einstein, that Newton's Principle was unassailable, and that its laws of the physical universe were actually the laws by which the universe worked, that they were necessary and universal. We, who have lived to see the physics of Einstein and Bohr, naturally know better. Science, we have come to learn, accepts explanations which are only more probable than others, and which are ready to be superseded when other explanations possessing a greater degree of probability are offered.

(cont.)
truths of science by no means encompass the whole field of human experience. It would therefore be more satisfactory and more conformable to the nature of facts, to start from human experience itself, and thereby allow for more than one kind of truth. If science is concerned with the problem of explanation, the realm of poetry lies in what we might call 'interpretation'. In interpretation we find elements which from the nature of things do not, and should not, disturb explanation — for what interpretation is primarily concerned with is the question of values. In this way we can say that there is truth in poetry as much as there is truth in science, and science and poetry then become only two tools (very different indeed) of searching into the nature of the reality of human experience: Science is itself a way in which the human mind constructs the world and itself according to certain rules (that is what is meant

Footnote 1 continued from page 223.

'Kant mobilizes the science of his day for the proof that certainty is attainable; he claims that the philosopher's dream of certainty is borne out by the results of science ... He regarded the physics of Newton as the ultimate stage of knowledge of nature and idealized it into a philosophical system ... Had Kant lived to see the physics and mathematics of our day he might very well have abandoned the philosophy of the synthetic apriori.' The Rise of Scientific Philosophy by Hans Reichenbach, (Univ. of California Press, 1951), pp. 42-44. See the whole chapter 'The search for Certainty' for a lucid explanation of the lack of certainty in science.
by explanation), and poetry, like any other art, is a way of assessing its value or meaning. Fundamentally it is a question of relationship or attitude. One and the same object can be treated scientifically as well as poetically, and unless we confuse categories I cannot see how the scientific explanation can be truer than the poetic interpretation. Perhaps it is something like this that Kierkegaard meant when he said that

Science, fully as much as poetry and art, assumes a mood both on the part of the producer and on the part of the recipient, that an error in modulation is just as disturbing as an error in the exposition of thought. 2

This fact, wrote Kierkegaard, 'has been entirely forgotten in our age,' and his words seem to be truer of our own time than even of his.

1. If the opposition is conceived as a question of different attitudes then the long standing feud between science and poetry can be reconciled in the psychological notion of the indivisible unity of personality. The individual can adopt different attitudes to the same object at different times, and that without ceasing to be one integral unity. There is no need therefore to envisage the conflict between the two as absolutely insoluble, as some poets like Blake and thinkers like Schopenhauer or Remy de Gourmont once did. The latter, in an essay on 'L'Art et la Science' wrote of this conflict: 'Le conflit est permanent, parce qu'il a sa source dans l'organisation même de l'être humain. L'homme veut vivre et l'homme veut connaître. Loin que ces deux tendances se complètent et se renforcent, elles se nient l'une l'autre' (Promenades Philosophiques, Paris, 1905, pp.122-123). As 'homme des lettres' he had to defend poetry at the expense of science, by making the impulse to knowledge a death impulse in contra-distinction to the vital impulse of art. Dr. Richards, more recently, being more respectful to science and yet recognizing the value of poetry, makes the latter a matter of emotions, thus reducing almost to nothing, at least in his early theories (in Principles of Literary Criticism and Science and Poetry), the cognitive element in poetry. (cont.)
It is something of the same nature that Coleridge's celebrated phrase 'the willing suspension of disbelief' suggests to my mind. We suspend our disbelief for the sake of poetic faith. Coleridge's use of the words 'disbelief' and 'faith' in this connection is indeed telling. Coleridge did not say the suspension of disbelief for the sake of poetic belief. And unless I am very much mistaken the word 'faith' implies something different from 'belief' or 'disbelief'. Disbelief is essentially an intellectual matter, whereas in 'faith' the question of values and the whole personality of man (his total faculties with their relative worth and dignity) enters. At one point he tells us that this poetic faith is an 'Analogon' of religious faith. I cannot object, as some Coleridge scholars have done, to the use of the word 'willing' in this context. Far from being an unhappy choice, in my opinion, it has an important function to fulfil. To read poetry as it should be read one must adopt the right attitude, one must assume the proper 'mood', to use Kierkegaard's term. We could, if we would, read parts of Paradise Lost as if it were a treatise

Footnote 2 continued from page 225.


1. Coleridge defines faith as 'a collective energy, a total act of the whole moral being,' B.L., i, p.84. See 'Essay on Faith' where he writes that by virtue of the dependence of faith upon the will it must be an energy, and inasmuch as it relates to the whole moral man, it must be exerted in each and all of his constituents or incidents, faculties and tendencies; it must be a total, not a partial - a continuous, not a desultory or occasional - energy.' Aids, p.349. In T.T. H.N. Coleridge tells us that Coleridge 'used very frequently to insist upon (contd.)
on astronomy. Coleridge himself, actuated by the 'pleasure' assumptions, did read parts of Wordsworth's Immortality Ode with the wrong attitude. He chose not to suspend his disbelief for the sake of poetic faith. The suspension of disbelief is therefore an act of will. Besides there is a historical justification for Coleridge's use of the word 'willing'. 'Willing' is necessary to distinguish the type of activity an ideal recipient is engaged in, according to Coleridge, from the mere passive reading of literature to which associationism leads. While we are suspending our disbelief we are not mere 'lazy lookers on' on the world that is revealed to us in poetry. We are not 'ideally present' as Kames's sensationalism would have us believe, nor are we indeed dreaming or even half-dreaming. Just as the poet himself, while composing, reveals judgment ever awake and steady self-possession, so does the ideal reader.

The suspension does not at all imply divorcing poetry from life. On the contrary. It only means that we adopt a specific attitude to human experience - only that this specific attitude happens not to be the attitude of science. Any objection declaring the superiority of the scientific attitude, or complaining that the poetic attitude, so to

Footnote 1 continued from page 223, and footnote 2. the distinction between belief and faith. T.T., July 29, 1832.
1. See infra., p.p. 239 ff.
speak, does not yield us scientific truth, would be not only irrelevant but meaningless. That is why this phrase of Coleridge is far more valuable as a description of the relationship between poetry and science than his famous definition which draws an opposition between them on the ground of truth.

With human experience we start; it is the raw material of a Shakespearean tragedy, for example. And although the experience itself is transmuted in the creative process into something else, something purer, deeper and more lasting as a pattern than the flux of individual experiences - yet it is with the affirmation of some human value that we always end. That is why it will not do to hold either the naive assumption that what we see on the stage is a real event (i.e. complete delusion) or at the opposite extreme, the hard, common sense assumption that we believe all the time while passing through the harrowing experience of Lear, that it is nothing but fiction - the two views prevalent in the eighteenth century. The first confuses art with reality, and ignores the vast difference between our responses to a tragedy and our responses to a catastrophic event in everyday life. The latter view suffers from the application of the scientific attitude to what lies outside the realm of science, from a confusion of 'moods'.

If it is true that Othello is nothing but fiction, how can we account for the fact that we are deeply concerned with the fate of Othello and the other characters? Any serious
reading or watching of the play cannot but show us how deeply involved in the whole action we are. It is hardly convincing to dispose of the problem by saying it is really a matter of language, an emotive use of language, which is so rich in associations and connotations. Although undoubtedly we only reach the experience through the language, and for that reason a thorough analysis of the language of Shakespeare is indispensable, we have to admit once and for all that it goes much deeper than that—unless, of course, we wash our hands of all real human problems, making of them, with the logical positivists, purely problems of language. Besides, language itself, as a great poet like Shakespeare uses it, is deeply rooted in experience. We are immediately involved in Othello, because we perceive that there are human values at stake. And Shakespeare's greatness lies precisely in that in his poetic drama he touches upon these human values, upon what concerns all of us, or to express it differently using Coleridge's words, he sees the 'universal in the particular; the 'all in each of human nature.' Thus in the tragedy of Othello, as Coleridge rightly suggests, we have the enormity of human deception. And nothing short of Coleridge's 'faith' can explain the degree and force of our concern.

1. B.L., vol.11, p.64.
2. See infra, ch.IV.p.407.
The values that are affirmed in Shakespearean drama may be regarded from metaphysical or ethical points of view. But this is not at all necessary; they are neither doctrinally ethical nor systematically metaphysical. At best they are shown to be in some broad sense moral values. They are concerned with man's spiritual life, his joy and suffering, the dignity and grandeur of the human soul. That such values exist in the works of Shakespeare it seems indeed strange that some people doubt. If the 'total' response we obtain from a Shakespearean play is purely an emotional attitude, all that can be said about Shakespearean tragedy would hardly make one slim volume - the technical language of emotion being handicapped and inadequate as it is confessed by its users to be. But the literature written on Shakespeare is colossal: we still interpret his plays and discuss other people's interpretations, assuming some kind of common ground from which we start our arguments or to which we return. Our writings on them do not always contain mere historical information. One cannot therefore see how we can in all sincerity do that unless we assume somehow the existence of such values in them. If people were really convinced that their experience of Shakespeare meant only, as it has been asserted, that everything is all right in their nor-

1. 'the power of destiny and the controlling might of heaven, which seems to elevate the characters which sink beneath its irresistible blow.' E.L., vol.ii, p.163.
2. By I.A.Richards. Also see his Principles of Literary criticism, p.273: 'The people who say "How True!" at intervals while reading Shakespeare are misusing his work, and, comparatively speaking, wasting their time.'
vous system, they would have shut their mouths a long time ago, opening them only at frequent intervals to murmur that De gustibus ... etc.

Does Coleridge then describe adequately the nature of our involvement in drama when he discusses the question of dramatic illusion, or when he deals with the problem of imitation? Does he advance the discussion of the subject a step further than his predecessors? As regards the problem of imitation we have seen that the question of the unities as understood to be a means of producing verisimilitude has already been settled in the eighteenth century both on historical and rational grounds by Kames, Dr. Johnson and others. That drama aims at perfect delusion is an opinion, which, Coleridge feels, needs 'no fresh confutation.' But in combating the theory of verisimilitude Johnson particularly moved to the opposite extreme denying all dramatic illusion. This Coleridge found to be an equally erroneous view. The truth of the matter he maintains to lie somewhere between the two positions.

Coleridge follows some of his predecessors in holding the Aristotelian imitation to be the end of drama. Imitation is not a copy and the difference between the two consists in a certain degree of difference in the former from the objects imitated. That is why a completely naturalistic  

1. See supra, pp.11 ff. and Part II, Sect.7.  
view of the characters would be inconsistent at least with Coleridge's principle of imitation. In the discussion of imitation in drama with special reference to Shakespeare Coleridge shows that he is somewhat aware of the conventionality of Shakespearean drama — though the discussion itself in many parts is far from satisfactory. The copy, he tells us, arouses disgust, whereas a successful imitation causes delight. So far so good. But when he goes on to explain that the quantum of difference that we find in imitation is 'an indispensable condition and cause of the pleasure we derive from it', and almost in the same breath he tells us that while watching or reading a play 'our sense of probability is in slumber' we suspect that the argument is breaking down, particularly as elsewhere, when he comes to analyse the state of dramatic illusion, he tells us that our power of judgment or comparison is suspended. For how can we obtain the pleasure of imitation, i.e., the pleasure arising from the perception of the quantum of difference between imitation and imitated, unless we are in possession of the power of judgment by means of which we can compare the two? 'In all imitation,' says Coleridge, 'two elements must exist, and not only exist but must be perceived as existent.' He further complicates matters by on the one hand likening the state of dramatic illusion to that of a dream, the explana-

2. Mis.Crit., p.203; the italics are mine.
tion given by some eighteenth century English as well as German critical theorists, which is compatible with a passive view of the mind, and on the other hand introducing the Kantian view that the moment we exclaim of a work 'How natural!' we perceive the highest degree of art.

But in the hope of throwing some light on the question, let us shift our focus for a moment from the recipient to the poet. Raysor remarks justly that

The distinction of copy and imitation as applied to the product of art, has a close connection with the distinction of observation and meditation, as applied to the artistic process. 3

Perhaps the analogy can explain more precisely what Coleridge means by his theory of illusion. If observation can only lead to a copy and meditation to an imitation the difference between a copy and an imitation can perhaps be put in this way. In a copy we only meet with the external appearance of the world in which the artist does not enter; whereas in an imitation we get not so much the external world as it appears 'objectively', but rather a vision of the world experienced and felt by the individual poet. The difference therefore between a copy and an imitation is not a difference in degree: in Shakespearean drama we do not get a picture of the world recorded by observation, in which some elements are suppressed and others superadded. It is a diffe-

1. On the German ancestry of the dream analogy see Dorothy I. Morrill, 'Coleridge's Theory of Dramatic Illusion', M.L.N., XLII, 7 (November, 1927). Amongst the English critics who used the dream image were Kanes and later Alison.
rence in quality. It is, in fact, the difference between the '
primary' and 'secondary' imagination. The world of Shake-
pearean drama is other than the world of everyday reality.
It is an experience of it seen from a particular point of
view; it is essentially a world of the spirit. It is pri-
marily an expression of value, of the meaning the external
world held for the poet. That is precisely what we do not
obtain from a copy.

Subjective indeed it is, but because the experience does
not touch the poet's petty personal self, but arises from
the very depths of his being, from 'the unfathomable depths
of his own oceanic mind', it has a universal significance:

Shakespeare shaped his characters out of the nature with-
in; 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... 1
Shakespeare in composing had no but the 2 represent-
tative. 3

Coleridge again and again points out the impersonal nature
of this subjective experience. It is an essential mark of
a true genius, he says, that 'its sensibility is excited by
any other cause more powerfully than by its own personal
interests.' The choice of subjects 'very remote' from
personal self is considered by him to be 'a promise of genius.' 5

1. T.T., March 15, 1834.
2. This is what Coleridge elsewhere describes as the 'natura
   naturans.' Mis.Crit., p.209.
3. Mis. Crit., p.44.
What he finds of specific excellence in Venus and Adonis is 'the utter aloofness of the poet's own feelings from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst.' The same thought he expresses in his letters:

> It is easy to clothe imaginary beings with our own thoughts and feelings, but to send ourselves out of ourselves, to think ourselves into the thoughts and feelings of beings in circumstances wholly and strangely different from our own, hic labor hoc opus; and who has achieved it? Perhaps only Shakespeare.

One could in fact produce a powerful catena of quotations to prove Coleridge's insistence on the impersonality of great art, particularly as exhibited in Shakespeare. It is therefore not quite accurate to say that he had 'a marked tendency to regard the writer who gave immediate expression to his own mode of experience - the personal writer - as the type and norm of the creative artist in literature,' or that he 'made the mistake of regarding - in his more abstract considerations at all events - the personal writer as superior to the objective writer.' The greatest artist in literature, in Coleridge's opinion, was always Shakespeare whose impersonal art no other critic pointed out with greater clarity or consistency. As to his critical theory Coleridge's position is sufficiently clear. This complete detachment and negation of self (what Keats calls 'negative capability'), this complete absence of personal interest may help explain

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Coleridge's emphasis on the relation between poetic genius and deep morality. In his Philosophical Lectures he says that 'to have a genius is to live in the universal;' meaning that during the act of creation the poet's 'individuality' is 'lost' and with it 'his little unthinking contemptible self.' The morality of a great poet, in Coleridge's view, is not therefore what F.L. Lucas understands him to mean; it does not consist in upholding 'prudish moral standards', nor has it anything to do with conduct or whatever lies outside the moment of creation.

From his other writings, particularly from his 'Essay on Method', we know the significance Coleridge attached to the distinction between observation and meditation. In observation the mind is a passive recorder of the impressions of the outside world, and is, as it were, a mirror which cannot but produce a copy. Meditation, contrariwise, is an inward recoiling of the mind upon itself: in it the mind is essentially active and imposes its forms on the passive gleanings of the senses, making of them meaning and sense. It is by meditation and not by observation that 'ideas' are born. Truth 'in whatever science', Coleridge believed, originates in the mind. Hence his emphasis on the subjective element in the creative experience.

1. Philosophical Lectures, p.173.
2. F.L. Lucas, The Rise and Fall of the Romantic Ideal, (Camb., 1937), p.188.
3. See especially Letters, vol.1, p.372, and T.T., Aug. 20, 1833: 'I would agree with Strabo ... that there can be no great poet who is not a good man, though not, perhaps, a good man.'
For in all that truly merits the name of poetry in its most comprehensive sense, there is a necessary predominance of the ideas (i.e. of that which originates in the artist himself), and a comparative indifference of the materials. 1

This explains why, in his treatment of Shakespeare, Coleridge's attention is wholly absorbed by an analysis of what is essentially Shakespearean, to a degree in which he tends to isolate him from his age and contemporaries. In the creative act meditation always comes first in the order of importance, and then observation. It is well known that in his approach to Shakespeare's plays Coleridge disregards, nay distrusts, scholarship completely. But it is not sufficiently realized that he does so, as it were, on principle. The scholarly approach which pointed out sources and hunted for analogues to the plays represented to him the view that regarded artistic creation as a passive act of 'observation', and which in its attention to the parts tended to lose sight of the 'idea' or the unifying principle of the whole, which is simply the product of the poet's own mind:

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, etc. 3

1. The Friend, p. 309.
2. See Appendix C.
Whereas observation leads to a mere artificial form, by meditation a poet achieves a real organic unity in his work. Meditation in art is in fact Coleridge's description of that activity of the mind during the creative process which must include the imaginative act in the strictly Coleridgean sense. In Beaumont and Fletcher's works where the power of meditation is lacking, there is an artificial form hiding '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 coloured fruit.' Meditation, on the other hand, creates a genuine object with a life of its own. By meditation Shakespeare 'evolves the germ from within by the imaginative power according to an idea', with the result that his works give the impression 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.' The 'ideas' which are arrived at by meditation, and of which the works of art are the embodiment, are the 'values' which poetic genius reveals in a world 'of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up - the sparkle and the dewdrops.' The values themselves constitute the poet's interpretation of the human condition: the mind of a genius 'feels the riddle of the

world and may help unravel it."¹ The man of genius places things in a new light."²

If we consider the question of imitation and dramatic illusion from this angle, and Coleridge's theory of imagination invites us to do so, we realize how the 'waking dream' analogy is not only unhappy but misleading. Instead of stressing their 'poetic truth', i.e. the values of which they are the expression, it links the plays to harmful and aberrational forms of self-indulgence, like reveries, which Coleridge tirelessly condemns. The fact that the whole state of 'dramatic illusion' depends upon the will ('we choose to be deceived,' says Coleridge) should alone be sufficient to make it something qualitatively different from

1. A.P., pp.41-42.
3. E.g., D.L., vol.1, p.34: 'day-dreaming, during which the mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness, and a little mawkish sensibility, etc. ...' See also his warning against making a habit of the passive reading of contemporary novels because it 'occasions in time the entire destruction of the powers of the mind', and 'produces no improvement of the intellect, but fills the mind with a mawkish and morbid sensibility, which is directly hostile to the cultivation, invigoration, and enlargement of the nobler faculties of the understanding.' (Sh.Crit., vol. ii, p.57). The nearest modern equivalent to these novels, I suppose, are the cheap sensational films which create this completely passive dream-like state of mind. But surely the implication of Coleridge's words here is that the effect of a serious literary work, Shakespeare's drama for example, is not analogous to that of a drug.
dreaming. Indeed it can never be true that a dream-like experience is, as Coleridge wishes us to believe, 'the highest degree' of the aesthetic state. But Coleridge seems to be influenced here by sensationalist psychology and the pleasure principle. If the object of poetry is to give us pleasure, then we must do all we can to obtain that pleasure. We must blind our judgment and willingly deceive ourselves. But all this will not do. We are not mere passive spectators bewitched or lulled into a state of semi-sleep by a series of events unfolding before our eyes. On the contrary, we respond actively to a play with the whole of our personality engaged — only we do not approach it with the improper attitude, e.g. the attitude of science. If our judgment is suspended it is only suspended in one field or on one level. We do not indeed ask ourselves whether Hamlet is really Garrick declaiming a set of fine speeches, or whether Gertrude is really Mrs. Pritchard cleverly simulating death by poison — not because we are in a state of 'a waking dream', or because we are absolutely suspending our judgment, but because such questions would be irrelevant, because our attention is wholly absorbed by a certain event which demands from us a certain attitude. It is not that we willingly deceive ourselves, but we willingly adopt a certain 'mood', to use Kierkegaard's term again. Such moods we continuously adopt in our daily life, otherwise our life would be a chaos. For instance, while dealing with a geometrical problem we do not stop to ask ourselves whether the circle is a beautiful
figure, or whether it is a mystical symbol. Nor do we, when in everyday life we assume for practical purposes that the sun rises and sets, ask ourselves whether the sun really rises or sets and whether it is not the earth that really revolves round the sun. In every different field of experience, be it scientific, practical or artistic, etc., ..., we willingly suspend our judgment in one direction or other in accordance with the requirements of the particular field, eliminating from our consciousness any irrelevant considerations. And yet we cannot say that we willingly deceive ourselves daily or suspend our judgment absolutely. This applies to art and literature as much as to science and practical life. If we do not judge whether or not the action and events in a play are real in the sense that our presence in the theatre is, we can still judge whether one part of the play is in keeping with another and harmonizes with the whole pattern. We can still ask ourselves such questions as what is the meaning of the whole play? In fact, while watching a play we are in a state of complete vigilance and mental alertness. An apparently insignificant incident, a little remark dropped casually by one of the characters, will perhaps determine our whole response to the play. This is not done completely unconsciously on our part. Without our readiness to interpret, the incident or remark may pass unnoticed, and its significance will be lost on us. That is why in an ideal recipient the exercise of judgment and a state of mental awareness are indispensable.
For instance, irony, a sharp and effective tool in the hands of a master dramatist, would cease to produce the required effect without that state of awareness. When we respond to a play rightly we judge and interpret all the time, even though a great deal of our interpretation we do almost unwittingly. Is it too much to say that a sensationalist psychology which has led to the belief that we are completely passive spectators, has also blinded the critics to the presence of irony in Shakespearean drama?

Nothing in fact can be more misleading about the nature of drama than this dream analogy. By stressing the element of 'unreality' it suggests a divorce between poetry and life. Once a dream or reverie is over and we apply the reality principle, we forget completely about it. This is at least what we do if we are the so-called 'normal' people. But in the case of our experience of drama, because it brings our whole personality into action, many a good play has altered in some ways one's outlook on the serious business of life. The relation between art and life is an intimate one at all points, and art cannot be divorced from life except to its own detriment. As Coleridge himself says, in good reading we should not judge of books by books, but rather we should refer what we have read to our own experience. Any theory that deprives literature of the exercise of its noble function in life must therefore be discouraged, at least on the grounds

1. See infra, ch.II pp. 266 ff.
that it is not true to experience.

Coleridge himself is not always satisfied with this description of our experience of drama in terms of a dream, in which we suspend our judgment. When he breaks loose from the eighteenth century sensationalist critical tradition he tells us a different and more convincing story. The experience then becomes, as he describes it, very far indeed from the sickly self-indulgence in pleasant unrealities. Although we do not apply the everyday life criteria, no delusion of any kind enters into it, however 'innocent' it may be. The 'delightful dream of our inner nature' is 'in truth more than a dream.' Similarly, at times, he realizes the inadequacy of his theory of the suspension of judgment, and fumbles for a more satisfactory explanation:

I admit the prerogative of poetic feeling, and poetic faith; but I cannot suspend the judgment even for a moment. He finds that, despite all the poetic faith in the world, he cannot accept as a good poem one in which there is a purely arbitrary interpretation of life, in which the poet simply 'makes things so and so.' The experience then becomes something like the loss of our narrow personal self into an experience larger and purer than our own. The pleasure, or

2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.110.
4. As early as 1799 Coleridge defined the feeling of sublimity as the utter absorption of 'the mind's self-consciousness in its total attention to the object working upon it.' (Biographies, vol.1, p.154). The relation between such an experience and the experience of empathy, which is only too common in Coleridge, is interesting. E.g. A.F., pp.70 ff. 101 ff.
rather, the deep inward joy, we feel is what accompanies
the being innocently — shall I say, deluded? — no! but
drawn away from ourselves into the music of noblest
thoughts in harmonizing sounds. 1

The great poet is one 'who makes me forget my specific class,
character, and circumstances' and who 'raises me into the
universal man.' That is why Coleridge thinks that the
effect of poetry resembles in some respects that of religion.
Like religion, poetry has for its 'object'
to generalize our notion, to prevent men from confin­ing their attention solely, or chiefly, to their
own narrow sphere of action and to their own individual
circumstances. By placing them in certain awful rela­tions it merges the individual man in the whole
species, and makes it impossible for any one man to
think of his future lot, or indeed of his present
condition, without at the same time comprising in his
view his fellow-creatures. 3

This indeed is a truer account of the state of aesthetic
appreciation than any dream image can be, for the so-called
'illusion' in drama is not something sui generis, but is
exactly of the same nature as our experience of any other
form of art. And when Coleridge writes about 'the spiritual
vision' in The Tempest, we see that the dramatic world is no
longer conceived of either as a dream world of illusion or
the world of everyday life, but essentially as a world of
the spirit. As he himself says elsewhere, in accordance with
his theory of the imagination, poetry is 'ideal'; it is not

'the mere copy of things, but the contemplation of mind upon things.' 'High poetry is the translation of reality into the ideal'.

Because Coleridge realizes that the dramatic world is neither the one world nor the other he is driven to the middle state which he styles 'illusion' - a word unfortunate for its association with deception. And in order to describe this state in more intelligible terms, he has to fall back upon the dream analogy, which is the product of the eighteenth-century critical tradition with its passive conception of mind and art and its relegating poetry, as contradistinguished from science, to the realm of pleasing dreams and fancies. The result is that instead of clarifying the discussion, the analogy makes it only more muddled and throws it into violent contradiction with Coleridge's other and more valuable principles which are revealed in his theory of imagination.

2. His.Crit., p.162. Cf. Sh.Crit., ii, pp.30-31 and T.T., May 6, 1824, where he interprets 'impassionate' in his often quoted definition of poetry, ultimately derived from Milton, as 'informed with the spirit of mind.'
3. For the apparent influence of sensationalist philosophy upon Coleridge see, e.g., his HS note in the flyleaf of Volume I of Hartley's Observations on Man in the British Museum, (on p.81): 'Ideas may become as vivid and distinct and the feelings accompanying them as vivid as original impressions - and this may finally make a man independent of his senses. - One use of poetry.' The thought is essentially in keeping with the sensationalist associationist philosophy and psychology, although it is here given a characteristic Coleridgean twist. The substance, however, is that of the 'ideal presence' of Kant, and even the expression is reminiscent of a man like Priestley.
The question of dramatic illusion is not as purely theoretical as it may seem. In fact it has a direct bearing upon the practical criticism of drama. If the object of a dramatist is to produce as much delusion as possible, then his output will be judged by the degree of its resemblance to everyday life. His job will be fulfilled if he manages to portray characters which are true to life. In this case the end of a Shakespearean critic will be only to analyze Shakespeare's characters with a view to pointing out their truth to life, measuring their actions and motives strictly by the moral and psychological criteria we apply in our dealing with our fellow human beings. This is precisely what we have seen the eighteenth-century critics do. Coleridge, by denying delusion to drama and acknowledging the middle state, cannot be charged with the same fault. But because his conception of this middle state was in terms of the eighteenth-century views on the subject, he hovered somewhere between their position and a new position of his own. Since he conceived of the 'illusion' as a dream he tended sometimes to attach great value and significance to whatever conduced to this illusion and sustained the slumber. He would say, for instance, that all the 'excellencies of drama' such as 'unity of interest', 'distinctness and subordination of characters', 'appropriateness of style', 'the

1. See supra, Part I, Sect. 4.
charm of language and sentiment' are 'means to this chief end, that of producing this willing illusion'; but he would also say that 'it is not always or of necessity an objection to them (i.e. all these excellencies) that they prevent it (i.e. the illusion) from rising to as great a height as it might otherwise have attained; it is enough, if they are compatible with as high a degree as requisite,' or would demand only 'a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.' Hence in his criticism of Shakespeare we find that he sometimes treats the Shakespearean character as a medium for value, and as a part of the meaning of the whole play as the poet's vision, and at other times, looking upon illusion as an end in itself, he is satisfied as long as a character is psychologically probable, or reveals psychological insight on the part of the poet, instead of considering psychological probability purely as a means. Here again, as in his definition of poetry, we have a mixture of what is the eighteenth-century heritage and what is Coleridge's own.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism forms part and parcel of his general critical theory. As it has been shown the critical theory

3. See infra, p.298.
itself suffers from a basic contradiction, which is the result of his attempt to combine what belongs to the eighteenth-century sensationalism and what is essentially the product of his own dynamic and idealistic position. There is no unified view of poetry in Coleridge's critical system; there are rather two distinct views in sharp opposition to each other. On the one hand, we have the view that the object of poetry is to arouse an emotion of pleasure and all that this view entails, from the opposition it draws between science and poetry to the conception of poetry as a pleasant and unreality to be willingly indulged in like reveries daydreams. On the other, there is the theory of imagination, which regards poetry essentially as a mode of apprehending reality and as an interpretation of existence. In his detailed study of Coleridge's philosophy R. Wellek maintains that Coleridge 'has little insight into the incompatibility of different trends of thought.' Without committing myself to Wellek's opinion of Coleridge's philosophy, I would suggest that Coleridge's critical theory tells very strongly on Mr. Wellek's side. In his actual criticism Coleridge does not deviate from his theory, but he alternately applies now this set of principles, now the other. It is perhaps failure to see this dichotomy that has led some critics to assert that

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his theory is one thing and his criticism is another. I hope that the preceding discussion has at least done something towards proving that such an approach to Coleridge's criticism is neither right nor fair. On the other hand, the dichotomy or polarity in Coleridge's critical position may explain - his constitutional failure to execute his innumerable projects apart - his inability to commit to paper his whole theory of poetry, except in fragments, for his ambitious book on poetry was never written. It is this dichotomy that may also help explain the baffling phenomenon in the history of criticism and ideas, namely the fact that several people representing diametrically opposite views have claimed allegiance to Coleridge, critics as widely different as Bradley, Herbert Read and I.A. Richards, to say nothing of past thinkers like J.S. Mill and Cardinal Newman. Since the theory of imagination is, as has been shown above, the more valuable theory, I shall treat Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare in the following chapters mainly from this point of view.
CHAPTER TWO

Form and Meaning

That a Shakespearean play is essentially a dramatic and poetic vision of human existence is a necessary conclusion from Coleridge's theory of the imagination. What it is concerned with fundamentally are 'ideas' or 'values', the product of the poet's deep experience of reality. This seems to be what Coleridge is at pains to point out in, for instance, a passage like the following:

The truth is, Shakespeare's characters are all genera intensely individualized, the results of meditation, of which observation supplied the drapery and the colours necessary to combine them with each other. He had virtually surveyed all the great component powers and impulses of human nature - had seen that their combinations and subordinations were in fact the individualisers of men, and showed how their harmony was produced by reciprocal disproportions of excess or deficiency. The language in which these truths are expressed was not drawn from any set fashion, but from the profoundest depths of his moral being, and is therefore for all ages. 1

The passage is strongly reminiscent of another by William Richardson, the author of A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of the Characters of Shakespeare, and, indeed, at first sight the two critics seem to be saying the same

2. See supra, p.69: "Shakespeare is most eminently distinguished by 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." William Richardson, Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters, pp.32 ff.
thing. But a closer study of the two passages reveals a basic difference between the two critics, and sets forth the nature of part of Coleridge's contribution. The difference lies in the first and last sentences of Coleridge's passage, which, if they are carefully attended to, will determine our interpretation of the rest of the passage considerably. The first indicates the nature of the 'truths' the poet conveys in his work and the relation these truths bear to him; the last establishes at once the intimate connection between the truths expressed and the language in which they are rendered. Richardson's Shakespeare 'imitates' the passion in all its aspects, and although by imitation Richardson means 'selective imitation', his conception of imitation remains what Coleridge designates 'observation'. On the other hand, a Shakespearean character is conceived by Coleridge as the embodiment of an 'idea', the product of his 'meditation' on the human condition. It is essentially the result of a subjective creative process, and a deep inner experience. Because the experience is profound, the 'idea' has a permanent relevance to human nature. The dictum that the characters are 'all genera intensely individualized' means in this context (and taking into account what Coleridge means by meditation) that the 'ideas' are felt and realized in concrete human situations. Both critics are moralists, for to Coleridge

1. See supra, pp. 77 and 233 ff.
the 'idea' is some human truth which ultimately has a moral significance. But Richardson's morality is an explicit morality, which is essentially non-dramatic. Richardson's method, we have seen, is to choose a particular Shakespearean character which suffers from a moral flaw, analyze it in the light of his 'ruling passion' psychology, deducing from it a moral which he ends by exhorting the reader to follow. His truths about human behaviour he arrives at purely from an analysis of the story of the plays, which he would have been equally able to obtain from a faithful prose rendering of them. The dramatic poetry, he admits, is only an embellishment. With Coleridge, however, it would seem that the 'truths' as well as the moral effect of a Shakespearean play would be incomplete without the very expression. Coleridge points to the close relation between the 'truths' and the 'expression': both are born in the same act. Shakespeare's language is 'drawn from the profoundest depths of his moral being', the very source of 'meditation' by means of which the poet arrives at the 'truths'.

The 'values', 'truths' or 'ideas' which we obtain from a Shakespearean play are therefore not abstract notions, or general rules of conduct, and it is only by an act of abstraction that we can discuss them at all in prose. Here the distinction between the thing said, and the way it is said does not exist, and, as Blake said, 'Invention depends

1. See supra, pp. 90 ff., 107 ff. and 151 ff.
Altogether upon Execution or Organization. This simple truth was not so simple before Coleridge's time, not even to a Dryden or to a Johnson. Coleridge would not go to Coriolanus, for instance, to learn politics, or read the History plays to acquire a knowledge of history. Poetic truth, says Coleridge is not abstract truth, and dramatic poetry 'must be poetry hid in thought and passion, not thought or passion disguised in the dress of poetry.' Each play is a poetic statement of some value, the nature of which is determined by the intensity, breadth and depth of the poet's intuition of it. The poetry therefore cannot be ignored or regarded as a mere trapping or an embellishment superadded. In a critical approach to Shakespeare it must be treated as an indispensable element, in fact, the sine qua non of the plays. Without it the value is reduced to a thin abstraction: it loses all its intensity, breadth and depth.

If this is granted then considerations of form do not become extraneous to the values we find in Shakespearean drama. But form when taken in relation to value is conceived in an organic sense. It is not a mould separate

2. In the History plays Shakespeare is 'not to be read as the Duke of Marlborough reads him, as an historian.' Sh.Crit., ii, p.278. Cf.U.L., vol.ii, p.194: 'For who in the Devil's name, ever thought of reading poetry for any political or practical purposes till these Devil's times that we live in ?'
from the material and into which the material is poured out. 'Could a rule be given from without', says Coleridge, 'poetry would cease to be poetry and sink into a mechanical art.' The question of the unities, to which great importance was attached in the eighteenth century, is therefore based upon an inadequate conception of poetic form. Whether a play observes the unities or not is neither a virtue nor a fault in its construction. Such considerations are immaterial, provided that the value in a play does not suffer. What is important is the inner form, or as Coleridge sometimes calls it, 'dramatic interest'. If every part of a play, every scene, and almost every word in the poetry contribute towards the setting forth of the value of a play, its main theme and interest, then the form of a play is to be praised. Otherwise the play is deficient in form, and failure as regards form means the failure of the play as a whole to realize its object. It is also failure in value. To Coleridge this complete interdependence of the constituent elements of a play is the criterion of dramatic excellence. In spite of his enthusiasm for Romeo and Juliet he still considers it an immature work, compared with the great plays of Shakespeare. In it, he says, 'are to be found all the crude materials of future excellence. The poet, the great dramatic poet, is throughout seen, but the various parts of the composition are not blended with such harmony as in some of his after

In this sense of form Coleridge offers us a great deal of sound formal criticism on Shakespeare's plays. His observations on the dramatic preparation in the plays are famous, and if they are not they ought well to be. That Coleridge often dwelt in his criticism on first scenes and on dramatic preparation is no accident. It is rather an expected outcome of his belief that Shakespeare's plays form organic wholes. In Shakespearean drama, he writes, 'all is growth, evolution, γενώσιμον — each line, each word almost begets the following — and the will of the writer is an interfusion, a continuous agency, no series of separate acts.' Since the plays grow and develop, it is most important, in order to know what they really are, that we should watch their development from the very beginning. In his criticism of the first scenes in Romeo and Juliet or in Hamlet, he is, as it were, trying to catch the 'germ' of the play and to define the nature of its growth and development. It is therefore misleading to say, as Babcock does, that the only contribution of Coleridge to Shakespearean criticism lies in his criticism of first scenes, implying, nay indeed stating, that in everything else his criticism of Shakespeare does not in any way differ from that of his eighteenth-century predecessors.

Coleridge's criticism of first scenes is only one manifestation of a new critical attitude to Shakespearean drama, an attitude of which one of the assumptions is that each play is an organic whole, a temporal development and not a static adding of one scene to another. Every individual scene has an implied past, a present and a future. This is what he means when he says on another occasion that in Shakespearean drama we get 'expectation in preference to surprise.'

When Coleridge praises Shakespeare's 'management of first scenes', it is important to note, he does not treat these first scenes in isolation. What he is always careful to point out is 'the wonderful balance between the progressive action and the immediate interest of the dialogue.' There is no scene in the canon which has won more consistent admiration throughout the eighteenth-century than perhaps the ghost scene in Hamlet. Coleridge also goes to great length in his treatment of this scene, and often expresses his adulation in rapturous terms. But the difference between the two treatments is colossal. Of the remarks of the eighteenth-century critics the main theme is the wonderful power Shakespeare displays in presenting the supernatural convincingly, and what an awe-inspiring thing the ghost is. By them the scene is praised in isolation, as if it were a picture revealing the truth of the remark

2. Ibid., vol.1, p.229.
3. See supra, pp.60 ff.
on Shakespeare that in the realm of magic and the supernatural none dared walk but he. In Coleridge’s treatment, however, the scene is extolled not simply because of its intrinsic merit, but also because of the valuable function it fulfills for the whole play. We are told that Shakespeare with great art attempted to make the Ghost convincing and important only to interest us the more in Hamlet himself. The enormous interest Shakespeare has gradually aroused in the appearance of the Ghost and its importance is all shifted to the hero when we are told by Horatio that Hamlet (whose name is mentioned at this point for the first time) must be informed of the strange appearance of the Ghost, that the latter must have a message of some serious import to him. Likewise, the subdued language with which the play opens, the dead silence, the cold, the welcome relief of the guard, the broken expressions — ‘all excellently accord with and prepare for the after rise into tragedy, the interest of which is eminently ad et apud intra.’ What Coleridge admires is ‘the judgment with which Shakespeare always in his first scenes prepares and yet how naturally and with what a concealment of art, for the catastrophe.’ For example in Richard II we see how he ‘presents the germ of all the after events, in Richard’s insincerity, partiality, arbitrariness, favoritism, and in the proud, tempestuous

2. Ibid., vol. i, p. 153.
temperament of his barons."

This is his typical approach. In plays like Macbeth and Twelfth Night the first scenes 'strike at once the key note, give the predominant spirit of the whole play.'

'Fair is foul and foul is fair' is the epitome of the tragic meaning of Macbeth, just as 'If music be the food of love ...' is the theme on which the Twelfth Night provides magnificent variations. In 'the feuds and party spirit of the servants of the two houses' with which Romeo and Juliet opens, we have before us 'in one glance both the past and the future in some effect which implies the continuance and full agency of its cause.' The Tempest is an example of another device employed by Shakespeare, which consists in starting at once 'the action so as to excite a curiosity for the explanation of the following scenes.' Here 'the storm of the wind, the waves and the boatswain' arouse our curiosity, 'instead of anticipating it' as other first scenes do, and thus prepare us for the explanation that follows. Yet because the tempest is in many ways symbolical of the meaning of the play, 'the element of danger is abstracted from it'.

In nearly all Coleridge's remarks on these first scenes a scene is judged by him valuable in proportion to its dramatic service to the other scenes, to its contribution to-

2. Ibid., vol.i, p.42.
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.41.
wards the total effect of the whole play.  

It is not then with 'the wriggling of individual emotion' that Coleridge is concerned, but rather with the whole situation - only his situation is not conceived statically or as a Chinese picture. The situation is always organic and dramatic. In his treatment there is always the implicit assumption that mere juxtaposition as such, effective as it may be, is not essentially dramatic. It becomes dramatic only when it is juxtaposition in motion, and when the relationship between the parts is an alive one, and the elements opposed act and react upon one another, modifying, enhancing or subduing one another. For after all drama is growth and development. Thus at the masque scene in Romeo and Juliet Capulet's 'impetuosity' is at once 'contrasting, yet harmonized, with the young Tybalt's', and 'precipitation is the character of the play'.

1. Cf. Allsp., vol.1, p.196: 'The wonderful power which Shakespeare above all other men possessed ... of anticipating evidently is the result - at least partakes - of meditation, or that mental process which consists in the submitting to the operation of thought every object of feeling, or impulse, or passion observed out of it.'

2. See Letters, vol.ii, p.558. Note Coleridge's dynamic conception of drama: 'In all subjects of deep and lasting interest, you will detect a struggle between two opposite, two polar forces, both of which are alike necessary to our moral well-being, and necessary each to the continued existence of the other. Well, therefore, may we contemplate with intense feelings those whirlwinds which are for free agents the appointed means, and the only possible condition of that equilibrium in which our moral being subsists; while the disturbance of the same constitutes our sense of life. Thus in the ancient Tragedy, the lofty struggle between irresistible fate and unconquerable free will ...' Mss.Crit., p.342.

Of this feature in Shakespeare's works, Coleridge thinks, the examples are 'endless'. He himself points out a few. The blinding of Gloucester, with which he found fault at first, seen in this light, becomes a means of harmonizing the cruelty of Goneril and Regan to their father, making the latter more credible. Similarly, Aufidius's speech in Coriolanus (IV.vii.28-57) in which, he sometime thought, the speaker's envious jealousy was somewhat improbable, he came to look upon as a fine dramatic device by Shakespeare to prevent the otherwise certain shock the reader or spectator would have felt in Aufidius's character when he stabs Coriolanus to death at the close of the play. The speech is therefore necessary in so far as it reveals Aufidius's jealousy which is to become later the instrument of the catastrophe. In Othello, Iago's duping of Roderigo, with which the play opens, acts as a prelude to his more momentous and tragic ensnaring of Othello, both enhancing it and making it more convincing. Likewise, Iago 'rehearses on Roderigo his intention on Othello' when he persuades him that Desdemona loves Cassio. In Lear Edgar's madness 'takes off part of the shock' from the true madness of Lear, as well as displays 'the profound difference between the two'. The relationship between the Fool and Lear is another example. In the character of

2. Ibid., vol.i, p.50.
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.52.
4. Ibid., vol.i, p.65.
5. Ibid., vol.i, p.64.
Prospero we are shown 'how completely anything that might have been disagreeable to us in the magician, is reconciled and shaded in the humanity and natural feelings of the father.' Conversely, Miranda is 'never directly brought into comparison with Ariel, lest the natural and human of the one and the supernatural of the other should tend to neutralize each other.' Again in the same play, the effect of the scene where Antonio and Sebastian plot against the lives of Alonso and Gonzalo is 'heightened by contrast with another counterpart of it in low life,' i.e. the scene where Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban plot the murder of Prospero. In a Shakespearean play the characters are often 'connected all by likeness or contrast.' For instance in Richard II 'York's boldness of words and feebleness of act' is harmonized with 'Richard's wordy courage that betrays the inward impotence.' Bolingbroke's 'ambitious hope', 'calm and decorous and courtly checking of his anger in subservience to a predetermined plan' after hearing the sentence of banishment in the beginning of the play is 'beautifully contrasted' with Mowbray's 'desolation' and 'unaffected lamentation'. This last quarrel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke, and the contrast between the two characters which it reveals 'seems introduced for the purpose of showing by anticipation the characters of Richard and Bolingbroke.'

2. Ibid., vol.1, p.134.
3. Ibid., vol.1, p.136.
4. Ibid., vol.1, p.134.
5. Ibid., vol.1, p.155.
It is because Coleridge is not interested in character in isolation from the whole situation that he does not find the death of Mercutio a forced machination on the part of the dramatist. In spite of his enthusiastic appreciation of his character, Coleridge considers him only instrumental to the bringing about of the catastrophe. 'By his loss it was contrived that the whole catastrophe of the tragedy should be brought about: it endears him to Romeo and gives the death of Mercutio an importance which it could not otherwise have acquired.' Upon his death the whole catastrophe depends ... Had not Mercutio been rendered so amiable and so interesting, we could not have felt so strongly the necessity for Romeo's interference, connecting it immediately, and passionately, with the future fortunes of the lover and his mistress. But there is no end to the examples one might quote. For to the orchestral movement of a play as a whole Coleridge was highly sensitive. His criticism is rich in remarks on the interrelation of the parts, be they incidents, characters, images or odd phrases.

2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.133.
3. Examples of this kind of formal criticism, in the profound sense of the term, are very scarce in the work of Coleridge's predecessors. One of them is provided by a critic, who was not primarily a literary critic, but significantly enough a critic of art, who could perhaps respond to the formal patterning of a work of art more sensitively than his contemporary literary critics. The scene in Macbeth, before Macbeth's castle, where Duncan and Banquo praise the very castle in which Duncan will meet his fate, Sir Joshua Reynolds describes as an instance of 'repose', a term (cont.)
When in tragedy the relation does not harmonize, but throws into relief the opposing nature of the elements, resulting in an extension of meaning, then we get something like 'tragic irony'. As far as I am aware, Coleridge does not use the phrase. The word 'irony', of course, occurs in his Shakespearean criticism, as well as in his other writings, but he does not mean by it the same thing as we do when we use the word in the tragic context. Had Mr. F.L. Lucas noticed that he would never have

Footnote 3 continued from page 262:

borrowed from painting. The fine comment deserves to be quoted in full: 'Their conversation very naturally turns upon the beauty of its situation, and the pleasantness of the air; and Banquo, observing the martlets' nests in every recess of the cornice, remarks, that where those birds most breed and haunt, the air is delicate. The subject of this quiet and easy conversation gives that repose so necessary to the mind after the tumultuous bustle of the preceding scenes, and perfectly contrasts the scene of horror that immediately succeeds... This is frequently the practice of Homer, who from the midst of battles and horrors, relieves and refreshes the mind of the reader, by introducing some quiet rural image, or picture of familiar domestic life.' The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, (Lond., 1870), vol.1, pp. 442 ff. There are also some brilliant, though brief and undeveloped remarks, which are worthy of the name of formal criticism, interspersed in Morgan's Essay, E.g. he notes that 'the real madness of Lear, the assumed wildness of Edgar, and the Professional Pantasque of the Fool' all operate 'to heighten and contrast each other' and that Caliban who is 'a compound of malice, servility and lust, substantiated, ... is best shown in contrast with the Lightness of Ariel, and the innocence of Miranda.' Maurice Morgan, On.Cit., p.253 FN. Dr. Johnson's defence of the functional nature of Mercutio's death is also to be remembered. (Raleigh, p.188).

1. According to O.F.D., Bishop Thirlwall was the first to use the phrase 'tragic irony' in 1833, when he wrote of Sophoclean drama: 'The contrast between man with his hopes, fears, wishes and undertakings, and a dark inflexible fate, affords abundant room for the exhibition of tragic irony.'
sneered at Coleridge's insensitivity to tragic irony in *Macbeth*. Coleridge used the word in the sense of deliberate equivocation, of saying one thing and meaning another, when, e.g., he talked about the 'irony' of Richard the Third. This was the usual sense of the word in his time. But he also wrote about the 'natural irony of self-delusion', a sense which he seemed to have derived from Schlegel. When Coleridge denied that there is any irony in *Macbeth* he was apparently under the influence of Schlegel, and was using the word in Schlegel's sense. The latter's conception of irony in tragedy is limited to the half-conscious self-deception of the characters, and to the parodying of the main serious plot in the comic sub-plot. That is why Schlegel believed that 'whenever the proper tragic enters everything like irony immediately ceases,' meaning presumably everything in the nature of a comic sub-plot. Consequently following him unquestioningly, Coleridge

The modern use of "Irony, saying the contrary to what is meant."'
This is the sense in which we use the word when we talk about someone being ironical.
thought that because Macbeth is wholly tragic, irony is completely absent from it. But when he freed himself from the shackles of Schlegel's influence, and relied upon his own response to the play, he pointed out the presence of irony even in Schlegel's sense (the sense of half-conscious self-deception) in the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, although he did not actually use the word. But in spite of the fact that he had a different name for it, Coleridge's conception of tragic irony, which is implied in the examples to which he drew our attention, is essentially our own. It consists in a character giving expression to a thought truer than he or she would have dreamt, or in complete opposition to what the subsequent turn of events will reveal, and, by extension, in the whole pattern of action, which the very conception of tragedy involves. But it can not be said that in his recorded criticism Coleridge ever discussed this wider implication of tragic irony. Coleridge's use of the word 'presentiment' does not differ materially in sense from the phrase 'tragic irony'. The examples he offers of 'presentiment', of which, he says, Shakespeare is fond, are precisely

2. See infra, pp. 303 ff. and 415.
3. I am using the word 'irony' in the narrow tragic sense, which is also the sense commonly accepted. It has therefore no relation to the generalized usage of Richards and more especially Cleanth Brooks, which makes irony a basic quality in every great poem. It is tempting to be side-tracked here and prove how much this generalized conception of irony, as the balance and tension between conflicting impulses and attitudes, owes (cont.)
those of what we now call tragic irony. It is no wonder that Coleridge is one of the first English critics, if not the first, to point out the frequency of tragic irony in Shakespearean drama. To be aware of tragic irony, a critic must be able to hold the whole of a play in mind, to perceive the subtle meaning of one part in relation to another, as well as to the whole. No amount of detailed study, however painstaking, of every scene, as it were, in isolation can make us see irony. Besides, tragic irony, particularly verbal irony, has affinities with puns and ambiguities; it arises from the same, or similar mental habits. It is not an accident then that the critic who perceived irony was the one who was passionately interested himself in puns and words, and who defended Shakespeare's puns tirelessly and on functional grounds. There is also another aspect to the question, which bears a relation to Coleridge's secondary imagination. Irony seems to be a per-

Footnote 3 continued from page 205 and Footnote 4:

to Coleridge's view of the reconciliation of opposites in great poetry.


1. Having consulted one authority on Greek as well as another on French literature, I have discovered the surprising and interesting fact that no previous critic was aware of the significance of 'tragic irony' used so often by the dramatists. In the classical critics who followed Aristotle, I understand, there was a total absence of interest in drama as drama. Not only was no development made in dramatic aesthetics after Aristotle's time, but what was made was subsequently disregarded, and the critics' attention was concentrated on the rhetorical and stylistic aspects of literature. This piecemeal approach to literary works determined subsequent criticism for many centuries. As for French dramatic criticism, nothing had been said about (cont.)
feet illustration of the type of organic unity it is the privilege of the secondary imagination alone to produce.

On this point I shall quote from an impartial critic:

Dramatic irony ... gives one some means of understanding the view of a work of genius as a sort of miracle whose style carries its personality into every part of it, whose matter consists in microcosms of its form, and whose flesh has the character of the flesh of an organism. 1

When Johnson wrote of Othello:

Had the scene opened in Cyprus, and the preceding incidents been occasionally related, there had been little wanting to a drama of the most exact and scrupulous regularity. 2

Footnote 1 continued from page 269 and footnote 2:

Dramatic irony until quite recently. Although Racine himself used it, yet it was not recognized in the criticism of the time. Even now, I was told, it is still not a familiar enough notion to have made a name for itself. It is extremely difficult to find a satisfactory French phrase into which to translate the English term 'dramatic irony'.

2. Cf. Coleridge's remarks on his reading of Donne's poem, Canonization. 'As late as ten years ago, I used to seek to find out grand lines and fine stanzas; but my delight has been far greater since it has consisted more in tracing the leading thought thro'out the whole. The former is too much like coveting your neighbour's good, in the latter you merge yourself in the author, you become He.' Misc. Crit., p.137.

1. William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, (Lond., 1947), pp.44-45. Indeed the presence of irony alone should provide us with an argument to refute the opinion entertained by Rimel in and Schickling that in Shakespeare's plays there is a 'supreme interest in the single scene, which all his knowledge of dramatic art cannot induce him to subordinate to the interest of the whole to the extent that is demanded by a later period.' L.L.Schickling, Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays, (Lond., 1922), p.112.

2. Kells, p.201.
he was, amongst other things, apparently blind to the tragic irony in the part preceding the arrival in Cyprus. Coleridge shows the functional nature of that part, and is furthermore aware of the irony in the lines:

Bra. Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: She has deceived her father, and may thee. Oth. My life upon her faith. (I.iii.293-295).

Because of his blindness to the tragic irony in these lines, the only comment Johnson could make on Iago's words, strongly reminiscent of Brabantio's:

She did deceive her father, marrying you. (III.iii.206)

is the crude moral exhortation that 'this and the following argument of Iago ought to be deeply impressed on every reader. Deceit and falsehood, whatever conveniences they may for a time promise or produce, are, in the sum of life, obstacles to happiness', and an admonition against 'dis-proportionate marriages.' 2 This inability to see tragic irony is a symptom of a certain way of reading Shakespeare, a way which is both piecemeal and literally minded. Coleridge, on the other hand, who was both aware of the subtleties of the plays, and their wholeness, often pointed out the tragic irony in them. It is difficult for us now to realize the extent of Coleridge's contribution, because it has become part and parcel of Shakespearean criticism. Most of his critical remarks, like his critical terminology, have been incorporated in the main body of critical opinion both in the nineteenth and the twentieth

2. Ialeich, p.198.
centuries, to such an extent that they often form tacit, unquestioned assumptions in our minds. We fail to be impressed when we are told that Coleridge stresses the dramatic importance of Othello's words, 'honest, honest, Iago', because, thanks to Coleridge, the remark, however important, has now become only a commonplace of Shakespearean criticism. But it is fair, if we want to give Coleridge his due, to remember that before Coleridge's time it was not. Nor was the role of tragic irony in Shakespearean drama perceived until he came. Coleridge is the first critic to draw our attention to Duncan's words on hearing the news of the death of the traitor, Cawdor,

There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face:
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust. (Macbeth, I.iv.11-14)

'interrupted by the "worthiest cousin" on the entrance of the deeper traitor to whom Cawdor had made way;' or to the ironic contrast between Macbeth's soliloquy before the murder and his remorseful utterance immediately after it. Yet, we are told, even by the scholar, that his contribution is insignificant.

1. Coleridge's words are only too true, when writing of his first course of lectures on Shakespeare, he says that three fourths of them 'appeared at that time startling paradoxes, which have since been adopted even by men who at the time made use of them as proofs of my flighty and paradoxical turn of mind - all tending to prove that Shakespeare's judgment was, if possible, still more wonderful than his genius: or rather, the contradistinction itself between judgment and genius rested on an utterly false theory.' Sh. Crit., vol.ii, pp.305-306.
2. Ibid., vol.i, p.70.
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.449.
Coleridge's subtlety enabled him to see art where previous critics could only find fault and negligence. Johnson, for instance, could not see the value of dramatic preparation in Lear, but, instead he found 'obscurity' or 'inaccuracy' in the first scene of the play. He could not understand how Lear 'has already divided his kingdom, and yet when he enters he examines his daughters, to discover in what proportions he should divide it.' Coleridge, who was fully alive to the dramatic function and implication of preparatory scenes, did not dismiss the apparent incongruity here as the result of haste or negligence. To him it was not 'without forethought and it is not without its due significance' that Shakespeare deviated from his source in making Lear divide his kingdom already before summoning his daughters to hear their declaration of love before the assembled court. If the arrangement of the scene is regarded as deliberate on the part of Shakespeare, then the trial of professions becomes a mere trick in which the ageing and capricious monarch indulges in order to satisfy a whim. The whim itself is important, because it makes a significant feature of the monarch's character; it reflects upon the meaning of his character, and of his arduous and painful journey towards wisdom and self-knowledge, as well as upon the meaning of the whole play. In the opening of the play then is to be found,

in retrospect, 'the facts, the passions, the moral verities on which the whole tragedy is founded.' Lear indeed appears in the beginning of the play as 'irrational' as Goethe noticed disparagingly; but Shakespeare intends to show him there with all the irrationality of folly on his head. As to the possible adverse effects of this initial folly and irrationality upon our response to his character, Shakespeare, Coleridge points out, circumvents them by a subtle dramatic method. From his careful reading of Shakespeare, Coleridge shows how the initial scene serves other purposes as well. In it we are first made aware of the difference between the characters of Albany and Cornwall, which will be developed and clarified in the course of the play. Also immediately after Lear, who is 'the persona patiens of the drama, and whose character, passions and sufferings' form its 'main subject matter', it introduces to us most judiciously the person who is second in importance in the play, and who will be responsible for much of its important action, i.e. Edmund. From the casual and natural conversation between Kent and Gloucester, we are given the circumstances of his birth, education and situation in life - all the details necessary for our understanding of his future actions.

2. 'In that scene Lear appears so irrational that we cannot altogether blame his daughters for the consequences!' Criticisms, Reflections and Maxims of Goethe, Tr. W. D. Rankesfeldt, (Lond., undated), p.15.
3. See infra, P.373.
Because of this remarkable power of reading one part with an eye on the whole, Coleridge could see relations and harmony where others could only find disjunction and heterogeneity. The mélange des genres which, as we have seen earlier, the eighteenth-century mind found repulsive and distracting, at least in practice is not in theory, is seen by Coleridge not as a mere mélange but as interfusion and functional interrelation. The comic scenes in Shakespeare's tragedies, unlike those in the works of Beaumont and Fletcher, 'react upon and finally fuse with the tragic interest.' In the latter, 'the comic scenes are rarely so interfused amidst the tragic as to produce a unity of the tragic on the whole, without which the intermixture is a fault. In Shakespeare this is always managed with transcendent skill.' But the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher are only 'aggregations without unity', while 'in the Shakespearean drama there is vitality which grows and evolves itself from within - a keynote which guides and controls the harmonies throughout.' While yet 'accommodating himself to the taste and spirit of the times' in introducing Fools and clowns in his plays to satisfy the demand of the Elizabethan audience, Shakespeare does not sacrifice artistic considerations. His genius and judgment are revealed in the particular use he often makes of such characters. In the serious plays the Fool constitutes an integral part of the

2. T.T., July 1, 1833.
whole. The case is very clear in Lear. But in 'other
dramas, though perhaps in a less degree, our great poet
has evinced the same skill and felicity of the treatment.'
Thus while conforming to the convention of tragi-comedy
Shakespeare produces a unified artistic whole. Even the
songs, as he uses them, often become an integral part of
the plays in which they occur. They too have a dramatic
function to fulfil. For example they are 'often made
characteristic of the person who has called for them', as
we see in the case of Desdemona and of the Duke in As You
Like It. Of a more complex relation to the dramatic
structure are Ophelia's songs.

Considering the sound formal criticism, with which
his writings on Shakespeare abound, it seems scarcely just
to accuse Coleridge of neglecting plot. Even as sympathetic
a critic as Raysor, who has done much to make his Shake­
spearean criticism available, joins the rank of the accu­
sers. Yet of all the romantic critics of Shakespeare,
Coleridge is the most sensitive to the formal aspect of
Shakespearean drama. It is true, that at one point he
does not mention 'plot' among the constituent elements of
poetic drama; but this can hardly be taken against him
seriously as a sign of his complete neglect of 'plot or
structure' in the teeth of the overwhelming evidence of his
practical criticism. Even in the same fragment in which he

2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.74 and p.266.
4. Ibid., vol.i, p.33.
5. Ibid., vol.i, p.205.
sets down the constituents of poetic drama, Coleridge tells us that 'each part should be proportionate, the whole perhaps impossible: at all events it should be compatible with a sound sense of logic in the mind of the poet himself' -which in fact is nothing if not a criticism of structure. Raysor claims that Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare is 'poetic rather than dramatic'. Yet there could hardly be a critic who insisted more strongly upon the distinction between poetry and dramatic poetry.

Moreover we must remember that by the word 'plot' Coleridge does not often mean the artistic structure of a play, but rather the mere story or fable. This is clear from the conversation he imagines to take place between him and a defender of the contemporary melodrama. There we learn that it is not the story that matters:

The greater part, if not all of Shakespeare's dramas were as far as the names and the main incidents are concerned, already stock plays. All the stories, at least, on which they are built preexisted in the chronicles, ballads, or translations of contemporary or preceding English writers. What matter, however, are 'the manner, the situations, the action and reaction of the passions.' The story is only the 'canvas', so to speak, 'on' which, and not 'by' which a dramatist displays his 'appropriate excellence.' The manner and situations are only Coleridge's words for 'plot' in the profound sense. On another occasion he describes

1. See infra, pp. 440 ff.
the function of plot exactly in the same terms as he does the story here. The plot, we are told, 'is only the canvas'. Coleridge is indeed right when he stresses the 'subordination' of plot in the sense of the more story and the external arrangement of incidents. His view ought to be emphasized particularly nowadays, when a greater value than is really proper is attached to similarity in story or fable, when we are given to understand that we have gone a long way towards the realization of Shakespeare's greatness, on being told that Shylock was clearly meant to compete with his near relative, Marlowe's Jew of Malta, or that Hamlet is only a variation on the theme of Kyd's Hieronymo. Because he throws all the emphasis on the handling or treatment of the story rather than on the story itself, the reading of Coleridge is a good tonic against the modern historical approach, which stands in the danger of regarding Shakespearean drama as a period piece.

Indeed Coleridge did not write about the plots of Shakespeare's plays in the manner of the eighteenth-century critics. Unlike them he did not indulge in a facile application of Aristotle's rules for a beginning, a middle and an end in every fable, or in the mechanical criticism of the

unities. Such formal criticism, in the superficial sense of the word finds no place in his work. For with his deep sense of the inner form of Shakespearean drama, not only did he treat it as an organic thing, but apparently he considered the whole outward movement of a play as the embodiment of the vision it expresses. The fable of a play in that sense ceases to be important in itself, and becomes as it were, a concrete symbol of its meaning. 'The events themselves,' he writes, 'are immaterial, otherwise than as the clothing and manifestation of the spirit that is working within.'

It is, of course, true that of the body of his criticism that reached us in the form of lectures, criticism of character seems to take the lion's share; but this is no proof that Coleridge neglects plot or fails to see its importance. In the compact ninth lecture of the 1811-12 course, for example, we have a magnificent analysis of the plot of the *Tempest*, which was meant to prove the poet's superb judgment. 'The storm,' he says, 'and all that precedes the tale, as well as the tale itself serve to develop completely the main character of the drama, as well as the design of Prospero.' The first scene was meant as a lively commencement of the story; the reader is prepared (by the bustle and excitement) for something that is to be developed, and in the next

2. This, however, does not apply to the marginalia notes.
scene he brings forward Prospero and Miranda. How is this to be done? By giving to his favourite character, Miranda, a sentence which at once expresses the violence and fury of the storm, such as it might appear to a witness on the land, and at the same time displays the tenderness of her feelings.

In a fine manner the reader is prepared for what is to follow:

Prospero is introduced, first in his magic robe, which, with the assistance of his daughter, he lays aside, and we then know him to be a being possessed of supernatural powers. He then instructs Miranda in the story of their arrival in the island, and this is conducted in such a manner, that the reader never conjectures the technical use the poet has made of the relation, by informing the auditor of what it is necessary for him to know.

The next step is the warning by Prospero, that he means for particular purposes, to lull his daughter to sleep; and here exhibits the earliest and mildest proof of magical power. In ordinary and vulgar plays we should have had some person brought upon the stage, whom nobody knows or cares anything about, to let the audience into the secret. Prospero having cast sleep upon his daughter, by that sleep stops the narrative at the very moment when it was necessary to break it off, in order to excite curiosity, and yet to give the memory and understanding sufficient to carry on the progress of the history uninterruptedly ...

The manner in which the heroine is charmed asleep fits us for what follows, goes beyond our ordinary belief, and gradually leads us to the appearance and disclosure of a being of the most fanciful and delicate texture, like Prospero, preternaturally gifted. In this way the entrance of Ariel, if not absolutely forethought by the reader, was foreshown by the writer.

Coleridge goes on commenting on the way Shakespeare introduces Ariel, Caliban, the lovers, the plots etc. ... showing how 'the same judgment is observable in every scene, still preparing, still inviting, and still gratifying, like a finished piece of music.' This is a criticism

of plot or structure in the best sense, a criticism which enters imaginatively into the poet's workshop, so to speak, but all the while taking into account the effect the work has on the recipient. 'Caliban is described in such a manner by Prospero, as to lead us to expect the appearance of a foul unnatural monster. He is not seen at once: his voice is heard; this is the preparation: he was too offensive to be seen first in all his deformity.'

But such a criticism of plot does not deal with the management of events only as such. It is rather an organic approach to plot, relating event and character when the two illuminate each other and help to enforce the design of the whole. Ariel's reluctance 'to be under the command even of Prospero' (itself in keeping with his character as shown by Coleridge) 'is kept through the whole play, and in the exercise of his admirable judgment Shakespeare has availed himself of it, in order to give Ariel an interest in the event, looking forward to that moment when he was to gain his last and only reward — simple and eternal liberty.' As a reporter of one of his lectures said, 'criticism of this kind cannot be abridged;' and on that ground I hope that the preceding lengthy quotations may be excused.

According to the syllabus of the 1812-13 Lectures, the object of the seventh lecture was partly to give the

2. *loc.cit.*
proofs that a profound judgment in the construction of his Plays is equally the characteristic of Shakespeare. One of the lectures given in Bristol (1813-14) was concerned with an analysis of the construction of the two tragedies, Hamlet and Macbeth. In the Prospectus to his last course of lectures on Shakespeare (1818-19), the text of which is still missing, we are told that Coleridge intended to give a course of Six Lectures, each having for its subject some one play of Shakespeare's scene by scene, for the purpose of illustrating the conduct of the plot, and the peculiar force, beauty and propriety, of the language, in the particular passages, as well as the intention of the great Philosophical Poet in the prominent characters of each play, and the unity of interest in the whole and in the apparent contrast of the component parts. On every occasion Coleridge declared his conviction that Shakespeare revealed 'consummate judgment not only in the general construction, but in all the detail, of his dramas.' But because Coleridge's criticism of character is at any rate much easier to note down and remember, it would seem that a great part of his criticism of structure has unfortunately failed to reach us.

The difference of Coleridge's conception of dramatic structure from that of his predecessors becomes even clearer

when we consider his treatment of the unities. Coleridge realized how the particular conditions of the stage for which Shakespeare wrote determined the form of his plays. Indeed by his time the argument that the Elizabethan drama, unlike that of Greece, did not observe the unities because each of them was intended for a different stage had already become general knowledge. But the only law which Coleridge deemed necessary to observe was the law of the unity of action. This law Coleridge understood in a way which makes his position entirely different from that of his predecessors. Johnson, perhaps, was the most powerful critic who in the eighteenth-century advocated the unity of action as the only essential law of drama. But in Johnson's view the law affects only the external arrangement of events; it recommends neat causal relations between the various actions of a play. Coleridge, perhaps, as Raysor suggests, under the influence of Schlegel, preferred to call his law 'instead of unity of action' 'homogeneity, proportionateness, and totality of interest.' The difference is not simply, as it may appear, one of nomenclature. Coleridge's in fact amounts to a new law, and certainly reveals a different attitude to drama. The difference is between the analytic and the organic attitude. Whereas Johnson's law is concerned with the plot, in the sense of the surface relation between the events, Coleridge's affects

2. See supra, pp.35 ff. and 157 ff.
3. See supra, p.35.
the whole form and structure of a play. The totality of interest is the totality of the vision the play expresses, the totality of theme and value. It pervades plot, character, imagery and rhythm alike, and is not to be looked for in any of them alone. This, Coleridge believed, is what only a genius can produce. The work of a genius is 'effected by a single energy, modified adaptum in each component part.' 

1. Notwithstanding his recognition of the shortcomings of Romeo and Juliet (he thought it is more of a poem than a poetic drama), he tried to trace the working of genius in it. He summed up the character of the play in the speeches of Romeo and Friar Lawrence:

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.

Friar Lawrence: These violent delights have violent ends, And in their triumph die, like fire and powder Which as they kiss consume: (II.vi.6-11)

His comment, which was to be substantiated later by Caroline Spurgeon's card index method, was that the speeches reveal clearly 'the precipitation which is the character of the play.' The precipitation is to be found not only in the love of Romeo and Juliet and their hasty marriage; it marks the heat of the family feud, which Coleridge takes to be one of the main themes of the play, and it is there in the 'impetuosity' of Tybalt and Capulet and in the latter's decision to bring Paris into wedlock so soon.

The theme of the family feud is introduced with all its variations in a minor key in the opening of the play:

'With his accustomed judgment Shakespeare has begun by placing before us a lively picture of all the impulses of the play, like a prelude.' Human folly, in the shape of the family quarrel, is set before us first in 'the laughable absurdity of the evil in the contagion of the servants,' then in its serious aspect, which is to be developed later on in the play, and the remainder of the scene is 'a motley dance of all ranks and ages to one tune.'

Because Coleridge finds that Shakespeare's plays are excellent from the point of view of form in the organic sense in which he understands the word, he considers it one of his main functions as a Shakespearean critic to combat the popular erroneous notion that he was a 'great

1. It is exceedingly difficult to consider his famous comment on the close of the tragedy, coming after such a sound and reasoned, though brief, analysis of some of the features of the play, an irrelevant piece of 'creative' criticism:

The spring and winter meet, and winter assumes the character of spring, spring the sadness of winter. (Sh.Crit. vol.1, p.12).

The comment becomes rather a fine appreciative statement of the meaning of the tragedy; it describes how the long-standing feud between the aged is brought to an end through the sacrifice of the young.

2. See Jeffrey's reviews in The Edinburgh Review of Weber's Edition of Ford's Works, or of Wilken Meister, e.g. 'If it be true that no other man has ever written so finely as Shakespeare has done in his happier passages, it is no less true that there is not a scribbler now alive who could possibly write worse than he has sometimes written, - who could, on occasion, devise more contemptible ideas, or misplace them so abominably, by the side of such incomparable excellence.' or 'The noto-
dramatist by a sort of instinct", a 'pure child of nature', a great genius indeed, but 'wild', 'irregular' and devoid of 'taste or judgment'. He is well aware that the rational criticism has ended in the supernaturalization of Shakespeare, and in spite of those who accuse Coleridge of treating Shakespeare as a supernatural phenomenon, he emphatically deprecates the fact and exposes its absurdity:

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.

In his attempt to illustrate his opinion that Shakespeare's judgment and conscious artistry were equal to his genius, he gives a great portion of his attention to the study of Shakespeare's early non-dramatic output, which met with hardly any critical consideration prior to Coleridge's time, and was summarily dismissed by a contemporary critic of Coleridge's as not worthy of criticism. His aim is to

Footnote 2 continued from page 282:
riety of Shakespeare may seem to make it superfluous to speak of the peculiarities of those old dramatists, of whom he will be admitted to be so worthy a representative. Nor shall we venture to say anything of the confusion of their plots, the disorders of their chronology, their contempt of the unities, or their imperfect discrimination between the provinces of Tragedy and Comedy. 'Edinburgh Review, Aug., 1811. Yet Jeffrey called himself an idolator of Shakespeare. (See his review of Hazlitt's Characters.)

4. William Hazlitt, Complete Works, ed.P.J. Howe, vol.4, p.358: 'In a word, we do not like Shakespeare's poems, because we like his plays: the one, in all their excellences are just the reverse of the other.'
prove that Shakespeare 'appears from his poems alone, apart from his great works, to have possessed all the conditions of a true poet.' From the plays themselves we see that 'he was no child of nature, he was not possessed, but he was in possession of all.' Shakespeare was therefore 'no automaton of genius, no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it.'

In order to put an end to the view that Shakespeare's plays are shapeless products and that Shakespeare is no conscious artist, a new understanding of form was necessary. Form had to be conceived in a way different from the way the eighteenth-century critics understood it. Indeed what was needed was a critical position which both in theory and in practice insisted upon the sharp distinction between the organic and mechanical forms. Such a position was held by Coleridge.

The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material ... The organic form, on the other hand, is innate, it shapes as it develops from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the form.

The view with its clear differentiation between the two types of form may not be ultimately of a Coleridgean origin. He may have borrowed it from Schlegel, Richter and Schelling.

But does it really matter that Coleridge has borrowed it, if he has assimilated it in such a way that it can be treated as his own? The comparison between a Shakespearean play and an organism is not very new itself. The eighteenth-century critics often introduced it in their writings. But there it is referred to merely as an abstract principle which is never applied in the actual criticism of the individual plays. The only type of formal Shakespearean criticism in the eighteenth-century is that which deals with the unities, and naturally enough, after the dethronement of the unities we cease to find formal criticism altogether. Coleridge, however, having learnt the German distinction, spent the rest of his life not only expounding it in England in theory, but the large body of his actual criticism of Shakespeare is an illustration of the application of the principle. That is why it ceases to matter whether or not he arrived at the principle himself; it is enough that in his practice, more than any other critic, he has lived it. There are reasons, of course, why Coleridge feels at home in the application of the principle. Apart from any questions of debt to others, the principle of the organic unity of a work of art is the direct outcome of his theory of imagination. To those critics who assert that in his practical criticism Coleridge was completely oblivious of his theory, the answer is so simple that indeed it is a matter of wonder how it could have been missed. If one

were to summarize the whole of Coleridge's contribution to Shakespearean criticism one could quite safely describe it as the application of the principle of the organic unity of the plays. Now any moderate study of Coleridge's theory of imagination will reveal that the function of the secondary imagination is precisely to produce this kind of unity. Works which achieve this unity are always described by Coleridge as works of imagination, while others in which this unity does not obtain are called by him works of fancy. As often with Coleridge, whatever he borrows in the course of his reading he assimilates into his own system. The organic and mechanical forms become in his system the products of imagination and fancy respectively. Thus the plays of Shakespeare are cited often enough by him as works of imagination, while those of Beaumont and Fletcher are designated works of fancy. In the former there is an organic unity, whereas in the latter there is a mechanical one. 'The power of reducing multitude into unity of effect and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling' is a gift of the imagination.

If Shakespeare's plays are not the shapeless and lawless works they were taken to be, then genius cannot rightly be opposed to rules; 'Imagine not I am about to oppose genius to rules.' Coleridge has read Lessing, whom he

1. It is this idea which has driven him to the false etymology of the German word 'Einbildungskraft': See A.F., p.236. "How excellently the German Einbildungskraft expresses this prime and loftiest faculty that forms the many into one - In-eins-bildung!"
admired all his life, with sufficient attention to realize
that the eighteenth-century conception of 'wild genius' can­
not be true. Consequently, on all occasions he stresses
the conscious and deliberate artistry of Shakespeare. Indeed
there is inspiration, the unconscious element in poetry. But
no great poetry is made of inspiration alone. Great poetry
(which is human) is not nature's poetry, and in great poetry
there must exist a balance between the conscious and uncon­
scious. Without any need to go into the philosophical
Schellingian implications of the words, this is what Cole­
ridge means when he says that

The man of genius is the link that combines the con­
scious and the unconscious ... But for that reason,
he must partake of both. Hence, there is in genius
itself an unconscious activity ... 3

and that Shakespeare is 'a nature humanized, a genial under­
standing directing self-consciously a power and an implicit
wisdom deeper than consciousness.' Elsewhere he writes,
as early as 1796, of 'that toil of thinking which is neces­
sary in order to plan a whole.' Without judgment genius

1. See G.E. Lessing, Hamburgische Dramaturgie, No.96:
'Every genius is a born critic. He has the proof of all
rules within himself. He comprehends, remembers and fol­
lows only those that express his feelings in words.'
Also Cf. Ibid., No.34. Coleridge once contemplated
writing a biography of Lessing. (see Misc.Epis., vol.
i, p.180).
'either cannot be, or cannot at least manifest itself.'

Indeed, as was shown by a recent critic, the belief that there must be a large conscious element in a work of art is a necessary corollary to Coleridge's theory of the imagination. Genius, then, has its own rules, but the rules are not to be imposed from without. Rules, being only means to some end, have no sanctity in themselves. They vary with every age, and even with every individual work. The unities, therefore, which were imposed on the Greek dramatists 'by local and accidental circumstances,' cannot of necessity apply to Elizabethan drama. When this, together with the distinction between the organic and mechanical forms, is understood, then '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 judgment 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 organizing power.' In the 'Essay on Method' Coleridge elaborates on the theme in Biographia Literaria that poetry has a logic of its own, no less severe


2. 'Coleridge must, of necessity, emphasize the coexistence of the conscious will with the Secondary Imagination, in order to avoid the 'mania' which is the final state of the Imagination "if the check of the senses and the reason were withdrawn."' Humphry House, Coleridge, p.145. See also B.L., vol.i, p.85 where Coleridge almost equates composing with 'thinking', the thing which lends some justification to Livingstone Lowes' theory expounded in *Road to Xanadu*, ch.XXII 'Imagination Creatrix'.

3. Coleridge on Logic and Learning, Snyder, p.110. (cont.)
than that of science. What the critics find to be pure irregularity in Shakespeare's work is only a higher and 'more methodical sense of harmony' than they can understand. 'A very slight knowledge of music will enable any one to detect discords in the exquisite harmonies of Haydn or Mozart', but will never reveal to him the superior judgment of the composer in introducing the minor note into the major key.

Of course for the reinstatement of Shakespeare's conscious artistry it was also necessary to know that Shakespearean drama is a genre of its kind, and to realize that it is a highly developed genre, that the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama was not drama in its infancy stage. For a certain amount of historical knowledge was needed. Coleridge was not ignorant of the historic background of Shakespearean drama. Of its relation to the morality plays he was aware. He knew the relation between the villain and the Devil, between the Clown and the old Vice, although in the major works of Shakespeare he was more concerned with the dramatist's power of endowing his characters with individuality and realism. He also knew Shakespeare's re-

Footnote 3 continued from page 238:
Cf. Hazlitt's remark that Shakespeare 'appears to have owed almost everything to chance, scarce anything to industry or design.' Complete Works, ed. P. B. Howe, vol. 12, p. 118.

2. 'Poetry even that of the loftiest and seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more and more fugitive causes.' D.L., vol. i, p. 4.

lationship with the romance tradition. He pointed it for instance in his notes on *Love's Labour's Lost*. But what is extremely important is that he entertained no misguided notions on the intellectual standard of the Elizabthan audience. To him they were not the ignorant people, whose barbaric taste was responsible for all the unhappy irregularities of Shakespeare's plays - the thing which we constantly hear in the early eighteenth century. Nor were they, as the late eighteenth-century primitivists thought, primitive and unenlightened people, who, however, as they lived in an early stage of society, were gifted with a fiery imagination that made of ghosts and other supernatural phenomena everyday realities, and could speak a colourful language vitiated by a good deal of mixed metaphors. Just as he exploded the preposterous notion that Shakespeare was a wild and irregular genius Coleridge found this view of the Elizabethan audience crude and unacceptable. The picture he painted of the intellectual standard of Shakespeare's times was, on the other hand, if anything, slightly idealized. The English court then, Coleridge thought, 'was still the foster-mother of the state and muses; and the courtiers, and men of rank and fashion, affected a display of wit, point and sententious observation that would be deemed intolerable at present.' Against such a background

2. See supra, pp. 41 ff.
a satire like *Love's Labour's Lost* becomes understandable.

But this may seem very much like the picture of the Elizabethan court and society imagined by the eighteenth-century critics, in which we are told, 'The public taste was in its infancy; it delighted (as it always does during that state) in the high and turgid,' and 'the professor quibbled in his chair, the judges quibbled on the bench, the prelate quibbled in the pulpit, the statesman quibbled at the council-board; may, even majesty quibbled on the throne.' Coleridge never believed that

The court of Elizabeth spoke a scientific jargon, and a certain obscurity of style was universally affected. James brought an addition of pedantry, accompanied by indecent and indelicate manners and language.

He maintained that he had read, for instance, Donne's sermons which Warburton condemned, without encountering any of the artificialities and jingles attributed to them. Apart from his taking word play as a sign of mental vigour, Coleridge knew well how the Elizabethan audience was highly educated and trained in the art of language by eloquent sermons, political pamphlets and miscellaneous tracts:

A hundred years of controversy, involving every great political, and every dear domestic, interest, had trained all but the lowest classes to participate. Add to this the very style of the sermons of the time, and the eagerness of the Protestants to distinguish themselves by long and frequent preaching, and it will be found that, from the reign of Henry VIII to the abdication of James II no country ever received such a national education as England.

3. Ibid., pp. xii-xiv.
5. Ibid., vol. i, p. 94.
When we have known that Shakespeare's times were marked by \footnote{Sh.Crit., vol.ii, pp.84, 85.} 'a general energy of thinking', we cease to find it either baffling or mysterious that Shakespeare's poetic dramas were at all possible.

If Shakespeare is a fully conscious artist, who never writes anything without design, the question then arises while perusing his works: What is the poet's design behind each particular play? What is the play's meaning? In his search for the meaning of the plays the question of their form persistently presented itself to Coleridge's mind. After all form and meaning are only two facets of the same thing, distinguishable only for the sake of critical convenience. Coleridge found that Shakespeare's plays are divided roughly into two groups. In some plays the main interest lies in one or two 'indisputably prominent' characters, and the meaning of such plays is to be inferred from the nature of the experience the characters pass through. To this type belongs a play like Hamlet. \footnote{Mis.Crit., p.95.} But this does not mean that such prominent characters should be disengaged completely from the artistic pattern of the whole. In fact Coleridge's aversion to the stage representation of Shakespeare is caused partly by the apparently prevailing habit in his time of giving one star performances of the plays, instead of providing a harmonious performance of an integral whole. \footnote{See Appendix B.} He laments the fact that while major
roles are given to a Kemble or a Mrs. Siddons, all the minor parts through which our poet shone no less conspicuously and brightly are usurped by fellows who owed their very elevation to dexterity in snuffing candles. Likewise, he deprecates the habit of going to the theatres not to see a play, but to see Master Betty or Mr. Kean, or some one individual in some one part. In plays of this category, therefore, the importance of the main characters should be stressed, but not to the extent of distorting the whole artistic design. In other plays, the interest is equally divided among all the characters, and the total effect is produced not from the subordination of all to one either as the prominent person or the principal object, but by a coordination of the characters, by a wreath of flowers. The meaning of such plays resides in their total pattern, and in them one effect is produced by the spirit of the whole. Of the latter group plays like Midsummer's Night's Dream or As You Like It, or Winter's Tale are perfect examples. In this connection, Coleridge pointed out, the titles of the plays bear a certain degree of relevance to their meaning. Some plays derive their titles from the names of the main characters, thereby suggesting that their main interest lies in these characters, e.g. Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Lear ... etc. Others are

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called The Winter's Tale. As You Like It because their meaning does not lie largely in the experience of any one of the characters alone, because in them all the component parts of the play have an equal importance. This, however, is a useful guide sometimes, but not an absolute rule. Coleridge knew that a play like Cymbeline, for instance, although it takes its title from the name of one character, the king, is really a play that belongs to the second group. The hint that there is occasionally a connection between a play's title and its meaning is, however, a useful one, and at least it may sometimes help throw some light on the way Shakespeare intends us to take his plays, which characters to emphasize... etc. For instance, theories which make of the King the main character in Hamlet, or conceive of Iago as an equally tragic figure with Othello, or make Lear the tragedy of Cordelia, may be dismissed at least on this simple ground.

A Shakespearean play is not simply a structure of words and scenes that has pleasure for its object. It is founded on 'facts', 'passions' and 'moral verities'. In other words, it has a meaning and a moral significance. This is what Coleridge means when he describes Shakespeare as a philosopher: he 'has made passion the vehicle of general truth, as in his comedy he has made even folly itself the vehicle of philosophy.' Shakespeare is at once

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both poet and philosopher. It is not that from his plays a system of moral philosophy can be abstracted, the thing which Dr. Johnson suggested and which the Victorian critics wrote much about. Nor is it that his characters utter moral aphorisms to be collected and detached from their dramatic context, and even from their speakers— as Mrs. Griffith offers us in her book on The Morality of Shakespeare Illustrated.  

Kenrick, in the late eighteenth century said that much had been written on Shakespeare as a poet, and suggested that it was time that he should be discussed as a moral philosopher. But this separation between the poetry and the philosophy is unwarrantable; it was only possible when a theory of poetry existed which thought of form and content in major poetry in isolation. In Shakespearean drama the philosopher and the poet cannot be separated except to the detriment of both. Like all great poetry Shakespeare's is marked by 'depth and energy of thought.'  

For, says the Coleridge who is not hampered by the pleasure theory, 'no man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher'. In the immature poetry of Shakespeare, 'his works which give at once strong promises of the strength, and yet obvious proofs of the immaturity, of his genius', the poet and the philosopher are not quite one: 'Each with its excess seems to threaten

1. See supra, pp. 112-114.
2. See supra, p. 106.
3. See supra, p. 110ff and infra, pp. 444 ff.
the extinction of the other. But 'at length in the drama they were reconciled, and fought each with its shield before the breast of the other.' In other words, in the plays the philosopher and the poet become inseparable.

What shape does this reconciliation take in the plays? We may turn to Coleridge's criticism of an early play, Love's Labour's Lost, to obtain some idea of the reconciliation Shakespeare effected in the drama, and also to see how Coleridge suggests that a Shakespearean play has a meaning. Biron's crucial speech on love and the relative values of learning and living (IV.iii.320-51) Coleridge finds to be 'quite a study'. Here poetry and philosophy are at harmony - but because the poetry is predominantly rhetorical Coleridge describes the speech as 'logic clothed in rhetoric'. The phrase is not particularly happy, since it suggests that the philosophy is separable, and that it is merely sugar-coated, as it were, to have the semblance of poetry. But, as Coleridge explains later, this is not the case. The 'profound truths' are only to be arrived at through the 'most lively images'. Further, they are not tacked on to the play: they do not form a gnomic passage to be detached and collected and viewed in isolation. Since both the poetry and the philosophy are indissolubly wedded to each other, the whole passage, the thought-expression, has its meaning only in the dramatic context of which it forms a part. It is 'faithful to the character supposed to utter the lines' and also constitutes
'a further development of that character.\(^1\)

\footnote{1} Not that Coleridge failed to see that in some of Shakespeare's plays the speeches of some characters fulfil a function similar to that of the Chorus in Greek drama. Coleridge knew that and pointed to it in his critical remarks on \textit{Richard II}.\(^2\) There he also noted that such speeches are distinguished from others by their rhymes and formal quality, and that in them we get 'the general truths' as distinguished from the 'passions of the dialogue.' But, in English drama which has no chorus, he did not consider such an explicit momentary neglect of a fairly important character for the sake of giving utterance to the 'general truths' which bear no immediate living relation to the character itself a merit in dramatic technique. Such 'general truths', if they have to be uttered, must be conveyed obliquely and without any detriment to the character uttering them. In Shakespeare's mature works, he remarked, we cease to find such an artistic defect: the practice 'is infrequent in proportion to the excellence of Shakespeare's plays.'\(^3\) In the mature plays 'the truths he teaches he told in character and with passion. They are the sparks from heated iron.'\(^4\) Otherwise, the general moral reflections are 'put in the mouths of unimportant personages who act as chorus commenting on the action, and whose speeches are meant to guide our responses to the plays.' \(^5\) In the mature

\footnote{1}{\textit{Col.Crit.}, vol.1, p.34.} 
\footnote{2}{\textit{Il.}, vol.1, p.146.} 
\footnote{3}{\textit{Lod.Cit.}} 
\footnote{4}{\textit{Col.Crit.}, vol.ii, p.17, 283.} 
\footnote{5}{\textit{Ibid.}, vol.ii, p.283.}
plays, then, the bond between the philosophy and the poetry becomes tighter and more organic.

Character, therefore, while being self-consistent, becomes a medium for the value and meaning in a play. Coleridge does not treat the matter in detail. Nor does he, in the manner of one writing a study of Love's Labour's Lost, analyse the particular meaning and values embodied in it. As usual he is contented with dropping a hint or suggestion. But the hint and suggestion, however fragmentary, reveal a sound method of approach. The play is a satire on pedantry; but it has a deeper meaning. The meaning is to be found, Coleridge suggests, in Rosaline's final speech to Berowne, in which she dictates to him the penance he is to offer for having been 'a man replete with mocks, Full of comparisons and wounding flouts.' The play then deals with the education of the soul without which love's labour is lost, and the passage is indeed crucial to the whole conception of the play. A parallel punishment is dealt to the other lovers. Shakespeare cures his young men, who would set themselves against nature, by making them fall in love, thereby breaking their preposterous oaths to rise above nature and shun the company of women. Here, with an exquisitely comical effect, nature triumphs above unnaturalness and hypocrisy. But they have to be educated further; they have to lay aside their vanity and mockery, learn humility and be acquainted with human sorrow, in order to

attain to the goals of their love. The theme itself is paralleled in the subplot.

Perhaps a few illustrations of Coleridge's method of searching for the meaning of Shakespeare's plays will make the method still clearer. Coleridge found Troilus and Cressida a difficult play to understand; he 'scarcely knew what to say of it'; but the judgment he attempted of the play reveals in some ways his method best. It is neither vitiated by crude moralization, nor disturbed by insensitivity to form. He was not, like Dr. Johnson, disgusted by the vicious characters, nor did he find both Cressida and Pandarus merely 'detested and contemned'. To him, though difficult, the play is not 'one of the most loose and desultory of our author's plays.' On the contrary, it presents a nice grouping of characters representing certain values. In the foreground we have the lovers, each the embodiment of a different value. In Cressida Shakespeare has drawn 'the portrait of a vehement passion that, having its true origin and proper cause in warmth of temperament, fastens on, rather than fixes to, some one object by fleeting and temporary preference.' This is set against the 'profound affection represented in Troilus, and alone worthy the name of love; affection, passionate indeed ... but still having a depth of calmer element in a will stronger than desire, more entire than choice, and which gives permanence to its own act by converting it into

faith and duty. But the contrast between the turbulence of passion and the profundity of moral life as expressed in Cressida and Troilus finds its place in a larger contrast between the group of characters representing the Greeks, and those representing the Trojans. Shakespeare has 'inwoven' with the two characters the theme of the opposition of 'the inferior civilization but purer morals of the Trojans to the refinements, deep policy, but duplicity and sensual corruptions of the Greeks.' The meaning Coleridge finds in the play is the superiority of the moral and spiritual to the worldly and calculating. There are also other related themes, (although Coleridge does not think the relation has been stressed by Shakespeare); for example, in the grouping of Agamemnon, Nestor, Ulysses as opposed to Achilles, Ajax and Thersites Shakespeare seems to have had the intention of stating poetically the 'subservience and vassalage of strength and animal courage to intellect and policy.'

We may now find this interpretation of Troilus and Cressida, a play which has meant so much to the twentieth-century mind and which has been best analysed and perhaps understood by it, naive and inadequate - although as recently as 1930 G. Wilson Knight read in the play a meaning

not altogether dissimilar from Coleridge's. But this is not the point at issue. What is important for our present purpose is the fact that in Coleridge's criticism we meet for the first time in the history of English criticism with an attempt to find out the meaning of a Shakespearean play, a meaning not in terms of crude psychological or moral aphorisms, but in terms of values. Johnson, when not explicitly moral, is satisfied with commenting on this play that Shakespeare 'has diversified his characters with great variety, and preserved them with great exactness.' Hazlitt, who wanted more and more psychological realism in the characters, complained that Troilus 'is no character; he is merely a common lover,' and praised the portraits of both Cressida and Pandarus for being so true to life: they are 'hit off with proverbial truth'. Different indeed from these approaches is Coleridge's, and what distinguishes his is the realization that the individual character or group of characters are intended to mean some-

1. Just as Coleridge finds that Shakespeare contrasts the Trojans and the Greeks, meaning the former to represent the inferior civilization, but the purer morals' and the latter 'refinement, deep policy, but duplicity and sensual conceptions' - Knight sees that 'the Trojan party stands for human beauty and worth, the Greek party for the bestial and stupid elements of man, the barren stagnancy of intellect divorced from action ... Now these two primary aspects of humanity can be provisionally equated with the concepts "intuition" and "intellect", or "emotion" and "reason".' G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, p. 51.


thing. He therefore offers an interpretation which is arri-
vived at after posing the questions: what does every character
or group of characters mean? and what is the meaning of
the whole? And it is a legitimate interpretation in the
sense that its truth or falsity can be tested, as far as
such matters are at all possible in literary criticism, by
its self-consistency and by reference to the text. We may
disagree with Coleridge on this interpretation, but in dis-
agreeing with him we assume in our minds some other inter-
pretation, which as an interpretation does not differ in
structure from Coleridge's. Coleridge has given us the
critical apparatus, as it were, with which we can test his
or anybody's criticism, or form our own. When we refute
him we are using his tools. For instance, it follows
from his interpretation of Troilus and Cressida, as a
poetic statement of the superiority of the moral or spiri-
tual to the worldly or sensual, that the character of Ther-
sites is 'the Caliban of demagogues' life - the admirable
portrait of intellectual power deserted by all grace, all
moral principle, all not momentary purpose.' We may now
find it difficult to accept this interpretation of Ther-
sites's character. We may tend to consider what Coleridge
takes as 'a mule, quarrelsome by the original discord of
its nature' as a chorus pointing to the meaning of the play.

2. 'As we read his (i.e. Thersites) comment and relate it
with the debates in these other minds, his is seen to
be the dominant of their scale.' U. Ellis-Fermor,
The Frontiers of Drama, (Lond., 1943), p.68.
But then we do that because we may have a different interpretation of the play, which sees it as a 'Discord in the Spheres'. And we have arrived at this interpretation by fundamentally the same process as Coleridge. Not content with regarding how far a character is true to life as an end in itself, we have asked ourselves questions concerning its meaning and the meaning of its relation to other characters. Of course, we ask questions regarding the meaning of other elements beside character, like for instance imagery, which Coleridge in this particular instance does not raise. But those, as we shall see elsewhere, he does not really neglect.

The tragedy of Macbeth to take another example, may be taken as that of a man suffering from a diseased will. But it is more than that. It is the tragedy of self-deception, just as Othello has for its theme the enormity of human deception. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are sadly ignorant of their own true selves. The case of Macbeth is the clearer. Before he succumbs to the temptation of murdering Duncan he interprets 'the inward pangs and warnings of conscience' as 'prudential reasonings.' After the murder he is 'ever and ever mistaking the anguish of conscience for fears of selfishness, and thus, as a punishment of that selfishness, plunging deeper in guilt and ruin;' although

1. See infra, p. 467.
3. Ibid., vol. i, p. 76.
sometimes 'conscience rushes in her own person' undisguised, as when, immediately after the murder, he refuses to take back the daggers to the scene of murder, or when he wishes that the knocking at his castle gate could 'wake' Duncan. This last speech (II.ii.73 ff) Coleridge asks us to contrast with his previous equivocal speech before the murder: 'If it were done ...' In his vain endeavour to obtain peace of mind and get rid of the horrible dreams which shake him and his wife nightly, and which he wrongly attributes to his insecure position, he commits further atrocities, upsetting the whole order of nature: he 'tears himself live-asunder from nature.' Trusting none he causes everybody to mistrust him. Like him, all those who work under him are motivated by fear. Fear therefore is what haunts the universe of Macbeth; it is to be found in all the characters of the play. Coleridge puts the problem thus:

Macbeth mistranslates the recoillings and ominous whispers of conscience into prudential and selfish reasonings, and after the deed, the terrors of remorse into fear from external dangers — like delirious men that run away from the phantoms of their own brain, or, raised by terror to rage, stab the real object that is within their own reach.

But towards the end we hear no more of his 'prudential prospective reasonings' and Shakespeare concentrates now on the 'inward'. Once Macbeth sees the truth of his situation there

2. Ibid., vol.1, p.76.
3. Ibid., vol.1, p.81.
4. Ibid., vol.1, p.80.
is nothing left for him but despair. On the speech he delivers when he hears of his wife's death Coleridge remarks that 'Despondency is the final wretched heart-armour'. No selfless/ignorant than Macbeth is Lady Macbeth. She has been living in a world of unreality and fantasy. We need not worry our heads over the deep psychology of the characters, and argue in the manner of Bradley as to which is the more imaginative and poetical or less practical. It is enough to know that Shakespeare presents to us in Lady Macbeth a character who is no less deceived in herself than her husband. In spite of her early conviction in her own heroic nature she soon loses the power to bear reality, and she gives way before her husband, who in her opinion was the weaker. When we last see her, before her mind is disordered in the sleepwalking scene, she is 'merely endeavouring to reconcile her husband and her own sinking of heart by anticipation of the worst shape and thoughts and affected bravado in confronting them'. Coleridge sums up the character justly when he writes that

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.  

1. On the role of imagery in the characterization of Lady Macbeth see infra, p. 460.
3. Ibid., vol.1, p.72.
The meaning Coleridge finds in Hamlet is only too well known. But it is important to realize that he reaches the conclusion that the meaning of the play resides mainly in the character of the Prince, as a consequence of this total response to the play and of his subsequent analysis of some of its dramatic features. We are shown for instance how the preparation leads to the dramatic building up of the character of Hamlet. Shakespeare does not make Hamlet himself appear in the first exciting scene on the battlements, but introduces him later on at the royal court, and that still after an important but subordinate character, i.e. Laertes. His object is to make the character of the hero - who also happens to be the chief organ of the meaning of the play - arouse as much interest as possible. 'How judicious that Hamlet should not have to take up the leavings of exhaustion.'  

The love theme in the play, important enough to be sure, is not made conspicuous, or presented directly to the audience. Rather, it is often to be inferred: for instance, Hamlet's 'spite to poor Polonius, whom he cannot let rest,' the audience understand, is in part caused by his love for Ophelia which has been intercepted by Polonius. If it had been otherwise presented the unity of interest might have been jeopardized. Shakespeare sees to it that nothing should deflect the attention from the crux of the play, which is Hamlet's attitude to the

3. Ibid., vol.1, p.39.
duty of revenge laid upon his shoulders. In conformity to the theme and interest of the play the tempo of Hamlet is marked by its utmost slowness, as contrasted, for instance, with the breathless and crowded rapidity of Macbeth. Thus the starting point of his interpretation of the play is not the character of the protagonist, but a dramatic consideration of the form and structure of the play, which leads to the character.

Or consider Coleridge’s criticism of the history plays, scanty as it is. Coleridge felt the epic breadth which characterizes them. He also knew that the problem which faced Shakespeare the artist was to reduce those events of epic magnitude to dramatic form. ‘An historical drama’, he said, ‘is a collection of events borrowed from history, and but connected together in respect to cause/time poetically, by dramatic fiction.’ The ‘theory’ on which the historical plays rest is ‘the conversion of the epic into the dramatic.’ Indeed Coleridge did not compare Shakespeare’s historical plays with their sources in order to trace the process by which he artistically transmuted the events into drama: he lacked the scholarly mind necessary for such an undertaking.

1. The contrast between the two plays is drawn by Schlegel; but Coleridge characteristically links it up with his view of Hamlet’s character. See Sh.Crit., vol.11, p.273.
2. See *Sharka*, p. 292.
4. Ibid., vol.1, p.152.
But he hinted on the way Shakespeare's artistic conscience impelled him to deviate from history for the sake of the exigencies of drama. He knew that if Shakespeare had been writing an epic about that wide expanse of English history, he would have tackled the problem differently. As he was writing drama, however, he had to insist more on the role of human wills, and the significance of choice, without which Coleridge believed drama would be impossible. He also had to introduce little concrete incidents in order to give the plays 'reality and individual life', thereby distinguishing them from mere history, as we find, e.g., in the Gardner episode in Richard II, and in the comic scenes of low life in Henry IV though the concrete incidents must bear an organic relation to the structure of the play they happen to form part of. On the whole in his treatment of the History Plays, Coleridge regarded every play as an autonomous individual work of art. But he still noted the continuity and the close connection between one play and another - a thing in which he found a decisive argument against the view that Shakespeare was no conscious artist. While writing the individual play, the pattern of the series seemed to have been taking shape in his mind. Coleridge admired the art by which Shakespeare 'makes one play introductory to another', and the way in which the character

2. Ibid., vol.i, p.140.
of Gloucester in Henry VI was portrayed 'evidently with a view
to Richard III, ' how Bolingbroke in Richard II was a prepara-
tory study for Henry IV, and how casual questions dropped by him prepare for Prince Hal of the future play. But Coleridge does not attempt any considerable analysis of the epic quality in the History Plays. Indeed, with the exception of his re-
marks on the continuity of some characters in certain plays,
he does not point in any detail any major theme that links the whole series together. Yet even here, in Coleridge's view, the plays are not devoid of meaning. They are the expression of the ethos of a people, and the poetic and dramatic state-
ment of the value of patriotism and of harmony and order in the state.

A Shakespearean play, then, has a meaning; it discloses a particular vision of life, which is ultimately the poet's vision. But Coleridge also remembers that it is an autonomous work of art. In it the poet does not speak of his own thoughts crudely and directly, and nowhere does Coleridge try to trade the poet's personal convictions. As artist Shake-
speare reveals an amazing power of detachment from his crea-
tion, a power which Coleridge detects even in Shakespeare's earliest productions. In Venus and Adonis he admires Shake-
speare's 'thinking faculty and thereby perfect abstraction from himself' and notes how 'he works exactly as if of another planet, as describing the movements of two

2. Ibid., vol.i, pp.143-152-3.
butterflies.' It is precisely this quality which made some of the romantics think that there is an element of cruelty in Shakespeare's art. Coleridge, however, finds that impersonality is an indispensable feature of all art that merits the epithet 'great'. For instance, he praises 'the wonderful philosophic impartiality in Shakespeare's politics' which is displayed in Coriolanus. 'Shakespeare is quite peculiar. In other writers we find the particular opinions of the individual ... but Shakespeare never promulgates any party texts.' Sensitive as he is to the follies and absurdities of the mob, for instance, his treatment of it is on the whole impartial.

Such is the way Coleridge searches for meaning in Shakespeare's plays. But it cannot be said that this is always his approach. The naturalistic criteria in his criticism sometimes betray themselves. Then we are con-

2. See e.g. Schiller, On Naive and Sentimental Poetry.
3. See supra, pp. 234 ff.
4. Sh.Crit., vol.1, p.89. St. Hazlitt on Coriolanus:
"Shakespeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble." Complete Works, vol.4, p.214. Cf. J. Palmer, Political Characters in Shakespeare; (Lond., 1945), p.334, 'The mood in which Shakespeare contemplated politics as such was one of ironic detachment'; and ibid., p.310: 'The warning of Coleridge, who found in it(Coriolanus) a supreme example of the impartiality of Shak's politics, deserves more attention than it has received.'
fronted with Coleridge at his weakest as a critic, concentrating on character to the exclusion of the meaning of the play. Whenever he does that, he disengages the character from the whole fabric, judging it as if it were a living human being, confusing art with reality. It is then that his moral judgments become as crude and explicit as those of the eighteenth-century critics only too often are. Thus concentrating on the character of Angelo in Measure for Measure, he fails to see the point of the play. To him Angelo represents only 'cruelty with lust and damnable baseness', and he therefore cannot pass unpunished. Coleridge does not stop to ask himself, whether it is of any significance at all that Shakespeare disposed of him otherwise. Instead, applying a crude moral judgment, he concludes that Angelo's pardon and marriage 'not merely baffles the strong indignant claim of justice ... but it is likewise degrading to the character of woman.' With his moral sense so wounded he complains that Measure for Measure is the 'most painful - say rather the only painful - part of his genuine works', and he compares the marriage of Angelo and Marianne to that of Alathe and Algripe in the Night-Walker of the morally irresponsible Beaumont and Fletcher. He never studies the nature of Angelo's pardon and its relation to the other forms of forgiveness in the total pattern or its significance in the whole meaning of the

2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.352.

\[Vol.i, p.113\; \text{Cf.}\]
play. Unawares, he has suffered his feelings to be disturbed and offended by thoughts which the poet himself has not presented. That Coleridge so errs in a play which was for long considered at least a problem play, and on which even now there is not much agreement among critics of Shakespeare, may make his error understandable, but it cannot excuse the faulty method of criticism which against his better judgment and knowledge he here pursues. But this brings us to considerations of character proper, which is the subject of the following chapter.

Although as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century the Aristotelian mimesis was understood in the sense of literal imitation, Shakespeare's characters were then generally considered as classes. This attitude, oddly enough, was best expressed by Dr. Johnson, the last great critic, who in some ways represented fully the early eighteenth-century tradition. Johnson, we remember, wrote in his Preface that in Shakespeare's writings, as contrasted with those of other poets, a character is 'commonly a species.' But we have seen how with the spread of the empirical philosophy and psychology the emphasis was being gradually shifted to the individual. By the last quarter of the century it was no longer surprising to find that Shakespeare's characters were openly treated even as historic beings who have, imposed upon them by the critic, a past before the play starts and a future after the curtain falls. In the beginning of the nineteenth century this criterion of individuality was carried to extremes. The main butt of Hazlitt's attack in the preface to his Characters of Shakespeare, a book written apparently with Schlegel's lectures fresh in his mind, is the ideal of

1. See supra, pp. 77 ff.
2. Raleigh, p.12.
generality as represented in Johnson's Preface. Here Hazlitt censures Johnson for remarking of Shakespeare's characters, 'in contradiction to what Pope had observed, and to what every one else feels that each character is a species, instead of being an individual' - just as he elsewhere attacks Reynolds for expressing the same belief in the criterion of the general in his Discourses. Hazlitt himself sets out in his book on Shakespeare's characters to point out in the best way he can 'the individual traits' in them, which Johnson could not or would not find.

In this long-standing feud between the general and the particular Coleridge sided with neither party. If anything he blamed the modern poets for rendering their characters 'as much as possible specific, individual, even to a degree of portraiture.' He found that neither the concept of the general nor that of the particular alone fits the nature of the Shakespearean character. A Shakespearean character is both at once, and here is an example of the principle of the reconciliation of opposites which imagination embodies. It is neither an individual nor a class alone, but, as it were, 'a class individualized'.

2. Ibid., vol.8, p.141.
4. A.P., pp. 55, 185, 300-1.
In *Biographia Literaria* he wrote that 'the ideal', which is the province of poetry,

consists in the happy balance of the generic with the individual. The former makes the character representative and symbolical, therefore instructive ... The latter gives it living interest; for nothing lives or is real, but as definite and individual. 1

Those who believe that Coleridge was a master of verbalism may find the solution, if not the controversy, meaningless. But it is not really as purely verbal or as meaningless as it may at first sound. The 'general' and the 'individual' represent two different approaches to Shakespeare's characters, or to any work of art for that matter; they give rise to two different types of practical criticism. Whereas the belief in the *general* results primarily in a literary and moral type of criticism, the outcome of the belief in the individual is the psychological; its direct progeny is the Ernest Jones variety. That is to say nothing of the living philosophical implications of the two critical attitudes. By reconciling both approaches Coleridge managed to write a kind of Shakespearean criticism which is both psychological and something else at the same time. Coleridge did not treat the psychological criticism of charac-

3. If the difference between the two does not appear as striking as it should be in the eighteenth-century criticism of Shakespeare's characters, it is because the age's view of imitation was generally that of copying, at best selective copying. (See *supra*, pp. 77 ff.)
ters as the end of the Shakespearean critic, but he went beyond it (without neglecting it or underrating its importance as some modern critics try to do) and asked further questions about the 'meaning' of a character and of a whole play.

This may indeed sound a startling assertion to make, since the spread, if not the rise, of the psychological school of Shakespearean criticism is often associated with the name of Coleridge. Moreover, his psychological criticism of character has been found by many, including his editor Raysor, to be his only valuable contribution. Other critics, reacting wholeheartedly against the psychological criticism, have chiefly blamed him for lending the voice of his authority to such an erroneous approach, and for diverting the course of Shakespearean criticism into fruitless and irrelevant channels. But in the light of the evidence we possess in his criticism, we tend to think that such a charge is exaggerated, if not sometimes groundless. There are strong indications indeed that Coleridge does not treat psychological truth as an end in itself, that sometimes when he talks about the truths of the human heart he does not mean merely psychological truths, but rather broad human values, which it is the business of all serious literature to present. In the version of the Essay on Method, which appeared in the Encyclopedia Metropolitana, he tells us that Shakespeare 'was pursuing two Methods at once; besides the psychological Method he has also to attend
to the poetical. The 'poetical method' itself, we are
told in the same essay, involves the apprehension of deep
moral values. In his practical criticism the psychological
sometimes gives way to the poetical.

There is for instance a fragment of his unfortunately
missing criticism of A Midsummer Night's Dream, by which
what I maintain here can be supported. I am not concerned
at present with the critical method and assumptions the
fragment reveals. In the first scene of the first act of
the play Helena enters just after Hermia and Lysander
have decided to elope together and arranged to meet in a
wood outside Athens. Helena, being the friend and school
fellow of Hermia, is let into the secret by the young
lovers. As Helena dotes on Demetrius, who does not care
much for her, but is in his turn head over ears in love
with Hermia, she betrays the faith the young lovers have
placed in her. She decides to divulge the secret of their
elopement and the details of their meeting to Demetrius,
hoping thereby to enjoy his company to the place in the
woods she well knows. Now Helena's behaviour here Cole-
ridge finds in accordance with the truths of psychology
as he understands it. 'The act', he writes:

is natural; the resolve to act is, I fear, likewise
too true a picture of the lax hold that principles have
on the female heart, when opposed to, or even separated
from passion and inclination.

2. See also e.g. his criticism of Troilus and Cressida,
supra, pp. 297 ff. and his interpretation of Othello,
infra, ch. IV.
But it is not enough for a dramatic character to be psychologically true. It has to fulfil other requirements which a work of art entails - requirements which vary from one work to another according to the meaning, mood and emotional level of every particular work.

But still, however just (the act may be psychologically) the representation is not poetical; we shrink from it and cannot harmonize it with the ideal. 1

Similarly in The Winter's Tale Autolycus's speech at the beginning of the third scene of the fourth act is, Coleridge thinks, marred by the words 'for the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it', although the utterance itself is in keeping with the character. It is 'delicately characteristic of one who had lived and been reared in the best society, and had been precipitated from it by "die and drab".' So far Coleridge is saying what in substance is Dr. Johnson's verdict: 'The character of Autolycus is so naturally conceived, and strongly represented.' 3 But it is not sufficient that a character should say what is consistent with itself; what it says should also harmonize with the predominant tone of the whole. In this particular instance the expression, despite its psychological probability, 'strikes against' the critic's feelings 'as a note out of time and as not coalescing with that pastoral tint which gives

1. Sh. Crit., vol.1, p.100. Of course, it may be objected that what Coleridge really wanted Shakespeare to do was to give the romantic idealized picture of womanhood he himself often entertained. It may be so. But this still shows that he did not consider the object of a poetic dramatist to represent men strictly as they are.


3. Raleigh, p.91.
such a charm to this fourth act. It is apparently too Macbeth-like for the emotional level of the play. Of course, we may disagree with such nice and fastidious criticism; but the criticism itself is significant. There are other considerations to be taken into account in a work of art besides character consistency and psychological truth, and without them psychological truth itself has no merit.

These considerations are what Coleridge calls poetic or 'aesthetic logic'. What offends the aesthetic logic is for Coleridge of graver results than what offends realism. For instance, to observe poetic logic the storm in the Tempest has to be represented as 'not in strictness natural'. To harmonize with the 'meaning' of the play it has to be represented in such a way that we are given only 'the bustle of a tempest, from which the real horrors are abstracted.' Coleridge is abundantly aware that the plays are primarily poetic drama and not psychological documents. In the comparison he draws between Massinger and Shakespeare the former is praised for his realism: in his delineations objects appear as they do in nature, have the same force and truth and produce the same effect upon the spectator.

But Massinger, he goes on, 'is not a poet of high imagina-

1. Sh.Crit., vol.i, p.120.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.132.
tion, and it is not enough for poetic drama to be simply truthful. Shakespeare, on the other hand,

is beyond this; — he always by metaphors and figures involves in the thing considered a universe of past and possible experiences; — he mingleth earth, sea, and air, gives a soul to everything, and at the same time that he inspires human feelings, adds a dignity in his images to human nature itself. 1

That Coleridge was not really satisfied with the psychological analysis of Shakespeare's characters as an end in itself cannot be more apparent than in his insistence that in Shakespeare we neither find what he calls 'ventriloquism' nor are we faced with characters composed of flesh and blood and completely independent of their creator. Ventriloquism is the term Coleridge uses to describe the lack of sufficient detachment in the dramatic poet from his creations, to denote the absence of what Mr. Eliot has recently called the 'third voice' of poetry. 2 If a dramatist presents to us characters all speaking the same voice, which is directly the poet's own voice, then he is a ventriloquist. 3

3. Coleridge's definition of ventriloquism is: 'One man is speaking all the while, but every now and then he alters his voice into a semi-squeak and would fain make it appear to proceed from some doll or man of straw at some little distance from it.' Coleridge on Logic and Learning, Snyder, p.60.
Shakespeare, Coleridge tells us, is no ventriloquist; his characters are more than sufficiently independent of him and remarkably distinguished from one another. Each has a life of its own and each speaks its own voice. That is why Shakespeare seems to be 'characterless'. But this does not mean that it is not basically a poetic creation:

In the meanest characters, it was still Shakespeare; it was not the mere Nurse in Romeo and Juliet, or the Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing, or the Blundering Constable in Measure for Measure... We know that no Nurse talked exactly in that way, the particular sentences might be to that purpose.  

The Shakespearean universe is peopled not by historic beings, but by the creatures of the poet's imagination, which however independent they may be, still have their relation to the poet. For the characters, we remember, are essentially products of 'meditation'. Just as Shakespeare is no ventriloquist he is not lost in his creations either. This Coleridge expresses in the following cryptic manner:

The poet lost in his portraits contrasted with the poet as a mere ventriloquist; wonderful union of both in Shakespeare.  

The poet indeed speaks in every play, but his voice, in the mature plays at least, is not the voice of any one particular character. We hear it rather, as Coleridge puts it, 'by way of continuous undersong', and its message lies in

1. Sh.Crit., vol.1, p.82. Contrasted with Milton Shakespeare is 'the Spinozistic deity - an omnipresent creativeness', whereas 'John Milton himself is in every line of the Paradise Lost: Shak's poetry is characterless; that is, it does not reflect the individual Shakespeare.' T.T., May 12, 1830.  
4. Ibid., vol.1, p.93. Cf. vol.1, p.201. (cont.)
the total meaning of every play. It is only in the immature Shakespeare, or in those rare parts of his mature works, of which an example is furnished in the Captain's speech in the second scene of Macbeth, in which Shakespeare drops the dramatic style and in its stead uses a 'mere style of narration' - that the author's voice is heard, to use Coleridge's word, 'palpably'. In such parts we find 'thoughts and descriptions, suited neither to the passion of the speaker, nor the purpose of the person to whom the information is to be given', but for a moment the author himself addresses directly the audience or the reader. For a moment Shakespeare's 'negative capability' disappears and his poetry has a 'palpable design upon us', as Keats would say. Of course we can reply that in some cases the dramatic style proper is suspended for higher purposes, perhaps for the sake of the introduction of some significant phrase that is meant to orientate our response to a particular situation or of an image that will set the appropriate atmosphere. Still from the point of view of dramatic technique Coleridge would consider this a lapse, and in his mature works Shakespeare very often achieves these effects while simultaneously maintaining the dramatic style, and ventriloquism is the last charge that can be levelled at him. 1

Footnote 5 continued from page 321:

'The consciousness of the poet's mind must be diffused over that of the reader or spectator; but he himself, according to his genius, elevates us, and by being always in keeping prevents us from perceiving any strangeness, tho' we feel great exaltation.'

1. The case of Macbeth does not disturb us much because the speaker is a very minor character. The Captain (cont.)
Although he did not regard psychological truth as the objective of the dramatic poet, Coleridge did not underrate its importance. He knew well that in order to convey its meaning a play, at least a serious play, ought to have a certain degree of probability. A play is not simply a structure of words that creates an emotion in the recipient, no matter whether the structure is feasible or involves a psychological impossibility. Psychological truth may not be the country into which a play transports us. But it is a country we have to cross in order to arrive at our destination - the dramatic and poetic vision. There is no other route. Without it we remain all the time outside the threshold of the dramatic experience. It is, in fact, the equivalent of literal sense in non-dramatic poetry: although in itself it does not constitute the meaning of a poem; yet without it we can never arrive at its meaning.

Indeed there are one or two of Shakespeare's serious plays of which 'the interest and situations' 'are derived from the assumption of a gross improbability'. Both Lear and The Merchant of Venice start with a postulate which we have to accept unquestioningly. But, as Coleridge points out, in such cases we are dealing with an old tale. Not only

Footnote 1 continued from page 322:
is clearly meant to be nothing more than a choric commentary on Macbeth's martial valour, the object of his rhetorical or epic speech being to introduce us in as short and concentrated a space as possible to the heroic aspect of Macbeth's character. As we are not interested in the speaker himself, the speech therefore has relevance not so much to him as to the character to which it refers.
were the stories known either in histories or in ballad form or in both in the Elizabethan times but they had sometimes been already dramatized. This fact would lessen then, if it did not remove altogether, the sense of improbability and the unfamiliarity of the poet's world which a modern recipient, unacquainted with these, might feel. The conduct of Lear in the first scene, Coleridge observes, and the same thing applies to that of Shylock in The Merchant of Venice, follows 'an old story, rooted in popular faith - a thing taken for granted already, and consequently without any of the effects of improbability'. Besides, Shakespeare, Coleridge explains, counteracts the possible effects of improbability in different ways. For instance, the glaring absurdity of Lear in the first scene is lessened by 'the little admixture of pride and sullenness' which he finds in Cordelia's answer 'Nothing'. Further, the interest in the improbable postulate is dropped the moment it has served its purpose, and by introducing the Kent episode the attention is 'forced away from the nursery-tale'.

2. Loc.Cit.
3. This argument would be unacceptable to us if we happened to be of Schücking's view that Cordelia's answer is by no means meant to characterize her: 'We may regard it as absolutely certain, however, that Shakespeare had not the slightest intention of endowing with any trait of vanity the touching figure of Cordelia.' (Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays, p.39). One fails, however, to see the grounds of Schücking's absolute certainty. Granting the use of basic dramatic conventions, surely in his delineation of Cordelia Shakespeare does not display mere 'ventriloquism'.

But the important thing is that it is only the initial postulate which we now have to accept. In the development of the drama, once the initial step is accepted, there is nothing purely arbitrary and accidental. The characters reveal enough psychological realism to make the dramatic experiences possible. Or, to quote Coleridge, the tale in both plays is 'merely the canvas to the characters and passions, a mere occasion - not (as in Beaumont and Fletcher) perpetually recurring, as the cause and sine qua non of the incidents and emotions.' 1. The incidents and emotions form the body of the dramatic experience, and because genuine dramatic experience is first and foremost a kind of apprehension of reality, a great dramatist, in spite of all the conventions in the world, cannot afford to give us such a distorted representation of reality as to preclude all psychological probability. Of drama, perhaps more than of anything else, Coleridge's words remain true:

Like the moisture or the polish on a pebble, genius neither distorts nor false-colours its objects; but on the contrary brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escapes the eye of common observation, thus raising to the ranks of gems what had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty high road of custom. 2

Writing of the requirements of poetic drama, Eliot observes that 'it must take genuine and substantial human emotions,'
such as observation can confirm, typical emotions, and give them artistic form.' But if we insist upon 'genuine and substantial human emotions', we are, in fact, demanding a certain measure of psychological truth. It is here that Coleridge finds the tragedies of Beaumont and Fletcher to be deficient, for they 'proceed upon something forced and unnatural; the reader never can reconcile the plot with probability, and sometimes not with possibility.'

Much has been written of late to deny psychological realism to Shakespeare's major characters, and to propagate the strange notion that because a dramatist works primarily for the stage his sole object is the momentary excitation of emotions by means of tricks and illusions. But if it were true that Shakespeare's major characters are not psychologically convincing (and it is difficult to see how they could be convincing otherwise), then, it seems to me, it should be admitted once and for all that the plays can no longer stand as great drama, although they may live as second rate literature, for even great non-dramatic literature must have a permanent relevance to human reality. But it is a strange fact that the critics who deny the characters any psychological reality still continue to pay lip service to the great dramatist. The relation between drama and psychology is in fact of the greatest importance,

2. Sh.Crit., vol.11, p.34.
and Coleridge was undoubtedly right in stressing this importance. Even a modern dramatist like Sartre, who cannot be said to entertain much respect for traditional dramatists, admits that it would be 'absurd' to 'reject psychology'. It is because of this close relation that it seems that an exact equivalent of surrealism and cubism, where there is an undue distortion of material, is not possible in the sphere of drama. Even the so-called expressionistic drama could not do without psychology altogether - except to its own detriment. For instance, the latter part of a play like Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine fails, not because in it the events are staged in the world beyond the grave, but because the character of the protagonist, who is sufficiently individualised in the earlier part, is deliberately robbed of his individuality and is made by the dramatist to appear like a type. Consequently the play ceases to be a living action and becomes a pure drame à thèse fundamentally of the same nature as an apparently different work like J.J.Bernard's L'âme en peine. A similar charge could be levelled at Toller's Masses and the Man, where the characters, as the author admits in his letter to the producer, are not individuals,

2. The Maeterlinckian thèse of Bernard's play demands that the hero and the heroine, who were apparently made for each other, should never meet. The result is a dramatization of an idea, but no real drama, which can only exist when its material is the action and interaction of psychologically plausible characters.
and where even the heroine, being no one in particular with a definite human experience, could in fact be anybody. This, of course, is something radically different from the nature of a Shakespearean tragic character, which, while never ceasing to be an individual, rises into the general man. While being an individual with a concrete experience in a concrete situation, Macbeth utters words which are beyond the individual character without being themselves out of character. This is what Coleridge meant by his dictum that a Shakespearean character is both an individual and a species. In drama the individual is no less important than the species, and without it there can be no real drama. In this connection the failure of the surrealist and other cognate attempts at drama, which sacrifice character consistency altogether, is particularly instructive. Even if we analyze the works of a great dramatist like Strindberg, who in some plays has adopted methods broadly resembling the surrealist technique, we shall find that in them character consistency is sacrificed only at the expense of drama itself. Not even Strindberg's brilliance could redeem these plays which flaunt the basic conventions of drama. In fact the most powerful a posteriori

1. When Strindberg uses the expressionist devices sparingly and plausibly the effect is admirable. For instance, in *The Dance of Death*, Part I, Curt, a decidedly minor figure in the play, seems to undergo a transformation which lasts only a few seconds when he seems to be caught into the web of evil, which the Captain's household has been weaving for twenty-five years. During that short while he is, as it were, possessed, and the
sight of so much evil in its 'odious nakedness' seems to have aroused 'the wild beast' in him; but consistently with his character he soon shakes it off and returns to himself. This momentary excursion into evil, however, itself not unpleasing, helps to enhance the atmosphere of evil in the play, and fulfils a similar function to the temptation of Banquo in Macbeth. But when Strindberg resorts to purely symbolic devices affecting major characters, without considering psychological probability, the result is not really dramatically effective. In The Ghost Sonata, for example, Hummel and the Dummy, the Colonel's wife, end by exchanging places – a symbolic act signifying the final unmasking of the unmasker. Hummel, who starts by placing himself on a higher plane than his fellows and who sets about brutally revealing the sordid reality of their true selves, ends by being himself stripped naked and shown in a world of deceitful appearance to be no better than they. But in as much as the characters are drained of psychological content and living individuality and made purely symbolical, there is a loss in dramatic immediacy and effectiveness. An even more extreme case is The Dream Play, where he tries to imitate the disconnected form of a dream, and where, as he writes in the Reminder to the play, 'anything may happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist. On an insignificant background of reality, imagination designs and embroiders novel patterns: a medley of memories, experiences, free fancies, absurdities and improvisations. The characters split, double, multiply, vanish, solidify, blur, clarify ...' (Plays by Strindberg, First Series, Tr. E.Björkman, Lodd., 1912, p.24).

The result, however, is certainly not drama, but a dramatization of an idea or rather an emotion: the prevalence of human misery. All that the play, in fact, succeeds in creating is an atmosphere, something which Shakespeare managed to evoke through the use of imagery alone, say in Lear. It is as if the dramatist wished to erect a whole play purely upon imagery. In Shakespeare's plays, on the other hand, imagery adds to the characters a fourth dimension, so to speak; while in this play of Strindberg what we get is only the fourth dimension without the other three. Much nearer to Shakespeare's catholic method is Ibsen's, for instance, in The Wild Duck. All the characters connected with the wild duck are defined further by this connection; the duck, which is obviously symbolic, seems to bestow upon them another attribute, another dimension. But they have, to begin with, a solid basis of reality.

Surely you must first lay down the foundations before erecting securely the superstructure.
argument against the critics who deny psychological truth to characters in great drama like Shakespeare's lies in the relative failure of the actual attempts to juggle with psychology made by some modern dramatists, certain of whom possess undoubtedly more than mere brilliance.

Why it is impossible to dispense with psychological probability in drama altogether is indeed an important and interesting question. To this question the answer that can be constructed from Coleridge's position appears to be that because the object of drama is to offer us an interpretation of life, the interpretation would be lost on us if the world the dramatist presents to us did not in any way strike us as being in essence similar to life as we experience it. Coleridge thought that without this sufficient degree of resemblance we fail to be involved in the action, and remain outside the dramatic experience. But perhaps it is a question of the exigencies of the dramatic form itself which does not permit an unduly large distortion of the material. Indeed, we can easily imagine a somewhat surrealistic mime and conceive a silent film made up entirely of a series of pictures representing certain situations and characters merging into one another in a manner similar to what happens in dreams. But drama we cannot.

1. See B.L., vol. ii, p. 5: 'the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations supposing them real.' Coleridge is speaking here not of poetic drama, but of dramatic poetry, but the words remain true of both.
It may ultimately therefore be a question of language, which cannot at any considerable length be emptied of all its cognitive element. We expect that dialogue should to some extent be intelligible, and intelligibility in its turn involves consistency. That is why we cannot really approach drama, Shakespearean or otherwise, in the same way as we approach ballet or opera.

The comparison between Shakespearean drama and ballet or opera, which has been urged once more recently by Mr. B.L. Joseph, is therefore somewhat misleading. Unless we are

1. Goethe, we may remember, had already likened drama to opera in his dialogue 'On the Truth and Probability of Works of Art', (1798); See Criticisms, Reflections and Maxims of Goethe, Tr. by W. B. Ronfeldt, the Scott Library, pp.31-38. But his intention in the dialogue was to arrive at a principle in aesthetics, and to point out that drama is not a copy of life. The problem with which he was concerned was the problem of imitation which occupied much of the attention of critics in the 16th and 17th centuries, and for which Coleridge attempted a solution in the antithesis which he established between copy and imitation, observation and meditation. When he came to treat Shakespeare's plays in detail, however, the question of opera never arose. Indeed, if anything, Goethe leaned heavily on the side of naturalism. His criticism of Hamlet's character in Wilhelm Meister and elsewhere, and his attempt to reconstruct his character before his Father's murder are just as naturalistic as Hogarth's speculations on the past of Sir John Falstaff. More recently Mr. Eliot, in 'Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry', (Selected Essays, p.46), noted that in the Russian ballet there 'seemed to be everything that we wanted in drama, except the poetry.' But that is precisely the point. And once poetry or language is introduced we have other elements than the purely formal. Witness the death of the once fashionable théâtre de silence.


directly concerned with general aesthetical theory, it seems to me that for purposes of practical criticism it is more valuable to emphasize the distinctions between poetry and the sister arts than their resemblances. Poetic drama is, as Coleridge often says, a kind of poetry. It has to be responded to and judged in the same way as poetry is responded to and judged. Hence the inevitable intrusion of psychology. Just as in poetry of the first voice any experience of the poet that is worthwhile has to be convincing, so it is in poetic drama: only in drama, because the poet's own personality disappears behind his creations, is it the experience of his characters which we expect to find convincing. Because of the nature of its medium poetry contains a cognitive element, even though the cognitive element in it may be one part of, or subordinated to, the total 'meaning'. Even if we agreed with some critics (e.g. Maud Bodkin) to reducing poetry to archetypal patterns, the patterns themselves would be found to possess some intelligible significance than can in some measure be discussed. But in music and the rest of the arts the cognitive element is vague and attenuated. Indeed it has recently been claimed by some critics and artists to be non-existent. That is perhaps one reason why there is very little criticism written on, for instance, music and the little that there is is undeveloped in comparison with criticism of poetry.

In ballet as well as in opera the individual moment of
human life is so highly formalized that it bears the minimum of reference to actual human experience. And because of the high degree of formalization it becomes only an occasion for the display of the composer's art. Shakespearean drama does not give us this degree of formalization. It is only in the early work of Shakespeare, where the already existing Elizabethan dramatic conventions have not undergone much alteration in his shaping hands, that we find a considerable degree of formalization. But Shakespeare's art develops, just as his experience of the human condition deepens, and with this development the conventions grow beyond the accepted limits. It is significant that Mr. Joseph could only apply his opera approach to parts of an early work like Henry VI or Romeo and Juliet. But when he comes to a mature play like Hamlet, where there are no purely symbolic figures, or dramatic speeches or dialogues cast in sonnet-form, or set in rhetorical patterns, he has to fall back upon the long accepted criterion of Character.

1. The degree of formalization varies within opera itself. For instance, there is generally less of it in the Wagnerian music drama than in opera proper, in which the arias play a much more important role.

2. In Hamlet, he writes, 'we have a fast-moving plot of action and mystery, which is saved from becoming melodramatic by the author's ability to draw character, and his poetic apprehension of the implications underlying a story in some respects almost as barbarous as that of Titus Andronicus.' D.L. Joseph, Elizabethan Acting, p.132.
In drama then, there can only be simplification, but not total distortion of the human character. The degree of simplification varies from one play to another according to the amount of naturalism aimed at; but it is there even in the most naturalistic prose play. If, however, the simplification is carried to an extreme, and the characters lose all their individuality, the result is not so much drama as a dramatic poem, something basically like Everyman, where the characters have no psychological reality in themselves, but are clearly personifications of certain human qualities. Once more we recall Coleridge's golden rule that in poetic drama character must be both an individual and a species. Yet even there, once we are introduced to every character we find that its action, simple as it is, answers perfectly to its appellation. Fellowship behaves exactly as we should expect it to behave in a crisis and so does the frail Good Deeds. The characters are consistent, but because of their predominantly abstract nature, their consistency is not psychological, but logical.

Consistency in character, when the character grows obviously beyond the confines of the purely allegorical or conventional, can be measured only by reference to human experience. We have no other criteria. As Coleridge says, 'if the allegoric personage be strongly individualized so as to interest us, we cease to think of it as allegory'. Of course, we can, if we like, think of Caliban as 'an impersonated Abstraction'; but we can hardly do so in the case of

2. *B.L.*, vol.11, p.185.
Hamlet. Surely Iago is not of the same calibre as Aaron in Titus Andronicus. Since it is only wilful prejudice that would make us think of Shakespeare's characters merely as types or of his plays as almost morality plays, it no longer becomes as futile as it is often made to appear to find a certain measure of psychological truth in them. For consistency in the major and strongly individualized characters is nearer to psychological probability. When we are told therefore by Stoll that Othello presents a psychological impossibility we suspect that the powerful critic is misreading his character. Othello is obviously neither an allegorical nor a 'conventional' figure; on the contrary, the impression he creates is that he is an alive and strongly individualized personage. To admit the psychological improbability in the character and yet at the same time to claim that he is made convincing by the power of poetry is a very strange position indeed. One fails to understand how the magic of poetry at all can endow a psychologically unconvincing character with the quality of convincingness, even seeming convincingness. Of course, there is the further question to ask: how can we draw such a sharp line of demarcation between character and poetry in Shakespeare? Is it not through the poetry, the poetry a character utters in self-exposition, self-exploration or in commentary on its own action -that we have come to have any notion of a character at all?

1. See infra, ch. IV, p.
2. See E. B. Stoll, Shakespeare and other Masters, (Cambr., Mass., 1940), p. 94: 'In his traits ... (cont.)
Many critics have hastened to the rescue of Shakespeare's characters from the danger of Stoll's incessant attacks. But nearly all the attempts to refute his assertions seem to me to tackle the problem from the middle, so to speak. The common method, brilliantly adopted in some cases, is to show that underneath the apparent inconsistency which Stoll points out, there lies a weightier and deeper psychological truth. But Stoll's criticism of Shakespeare's characters and indeed of all drama, is directly based upon a specific theory of drama. This accounts for its strength as well as for its weakness. For the theory has its serious limitations: it stands upon a strongly questionable assumption - the assumption that the end of poetic drama is merely to arouse emotions. The object of tragedy is to make us weep and of comedy to arouse our laughter and that is the extent of their functions. The 'bigger the volume of emotions generated', the better is the work. It is a kind of sensationalism that the dramatist seeks: the reason for the death of Desdemona, Ophelia or Cordelia is simply that Shakespeare wanted to arouse our emotions 'at their greatest intensity'. It is not then a

Footnote 2 continued from page 335:
the character does not always hold convincingly to-gether; but in his speech he does.'
1. For a discussion of this assumption and its consequences in the Shakespearean criticism of the eighteenth-century critics as well as in that of Coleridge see "_Shirda_, Pt. II, Ch.I.
2. See _Shakespeare and Other Masters_, (Camb., Mass., 1940), pp. 37, 119.
vision of human existence or an interpretation of life that the dramatist presents to us, but a set of situations in which characters are brought to do impossible deeds solely to excite our emotions. Hence Stoll's deliberate neglect of all questions of meaning, psychological or otherwise. Psychological probability is in fact the heavy price we have to pay to obtain our emotional gratification. Whether he is aware of it or not, Prof. Stoll therefore belongs categorically to the scientific tradition which sets a great value on science, making it the sole purveyor of truth, and which makes of poetry merely an affair of emotions, reducing it to the realm of make-believe and illusions. In fact he quotes approvingly in *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare* the words of Dr. Richards of *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, who by the distinction he drew between the two uses of language, the referential and the emotional, propagated the view that the object of poetry is to create emotional attitudes, thus draining poetry of all cognitive elements. Stoll shrinks from anything in the plays which might be suggested by others to make us think, for we do not go to the theatre to do any serious thinking but only to respond emotionally. If by thinking

3. E.E. Stoll, *Shakespeare and Other Masters*, p. 125 and p. 55: 'Merited suffering moves us far less than the unmerited; psychology is for the intellect, and anything of a riddle - even of a study - on the stage interferes with the direct response both demanded and provided for by the greatest dramatists still more largely than by the merely successful ones.'
Stoll means scientific thinking; he is no doubt right. But we have seen how our experience of a play is not really the passive business of watching dreams and taking narcotics.

Like Coleridge Stoll is rightly aware that poetic drama is after all a kind of poetry. He also perceives that the world of poetry is not the world of science, but because of the essential difference between the two worlds, he cannot conceive that poetry has its own 'truth' and does not really traffic in 'illusions'. Unlike Coleridge he has no theory of imagination to save him. Stoll writes that 'the dramatist keeps away from science'; and that 'Poetry, however - above all, drama - is not theology, metaphysics, or higher science.' With this nobody can quarrel. But it does not at all mean, as he wishes us to believe, that 'it deals with appearances and produces immediate impressions'. The plays of Shakespeare are not made up of mere appearances and illusions, nor do they merely consist in the momentary emotions of joy or sorrow they produce. They are the embodiment of a great poet's experience of human life. They have something serious to say to us, something which bears a permanent relevance to human reality. By exploding all sorts of erroneous approaches to the plays, by

1. See supra, pp.227 and 240 ff.
2. B.B. Stoll, Shakespeare and other Masters, p.211.
3. Ibid., p.7.
4. Loc.Cit.
insisting that the plays are primarily works of art, not psychological documents, and by showing, indirectly through his own practice, the inadequacy of applying to them the common sense criteria of practical life, Professor Stoll has done a great service to Shakespearean criticism. But he has failed to see the relevance of the plays to the human situation. Indeed, it is difficult to see after his laborious analyses of the plays, why they are considered to be of any importance at all. If the action does not develop at least in part 'out of the character' what difference would there be between a tragedy and a pure melodrama, or even a disastrous event in real life? If the pure tragedy does not lie in the human situation as such, but in an artificial situation which is brought about absolutely arbitrarily by the dramatist and which bears no basic relation to our nature, we fail to see any tragedy at all. Stoll's position cannot be rescued by resort to poetry. Poetry is not exactly a narcotic, and, divested of human experience in which it is rooted, it becomes an added embellishment which can only afford an ultimately frivolous delight.

There is in fact a certain confusion that continually besets discussion of the relation between Shakespeare's characters and psychology. Of course it is one thing to say that Shakespeare's characters are psychologically convincing; it is entirely another to claim that they are psychological studies in the technical sense. But this

simple distinction has not always been observed. All that Stoll has succeeded in doing in effect is to deny that they are psychological documents and to show that the dramatist's method is not that of the professional psychologist who explains perfectly all the various intricate motives behind every minute act, that, in short, a Shakespearean character is not a case history. But it does not at all follow, as Coleridge was well aware, from the fact that a dramatic poet does not apply the scientific method of the psychologist in his conception of character, that his products, if he is a great dramatist, are psychologically improbable. This is the error which Stoll commits. In fact, it is a common paradox in drama that dramatists who adopt methods nearer to those of the psychologist, and whose characters give us a perfectly lucid account of every little act and every movement of their thought, whose characters, in other words, talk too much about themselves, and by giving us far less convincing and alive characters than those who just follow their intuition and are sparing in their exposition. This is true not only of earlier dramatists, like e.g. Corneille, but of modern dramatists as well. We can see how the excessive analysis and self-analysis almost defeat the characters of the captain and his wife in Strindberg's The Dance of Death and of the character of Henry the Fourthin

1. F. W. Stoll, Shakespeare and Other Masters, p. 37.
2. See infra, p. 342.
Pirandello's play of that name. One of the dramatic ex-
cellences of Shakespeare, says Coleridge, is that his
characters are 'to be inferred by the reader, not told to
him'.

Stoll again and again quotes in support of his position
Eliot's words that:

A living character is not necessarily true to life. It
is a person whom we can see and hear, whether he be
true or false to human nature as we know it. 2

But I am not sure whether Eliot's words really advocate
the psychological improbability or impossibility which
Stoll insists upon. The rest of Eliot's statement runs
as follows:

1. Sh.Crit., i, p.227. The distinction between the two
methods of characterization has in fact been well
established by the latter part of the eighteenth cen-
tury. For instance, Kames drew a contrast between
Shakespeare and Corneille in which he showed how the
former provides an immediate representation of passion,
while in the latter we only get cold 'description'.
(Kames, Elements of Criticism, Ch.XVI). William Richard-
son made much of this distinction and acknowledged his
debt to Kames (see supra, p.85,87.). Maurice Morga-
n succumbed to the temptation of regarding Shakespeare's
characters 'rather as Historic than Dramatic beings'
because of their wholesomeness, and because very frequently
they 'act and speak from those parts of the composition,
which are inferred only, and not distinctly shewn.'
(Maurice Morga, Op.Cit., p.247 FN.)

quoted from Eliot's essay on Massinger (T.S.Eliot,
Selected Essays, p.212).
What the creator of character needs is not so much knowledge of motives as keen sensibility: the dramatist need not understand people, but he must be exceptionally aware of them. 1

The question with which Eliot is concerned here is really the question which crops up now and again in his critical writings, namely, the question of the relation between poetry and philosophy or abstract thinking. Although a poet may not provide us with clear cut motives (he is not concerned with a rational problem, for poets, according to Eliot, are not philosophers), he must yet possess the sensibility which enables him to feel and recreate human situations. In other words, the poet proceeds, not so much by a purely rational operation of the mind, as by intuition — a word of which Mr. Eliot of the twenties would not perhaps have approved, but which is really what his sensibility or feeling amounts to. In the version of the Essay on Method which appears in the Encyclopaedia Metropolitana, Coleridge wrote that what distinguishes art from science is that in art we get 'the instinctive approach towards an Idea', whereas in science we get the 'Idea' itself 'in a clear, distinct and definite form.' 2

As Ibsen says when he speaks of the relation of the artist to the psychologist: 'what we, the uninitiated, do not possess as knowledge, we possess, I believe, to a certain degree, as intuition or instinct.' 3

2. Treatise on Method, ed. Snyder, p. 5.
The characters the poet creates must therefore be more than the illusions Stoll takes them to be; they must be such as have some meaning for us. We instinctively recognize some human truth in them, although they may appeal to us on a subconscious level, they may not be true to human nature as we know it. Otherwise, if the object of a dramatist is to provide us with impossible characters why does Eliot demand that he must be exceptionally aware of people? The value of his awareness, in fact, is to enable him to perceive (and recreate) their behaviour patterns, although he may do all that intuitively and without any rational knowledge of motives. Elsewhere Stoll quotes Eliot's words that in a play characters must be real in relation to each other, adding that this is more important than their being real in relation to human nature. But Eliot's actual words are that characters, beside being true to life, must be true to one another — which is really the same position of Coleridge. Eliot by no means minimizes the 'reality' of characters:

Characters should be real in relation to our own life, certainly, as even a very minor character of Shakespeare may be real; but they must also be real in relation to each other.

1. E. E. Stoll, Shakespeare and Other Masters, p. 43.
2. In Eliot's later remarks on the dramatic art, which are largely the product of his reflection on his own practice as a dramatic poet, his emphasis on the truth, not the photographic realism, of character is even stronger. See e.g. his Poetry and Drama, (Lond., 1951), pp. 20-29 and his recent lecture, Three Voices of Poetry, (Lond., 1953).
Coleridge before him had insisted upon the necessity of what he called 'the keeping' of all the characters in a play, beside their individual reality. But why did some modern influential critics depart from Coleridge's position? And what are the real assumptions behind their criticism?

The modern view that in Shakespeare's plays characters are not psychologically convincing is in part a reaction against the tendency prevalent in the previous century which regarded the plays primarily as psychological documents. But the rise of this view was intimately related to the advance of the scholarly and historical method and the consequent revaluation of Shakespeare's contemporaries on the one hand, and on the other to the 'positivist and realist temper' of the twentieth century which led to the conception of character in drama as nothing more than an illusion. The question of illusion and Coleridge's views on it have already been dealt with in an earlier chapter, and, I feel, require no fresh discussion. But the problems to which historical criticism and scholarship have given rise, and which have an immediate bearing upon the evaluation of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, ought to be discussed if briefly at this point. The detailed study of the works of Shakespeare's contemporary dramatists revealed that Shakespeare worked in certain dramatic conven-

2. The phrase is characteristically used to introduce the chapter on Twentieth-Century Shakespearean Criticism by H.C. Bradbrook in her essay, Elizabethan Stage Conditions, (Camb., 1932), p. 19.
tions, which are not the conventions inherent in the dramatic form as such, but are the result of a certain time and place. Shakespeare's characters, we are told, should not be judged by their truth to human experience, but by reference to the dramatic conventions which governed the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. But it does not require a painstaking study to see that, this, although it may explain to us certain minor figures, cannot really be applied to the major characters of Shakespeare, at least in the period of his maturity—except to the detraction from the great dramatist's power of apprehending reality.

Surely it would be absurd to pretend that such discoveries as the conventions and stage-conditions in which Shakespeare worked are devoid of value. But conventions only begin to be relevant to aesthetic criticism when we attempt a comparative study of the different ways in which Elizabethan dramatists used them. Such a study, however, will ironically enough, show that the difference between Shakespeare and most of his contemporary dramatists lies precisely in the subtle ways he uses the conventions, in the organic relation he often creates between his character, plot, dialogue, imagery and rhythm—the very thing upon which Coleridge always insists. Consequently his major characters do not remain the mere types lesser Elizabethan dramatists give us, and although they may nominally deal with the conventional themes of lust and

1. See *Sandra*, Ch.II, pp.281 ff.
ambition, the plays in reality far transcend these themes. The result of such a study, in other words, will be a tribute to Shakespeare's firm grasp of concrete human experience. Miss Bradbrook is undoubtedly right in attacking the attitude that regards the Shakespearean character purely as a flesh and blood individual whose past has to be ransacked in order to account for his present action. But it is surely going to the opposite extreme to maintain that the characters are 'theatrical types'. If we want characters which are just theatrical types, we shall find them in plenty in the works of the lesser dramatists. For the conventional figure of the melancholy 'revenger' we should go to the Hieronymos, but not to Hamlet, just as for the figure of the Machiavellian villain we should go to the Flamineos, even to the Bosolas, but not to Iago. Or if we seek a conventional lustful tyrant we shall find him in D'Amville, but not in Angelo. And when some of these characters themselves come to life, as they do now and then, even they, for a moment, cease to be pure conventions. But Shakespeare's greatness consists in that in his hands the 'types' grow into convincing beings, which often 'develop', and which are almost always complex and

2. In *IAGO*.
3. In *Webster's The Duchess of Malfi*.
round. Where in the compass of Elizabethan drama can we find the type which can adequately fit, for instance, Macbeth? Is it in the type to which Tamburlaine belongs? or even Shakespeare's own early character, Richard the Third? If the nineteenth-century construed Shakespeare's major characters rather naturalistically, the twentieth-century critic is in danger of conceiving them in accordance with his own likes and prejudices. We have come to attach too great a significance to the purely formal, whether in music, art or poetry. But it is useful to remember that excessive formalization ends in sterility, just as insensitivity to form results in blindness to the figure in the carpet. When one critic likens Shakespeare's plays to tapestry or Chinese painting, and another implies that Shakespeare's characters qua types remain static or do not undergo much development, a reaction against the purely formal would be healthy, and a return to Coleridge's sane position should be preached. It is only in the twentieth century that we have come to hear the strange notion that a static character can be tragic, or that the tragic can consist in a situation in which a number of static characters are hurled together. If, as Coleridge believed, choice is the essence of the tragic, then how can a static character,

2. R.O.Tradbrooke, Elizabethan Stage Conditions, p.98; 'In the development of a character Shakespeare was as a rule not interested.'
3. Indeed because of their particular form, and because the fate of their characters is decided beforehand, the Japanese Nô plays can afford to be somewhat static (cont.)
i.e. a character whose behaviour is determined beforehand, after hearing its first few lines, have in any way the possibility of choice?

To say that choice is the essence of the tragic does not imply that character is destiny, but that without character, character which has the possibility of development, and which is sufficiently humanized for us to be interested in its actions and its fate, there can be no real tragedy. If a Shakespearean play is a poetic statement of human values, then its characters have to bear some degree of resemblance to man. Particularly in plays in which character happens to be the main interest, the main 'key' to their 'meaning', character must be other than static.

Surely Lear in the storm scene is not quite the Lear of the opening of the play, and he has certainly travelled a long way to arrive at the position of the Lear taken prisoner with Cordelia, telling her that they two alone will

Footnote 3 continued from page 347 and Footnote 4:

and formal. Unlike European drama, this kind of Japanese drama does not offer us, as it were, living characters, but the ghosts of characters who come back to narrate and partly re-enact and mime the story of their lives. The whole action is therefore very much distanced from us, whereas in Shakespearean drama we are actually witnessing a present unfolding of human events, no more distanced from us than a work of art necessarily is. From the point of view of form Japanese drama bears a somewhat similar relation to the Shakespearean as opera proper to music drama. Shakespearean drama has been likened to Chinese painting, but I do not think any one, as yet at least, has asserted its similarity to Japanese drama. See Donald Keene, Japanese Literature, (Lond., 1953), pp.53 & 65.
sing like birds i'the cage. Would it not be rash to say that neither Othello nor Macbeth (nor even Lady Macbeth) nor Troilus develops, to say nothing of Hamlet's choice.

Of course, as Coleridge believed, a Shakespearean play is not meant to be a delusion. That is why methods that assume the naturalistic criteria, whether they are used by Morgann, Ernest Jones or F.I. Lucas are to be discouraged on the grounds that they start with a wrong assumption. But this does not mean that what we are dealing with is a world completely alien from ours, and is nothing but a set of walking gorgeously attired abstractions declaiming stentorianly a good deal of fine verse. It is a world of direct human relevance. A poet can never convey his serious dramatic vision of life unless his medium, the world we are witnessing, is convincing enough. In Biographia Literaria Coleridge explains that the object of 'adherence to the truth of nature' is 'to excite the sympathy of the reader', to arouse in him the necessary degree of concern and interest. This is precisely Shakespeare's greatness, and his superiority to his contemporaries. Whereas most of them presented only those 'abstractions', or the

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2. See the development of Lady Macbeth from Act i, sc.5 to Act iii, sc.2, where signs of change begin to show themselves and the end of Act iii, sc.4, which is clearly a turning point, and which paves the way for Act v, sc.1.
3. B.L., vol.11, p.5.
wooden conventional characters based upon them, coming to life now and then, Shakespeare, by transcending these conventions and the 'primitive technique', managed to make his world convincing to us. The conventions can perhaps be seen through his characters, but certainly in the mature works, they are not the characters themselves. Falstaff has travelled such a long way from the Braggart Soldier that a knowledge of his humble ancestry does not afford us much help. Iago may be derived from Aaron, Richard the Third, or Marlowe's Barabas; but it would be wrong to regard him, as with some justification we may regard the others, just as 'a Machiavel, or stage villain.'

It is indeed gratifying to notice that when Miss Bradbrook comes to develop her views in the more comprehensive work, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy, she finds that she has to make some important qualifications to the view expounded in her earlier essay, that Shakespeare's characters should be treated as theatrical types:

The plays of Shakespeare should be, as far as possible, excluded from the mind when the lesser Elizabethans are considered. Shakespeare can be judged by nineteenth-century standards (or any other standards, for that matter) without suffering an eclipse. He is so different from his contemporaries, particularly in the matter of characterization, that it is unfair to judge him by them. 2

One may add that it is equally unfair to judge him exclusively by them. In fact, the dangers of doing so are never

pointed out more strongly than by Miss Bradbrook herself indirectly in her book. Practically to every Elizabethan dramatic convention Shakespeare's plays, especially the mature tragedies, are alleged to form an exception. We are told, for instance, that in Elizabethan drama characters are types which are 'preternaturally rigid'; they could not 'interact upon each other'. But to this generalization Shakespeare is the exception. Again we are told that characters in Elizabethan drama do not develop; but again Shakespeare is cited as the exception. 'Credibility of slander', says Miss Bradbrook, following Professor Stoll more closely, is a convention used again and again by Elizabethan dramatists in order to complicate action. But in Othello, she goes on, slander is made credible and 'the movement of the hero's mind from security through doubt to a conviction by the slander is adequately shown'. Likewise, soliloquies, as used by Elizabethan dramatists like Jonson and Chapman, are always to be 'taken straightforwardly and not with reference to the character of the speaker'; but

2. Ibid., p. 61.
3. Loc. Cit.
4. Ibid., p. 63.
Shakespeare is the exception again. And so on. In fact, the book may be taken as a document revealing indirectly how in Shakespeare's mature plays the Elizabethan dramatic conventions have undergone such a complete metamorphosis that it is very hard indeed to trace their origin. It is an illustration of Coleridge's dictum that it is natural that a poet should conform to the circumstances of his day, but a true genius will stand independent of these circumstances. Although Coleridge did not prove his case in a detailed, scholarly fashion, he no doubt held the right end of the stick when he said

No one can understand Shakespeare's superiority fully until he has ascertained by comparison, all that which he possessed in common with several other great dramatists of his age, and has then calculated the surplus which is entirely Shakespeare's own.

Shakespeare's power of realizing his 'values' in concrete human situations is entirely his own, and cannot really be explained away by reference to contemporary dramatic conventions.

Character therefore has to be consistent; it has to

1. H.C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy, p.130.
2. In her last book Miss Bradbrook admits that Shakespeare's characters 'range from the generic to the specific', which is a much more moderate and sane position. Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry, (London, 1951), p.95.
3. T.L., May 12, 1830.
4. Ibid. If Coleridge concentrates on the 'essence' of Shakespeare's works, paying little or no attention to contemporary stage conditions, he is only applying his philosophical standpoint to literary criticism. We must not forget that his refutation of the materialist school of thought is that they mistake the 'conditions of a thing for its causes and essences', T.L., vol.1, p.85. His criticism of Locke is that his book is an embodiment of 'the fallacy that the soil, rain, and sunshine make (cont.)
conform to the general psychology of man. The 'accidental' in the initial assumption of a play is not as serious a fault as in the character; and yet we are shown by Coleridge how the effects of the former in Shakespeare are counteracted by the fact that the accidental there was part and parcel of the common tradition of the time. In the characters Shakespeare is too great a dramatist to present us with the purely arbitrary. In Lear, Coleridge writes,

The accidental is nowhere the groundwork of the passions, but the καθολον, that which in all ages has been and ever will be close and native to the heart of man — parental anguish from filial ingratitude, the genuineness of worth, the coffered in bluntness, the vileness of smooth iniquity.

These are some of the values the play expresses. They are primarily moral rather than psychological. But they have to be placed in a universe not unlike ours so that they may have relevance to our experience. As early as 1797 Coleridge realized that necessity. The reason for his strictures on the type of 'romances' in which 'the order of nature may be changed whenever the author's purposes demand it' is that it is 'incapable of exemplifying a moral truth'. As long as the author works 'physical

Footnote 4 continued from page 392: the wheat-stalk and its ear of corn, because they are the conditions under which alone the seed can develop itself.' E.L., vol.i, pp.236-237. There is in this sentence an implicit criticism of the arguments of Schelling and other determinists.

wonders' no serious charge can be levelled against him, but 'the first moral miracle which he attempts' will doubtless offend and disgust our judgment. We cannot get away from judging by our own experience as human beings. Once the situation in which the characters are placed, however, improbable that may be, is accepted, then 'how beings like ourselves would feel and act in it our own feelings sufficiently instruct us.' Consequently Coleridge would not have a dramatic character that is purely vicious. For a character that is completely devoid of the common feelings of humanity is not an adequate representation of it. It is monstrous and therefore unnatural. That is perhaps what caused Coleridge to make the rash generalization that Shakespeare became everything except the vicious.

Consistency of character, however, in Coleridge's view, does not mean perfectly adequate motivation, and it certainly does not imply that a character's behaviour is absolutely determined beforehand, the thing which obtains in complete types. The rationalist approach to character, we have seen, reduced character to a neat chain of cause and effect. L'esprit simpliste behind it could only lead to an

2. Ibid., p.373.
3. In *T.T.*, April 5, 1833 Coleridge admits that 'Regan and Goneril are the only pictures of the unnatural in Shakespeare - the pure unnatural; and you will observe that Shakespeare has left their hideousness unsoftened or diversified by a single line of goodness or common human frailty.' For Coleridge's analysis of the artistic treatment of these characters see supra, Ch.II, p.260.
inadequate and rather naive conception of personality. To hold that man is a completely rational animal is to believe that his actions proceed from completely rational motives. If the behaviour of dramatic character therefore does not tally perfectly with its conscious motives, the character is dismissed as inconsistent and not true to human nature. It is significant that the critic who wrote the best essay on Shakespeare in the eighteenth century was the one who raised his voice against the concept of rationality. 'We might indeed, if we chose it, candidly confess to one another that ... we are by no means so rational in all points as we could wish,' said Maurice Morgann. But unfortunately his voice was not hearkened to, and he himself did not always distinguish between nature and art, with the result that he sometimes lost himself in a wilderness of irrelevancies.

Like Morgann Coleridge realized only too well the inadequacy of the rationalist concept of personality. Complete consistency and intelligibility, Coleridge believed, is not human:

It is not the wickedness of Don Juan, therefore, which constitutes the character an abstraction, and removes it from the rules of probability; but the rapid succession of the correspondent acts and incidents ... Don Juan, is from the beginning to the end, an intelligible character: as much so as the Satan of Milton.

1. See supra, pp. 94 ff.
Hence the residue of mystery in nearly all the major characters of Shakespeare, the mystery which, in their attempts to make the characters completely intelligible by an appeal to the history and the conventions of the Elizabethan stage, etc. ..., the modern rationalist critics explain away at the expense of impoverishing the immensely rich content of the characters. To claim with the modern realists, that Shakespeare's characters are psychologically impossible creations and must therefore be mere illusions, because their conscious motives do not always explain adequately their actions, is in fact to claim that man is a completely rational animal. It is strictly speaking to hark back to the eighteenth-century rationalist approach, the approach of Rymer no less than that of the late eighteenth-century critics. Only a superficial view of psychology, which holds that man lives only on the level of the conscious and that his actions are absolutely commensurate with his conscious motives, can regard, for instance, the characters of Brutus and Iago as 'unnatural' because

1. See supra, pp. 94 ff. How much of Rymer is there in Schacbing, from his petty condemnation of anachronisms to his objections to the clown and the mélange des genres, and the general literal-mindedness which pervades his criticism? The arguments Stoll adduces to deny Othello psychological reality are the common sense argument we would use in practical everyday life. The difference between him and Rymer is that whereas Rymer condemns Othello for not being 'natural', Stoll applauds him for his unnaturalness. If one were to approach the play with the 'mood' of everyday life common sense, then it seems to me that of the two Rymer's conclusions are the more tenable.
the former's avowed motives are not adequate, and the latter's cannot be reconciled with his actions. This is apparently Stoll's view of psychology no less than Schüchting's. Schüchting found the contradictory impulses in Cleopatra's character too hard to swallow. Stoll all the time equated the 'psychological' with the 'logical'. But there are in fact two aspects to modern psychology. As a science Freudian psychology presupposes that human behaviour follows certain patterns on principle subject to rational investigation. On the other hand, it recognizes the overwhelming importance of the unconscious and therefore illogical aspect of personality in determining behaviour. Nobody acts from purely conscious motives. Man is mad, though there is method in his madness. Because of his habit of introspection and of his fascination by dreams and cognate experiences Coleridge was aware of the unconscious forces underlying the human personality, of the inadequacy of motives to account for its behaviour.

Coleridge's own view of motives is indeed interesting, and may explain his approach to the Shakespearean character more fully. The following is a lengthy quotation for which I feel no apology is needed, since the subject is both relevant and important.

2. E.E. Stoll, Shakespeare and Other Masters, e.g., pp.25, 26, 40, 263.
For what is a Motive? Not a thing, but the thought of a thing. But as all thoughts are not motives, in order to specify the class of thoughts we must add the predicate, "determining" and a motive must be defined a determining thought. But again, what is Thought? - Is this a thing or an individual? What are its circumscriptions, what the interspaces between it and another? Where does it begin? Where does it end? - Far more readily could we apply these quotations to an ocean billow, or the drops of water which we may imagine as the component integers of the ocean. As by a billow we mean no more than a particular movement of the sea, so neither by a thought can we mean more than the mind thinking in one direction. Consequently a motive is neither more nor less than the act of an intelligent being determining itself ... It is not the motives govern the man, but it is the man that makes the motive: and these indeed are so various, mutable and chameleon-like that it is often as difficult as fortunately it is a matter of comparative indifference, to determine what a man's motive is for this or that particular action. A wise man will rather enquire what the person's general objects are - what does he habitually wish? - thence deducing the state of the will and the impulses, in which that state reveals itself and which are commonly the true efficient causes of human actions: inasmuch as without these the motive itself could not have become a motive.

Thus an analysis of motives resolves itself really into an analysis of the whole personality. The motive, in the sense of a single conscious determining thought, becomes not only very difficult to detect, but in fact meaningless. For the motive in reality is nothing short of the whole being moving in a certain direction at a particular moment. What matters is the whole man, his principle of individuation, so to speak: what matters is not "motive-mongering", but 'the individual self.' The motives in the common sense of the word behind Iago's action are not adequate, and Coleridge

1. Coleridge on Logic and Learning, ed. Snyder, pp.132-133.
is fully aware of it. But he does not dismiss the character as a psychological impossibility. The living principle beneath Iago's character renders his actions sufficiently explicable. To go much further is to presuppose that a living character is perfectly intelligible. And after all, as Coleridge was fond of saying, *omnia exsunt in mysterium*. Mr. Eliot was indeed right when he said that 'one of the gifts of the Romantic Movement to Shakespeare criticism' was the recognition of 'an element of mystery' in Shakespeare's characters. More than any other critic Coleridge was sensitive to this element of mystery, especially because of his views on the nature of motives. It is precisely this element of mystery that our modern rationalist critics endeavour to exorcise from the plays. The realist critics fight shy of mystery with the same zeal and embarrassment as the logical positivists shun metaphysics; and perhaps there is more than a surface connection between the two. This is another reason why it is good to stress the value of Coleridge's position nowadays. Even Mr. Eliot of the 1934 admits that this gift of the Romantic Movement is 'one for which, with all its excesses, we have reason to be grateful.' We should remember that if

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1. See *Omniana*, vol.1, pp.29-30: 'Without the perception of this truth it is impossible to understand the character of Iago, who is represented as now assigning one, and then another, and again a third, motive for his conduct, all alike the mere fictions of his own restless nature, distempered by a keen sense of his intellectual superiority, and haunted by the love of exerting power, on those especially who are his superior in practical and moral excellence. Yet how many among our modern critics have attributed to the profound author this,' (cont.)
the characters of Shakespeare then act not on a rational
principle, but 'on the immediate impulse of feeling', if
they do not give us a cogent rational explanation of their
action, it is not because of their unreality, but because of
their essential psychological realism. And as the author
was not a psychological novelist he could not very well
intrude in his own person and analyze in detail the various
motives of his characters.

But the degree of probability and psychological realism
is determined by the seriousness of the vision expressed.
So Coleridge seems to say. When we are no longer imme-
diately involved, we remain outside the threshold of the
dramatic proper. In Comedy of Errors Shakespeare provides
an example of this case. It is a farce in the strict sense
of the term. In a farce it does not matter if we cannot
identify to the requisite degree the world that is being
unfolded to us with our own. In fact, it is perhaps neces­
sary that we should abstain from such an act of identifica­
tion, for as a rule the effect of a farce, as a farce,
diminishes in proportion to the decrease in the detachment
which we view it. To secure that detachment there is no attempt

Footnote 1 continued from page 359 and Footnotes 2,3,4:
the appropriate inconsistency of the character itself.'
2. Aids, p.91.
1. H.J.Grierson, Cross Currents in English Literature of
the XVIIth Century, (Lon., 1945), p.117.
in a farce to make its world probable or convincing. As distinguished from comedy and naturally from tragedy, a farce is not only 'allowed', but it actually 'requires' extraordinary licence in its fable. 'The story need not be probable, it is enough that it is possible.' The accidental, which if it is allowed to remain accidental, mars serious drama is the domain of the farce: 'A comedy would scarcely allow even the two Antipholuses ... But farce dares add the two Dromios, and is justified in so doing by the laws of its end and constitution.' But it is significant that in farce we are not concerned with the question of values. If there is any dramatic form which aims at producing a mere emotion, it is farce, which is on the same level as a melodrama. Every liberty is taken by the dramatist to achieve his end, which is the production of 'laughable situations'. But it is also noteworthy that farce is the lowest form of drama, for who would think of comparing Comedy of Errors with Othello or The Tempest? If a farce produces 'strange and laughable situations' it has achieved its end. But great drama cannot be satisfied with skimming the surface of the human spirit. It has to touch its depths and uncharted seas, enlarging our awareness of the human situation itself. This a play like The Comedy of Errors, which is an explicit farce, does not pretend to do.

Dramatic probability, again, depends on the emotional level of a situation and the degree of excitement in which

the mind is supposed to be:

Many obvious improbabilities will be endured as belonging to the groundwork of the story rather than to the drama, in the first scenes, which would disturb or disentrance us from all illusion in the acme of our excitement, as, for instance, Lear's division of his realm and banishment. 1

Consequently the degree of psychological realism varies from one character to another, in proportion to the importance of the role a character plays in the particular drama, together with the emotional level of the dramatic world it inhabits. Generally speaking it is not necessary that characters in comedy should possess the same degree of psychological reality as those in tragedy. For instance, Coleridge finds that Prospero's behaviour in interrupting the courtship between Ferdinand and Miranda is not sufficiently motivated. 2 Now a critic who regards psychological realism as the end of drama would either condemn this behaviour as psychologically unconvincing, or else try to reconcile it with Prospero's character. Hazlitt, as an example, follows the second course, maintaining that it is 'in character with the magician, whose sense of preternatural power makes him arbitrary, tetchy, and impatient of opposition,' 3 which is rather straining the character for the sake of preserving the psychology. Likewise Schelling finds in

his behaviour something of a humourless schoolmaster, and Dover Wilson regards him as 'a terrible old man almost as tyrannical and irascible as Lear at the opening of his play.' But such interpretations cannot be convincingly corroborated by the text. Coleridge, however, admits the absence of complete psychological probability, but he still considers Prospero's alleged reason 'lest too light winning Make the prize light' to be a sufficient motive 'for the ethereal connexions of the romantic imagination, although it would not be so for the historical.' In other words, a romance play does not require the same degree of psychological probability as a play of a higher emotional level. It is therefore irrelevant to ask for the same degree of psychological probability in The Tempest as for instance in Macbeth, since the former is deliberately 'pitched in a lower key throughout.' Similarly when Coleridge discusses The Winter's Tale, he writes that 'it seems mere indolence of the great bard not to have in the oracle provided some ground for Hermione's seeming death and fifteen years concealment, voluntary concealment.' By suggesting that Shakespeare could have remedied the fault by the mere addition of

some such 'obscure sentence' to the words of the oracle as 'Nor shall he (i.e. Leontes) ever recover an heir if he have a wife before that recovery,' Coleridge's intention is not to make the behaviour of Hermione rational in the strict sense, or, as Miss Bradbrook thinks, to 'relieve her from a possible charge of hard-heartedness,' but rather to create that quantum of probability necessary for drama. But he realizes that in a romance play like The Winter's Tale, no great degree of probability is aimed at by the poet. It is, he remarks 'on the whole exquisitely respondent to its title.'

Not only in romances can psychological probability to some extent be sacrificed, but even in a serious tragedy a minor character may be deliberately unrealized and made somewhat symbolical. For instance, the Fool in Lear is not altogether just a realistic clown to provide tragic relief or to please the groundlings. He is 'no comic buffoon to make the groundlings laugh, no forced condescension of Shakespeare's genius to the taste of his audiences.' The eighteenth-century had generally thought he was, and consequently he was cut out in the stage productions of the time. Of course, there were individual critics in the eighteenth century who objected to the tampering with Shake-

1. M.C. Bradbrook, Elizabethan Stage Conditions, p. 84.
speare's text, particularly as the century drew to its close. But it was Coleridge who pointed out the exact nature of the Fool in *King Lear*. The Fool, he wrote, is 'brought into living connection with the pathos of the play, with the sufferings;' since Cordelia's departure, Shakespeare tells us, the Fool 'hath much pined away.' He has an important symbolical function to fulfil: he acts as an impersonal commentator on, and a pointer to, what goes on in the mind of Lear. For instance, the Fool's 'grotesque prattling' at the end of the first act 'seems to indicate the dislocation of the feeling which has begun and is to be continued' in the mind of Lear himself.

In the serious plays, however, the degree of roundness and psychological truth of the main characters naturally increases with the maturing of Shakespeare's genius. Coleridge detected the formal nature of the characters where it is obvious in the early plays. For instance, in * Richard the Second* he noticed that characters are formal in the sense that they have no more reality than a poet assigns to them in certain situations, that they have no third dimension, so to speak. The result is that a character may say something in a particular situation which is patently out of character. For a moment it ceases altogether to be an individual character and acts as a chorus uttering general truths that bear no relation to its own nature. This inorganic quality in character, Coleridge remarks, belongs

1. *Sh.Crit.*, vol.1, p.64.
only to Shakespeare's early work. In the case of Richard II, he tries to account for this feature, saying that Shakespeare takes the historical reality of his characters for granted, and assumes that it is equally known to his public, with the result that he is not so much concerned with impressing his audience with their reality (as he does with his non-historical characters) as with pointing out certain truths. Hence a character may act as itself and as a Greek chorus, not indeed at one and the same time as is the case sometimes in the mature works, but at different moments. But Coleridge's explanation of the lack of complete dramatic reality in some of the characters of Richard II is very shaky, as he himself realizes. His idolatry here drives him to find excuses for Shakespeare's artistic lapses, where there can be none. For in the same breath he declares that 'it does not exactly justify the practice', and remarks that this fault in dramatic conception and technique is 'infrequent in proportion to the excellence of Shakespeare's plays.'

Coleridge was also aware how a number of Shakespeare's characters fall under certain types, and he traced the development of these types in Shakespeare's hands. Just as he found that Love's Labour's Lost, which is an early work, mirrors forth, though in a minor form, some of the qualities of the later productions, so he saw that Berowne and Rosaline

2. Ch. supra, pp.297 ff.
are the prototypes of Benedick and Beatrice. Berowne is also the prototype not only of Benedick but of Mercutio as well. Costard is the 'groundwork' of Tapster in Measure for Measure, and Dall of Dogberry. The pedant in Holofernes is the germ of his equivalent in Polonius. Launcelot in Two Gentlemen foreshadows Launcelot in Merchant of Venice. In the early characters we see the germs of the later conceptions. 'True genius,' says Coleridge, 'begins by generalizing and condensing; it ends in realizing and expanding. It first collects the seeds.' Thus by comparing the earlier with the later works we can watch the development of the dramatic artist in Shakespeare. In Love's Labour's Lost there are 'many of Shakespeare's characteristic features' in which we find all the potentialities of his maturity. In them, as it were, we see 'a portrait taken of him in his boyhood.' The earlier sketches seem to be studies for the later finished works. But they are not studies made with the object of furnishing material to be exhibited in a portrait gallery. Each of these characters, although broadly it conforms to a type, serves a particular purpose in the play from which it derives its existence.

2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.108.
3. Ibid., vol.i, pp.92-93.
5. Ibid., vol.i, p.92.
And it is always a dramatic purpose. Berowne, Mercutio and Benedick belong to the same family, but they fulfil different functions. There would have been no tragedy in Romeo and Juliet if such a character as Mercutio, with his nobility, charm and generosity, which endear him to Romeo, had not been there to be sacrificed. Conversely without Benedick Much Ado would have been no comedy. The education of Berowne is essential to the meaning of the play of which he is a part.

The main characters at least in the mature works obviously grow beyond the limits of types and conventions. Coleridge realizes that the ground work of Hamlet, for instance, is the melancholy type. He sees his affinity to the melancholy Jacques. But he is sensitive, as who cannot be, to the complexity of Hamlet's character, to his growing beyond the conventional framework of the type. The speech 'To be or not to be ...', he remarks, is appropriately given to Hamlet, but 'it would have been too deep' for Jacques. He also intimates that Hamlet's doubts concerning the Ghost's message are not the unjustified doubts of a diseased character in the face of contrary evidence. Rather he seems to place the conflict in Hamlet's

5. Loc.Cit.
mind in the larger context of contemporary opinion. Cole-
ridge goes to the writings of Sir Thomas Browne, to support
his view that until the staging of the play Hamlet's mis-
givings about the possibility of the Ghost being the incar-
nation of the devil, and his consequent fears of damnation,
are both genuine and sincere. Hamlet's predicament is there-
fore a real one; his sorrows are not artificial sorrows
spun round a mere melancholic humour.

In the analysis of the major characters, the type of
analysis which began in the form of describing its actions
from without in the early eighteenth century and took a
more inward turn later in the century, Coleridge, in a sense,
may be said to have carried on the achievement of his pre-
decessors among the Shakespearean critics. But he was
better qualified than many of them. He had an exceedingly
sharp eye for the subtle distinctions between one character
and another, and noted the minutest change from one moment
to another in the emotional life of each character. Unlike
Richardson he did not often force the text to agree with a
preconceived simple moral theory. Rather he had an open,
sensitive and perceptive mind, with the result that nearly
all the outstanding traits in the characters he dealt with
are all there in his accounts. For instance, his analysis
of the character of Hamlet, however much we may disagree

2. See supra, pp. 81.
with his final interpretation, is indeed a masterly piece of Shakespearean criticism of its kind. His account of the salient points in the character is just and almost exhaustive. He noted his meditiveness, his habit of introspection, his morbid preoccupation with death, his melancholy, his tedium vitae, his fits of passion, his 'half-false' madness, his wild jesting immediately after his fateful interview with the Ghost (the ludicrous is 'a common mode by which the mind tries to emancipate itself from terror'), his exuberancy of mind, his fondness for puns and ambiguities (and all that it means), his tendency to generalize his situation, his gentlemanly manners, his nobility of soul, etc. ... In this connection it is worth mentioning that the charge that Coleridge identifies himself with the character of the protagonist is largely ill-grounded, and indeed can be exaggerated. It is only true of his criticism of Hamlet, where he interprets the protagonist's delay in the light of his own personal tragic experience. But we must remember that he was in part aware of that: 'I have a smack of Hamlet myself,' he once said. On the other hand, it was his constant belief that 'the essence of poetry is universality.' Great poetry, he main-

2. C.U.L., vol.ii, p.104, Letter to John Morgan (1814): 'To-morrow morning I doubt not I shall be of clear and collected spirits; but tonight I feel that I should do nothing to any purpose, but and excepting Thinking, Planning, and Resolving to resolve - and praying to be able to execute,' and his summing up of the character of Hamlet in Sh.Crit., vol.ii, p.198.
3. T.T., July 24, 1827.
tained, does not address itself to 'personal feeling' and 'the sympathy arising from a reference to individual sensibility' is only 'a spurious sympathy.' It is not of the nature of the proper response to the work. That is precisely why a character like Hamlet 'affects all men.' And he always maintained that a Shakespearean character is both an individual and a species. Besides it is only right to observe that in his remarks on the other characters of the play he never commits the folly of seeing them through Hamlet's eyes. In fact he seems to be sure (and he substantiates his view by the text) that 'Shakespeare never intended us to see the King with Hamlet's eyes.' Similarly he tells us that we are not supposed to regard Polonius as the prejudiced Hamlet sees him:

It was natural that Hamlet, a young man of genius and fire, detecting formality, and disliking Polonius for political reasons, as imagining that he had assisted his uncle in his usurpation, should express himself satirically; but Hamlet's words should not be taken as Shakespeare's conception of him. 

Coleridge also points out another reason for Hamlet's dislike for Polonius, namely his interception of the love affair between him and Ophelia. But if his self-identifica-

2. Loc.Cit.
3. Ibid., vol.1, p.34.
5. Ibid., vol.1, p.30.
tion with the character of Hamlet were as complete as it is often made out to be, he would certainly have seen the other characters through Hamlet's eyes, as indeed some critics have done. It is therefore not quite just to imply that Coleridge's Hamlet is merely 'an attempt to present Coleridge in an attractive costume.'

Or take his searching analysis of Lear's character—an analysis which is both psychological and dramatic. From the psychological point of view he finds that Lear at the opening of the play suffers from 'a mixture of selfishness and sensibility.' He is selfish in the sense that he had 'an intense desire to be intensely beloved', but his selfishness is of a feeble kind: Lear is not self-supporting since he craves for the absolute love of his daughters. His sensibility is enforced by his rank and the long habit of obtaining complete obedience. The latter converts his selfish 'wish into claim and positive right, and the incompliance with it into crime and treason'. Hence his tyranny and his moral inability to resign his sovereignty even at the very moment he has divided his kingdom, which shows itself in his punishment of Kent.

The psychological method, however, is not pursued beyond the proper limits. There is just enough psychological rea-

1. See e.g. Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare, (Lond., 1939), p. 154: 'we see him (i.e. the King) through Hamlet's eyes, and share Hamlet's hatred of him.'
4. Loc. Cit.
5. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 61.
lion in the character: 'the mixture of selfishness and sensibility', we are told, is 'strange but by no means unnatural.' Lear is not a complete flesh and blood individual, and 'an addition of individuality' (to his old age and lifelong habits of being promptly obeyed), Coleridge writes, would be 'unnecessary.' But Shakespeare resorts to a subtle dramatic method in his delineation of Lear. Lear's character becomes distinguished sufficiently for dramatic purposes, as the play unfolds itself, by the relations of others to him. Thus the 'passionate affection and fidelity' of Kent - who is 'the nearest to perfect goodness of all Shakespeare's characters' - 'acts on our feelings in Lear's favour.' We feel that 'virtue seems to be in company with him', just as vice and evil in the person of his daughters and Edmund to be against him. This too seems to mitigate whatever bad effect his extreme folly, pride and irascibility may have on us. In fact Shakespeare manages most cunningly to make all his faults 'increase our pity. We refuse to know them otherwise than as means and aggravations of his sufferings and his daughters' ingratitude.' And from the very beginning Shakespeare has seen to it that Lear's selfishness is not that of a vicious character, but of 'a loving and kindly nature.'

2. Ibid., vol.1, p.61.
3. Ibid., vol.1, p.65.
4. Loc.cit.
Shakespeare in fact pursues more than one method of characterization. In his discussion of these methods Coleridge is indeed enlightening. For instance, he points out, by implication, what we may call the method of single characterization. This is the usual method, which seems to consist in the dramatist's concentration on individualizing his character mainly through soliloquy, self-exploration as well as impersonal commentary by other characters. Of this method Hamlet, I suppose, would be a good example. But there is also the method of double characterization. We find that the speeches in which one character describes another quite often reveal to us both characters at once. This method of double characterization Coleridge detects in Macbeth, where Lady Macbeth in her famous soliloquy describes her husband: 'Macbeth is described by Lady Macbeth so as at the same time to describe her own character.' This latter method, however, is too subtle to be reduced to a single formula: at one time a speech works one way, at another time it works another way. But there are times when it works both ways at once. It is therefore futile to attempt to find any one single law which, we may suppose, Shakespeare consciously or unconsciously follows scientifically, since we shall have to allow for numberless exceptions to any law that our ingenuity may cause us to discover. Such laws as 'the Principle of the Objec-

2. [Footnote: loc. cit.]
tive Appropriateness of Dramatic Testimony* and so forth are the result of a naive application of scientific method to such a nice thing as poetic drama. Coleridge indeed has said that poetry has a logic of its own as severe as that of science, but the logic of poetry is not the same as that of science. When Iago tells us that there is a daily beauty in Cassio's life that makes himself ugly we believe him. But when he tells us of Othello that he is 'horribly stuff'd with epithets of war' we do not. The reason is that we cannot take at any point one character's description of another for gospel truth without taking into consideration the nature of the character as well as the dramatic situation. As Coleridge writes, 'it is a common error to mistake the epithets by the dramatis personae to each other, as truly descriptive of what the audience ought to see or know.' What is always needed is critical tact, the kind of tact a great critic like Coleridge often reveals. Otherwise our criticism will become mechanical, we shall misread the text and find ourselves beset by all kinds of spurious problems. If, for instance, against Coleridge's advice, we decided to take Hamlet's description of his uncle as objectively true in every detail of it, we would create, with Schücking, the problem of the incompatibility

1. L.L. Schücking, Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays, p.66.
2. ibid., vol.1, p.4.
4. Ibid., vol.1, p.34.
between the King's character as we see it and Hamlet's account of it. And to solve this problem we would have to resort to the old eighteenth-century misconception of Shakespeare's lack of art, as indeed Schicking does. But we must remember that such problems are really pseudo-problems, and can only exist as a result of the misapplication of the scientific method.

Coleridge notes another method of characterization in Shakespearean drama. He often draws attention to what may be called the relational method, which, by its economy and indirectness, seems to be more germane than the other two to poetic drama proper. By this method a character is further defined, not by excessive psychological delineation so much as by the relation which other characters bear to it. Thus Ophelia's attitude to Polonius, 'her reverence of his memory', acts in his favour and shows that 'Shakespeare never intended him to be a mere buffoon'. Similarly, but more powerfully, Kent's relation to Lear, his absolute faithfulness and devoted service to him, help to define the latter's character and our response to him. Our interest in Helena in All's Well that Ends Well is determined 'chiefly by the operation of the other characters, the Countess, Lafeu, etc. We get to like Helena from their praising and commending her so much.' But there is really

4. F.T., July 1, 1833.
no sharp separation between these three methods, for often
the three can be seen at work together in the delineation
of the same character, although usually there is either the
one or the other more dominant at a time.

From Coleridge's treatment of Shakespeare's charac-
ters it is clear that he does not regard the main charac-
ters in the great plays as purely conventional or as mere
theatrical types. On the contrary, he sees in them a proof
of Shakespeare's firm grasp of concrete human situations.
Not only does he note the different and subtle methods of
colorization employed by Shakespeare, as well as the
fine shades of distinction between one character and ano-
ther, but he also points out how the characters develop.
And he is sometimes aware of the dramatic technique Shake-
speare occasionally uses to reconcile the audience to
that development. For instance, he shows how Shakespeare
withdraws Lear after the storm scene, where we find the
'first symptoms of his positive derangement', for a whole
scene 'in order to allow an interval for Lear in full mad-
ness to appear.' In fact in his treatment of the mature
plays, at least, there is the assumption that there is no-
thing at all primitive about Shakespeare's characterization.
In order to arrive at a sound view of a character, he often
considers the very expression it uses, the imagery and even
at times the rhythm of its speech. He points to the 'set

pedantically antithetic form’ of the King’s speech at the
beginning of the second scene of the first act of Hamlet, and ‘the laboured rhythm and hypocritical overmuch’ of Lady
Macbeth’s welcome to Duncan. The result is a more sensi-
tive and broad-minded criticism than the so-called objec-
tive interpretation. Ironically enough the so-called scien-
tific criticism often ends by being downright dogmatic.
For instance, having stated his principle of the sufficiency
of ‘expressly stated reasons’ for action for the under-
standing of a character (in this case the reasons stated by
the King, Hamlet, IV, v, 76), Schüting goes on to ‘conclude
with certainty’ that Shakespeare wanted us to know that
Ophelia’s madness is caused solely by her father’s death,
and that Hamlet’s desertion has nothing to do with it.
On the other hand, a detailed analysis of Ophelia’s speeches
like the one attempted by Coleridge shows us how the two
thoughts, i.e. her father’s death and her lover’s desertion,
remain inseparable in her mind.

But it would be wrong to think that Coleridge was blind
to the exigencies of poetic drama and to the basic conven-
tions which its very nature imposes. Let it be at once ad-

1. SH.Crit., vol.1, p.22.
2. Ibid., vol.1, p.73. For a detailed treatment of this point see infra, Ch.V.
4. SH.Crit., vol.1, p.34.
mitted here that Coleridge at times forgot his own wise precepts and hunted for psychological truths for their own sake. For there are in fact two Coleridges, or, as a witty critic once put it, a Coleridge and an S.T.C. And we have seen how his theory of poetry consists in reality of two incompatible theories, each having its different assumptions as well as its different consequences in his practical criticism. Whereas his theory of imagination led him to the conception of a work of art as a work of art, his pleasure theory did not: it rather confused art with everyday life. In the former he regarded psychological truth purely as a means; in the latter it became the end. Consequently because Coleridge found that in Shakespeare's major characters 'the reader never has a mere abstraction of a passion, as of wrath or ambition, but the whole man is presented to him', he often dwelt on the psychological insight and subtlety with which Shakespeare presents the whole man, as if these were the ultimate end of dramatic excellence:

Shakespeare has this advantage over all dramatists — that he has availed himself of his psychological genius to develop all the minutiae of the human heart: showing us the thing that, to common observers, he seems solely intent upon, he makes visible what we should not otherwise have seen: just as, after looking at distant objects through a telescope, when we

2. See supra, Ch.1.
behold them consequently with the naked eye, we see them with greater distinctness, and in more detail, than we should otherwise have done. 1

And when he declared that 'one main object' of his lectures is 'to point out the superiority of Shakespeare to other dramatists' and that

no superiority can be more striking, than that this wonderful poet could take two characters, which at first sight seem to be so much alike, and yet, when carefully and minutely examined, are so totally distinct. 2

—like Hazlitt, he was simply writing in the eighteenth-century tradition. Numberless parallel passages, particularly from the late eighteenth-century criticism can easily be produced. And by stating that 'every one wished a Desdemona or Ophelia for a wife' he was already paving the way for such irrelevant and sentimental works as Mrs. Jameson's Shakespeare's Heroines.

In fact it is abundantly clear that by calling Shakespeare a philosopher Coleridge sometimes meant simply that in his creations he reveals a very profound insight in the psychology of man. For example, when he compared Fletcher's Rollo with Shakespeare's Richard the Third he wrote:

as in all his other imitations of Shakespeare, he was not philosopher enough to bottom his original. Thus in Rollo, he has produced a mere personification of outrageous wickedness with no fundamental characteristic impulses to make either the tyrant's words or actions philosophically intelligible. 4

2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.182.
In the Essay on Method Coleridge, exactly in the manner of Kames and Richardson, illustrates a psychological truth by examples drawn from Shakespeare's characters. But it would be unfair to overlook the two different views of character expressed in the Essay on Method itself. While looking upon the characters as concrete illustrations of psychological truths, unlike his predecessors, Coleridge shows that he is sufficiently aware of the difference between art and reality. The Hostess and the Tapster, it is true, illustrate the want of method in the 'ignorant and the un­thinking'; but they differ from their counterpart in real life 'by their superior humour, the poet's gift and infusion.'

Ultimately, however, Coleridge's conception of Shakespearean drama is not naturalistic. Referring to modern naturalistic drama he writes that it is

utterly heterogeneous from the drama of the Shakespearean age, with a diverse object and a contrary principle. The one was to present a model by imitation of real life, to take from real life all that is what it ought to be, and to supply the rest - the other to copy what is, and as it is ... In the former the difference was an essential element; in the latter an involuntary defect.

Perhaps we would not like now to put the difference between the two types quite so strongly, or at least in these terms; but from our earlier discussion of what Coleridge meant by the antithesis he drew between 'copy' and 'imitation',

1. See supra, pp. 85 ff.
4. See supra, pp. 231 ff.
we may be able to perceive something of the force of his distinction here. Of course, Coleridge was aware of the conventions inherent in the dramatic form itself, from 'dark scenes' to 'asides' and dialogue. When Schöcking thinks that it would clearly be 'an absolute self-contradiction if, for instance, anybody were to explain in long-winded speeches, and with a great wealth of vocabulary, that he is remarkable for his gift of silence, and it would be equally absurd to endeavour to prove stupidity by a great display of clever arguments ... or to express a matter-of-fact disposition in highly poetical language. 2 he is clearly confusing drama with life, or approaching drama with the wrong 'mood'. He goes to Shakespeare's plays for literal truth, and when he does not find it he complains of psychological impossibilities. His criteria, in fact, are the same as those which caused Bradley to find in Macbeth the imagination of a poet. These criteria reveal a certain insensitiveness to the basic conventions of drama at any time. Precisely on Schöcking's arguments one might complain that it is a worse and more patent contradiction that in Merchant of Venice Portia, who speaks excellent English, rejects her English suitor because she cannot speak his language. This is the actual example Coleridge offers to show the essentially conventional nature of drama.

Poetic drama has still its further specific exigencies. According to Coleridge, its proper domain lies in that middle state between pure conventionalism on the one hand, and pure naturalism on the other. A purely conventional poetic play will be more akin to poetry than to drama, for drama is after all a living action; just as a purely naturalistic play may be drama, but no poetry. Making allowance for Coleridge's prejudiced view of the Greek drama, which he derived from Schlegel, but which he later repudiated, this is what he meant when he said that 'on the Grecian plan a man could be a poet, but rarely a dramatist; on the present a dramatist, not a poet.' This is also the assumption behind his discussion of the way a dramatic poet should use 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 each 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, on the other hand, a certain amount of realism Coleridge deems necessary for good poetic drama:

According to my feelings, it is 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.

and which is the 'actual produce of an author's closet'.

It is again the happy union of 'the poet lost in his por-

traits' and 'the poet as a mere ventriloquist' that is needed. It is wrong then to assume that Coleridge conceived of a Shakespearean play as a kind of naturalistic drama only written in verse. This is largely the eighteenth-century view, but not that of Coleridge. In Biographia Literaria we are told that 'if metre be superadded' to a work, 'all other parts must be made consonant with it.' And he always considered Shakespearean drama primarily as a kind of poetry. This could be seen even in his views on acting. 'A good actor, comic or tragic,' he wrote, 'is not to be a mere copy, a facsimile, but an imitation of Nature.' He is in fact 'Pygmalion's Statue, a work of exquisite art, animated with and gifted with motion, but still art, still a species of poetry.' And he attacked the contemporary stage representations of Shakespeare because in their drive for naturalism they sacrificed the poetry of the plays. In fact, one can go further and claim that he was even aware of some of the conventions of speech in Elizabethan drama itself – though not as conventions – the kind of thing that Miss Bradbrook and other scholars have recently pointed out. He noted the patterned sentiments speeches which were usually formalized by rhymes.

3. See id., vol. ii, p. 33; F.R. With the ancients, and not less with the elder dramatists of England and France, both comedy and tragedy were considered as kinds of poetry.
5. See Appendix B.
as well as the insertion of little poems in the dialogue, to which Shakespeare drew attention by the use of incomplete metre. But it does not require any deep study to be convinced that Coleridge's interest in Shakespeare's poetry is just as great, if not greater than his interest in characters.

The use of poetry therefore entails a specific treatment of character. In Shakespearean drama characters are essentially the product of 'meditation'; 'they are the embodiments of 'ideas' or 'values', for 'Meditation looks at every character with interest, only as it contains something generally true, and such as might be expressed in a philosophical problem.' Coleridge often talks about 'the germ of a character' which is 'of such importance to understand,' meaning the idea round which the character is built and the value which it is meant to convey. Once the mind seizes hold of the 'Idea' of a character 'all the speeches receive the light and attest by reflecting it.' The idea of a character is, of course, something different from mere psychological truth. The latter, Coleridge says, is not what we get in Shakespeare; for he does not give us 'psychologic portraiture', as naturalist dramatists do, but rather 'a living balance' between psychologic portraiture and general truths:

It is not the poet's business to analyze and criticize the affections and faiths of men, but to assure himself that such and such are affections and faiths grounded in human nature, not in mere accident of ignorance or disease. 1

We may not accept the values Coleridge finds in this Shakespearean character or that. We may find his interpretation of Hamlet's character too personal or his view of the values behind Falstaff's too solemn. But the search for a pattern underlying the character, and indeed the whole play, a pattern of moral and philosophical implications is significant. We have been doing the same thing since Coleridge's time, nor can we help doing it if we are at all to treat art seriously. And one of the many results of such a search is the realization of the profundity, the rich and closely knit texture, the organic unity of the plays. Unlike characters in naturalistic drama, Shakespeare's characters

from Othello, Macbeth down to Dogberry and the Gravediggers, may be termed ideal realities. They are not the things themselves, so much as abstracts of the things, which a great mind takes into itself, and there naturalizes them to its own conception. 2

Yet they are not abstractions, for they have sufficient psychological realism and individuality. Unlike Ben Jonson's characters, which are 'almost as fixed as the masks of the ancient actors; you know from the first scene - sometimes from the list of names - exactly what every one of them is to be,' Shakespeare's grow and develop. 3

1. *Sh.Crit.*, vol.1, p.228
alive, but their life is not that of pure naturalism. And Coleridge knew how an author deliberately 'unrealizes his story, in order to give a deeper reality to the truths intended.'

Characters in Shakespearean drama are therefore both individuals and species at one and the same time, and that is what characters in poetry should be. Coleridge declares his full faith in 'the principle of Aristotle that poetry is essentially ideal, that its apparent individualities of rank, character and occupation must be representative of a class. That is why he attacked the 'matter-of-factness' in some of Wordsworth's poems - a phrase which he coined to mean 'a laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects, and their position' and 'the insertion of accidental circumstances in order to the full explanation of his living characters, their disposition and actions; which circumstances might be necessary to establish the probability of a statement in real life, where nothing is taken for granted by the hearer; but appear superfluous in poetry, where the reader is willing to believe for his own sake.' In a footnote he explains his position further in a passage, which for all its length deserves quotation:

Say not I am recommending abstractions; for these
class-characteristics which constitute the instructive-
ness of a character are so modified and particularized
in each person of the Shakespearean Drama, that life
itself does not excite more distinctly that sense of
individuality which belongs to real existence. Para-
doxical as it may sound, one of the essential proper-
ties of Geometry is not less essential to dramatic
excellence; and Aristotle had accordingly required
of the poet an involution of the universal in the in-
dividual. The chief differences are, that in Geometry
it is universal truth, which is uppermost in the con-
sciousness; in poetry the individual form, in which
the truth is clothed. 1

Because characters in Shakespearean drama are general
no less than individual they are 'clothed ... not with such
as one gifted individual might possibly possess, but such
as from his situation it is most probable beforehand that
he would possess.' Hence the importance of the dramatic
situation. For the truth of a character is none other
than the truth of the experience that it undergoes in a
given situation and in none other. A character is only a
constituent of a whole, and if it were disengaged from it
it would have no meaning, or at least, it would not mean
the same thing. For it is only alive in the particular
situation conceived by the poet. The pattern of the whole
work is of great importance, not only in poetry, but in
the other arts as well.

The Helen of Zeuxis is said to have been composed from
different features of the most beautiful women of
Greece but yet it would be strange to say that the
Helen of Zeuxis had existed anywhere but in the picture. 2

1. B.K., vol.11, p.33. F.K.
2. Ibid., vol.11, pp.33-34.
3. Philosophical lectures, p.234. cf. B.L., vol.1, p.162:
The fairest part of the most beautiful body will
appear deformed and monstrous, if disengaged from its
place in the organic whole.
Hamlet's madness, feigned or real, is not a study in madness as such, and is not meant to reveal the character of Hamlet abstracted from the situation. It rather consists in 'the full utterance of all the thoughts that had past thro' his mind before - in telling home truths.' It is born of, and reflects upon, the wider issues of the play. Similarly Ophelia's madness brings out most clearly some of these issues. In her singing we find the 'conjunction of the two thoughts that had never subsisted in disjunction, the love for Hamlet and her filial love.' Her madness has its roots in the dramatic situation, and the thoughts that come rushing in her disordered mind in rapid succession are formed of the 'cautions so lately expressed and the fears not too delicately avowed by her father and brother concerning the danger to which her honor lay exposed.' Far from being a 'mere portrait of a Dutch painting', the character of the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet is not only 'exquisitely generalized', but it is also made 'subservient to the display of fine moral contrasts.' It derives its full significance from the whole dramatic situation of which it forms a part.

Each play is then an individual work of art. The poet is interested in creating, not a portrait gallery, but an organic whole. The characters have to be convincing, to be

2. ibid.  
3. ibid., vol.1, pp.33-34.  
4. ibid., vol.ii, p.204.
sure; but because they inhabit a particular world they bear a necessary relation to one another. They have to be 'real in relation to each other', as Eliot justly says. While 'his eye rested upon an individual character, Shakespeare always embraced a wide circumference of others without diminishing the separate interest he intended to attach to the being he portrayed.' Coleridge often admired what he called 'the keeping of the characters' in every individual play. For instance, in Richard II, not only are the principal characters, Richard the Second, Bolingbroke and York, 'easily distinguished from one another', but 'the keeping of all is most admirable.'

The beautiful keeping of the characters of the play is conspicuous in the Duke of York. He, like Gaunt, is old, and, full of religious loyalty struggling with indignation at the king's vices and follies, is an evidence of a man giving up all energy under a feeling of despair.

-- which, in turn, is what happens to Richard himself. This is what Coleridge means when he describes a Shakespearean play as a synecdoxa: in a Shakespearean play, he writes, the dramatis personae 'were not planned each by itself,' but 'the play is a synecdoxa -- each has indeed a life of its own and is an individuum of itself, but yet an organ to the whole -- as the heart, etc. ... of that particular whole.'

2. CRIT., vol.ii, pp.33-34.
6. CRIT., p.95.
We have seen in the preceding chapter that, although Coleridge thought psychological probability essential to a major character in a serious play, he did not regard psychological truth as the ultimate end of a Shakespearean play or the main occupation of the Shakespearean critic. A Shakespearean play is primarily a work of art, or, as he put it, a 'syngenesia'. As poetry it has for him a serious 'meaning', which lies, not in the psychological truths it reveals in its characters, but, as we have seen earlier, in the moral values of which it is the concrete expression. In this respect Coleridge can be called a moral, rather than a psychological, critic — although we shall have to modify the sense of the word 'moral' here so as to distinguish between his standpoint and that of the eighteenth-century critics who hunted mainly for the explicit moral in the plays. Poetry, in Coleridge's view, belongs essentially to the world of the spirit; it is the product of an act of 'meditation' on the human condition, and that is why it embodies spiritual values. Dramatic poetry, especially, because it deals directly with the moral

1. See supra, Ch.II.
2. See supra, Pt.I, Section 5, and Pt.II, Ch.II.
or spiritual world, cannot be divorced from morality in the broad sense of the term. Consequently in his criticism of Shakespeare's plays Coleridge always points to the intimate connection between characters and moral issues. He would never accept, for instance, Blake's view that 'Goodness or Badness has nothing to do with Character.' He would agree with him that 'a Good Apple tree or a Bad is an Apple tree still,' but he would point out that the case of man is different. Man is such because of his self-consciousness: this is in fact the starting point of Coleridge's dynamic philosophy. But self-consciousness also means to him reason and the moral sense. Goodness or badness, therefore, is not 'another consideration,' as Blake believes: on the contrary, in Coleridge's opinion, the moral sense is part of the very concept of man. That is why moral considerations carry such a heavy weight in Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare.

It is his moral approach to the plays which determines his interpretation of this character or that, of this play or the other. This is apparent in much of his criticism of the plays. But it is his treatment of Othello, which seems to me to reveal this moral approach in a peculiar and significant way. It may therefore be illuminating on this point to examine his treatment of this particular play first and in some detail. Before we can discuss his general interpretation of it, however, it is necessary at the outset to clarify certain points regarding a statement he once

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made to describe Iago's commentary on his own vicious machinations. I mean the celebrated phrase 'the motive-hunting of motiveless malignity', which has led him into some trouble with certain modern critics, and indeed passed current as the summing up of his judgment on Iago's character. Besides, as will be seen later, his interpretation of the character of Iago is an integral and important part of his interpretation of the whole play.

That the phrase means, to begin with, as it is often understood to mean, the complete absence of all motives behind Iago's actions is indeed very far from the truth. Coleridge, in fact, points out the two passions that rankle in Iago's breast: disappointment and envy. Further he even concedes that Shakespeare has compromised on the dubious question of Othello's alleged adultery with Emilia. But he also realizes that when we have exhausted all that could be said about Iago's alleged motives, there will still remain something inexplicable and inscrutable about his villainy, something which cannot be accounted for by the application of a rational chain of cause and effect.

And, taking into account Coleridge's own views on motives,

4. Ibid., vol.i, p.52.
5. See supra, p.357 ff.
this is not because of Iago's unnaturalness, but because he is too alive a character to be reduced to any one wholly intelligible formula.

It is, in fact, here that Coleridge's dissatisfaction with the purely rational approach betrays itself. In Iago Shakespeare has given us a character, who is alive and convincing, and yet whose behaviour cannot be elucidated rationally - a problem which, as we have seen, has caused some previous critics either to make a capital out of inadequate motives or else to supply him with motives of their own. It is significant to note that William Richardson, who attempted an analysis of Shakespeare's major characters such as Hamlet, Lear and Macbeth, did not venture to tackle Iago, although he dealt with minor characters like Jacques, Imogen, etc. For what leading passion in the eighteenth-century sense could be found in him? Unlike some of the eighteenth-century critics, Coleridge does not lose himself in a morass of speculation as to whether and how Othello committed adultery with Iago's wife, whether Iago was a good man before this happened, and like questions. Instead he sees that in Iago we are faced with the inscrutable element of evil in human existence. But evil is not an abstract quality thrust upon him inorganically, from

1. See supra, pp. 354 ff.
2. See supra, p. 25.
without, so to speak. It comes from within him, and is his whole 'individual self'. The scientific Shakespearean criticism of Schücking is committed to accepting Iago's avowed motives for gospel truth, and the historical method of Miss Bradbrook leads her to think that 'His explanation must plainly be accepted.' But it is amusing to watch Schücking attacking Coleridge's view of Iago, and yet, after a long-winded analysis, ending by declaring that 'the reasons alleged by Iago for his actions do not strike as the real impelling forces' — which is the very position of Coleridge. Only Schücking considers the inconsistency between Iago's avowed motives and his actual behaviour as an artistic 'mistake' by Shakespeare. But if 'we see him (i.e. Iago) actuated by hellish malignity' we must not think he is the less human or alive for it. It is indeed better to be true to our response and admit the embarrassing truth that he is a fearfully alive character, inscrutable as we may find him.

1. See supra, p.356.
3. M.C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy, (Camb., 1933), p.53. Miss Bradbrook accepts unquestioningly Iago's explanation of his own villainy, and yet she refuses to accept that of Ferdinand of Aragon in The Duchess of Malfi, because it is 'incompatible with the facts of the case' and with 'his tone and temper.' Ibid., p.64. But surely of the two Iago is the more convincing character, and is therefore the one to be taken more seriously and not at his face value.
5. Ibid., p.213.
6. Ibid., p.211.
Such an interpretation as Coleridge's, which endows Iago with exceptional 'will in intellect', and regards him as the incarnation of evil, naturally makes of him a major figure in the tragedy. Coleridge in fact objects to the representation of Iago on the stage as 'a fellow with a countenance predestined for the gallows,' and not as 'an accomplished and artful villain, who was indefatigable in his exertions to poison the mind of the brave and swarthy Moor.' This view of Iago some critics have found hard to accept. F.R. Leavis, for instance, rejects altogether the dramatic importance of Iago, maintaining that he is 'not much more than a necessary piece of dramatic mechanism.' This, however, much of a reaction it may be against the Bradley school, is certainly going too far. It is on a par with the purely 'conventional' attitude which reduces Iago to a purely theatrical villain of the Machiavellian type. No doubt it is wrong to be sentimental over Iago's character, and look upon him in the face of the evidence of the text as an almost tragic figure—a thing which Coleridge, of course, never does. Not only does the title of the play indicate how the tragedy is to be taken, but Shakespeare clearly intended that Iago should be the villain

4. A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy,* p. 218: 'In fact, the tragedy of Othello is in a sense his (i.e., Iago's) tragedy too.' I do not know where in the text Bradley can find the justification for the words: 'I would suggest that Iago, though thoroughly selfish and unfeeling, was not by nature malignant.' Ibid., p. 217.
5. See supra, n. 293 ff.
of the piece. We are familiar enough with the type which forms, as it were, the substratum upon which Shakespeare built his character, both in his plays and in Elizabethan drama in general. But what is more to the point is that this is confirmed by the effect the character has upon us. On the other hand, it certainly will not do to reduce his character to a piece of dramatic mechanism, as Dr. Leavis does, or to a mere type as Stoll will have us see him.

Coleridge may not have been fully conscious that the character of Iago is based upon the Machiavellian type. But his analysis of some of the salient points in his character accords with the Elizabethan notion of the Machiavellian villain. In Iago, Coleridge writes, Shakespeare gives us a human quality magnified to the exclusion of other human attributes: his character consists in his being 'all will in intellect'. He is the type that sets himself on a higher level than the rest of humanity; he does not share 'the frail nature of man', or his passions. No moral considerations can stand in his way. On the contrary, he coldly and unflinchingly uses the rest of humanity purely for his convenience, and as tools with which to achieve his ends. His end is always to assert his superiority, and if he suffers from any passion at all, it is pride in doing so. In his relationship with Roderigo, Coleridge remarks, pride is by far stronger than 'the love of lucre.'

All these are roughly the qualities of the conventional Machiavellian villain, but only roughly. For he is not a cold compound of conventions; in him all these qualities spring to life. He is "a being next to devil, only not quite devil" and yet he is made perfectly convincing. And that is the mystery of Shakespeare's genius. But alive as he is, he is clearly meant to be a medium for certain 'values', what Coleridge calls 'Iagoism'. Iago's 'passionless character', which is 'all will in intellect' is 'a bold partisan here of a truth, but yet of a truth converted into falsehood by the absence of all the modifications by the frail nature of man.' But all this Dr. Leavis brushes aside. He even goes further:

But in order to perform his function as dramatic machinery, he (i.e. Iago) has to put on such an appearance of invincibly cunning devilry as to provide Coleridge and the rest with some excuse for their awe, and to leave others wondering, in critical reflection, whether he isn't a rather clumsy mechanism.

And Dr. Leavis is unhappily among those who are left wondering in critical reflection.

The truth is that Dr. Leavis is driven of necessity to this view of Iago's character by his peculiar interpretation of Othello. Othello, as he sees him, is a sentimental hero, an egocentric, who from beginning to end, betrays a notorious

2. Ibid., vol.i, p.58.
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.49.
4. Ibid.
habit of self-dramatization. This is his tragedy. His is essentially a psychological problem. Because he is egocentric he has never been really in love with Desdemona, as we read in Shakespeare's play. But, against the testimony of the dramatist's own words, we are asked to believe that what the 'egoistic' Othello really feels for Desdemona is not love but 'a matter of self-centred and self-regarding satisfactions - pride, sensual possessiveness, appetite, love of loving.' Since the tragedy is 'inherent in the Othello-Desdemona relation' Iago becomes only 'a mechanism necessary for precipitating tragedy in a dramatic action.' Any odd villainous character would do for that matter, for Othello believes 'promptly' the slanderer of his wife. Thus the dramatic proportions of Iago are greatly reduced at the expense of providing instead of Shakespeare's Othello, an entirely new play. We might as well have been reading Jean Anouilh's Colombe. But is this really tenable? and is Coleridge's view of Iago so wide of the mark?

By dismissing Iago as a clumsy piece of machinery Leavis is simply running counter to Shakespeare's text. If Coleridge thinks of Iago as a major figure in the play it is only because Shakespeare has made him so. Until almost the beginning of the change in Othello's soul Iago is certainly the most dominant figure on the stage next to Othello, sometimes as dominant as Othello himself. In a

1. F.R. Leavis, O.Cit., p.145. 2. Ibid., p.141.
3. It is a well-known fact that leading actors welcome the role of Iago as much as that of Othello.
great and well-constructed play like Othello we refuse to think that such dramatic interest as that gradually aroused in us by Iago is simply of no purpose. Besides, the scenes in which we witness him torturing Othello's soul have such a powerful emotional impact that any interpretation of Othello, which takes into consideration the tortured and the tempted, leaving out the torturer and the tempter must be false to our responses to the play. It is these scenes, in fact, that make understandable, though by no means acceptable, J.I.M. Stewart's fantastic theory that 'when poetically received Othello and Iago are felt less as individuals each with his own psychological integrity than as abstractions from a single and, as it were, invisible protagonist.' Further, to claim that Othello believes Iago promptly and without sufficient reasons is to overlook certain aspects of the treatment of Iago's character as well as of the dramatic structure of the play, thus confusing art with life. After all, Othello is a drama, a work of art, and not an event in everyday life. To judge its action purely by reference to everyday life criteria, without taking into account dramatic considerations, involves a misapplication of the criteria and a confusion of 'moods'. It would indeed be irrelevant here to point out what these

1. J.I.M. Stewart, Character and Motive in Shakespeare, (London, 1949), p. 136. Pope, who was generally only too sparing in his marks of approval of whole scenes, blessed the temptation scene (Act III, Scene iii) with a star. Even Rymer said that it was considered 'the Top scene, the Scene that raises Othello above all other Tragedies on our Theatres.'
aspects are, for my object is not so much to defend Coleridge's interpretation as to show the nature of the critical assumptions behind it. But it is sufficient at present to say that Othello would not have believed Iago as he does had it not been for certain dramatic features in the play, one of which is the way Shakespeare conceived the character of Iago. To omit Iago, or to belittle his role unduly, concentrating on the Othello-Desdemona relationship, is to commit an offence against the dramatic pattern of Othello. This is not the way Shakespeare wrote his play, and Coleridge is indeed right when he stresses the importance of Iago's character.

The question is crucial to Coleridge's interpretation of the whole play. Coleridge, we remember, does not consider Othello a tragedy of jealousy. He notes how Shakespeare idealizes Othello's character as well as the relationship between him and Desdemona, how he emphasizes his nobility, his 'self-government'. In support of his interpretation Coleridge finds abundant evidence. For instance, he draws attention to Othello's calm reply: 'It is better as it is' to Iago when the latter tells him how he has thought of attacking Brabantio. Shakespeare, he says, seems to have made Othello 'above low passions.'

1. See, however, Appendix D.
3. Ibid., vol.1, p.48.
4. Loc.Cit.
would not let Desdemona accompany him until he obtained the consent of the senate. His agreeing to taking her with him to Cyprus is motivated mainly by the wish to grant her her desire. His trusting nature appears most clearly in his speech to the Duke at the Senate House, where he asks that Iago, 'a man of honesty and trust', should be given the charge of bringing her to Cyprus. Coleridge asks us to consider Othello's description of himself as one 'not easily wrought.' Jealousy is not the quality emphasized in the important murder scene, in the dialogue between Othello and Desdemona before he murders her. Othello is not jealous in the sense that in him 'there is no predisposition to suspicion':

Iago's suggestions are quite new to him, they do not correspond with anything of a like nature previously in his mind. If Desdemona had, in fact, been guilty, no one would have thought of calling Othello's conduct that of a jealous man. He could not act otherwise than he did with the lights he had; whereas jealousy can never be strictly right.

Because Coleridge was only too aware of the idealized nature of Othello's character he did not see his tragedy or, indeed, the whole drama as a tragedy of jealousy. But why was Coleridge so anxious, as indeed he often was, to point out this fact? The point which Coleridge was intent on demonstrating seems to me to be that the tragedy of

2. Ibid., vol.i, p.48.
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.53.
4. T.T., June 24, 1827.
Othello is not centred on a psychological problem. Indeed the tragedy would have lost its meaning, or, at least, a great deal of its meaning if the hero had been portrayed by Shakespeare as a psychologically unstable character from the start. For what is there specifically tragic about an abnormal personality as such? Indeed it is doubtful if an abnormal personality could at all be tragic, since because of its abnormality it would fail to be representative. And character in tragedy, we are told by Coleridge, must be no less a species than an individual. Here the comparison he draws between Othello and The Winter's Tale is illuminating. While certainly not being treated comically by Shakespeare, as Stoll seems to think, unlike Othello, Leontes does not strike us as a tragic figure, or even as a figure with tragic potentialities. The reason, I think, is obvious. Whereas Leontes's problem is largely psychological (he is, in fact, a pathological case) Othello's is moral. Or, to put it differently, the moral issues involved in the tragedy of Othello are greater and more significant. And without a profound sense of moral values no tragedy can be great. It is of the essence of tragedy, for instance, to watch Othello, led step by step to his damnation by the very man whom he never ceases to call 'honest', just as it is of the essence of tragedy to watch Othello, convinced by the demi-devil of the rightness of his

1. See supra, Pt. II, Chapter Three.
cause, offering as a sacrifice to the just gods the very woman who has been only too faithful to him. But, apart from other considerations, it is not tragic, though it may not be quite unnatural, to see a man, impelled by no force outside him, and for no apparent reason, suddenly suspect his faithful wife, and his innocent best friend, and tyrannically try the former and plot against the life of the latter. In the one case the tragedy arises from the human situation itself, whereas, in the other if there is any tragedy at all it springs from something of the nature of a disease. Othello is therefore not just a tragedy of jealousy, unless by that we mean that jealousy is a means of bringing about the tragic. But then that will not be a profound statement to make, nor will it advance us in our understanding of the play.

By denying that Othello is a tragedy of jealousy, Coleridge therefore went further than the psychological issues it involves. He cared too much for the poetic meaning of the play to be satisfied with a literal meaning, and a partial literal meaning at that. With his vigilant reading of Shakespeare's poetry he could not pass unheedingly, as some critics did, the repetition of the epithet 'honest'. Not only Othello, but the other characters as well apply the word to Iago. Coleridge knew that Shakespeare could not repeat the words 'honest, honest Iago' accidentally, and he therefore set about viewing the whole tragedy from

the point of view stressed by Shakespeare. Othello could not but believe Iago, because of his subtlety of deception, as, indeed, the rest of the characters did (including Roderigo himself, who had no illusion as regards Iago's dishonest behaviour to others), and because Shakespeare has intentionally endowed him with a firm faith in his honesty and love.

Because Othello's character is deliberately ennobled by Shakespeare, and his attachment to Desdemona highly spiritualized, his tragedy becomes not the tragedy of a jealous man so much as that of a noble man who has been deceived into seeing his ideal (where he has garnered up his heart, and the loss of which would bring chaos in his universe) thrown in the mire:

Jealousy 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 has garnered up his heart, and whom he could not help still loving, should be proved impure and worthless ... It was a moral indignation, and regret that virtue should so fail: - "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. 2

1. It has been objected that Iago only has great luck to his aid, and that not only Othello, but every character whom Iago succeeds in deceiving is really simple-minded. Without underrating the role of fate, which in this play clearly joins hands with the forces of evil, one can still say that Othello is a tragedy and not a piece of Jonsonian satire on human gullibility. The view that the characters in the play are a mere bunch of fools or simpletons does in effect reflect upon Shakespeare's play. Yet the play clearly strikes a profound tragic note, and no tragedy can arise if the action takes place in a world inhabited by mere simpletons. For, without having to be unduly optimistic, we shall fail to do the necessary identification between such a world and our own. (See supra, p. 330)

2. T. T., Dec. 29, 1522.
Othello's experience is therefore nearer to that of Troilus than to that of Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, or Leonatus in *Cymbeline*. But this is not all, for the reality Othello has to face is much harsher and more bitter than Troilus has ever known. The humiliation of such a noble mind as Othello's is brought about by the villainy of one who is both man and the incarnation of evil, for, apart from its ultimately mysterious nature, Iago's evil acquires superhuman dimensions by being aided by chance or fate. Tempted by the devil Othello mistakes reality for appearance, and having lived appearance through, he discovers, when it is too late, that it is only an appearance and that reality is what he has irretrievably discarded.

1. See supra, p.396.

2. Because of his strange neglect of Iago's character, and of his view of Othello as an egocentric sentimentalist, F.R. Leavis remarks of Othello's speech when he discovers his fatal error: 'Whip me, ye devils ...' that it is 'an intolerably intensified form of the common "I could kick myself"' (Op.Cit., p.150) — a remark which reminds one very strongly of Byrner. The speech, of course, is somewhat rhetorical, but Dr. Leavis fails to see the function of rhetoric in it. One of the causes of rhetoric pointed out by Coleridge is peculiarly relevant here. 'Elevation of style,' says Coleridge, is 'an effort' of the mind 'to master' its own 'terrors' (Ch.Crit., vol.1, pp.20-21). That is precisely what makes Othello resort to rhetoric here. What we see in Othello at this point is not, as Dr. Leavis believes, sentimentality, if by sentimentality we mean an undue inflation of a trivial emotion. It is because the experience Othello suffers is terrible that he is trying by rhetoric to sustain himself through it. Rhetoric here in fact serves a somewhat similar purpose to the self-dramatization which T.S. Eliot detects in the dying speeches of most Shakespearean and other Elizabethan tragic heroes. Of Othello's dying speech Eliot writes, 'What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is cheering himself up. He is endeavouring to escape reality' (Selected Essays, p.130). This is far more perceptive than Leavis's charge of sentimentality (cont.)
The tragedy of Othello is then the tragedy of the enormity of human deception and the fearful blunders of the spirit. This, as I understand, is Coleridge's interpretation of the play. It is true that he did not put it precisely in these terms, but what I have attempted here is only a reconstruction of his interpretation, based upon his various abrupt and fragmentary comments and suggestions. That this interpretation is neither excessively fanciful nor above the understanding of an Elizabethan audience can be seen from the evidence of other Elizabethan plays. As Mr. E.L. Joseph writes in his book, Elizabethan Acting:

Footnote 2 continued from page 406:

and egocentricity. Nearly all Shakespeare's heroes behave similarly in their last minute, because nearly all stake the whole of their being upon some one thing, and once this goes their whole being is violently shaken. Their raison d'être disappears, so to speak, and reality becomes much too harsh to bear. In this respect Othello is no exception. We can with no more justice call him sentimental or egocentric than we can Coriolanus or Antony. Othello's feelings are true in the sense that given the Othello world they are, as Coleridge says, what 'any man would and must feel who had believed of Iago as Othello' (Sh.Crit., vol.1, p.125). The man who sought to escape from the terrible reality by means of rhetoric and self-dramatization is also the man who in his extreme anguish indicted himself in the simple words; 'fool! fool! fool!' (Othello, V. ii. 323).
The difficulties in the way of seeing into another's heart are often at the basis of tragedy, particularly in those of Shakespeare. Othello mistakes both Iago and Desdemona, Lear both Edgar and Edmund; Lear is blind to Goneril and Regan as well as to the reality inside Cordelia. Here we have penetrated to one of the fundamental truths of which the Elizabethan was sure to be conscious, as soon as he passed to consider seriously the implications of a story dealing with the consequences of a serious mistake. Man, unlike God, cannot see into the heart ... No specialized intellectual training is needed to appreciate the situation in which Iago, who has exulted in evil before our eyes, exchanges the 'action' of a soul over to Satan for the seeming appearance of one whose honesty is his ruling principle. The seeming honesty is so like what it imitates that only those who have seen the devil within can know, or even suspect, that the show without tells a lie.  

Othello's great mistake, Coleridge says, is that 'we know Iago for a villain from the first moment.'  

Indeed there is abundant evidence in the play to support Coleridge's interpretation. For instance, the number of times such words as 'forms', 'mere form', 'visage', 'shows', 'seeming', 'outward action', 'extern', 'flag', 'sign', 'appearance', 'look', 'well painted', 'deceive' occur in the play is so large that there is some justification in looking upon them as of the nature of 'key-words'. Not to say anything of the unusual recurrence of the word 'honest', which has already been detected, and the just as frequent recurrence of the words 'seem' and 'seeming', which as far as I know has not yet been pointed out - there are certain crucial scenes in the play in which the contrast between appearance and reality is more striking and distur-

bing than in any other Shakespearean play, *Macbeth* not excluded. The decisive scene (Act IV, scene 1) in which Cassio, as Othello is made to believe, confesses his adultery with Desdemona, is in a sense symbolical of the meaning of the play. The feelings associated with the reiterated words 'seeming' and 'show' are crystallized here and given a concrete shape. Othello has insisted upon having an 'ocular proof', and so Iago asks him to concentrate on Cassio's facial expression. As Othello is not supposed to hear the content of the conversation between Iago and Cassio, the sharp contradiction between appearance and reality is driven home, and Othello's misunderstanding could not be more poignant. In fact, this mistaking of appearance for reality runs throughout the whole play. Even towards the end, before Othello murders Desdemona, when he accuses her of misconduct with Cassio, she replies in unfortunately ambiguous words, which being taken by him only in one sense, only serve to inflame his passion:

Des. Alas! he is betray'd and I undone.
Oth. Out, strumpet! weep'st thou for him to my face.

The deception is also the theme of the sub-plot (the Iago-

2. Cf. the way Iago incriminates Bianca, V. i.104-110.
Iago's commentary on Othello's deception is:
As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad
And his unbookish jealousy must construe etc. ... IV. i.101-104.
3. *Oth.* V. ii.75 ff.
Roderigo relationship), which in Shakespeare's plays is often related to the main plot. The deception theme is to be found even in the Turkish fleet episode discussed by the Duke and Senators in the Council chamber. Conflicting reports about the whereabouts of the Fleet succeed one another as a result of the Turkish attempt to conceal their real object. Their action is described by a senator as:

\[\text{a pageant,}
\]
\[\text{To keep us in false gaze.}\]

which is itself an admirable commentary on Iago's action.

The failure of Othello is to understand not only Iago, but Desdemona, and the similar failure of Desdemona to understand Othello, and of Emilia to understand her husband, and the deception of the other characters by Iago do not need pointing out. And when we come to consider the leading images in the play we shall find that they bear out this interpretation. Mainly they involve error and deception: for instance, the elements are described as "traitors clogging the guiltless keel"; Othello tells us that "it is the very error of the moon". Miss Spurgeon has pointed to "the current image of bird-snaring" in the play.

2. Ibid., I.iii.18-19.
3. Ibid., II.i.70.
4. Ibid., V.ii.109.
Coleridge no doubt goes to extremes when he denies Othello jealousy altogether. When he attempts to prove his case he seems on the whole to be thinking of him before the temptation, rather than after. At least he seems to select deliberately only those examples which support his view and omit others equally significant. But if he concentrates on Othello's mind before the temptation it is because his object seems to be to deny Othello a jealous disposition. Coleridge's arguments are directed to the one end of proving that Othello's jealousy is not 'a vice of mind, a culpable despicable tendency.' In other words, all the behaviour of Othello until Iago's devilish temptation is not that of a jealous man. His jealousy is not the child of his own soul; it does not arise within him as a result of previous suspicions and/poisoned imagination. Unlike Leontes he does not get 'excited by the most inadequate causes.' It needed the wiles, tricks and insinuations, the masterly suggestion, the hypnotizing and the blinding of none less than an Iago, whom every character in the Othello world trusts, to set it in motion. To say that he succumbs to temptation too easily is to argue a literal-mindedness in the critic, and a wilful inability to understand the concentrated nature of poetic drama, in fact, a demand for verisimilitude on a par with the attitude which quite unimaginatively refuses to respond to the tragedy because Desdemona, who has just been married to

Othello, has hardly had the time to conduct an affair with Cassio. On the other hand, if we approach the play with the right 'mood', if we let ourselves respond imaginatively to it, and refrain from measuring the time of the action of the play by the time the representation of it takes on the stage, we shall have no cause to complain that he 'promptly' believes Iago. There is nothing fundamentally improbable about a man, lacking a jealous disposition, at least no more jealous than any fond lover usually is, becoming to say the least perturbed on hearing a person, who, as far as he believes, is disinterested and trustworthy, tell him in a convincing manner about the infidelity of his wife. He insists upon proofs, and circumstances conspiring to confirm his aroused suspicions, together with his by now not completely unprejudiced mind, make him less prone to doubt the authenticity of the proofs offered him.

Yet it must be admitted that it seems perversity in Coleridge not to see jealousy in Othello after the temptation. For nearly all the qualities which he tabulates as the 'natural effects and concomitants' of jealousy can be, and have already been, found in his behaviour once Iago's medicine starts working. But is it just perversity that drives the great critic to entertain such a preposterous

1. This is, in fact, Rymer's rational attitude. See A Short View of Tragedy, (Lond., 1693), pp.115,121,123.
view? In denying Othello a jealous temperament we have seen that his object is really to make the problem of the play moral rather than psychological. But why does he omit to note his jealousy after the temptation? Coleridge seems to go astray here, because he has seen other sides in Othello's character, which if we missed or overlooked the play would be the poorer. Coleridge is the first critic to point out the ambivalence in Othello's feelings towards Desdemona, and by insisting on the other side in Othello's character he has helped us, who are not blind to his jealousy, to have a clear view of this ambivalence. By emphasizing such qualities as Othello's love for Desdemona, which can be seen, though intermittently, throughout, and its idealized nature, the sense of overwhelming pity he feels at the downfall of his ideal, his conception of vengeance as an honourable act of justice and duty, Coleridge has made us aware of the complexity of Othello's feelings in a way which no interpretation of Othello as a merely jealous man can do. This complexity Coleridge traces even in the very imagery in which Othello expresses himself.

As in Othello the issues raised in the other plays are moral. In fact, the meaning Coleridge finds behind Shakespeare's plays is always a moral rather than a psychological meaning. With the possible exception of Hamlet, the

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1. See supra, pp. 402 ff.
great tragedies present to him moral issues. But even in

Hamlet, although he is clearly fascinated by the particular
temperament of the hero's character, ultimately the question
he stresses is really one of conduct. 'Action is the chief
end of the existence,' which is the summing up of his inter-
pretation of Hamlet, is, after all, not a psychological but
a moral assertion. One and the same problem, I suppose,
can be put both in psychological and in moral terms; and
we can to some extent translate from the one set of terms
to the other. But it is a question of emphasis. And the
emphasis Coleridge lays, as far as his recorded criticism
shows, is on the moral rather than the psychological side.
He is not contented with saying that Iago, for instance,
behaves as he does because the make up of his personality
is such and such. He is always introducing value judg-
ments, a thing which strictly speaking is extraneous to
psychology: in Iago, he says, intellect is developed at
the expense of the moral reason. In other words, he does
not merely attempt to explain why characters behave as they
do, but he always asks whether or not they behave as they
ought to behave, and from thence tries to find the moral
values which the author means them to represent. 'Iagoism'
therefore is not a psychological, but a moral term.

The problem of Macbeth, to take another example, is
chiefly moral. Coleridge's interpretation of his character

is that he is a man deceived in himself. Before the murder he is continually mistaking the voice of his conscience for mere prudence, and after it for 'fear from external danger.' Indeed some critics have taken Macbeth's words at their face value, and consequently have regarded his conflict purely as a worldly conflict. And he has been painted to us as a weak man, not in the sense that he has a diseased will on which we are all agreed, but in the sense that he is a mere bundle of nerves—a view which fails to take seriously into account the dramatic function of the opening scenes in the play and the deliberate building up of the heroic aspect of Macbeth's character in them. Again, as in the case of Othello, we are given to understand by some critics that the problem the dramatist is concerned with here is psychological rather than moral. But in a play like Macbeth, even more so than in Othello, it would mean distortion of all dramatic proportions to overlook the primacy of the moral meaning. We may not agree with Coleridge's particular

2. Schücking, for instance, says that 'what always occupies the foreground of his thoughts is the fear of the consequences,' (L. E. Schücking, Op. Cit., p. 72). But, of course, Schücking would not accept anything but what comes in the 'foreground' of the thoughts of a character. That which is implied, but which is equally real and sometimes even more important, does not come within the orbit of scientific criticism.
3. Coleridge writes that 'his powers lack the direction of a controlling will.' A.F., p. 197.
interpretation of the play, but we must realize the validity of his moral approach to it.

In concentrating on the moral implications of the action we need not emphasize the nobility of Macbeth's soul, as some critics have done and still do—a thing which Coleridge incidentally never does. Nor should we at the same time go to the opposite extreme and maintain with other critics that even in the final scenes Shakespeare clearly makes a complete identification of Macbeth with evil. After all, even at his worst moments Macbeth is not an Iago or a Richard the Third. We only have to be faithful to Shakespeare's text and read it with an unprejudiced mind. If we do that we shall realize the important role imagery plays in the speeches of Macbeth. The imagery upon which Macbeth draws to express himself betrays a recognition of a scheme of values which cannot in any justifiable sense be termed evil. And what can we call this recognition but the voice of conscience, or at least something very near it? It seems arbitrary to divest the imagery of its immediate relationship to the character and concentrate on the total pattern as Knights does, for, after

1. See e.g. Peter Alexander, Shakespeare's Life and Art, (Lond., 1946), p.173: 'Yet how should a fighter of Macbeth's power, one so eminently suited for rule and homage, be so troubled by Duncan's taking off, as never again to be the same man he was, but for some profound rightness in his soul, an inexorable goodness that will assert itself the more, the more it is denied?'


3. That imagery is sometimes a means of characterization can be regarded now as a commonplace of Shakespearean criticism. On Coleridge's views on the subject see infra, Ch.V.
all, character itself is an important part of the pattern. In his interpretation of the character, Coleridge, on the other hand, takes a middle course. He realizes that Macbeth's words are not to be taken at their face value, and he is fully aware of the profundity of Shakespeare's conception. Macbeth is not the incarnation of evil: if he were his conflict would have been predominantly external, which clearly is not the case. To show that the trouble is really spiritual, Coleridge contrasts 'the ingenuity' with which he 'evades the promptings of conscience before the commission of a crime' with 'his total imbecility and helplessness when the crime had been committed, and when conscience can be no longer dallied with or eluded.'

Macbeth, he says:

in the first instance enumerates the different worldly impediments to his scheme of murder: could be put them by, he would "jump the life to come." Yet no sooner is the murder perpetrated, than all the concerns of this mortal life are absorbed and swallowed up in the avenging feeling within him: he hears a voice cry: "Macbeth has murdered sleep; and therefore Glamis shall sleep no more." 1

Like Lady Macbeth Macbeth then is 'never meant for a monster.'

Yet it cannot be said that, because he is deceived in himself and because he mistakes the voice of his own conscience for mere prudence, he does not undergo a moral conflict. Nor can his partial ignorance of his own soul relieve him of the responsibility in Coleridge's eyes. 'In

the tragic', Coleridge believed, 'the free-will of man is the first cause.' The deepest tragic effect is produced when a play presents an opposition between an individual ('springing from a defect in him') and 'a higher and intelligent will'. To deny Macbeth his part in bringing about his downfall and the downfall of others by minimizing or ignoring the importance of his choice is to misrepresent Shakespeare's play. Mr. Wilson Knight, to take an example of the type of critic who overlooks the significant role of Macbeth's choice, asserts that the concept of will power has no place in Macbeth. Macbeth, he writes,

is helpless as a man in a nightmare: and this helplessness is integral to the conception - the will-concept is absent. Macbeth may struggle, but he cannot fight: he can no more resist than a rabbit resists a weasel's teeth fastened in its neck, or a bird in the serpent's transfixing eye. Now this evil in Macbeth propels him to an act absolutely evil.

And he entitles his essay on Macbeth 'The Metaphysic of Evil'. No doubt the supernatural in this play plays a powerful role and Mr. Knight is acutely sensitive when he points out how Macbeth seems to be literally possessed by evil. But to make this a final verdict on his character, to rob him of his responsibility of choice is really to misinterpret his character. This is treating him either too

2. Ibid., vol.i, p.138.
4. Ibid., p.169.
sympathetically (by relieving him of the fatal responsibility of choice), or too unsympathetically (by reducing him to a rabbit held in the teeth of a weasel, thus depriving him of the glory of choice). Without detracting from the importance of the supernatural in the tragedy and without denying the metaphysical quality of evil in it, it must be admitted with Coleridge that the human also has its place.

In Macbeth, Coleridge thinks, evil is not exclusively pushed in from above. In fact, he tries to account for the nightmare-like experience Macbeth seems to be undergoing before the murder of Duncan by the fascination evil holds for the sinful soul in spite of the soul's full realization of its nature:

When once the mind, in despite of the remonstrating conscience, has abandoned its free power to a haunting impulse or idea, then whatever tends to give depth and vividness to this idea or indefinite imagination increases its despotism, and in the same proportion renders the reason and free will ineffectual. Now fearful calamities, sufferings, horrors, and hairbreadth escapes will have this effect far more than even sensual pleasure and prosperous incidents. Hence the evil consequences of sin in such cases, instead of retracting and deterring the sinner, goad him on to his destruction. This is the moral of Shakespeare's Macbeth.

And he therefore praises 'the consummate art' with which Shakespeare makes Lady Macbeth 'first use herself as incentives what his (i.e. Macbeth's) conscience would perhaps have used as motives of abhorrence', referring to her use of Duncan's presence in their castle as an argument in favour of his taking off. Lady Macbeth, we are told, does the

same thing to herself in her soliloquy immediately after 
hearing the news of Duncan's intended visit. 1

Unlike the eighteenth-century rationalist critics,
Coleridge realizes fully the function of the supernatural
in Shakespearean tragedy. In Macbeth not only are the
Weird Sisters embodiments of 'the Fates and Furies' at
once, but they also provide the keynote to the play. But
their supernatural power of knowledge does not relieve Mac-
beth of the heavy burden of choice laid on his shoulders.
Indeed part of their prophecy was fulfilled, but the major
and crucial part 'king hereafter' was 'still contingent,
still in Macbeth's moral will'. And the preservation of
the freedom of will is regarded by Coleridge as essential
for Shakespearean tragedy: it is the hero's particular
choice which brings about the tragedy. The fact that the
hero, once he has made the fatal decision, is no longer the
free agent he was before making it, does not make of him a
determined being from the start. It is Macbeth's diseased
will, his succumbing to temptation that brings about his
downfall, in spite of the fact that the Weird Sisters are
endowed with foreknowledge, and they predict the future

2. See supra, pp. 63 ff. Among Coleridge's cherished
projects was an essay on the role of the supernatural
4. Ibid., vol.1, p.68.
events pertaining to his life. The problem as Coleridge poses it resembles its equivalent in theology, but as this is poetry and not metaphysics or theology what matters is 'the general idea':

The general idea is all that can be required from the poet, not a scholastic logical consistency in all the parts so as to meet metaphysical objections. 1

To curtail the power of the supernatural without nullifying it altogether, Macbeth is shown as 'rendered temptable by previous dalliance of the fancy with ambitious thoughts.' Coleridge points out how, at the prophecies of the Weird Sisters, Macbeth's violent reactions are sharply contrasted with 'the unpossessedness of Banquo's mind.' 2 Nevertheless, Coleridge does not underrate the importance of the supernatural, for 'before Macbeth can cool,' from the effect of the Weird Sisters' prophecies, he writes, 'the confirmation of the tempting half of the prophecy arrives and the catenating tendency of the mind is fostered by the sudden coincidence.' 3 Thus the world of tragedy is the moral world, although in it there is sufficient room for the unknown forces in human existence.

1. Ibid., vol.1, p.69.
2. Ibid. Cf. Ibid., vol.ii, p.270: Contrast 'the talkative curiosity of the innocent minded and open dispositioned Banquo, in the scene with the Witches, with the silent, absent and brooding melancholy of his partner. A striking instance of his self-temptation was pointed out in the disturbance of Macbeth at the election of the Prince of Cumberland.'
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.59.
In the moral world evil exists in its own right as much as good. It is metaphysical, in the sense that it is necessary and universal and cannot be explained away. Its existence is essentially such, not by accident of outward circumstances, not derived from its physical consequences, nor from any cause, out of itself ... Omnia exspect in mysterium. 1

Coleridge is therefore no believer in a pre-established harmony after Shaftesbury's fashion, and that, at least, is one reason why he does not demand poetic justice, as most of the eighteenth century critics have done: in his lectures we find him vindicating 'the melancholy catastrophe' of Lear. 2 That he does not in his criticism of Shakespeare flinch from the existence of evil cannot be better illustrated than in his acceptance of Iago's character in spite of his mysterious villainy. But the relation between tragedy and morality is an intimate and important one. No tragedy can be great which neglects moral values altogether. It is essential for drama to present a world with which we can identify our own not only psychologically, but morally as well. The one thing may in fact be a corollary from the other. We refrain from this necessary identification when we are faced with a dramatic world made up exclusively of evil. Consequently no dramatic vision can be great which recognizes only evil in human

1. Aids, p.91.
existence. Great drama, Coleridge believes, must observe some kind of balance of moral forces. In a tragedy, he says, there must be at least one or more characters 'in whom you are morally interested', whom 'you follow with an affectionate feeling'. It is, in fact, 'impossible to keep up any pleasurable interest in a tale in which there is no goodness of heart in any of the prominent characters.'

That is why in spite of 'the fertility and vigor of invention, character, language and sentiment' in Jonson's Volpone, Coleridge finds it to be 'a painful weight upon the feelings' after the third act. It is precisely for the same reason that he condemns Measure for Measure, for in his opinion there is a complete absence of good characters in the play, and he admits that 'Isabella, of all Shakespeare's female characters, interests me the least.'

In this particular instance we may deplore the critic's insensitivity to the particular form and meaning of the play, although we cannot but agree that the general principle behind his criticism is just. In Lear, in which the dramatic vision is impenetrably dark, and evil in man is presented almost to an excess, or, as Coleridge puts it, 'the tragic has been urged beyond the outermost mark and ne plus ultra of the dramatic,' Shakespeare sees to it that

2. Ibid., p.55.
3. Ibid., p.49.
4. See supra, p. 311 ff.
the moral balance is not completely upset. He introduces a character of almost 'absolute goodness' like Kent, and when the utmost evil appears in the shape of 'utter monsters' like Goneril and Regan, Shakespeare takes care that they are 'kept out of sight as much as possible', and that they should be used largely as a 'means for the excitation and deepening of noblest emotions towards Lear and Cordelia.'

Just as a tragedy as a whole must maintain some kind of moral balance, so must the character of the hero. In Coleridge's opinion no completely villainous character can be a tragic hero. In this connection he seems to distinguish between two kinds of evil. There is what he calls 'positive' evil, the kind of evil which is premeditated in cold blood, with full knowledge and ability to act differently. On the other hand, there is the evil that 'springs entirely from defect of character.' The first can only make the villain, the Iago type, whereas the second kind of evil does not offer much resistance to tragic treatment. By denying some measure of responsibility to the character, the dramatist does not fear to draw his faults 'openly and broadly', and 'without reserve' - as in the case of Richard the Second, and one may add Macbeth.

Our sympathy for such a character will be secured as long as we perceive his eventual 'disproportionate sufferings'.

Yet even the villainous characters, if they happen to be major characters as well, Shakespeare often endows with some qualities which to some extent call for the admiration of the recipient. For 'power without reference to any moral end' inevitably compels our admiration 'whether it be displayed in the conquests of a Napoleon or Tamurlaine, or in the form and thunder of a cataract.' But the admiration is limited and there is no tampering with moral values in Shakespeare's plays. 'By the counteracting power of profound intellects,' Coleridge writes, the characters of Richard the Third and Iago are rendered 'awful' rather than 'hateful'; but awful they remain.

Unlike Beaumont and Fletcher Shakespeare does not resort to the 'trick of bringing one part of our moral nature to counteract another.'

Closely connected with the problem of evil is the question of motivation. Of course, the question is really psychological, and we have seen elsewhere Coleridge's psychological views on it. But in drama there is also a moral aspect to it. Fairly adequate motivation in the case of villainous characters is one of the means of producing

2. Ibid., vol.i, p.58.
5. See supra, pp. 357 ff.
the moral balance, which in Coleridge's opinion a tragedy must maintain. By making evil to some extent explicable a dramatist relieves its intensity. Compared with the introduction of good characters this is really a negative means. It only lessens evil, but does not remove it altogether. There remains a residue, which, as Coleridge thinks, is part of the mystery of existence. Hence the motives account for the evil, without explaining it away. This is essential particularly in the case of a character possessing qualities which are though amoral yet admirable:

For such are the appointed relations of intellectual power to truth, and of truth to goodness, that it becomes both morally and poetically unsafe to present what is admirable — what our nature compels us to admire — in the mind, and what is most detestable in the heart, as co-existing in the same individual without any apparent connection, or any modification of the one by the other. 1

Perhaps the categorical imperative has too large a share in this; yet, on the whole, it still remains true, I think, that

in the dramatic presentation of such a character it is of the highest importance to prevent the guilt from passing into utter monstrosity — which again depends on the presence or absence of causes and temptations sufficient to account for the wickedness, without the necessity of recurring to a thorough fiendishness of nature for its origination. 2

Even Iago does not possess 'a thorough fiendishness of nature'; although he 'approaches' it, he is still convincing as a character. But convincing as he is, in him evil mani-

2. Loc.Cit.
fests itself in its most powerful and mysterious shape. In a tragedy like Othello he is in his proper place, for there is no other character that can be called really evil in the Othello world. Roderigo is more like a fool than a villain; he is a mere tool and from the very beginning he is as much sinned against as sinning. But in a play like Lear, the introduction of such mysterious evil would precariously upset the moral balance, and would turn the tragic into the monstrous. It 'was most carefully to be avoided;' for the vision is gloomy enough, and there are already Goneril and Regan in it, who represent 'wickedness in an outrageous form.' Consequently evil in a prominent character like Edmund has to be made more explicable. In his discussion of his motives, Coleridge characteristically takes into account his whole personality. In the first place we have the peculiar circumstances of his birth. Further, his father relates these circumstances in his presence 'with a most degrading levity,' and in his presence too he expresses his shame in having to acknowledge him as his own son. Since the whole affair was no fault of Edmund's, he feels that 'the pangs of shame personally undeserved' are wrongs and hence his defence of his 'base' birth in his soliloquy. Secondly, we are told by Shakespeare that since his boyhood he had been away from his father and

brother receiving his education abroad, and that he will soon be sent away again. Thirdly, besides his being a bastard, the fact that he is the younger brother makes him, in his own words, 'unpossessing', and leaves all the honours to his elder brother. By giving us all this information Shakespeare apparently makes the evil in the character to some extent explicable. This, Coleridge finds, Shakespeare often does. He even sees it in a minor character like the Second Murderer in Macbeth, who is not made 'a perfect monster', but who gives such a description of his life as renders his evil somewhat accountable:

   I am one, my liege,
   Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
   Have so incensed that I am reckless what
   I do to spite the world.

In great tragedies like Shakespeare's we do not find therefore 'perfect monsters', for apart from the psychological improbability that attends presenting such beings, tragedy is not meant to arouse pure horror. It is on these grounds that Coleridge once condemned the blinding scene in Lear for being too painful. It is true that the scene has also wounded the sensibility of many an eighteenth-century critic,

1. *Sh. Crit.*, vol. 1, p. 64.
2. It is important to note that all this Coleridge finds in the text. He does not disengage the character of Edmund from the dramatic context and analyze it independently, nor, like Hazlitt, does he read it with too modern eyes. Whereas Hazlitt admires Edmund's 'religious honesty' in his admission of his 'plain villainy', (William Hazlitt, The Complete Works, ed. P. P. Howe, vol. 4, p. 259) and thinks that his speech about the mistaken influence of the stars 'is worth a million', Coleridge says that a person 'can be free from superstition by being below as well as by rising above it', and thinks (cont.)
but the paradox is that while their theories of the sublime included the element of terror or horror as one of its constituents (Burke in fact resolved the sublime to what is fraught with danger and terror alone), and while the Gothic novel was being born, the blinding of Closter was considered too terrible. But Coleridge's view of sublimity is free from such crudities as the eighteenth-century critics entertained. Early in his career (1797) in a review of The Monk, a Gothic novel by M.G. Lewis, he stated his opinions quite clearly:

Situations of torment and images of naked horror, are easily conceived; and a writer in whose works they abound deserves our gratitude almost equally with him who should drag us by way of sport through a military hospital, or force us to sit at the dissecting-table of a natural philosopher ... Figures that shock the imagination, and narratives that mangle the feelings, rarely discover genius, and always betray a low and vulgar taste.

Later on, when Coleridge realized that the blinding of Closter is at least formally functional, and saw that Shakespeare makes it less offensive to the moral sense and 'somewhat less unendurable' by referring to Closter's guilt in begetting Edmund, then he could justify the scene. But

Footnote 2 continued from page 428 and footnotes 3 and 4:

that Edmund is certainly below it. Sh.Crit., vol.1, p.62. This no doubt is more in keeping with the meaning of the Elizabethan play.


2. See supra, p.250.
3. Sh.Crit., vol.1, p.57: He confessed that 'he was at the time a married man and already blest with a lawful heir of his fortunes.'
his criticism is significant. In his view tragic terror is something totally different from pure horror.

Because he finds that Shakespeare keeps a moral balance in his plays, and does not run counter to moral values, Coleridge writes that one of Shakespeare's virtues as a dramatist is that he keeps 'at all times the high road of life.' And, as we have seen, in his view this constitutes one of the greatest virtues of a dramatist.

It is this, and not prudery, which he has in mind when on several occasions, he goes out of his way to defend the morality of Shakespeare. In fact, to make his meaning clear Coleridge draws a distinction between what he calls 'manners' or 'decency' and 'morals'. By manners he understands 'what is dependent on the particular customs and fashions of the age.' But morality is something permanent; it belongs to the concept of man, so to speak: 'Even in a state of comparative barbarism as to manners, there may be, and there is, morality.' An offence against decency or manners is grossness, not immorality. Of grossness the examples are rife in Shakespeare's plays, as well as in the works of his contemporaries, even though there are less of them in his work than in theirs; but of immorality there are none. 'Shakespeare may sometimes be gross', but

2. In the heat of his impassioned attack on Coleridge's criticism F.L.Lucas seems to have forgotten this fact, amongst other things. See *The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal*, pp.191 ff.
he is always moral. Yet his grossness is the 'mere sport of fancy, dissipating low feelings by exciting the intellect.' Unlike what we find in the works of Beaumont and Fletcher it is 'all head-work, and fancy-drolleries, no sensation supposed in the speaker, no itchy wriggling.' It is committed 'for the sake of merriment' and not 'for the sake of offending.' But while offending our decencies (for manners have changed) Shakespeare never runs counter to our moral sense. He is the opposite of the contemporary writer who 'tampers with the morals without offending the decencies.' In spite of his impersonal art, he 'always makes vice odious and virtue admirable.' His plays are based upon a scheme of moral values which is not oppugnant to moral sensibility. It is still basically our own scheme, and has relevance to 'frail and fallible Human Nature.' That is why one rises from their attentive perusal 'a sadder and a wiser man.'

Such is the importance Coleridge attaches to morality that even in his discussion of dramatic illusion while he believes that the power of judgment is suspended, he still asserts that we can never 'suspend the moral sense.' And in

6. _Sh.Crit._, vol.ii, p.34.
7. _Treatise on Method_, Snyder, p.33.
the Fragment of an Essay on Beauty, he maintains that whereas in music and painting it may be possible occasion­ally to do without moral feeling, in poetry this is impos­sible. In his criticism of Shakespeare's plays he is always looking upon the characters as the incarnations of moral values: 'Shakespeare's sublime morality ... pervades all his great characters.' In a character like Richard the Third or Iago we are meant to see a dramatic representa­tion of 'the dreadful consequences of placing the moral in subordination to the intellectual'. Cresaida represents the turbulence of passion arising from 'warmth of tempera­ment,' while in Troilus we have the moral profundity of love. Hamlet stands for the excessive deliberation which paralyses action, and Macbeth for the diseased will which ends in self-deception. This preoccupation with moral issues leads him to find a moral significance even in a minor character in a play which is not a tragedy. Caliban, we are told, is 'all earth, all condensed and gross in feelings and images'; he is the representation of 'the dawning of understanding without reason or the moral sense.' In him 'as in some brute animals, this advance to intel­lectual faculties, without the moral sense, is marked by the appearance of vice.' His poetry does not redeem him morally, but only endows him with a certain degree of nobility which 'raises him above contempt.'

This moral earnestness in Coleridge, however, causes him sometimes to be too solemn in his approach to some of Shakespeare's characters. He would therefore find a particular moral meaning in a character, which can never be justified by the total impression. Thus he says that in both Falstaff and Richard the Third we have 'the subordination of the moral to the intellectual being.' Apart from the debilitating lack of humour which it reveals, there is something seriously wrong in an interpretation that finds essentially the same values in Falstaff's character as in that of Richard the Third. But it is not because Coleridge's conception of humour is erroneous that he fails to see it in the character of Falstaff. The analysis which he has left us of humour is not devoid either of merit or of perceptiveness. But such are the shortcomings of an excessively serious moral approach, for it is the moralist in

2. Indeed on the philosophical implications of his analysis he draws heavily on Jean-Paul Richter. When he writes that in humour 'the little is made great, and the great little, in order to destroy both, because all is equal in contrast with the infinite,' he is simply reproducing Richter in English (Mis.Crit., p. 119; cf. Jean-Paul Richter, Vorsprüche der Aesthetik, Hamburg, 1804, Section 32). But on the whole he follows Richter wisely and even adds to his master's analysis. The result is that his analysis of some of the qualities of Stern's humour, for instance, illuminates not only the humour of Stern but humour in general. Coleridge distinguishes between wit and humour showing that the former is purely a product of an 'intellectual operation' and that its field is thoughts, words and images (Mis.Crit., pp.440-441). Humour, on the other hand, is related to pathos and it is the expression of an attitude of the whole man to life. Its domain is therefore human life, not so
in Coleridge who blinds him to the humour in the character. Similarly his moral zeal coupled with his idolatry drive him to make the preposterous statement that 'Shakespeare became all beings, but the vicious.' 'The great prerogative of genius,' he writes, again in a bardolatrous mood, '(and Shakespeare felt and availed himself of it) is now to

Footnote 2 continued from page 433:

much as a set of social assumptions, rules and habits, but primarily as human. Humour is free from all notions of utility. The soul of a humorist is given to some pursuit or other totally abstracted from any interest or utility (although he himself may think otherwise), which is given by him 'some disproportionate generality and universality.' Hence the dependence of humour upon the particular temperament. Whereas wit is 'impersonal' humour 'always more or less partakes of the character of the speaker' (Ibid., pp.111-113). No combinations of thoughts, words, or images will of itself constitute humour, unless some peculiarity of individual temperament and character be indicated thereby as the cause of the same', and there must be 'a growth from within' (Ibid., p.443). Coleridge proceeds further in his analysis, showing how humour is even free from moral/effect (Ibid., p.118). In humour, he says, we get 'a sort of dallying with the devil', and an 'inward sympathy with the enemy', 'a craving to dispute and yet agree' (Ibid., p.121). In a humorous character we witness a mode of living which makes of civilized life a topsy-turvy universe in which all the social and moral values are turned upside down, and in which 'the hollowness and farce of the world' is made apparent (Ibid., p.119). That Coleridge could see all this, at least partly in germ, in what constitutes humour and yet refrain from calling Falstaff a humorous character is very strange indeed. The reason he adduces for his opinion that Falstaff is not a humorous character is significantly the very reason from which such a judgment should follow. Only unfortunately it does not fit the facts of the case: 'The character of Falstaff, as drawn by Shakespeare, may be described as one of wit, rather than of humour. 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, not of humour, which always more or less partakes of the (cont.)
swell itself to the dignity of a god, and now to subdue and keep dormant some part of that lofty nature, and to descend to the lowest character - to become everything in fact, but the vicious.' It is difficult to see what Coleridge means by such statements. If by a 'vicious' character he understands a 'pure monster', then it is not impossible to agree with him, for as he himself says, 'in every one of Shakespeare's characters we still feel ourselves communing with the same human nature.' But then this will be a strange and misleading use of the word 'vicious' indeed.

Yet, despite the serious limitations of his moral approach, it cannot be said that Coleridge often applies the moral criteria in his criticism of Shakespeare's characters as crudely as the eighteenth-century critics. It is because he does not often confuse art with life that he does not fall in to the moral pitfalls of his predecessors. Of course, several cases of a crude moral judgment

Footnote 2 continued from page 433 & 434: character of the speaker.' (Ibid., p.111) Because he could only see in Falstaff the 'subordination of the moral to the intellectual being', and because wit is purely the product of an 'intellectual operation', Coleridge wrote that 'this character (i.e. Falstaff) so often extolled as the masterpiece of humor, contains, and was not meant to contain, any humor at all' (Ibid., p.50).

Footnote 1 from page 434:
2. Treatise on Method, Snyder, p.27.
unassisted by artistic sensibility can be pointed out in his criticism. The obvious case is that of Angelo in Measure for Measure, already referred to. Likewise his moral sensibility is wounded by Isabella's behaviour in the same play, and by Lady Anne's in Richard the Third. He even dismisses the scene in which she 'yields to the usurper's solicitations' as non-Shakespearian, although he has the honesty to admit that Measure for Measure, painful as he finds it, is 'Shakespeare's throughout'. But these are exceptional cases, and as a rule Coleridge's application of moral criteria in his judgement of characters is not crude. Besides the examples already shown in the course of this chapter, I will end by giving another example more truly characteristic of the moral critic in Coleridge. This time it is the character of Cleopatra. In her Coleridge finds a passion which 'springs out of the habitual craving of a licentious nature', and which is 'supported and reinforced by voluntary stimulus and sought for associations.' Had she been a person in real life she should have been condemned by moral standards. Dr. Johnson, indeed, found that some of the 'feminine arts' which she practises are 'too low'. Hazlitt, who believed that the characters of the play are 'living men and women', remarked that Cleopatra 'had great and unpardonable faults'.

4. Ibid., vol.1, p.113.
5. Ibid., vol.1, p.86.
8. Ibid., vol.4, p.230.
paradoxically he concluded that the 'beauty of her death almost redeems them,' which sounds true, but which, on analysis, in fact, bespeaks a confusion of standards. If we judged Shakespeare's Cleopatra as a living woman morally she should be found guilty in more than one respect. The beauty of her death could not palliate her guilt, since it is the poet who is responsible for it. But to shift from the strictly moral to the purely aesthetic concepts is not infrequent in Hazlitt's criticism. Schlegel noticed the contradiction in her character, but failed to account for it: 'Although the mutual passion of herself and Antony is without moral dignity, it still excites our sympathy as an insurmountable fascination.' Coleridge, on the other hand, was not in the least blind to the moral issues, but observed that in portraying her character Shakespeare's art is 'most profound.' Shakespeare prevents the sense of the criminality of her passion from being uppermost in the mind of the recipient by concentrating his poetic power on its depth and energy, thereby securing the effect of her grandeur. Such a criticism seems to me to be more balanced than either the crudely moral on the one hand, or the amoral, which to the exclusion of moral issues, would merely describe a character like

Cleopatra as 'light' or as a 'life-force', and a character like Hamlet as 'dark' or as 'a death-force.' But it was only possible because of Coleridge's peculiar conception of imagination. For, while it does not confuse art with life, his theory of imagination offers what is basically a serious view of art.

1. G. Wilson Knight, The Imperial Theme, (Lond., 1951), p.25. It would be more accurate to describe the whole vision of Antony and Cleopatra and of Hamlet as 'light' and 'dark' respectively, and not the individual characters. But Mr. Knight does not observe this distinction because he submerges the characters completely in the pattern. Of course the vision determines the particular treatment of character. It is because the vision of Antony and Cleopatra is bright that Shakespeare concentrates, as Coleridge notes, on the 'depth and energy' rather than the guilt in the passion. Depth and energy of passion are still spiritual assets, and if in this case they are not doctrinally ethical, they are yet moral values in the broad sense.
CHAPTER FIVE

Style

Coleridge's theory of the imagination has led him to the belief that a truly imaginative work is a γένεσις—a complete organic whole in which the constituent parts mutually explain and support each other. His criterion of artistic excellence, we have seen earlier, is always the complete interdependence of these parts. A mature Shakespearean play, in his view, is always marked by its totality of interest; in it the main theme pervades all its constituent elements. In his search for its 'meaning' therefore Coleridge does not abstract elements like character or plot or language from the whole context, and discuss them in vacuo, so to speak. Indeed, in this study, for the purpose of critical convenience, we have attempted a distinction (but not a 'division' as the Master would say) between these constituent elements, in order to understand fully Coleridge's conception of the nature of Shakespearean drama. We have already seen his treatment of plot and character, and we must now proceed to a discussion of his views on the language of Shakespeare's plays. But we must remember that these constituent elements are inseparable. In fact we have seen how in his discussion of the form of Shakespeare's plays Coleridge is led to

1. See supra, p. 254.
the question of their meaning and that in turn brings him to considerations of character. Similarly his treatment of character leads him at certain points to considerations of the language of the plays. But this is clearly a symptom of his organic approach. And one manifestation of this approach in the present discussion of his criticism is the peculiar manner in which the chapters seem to overlap, with the result that there is always the risk of repetition. But this, I believe, is unavoidable.

As with plot or character, so it is with language. The relation between the dramatic vision the plays embody and the language in which this vision is expressed is an intimate one. In fact without the very expression the vision itself would be seriously impaired. Dramatic poetry, Coleridge says, 'must be poetry hid in thought and passion, not thought or passion disguised in the dress of poetry.' Coleridge's view of Shakespeare's language is therefore essentially dramatic. Because the poetry is not an external addition, but is born in the same act of the conception of the dramatic vision, it is an integral part of the drama. On this aspect of Shakespeare's language Coleridge's contribution to Shakespearean criticism is incalculable.

To say that Coleridge was one of the first critics who fully understood the dramatic nature of Shakespeare's language is indeed no exaggeration. Ever since Dryden the

1. See supra, pp. 252 ff.
English critics entertained a tight conception of the language of poetry which valued polish and correctness above any other quality, and which was not easy to reconcile with the greatest English dramatic poetry exemplified by Shakespeare. We have already dealt with this conception in an earlier part of this work, and we have seen how in order to make room for Shakespeare, who, they knew only too well, could not fit in with their conception, the eighteenth-century critics were eventually to develop another antithetical standard, which by virtue of its very nature was intractable to critical rules, namely the standard of the sublime. At present we may sum up the eighteenth-century view of poetry saying that it was a view which on the whole could only admit the poetry of statement. Although it must be raised above the level of prose by certain stylistic devices, poetry must possess first of all all the clarity and unambiguity of prose statement.

But the dramatic poetry of Shakespeare, which aims above all at immediacy and urgency, and which works simultaneously on a variety of levels, cannot, except to the loss of its complexity, afford to be as clear as prose statements. It cannot be as 'correct' as the champions of correctness would like it to be. That is why Shakespeare was often blamed by the eighteenth-century critics, and his sublimity and his bathos were considered inseparable.

Even Dr. Johnson claimed that 'The stile of Shakespeare was in itself ungrammatical, perplexed and obscure.' But if the eighteenth-century critics generally took exception to the lack of perfection in Shakespeare's style, to his ambiguity and grammatical incorrectness, it was because they misunderstood the nature of his poetry. Even when his poetry was praised, as indeed it sometimes was in the latter part of the century, the fact that Shakespeare's is essentially dramatic poetry was generally overlooked. Neither Webb nor Joseph Warton, two of his most sympathetic critics in the century, showed any awareness of it. Shakespeare, we now know, was writing not just poetry, but dramatic poetry, and dramatic poetry has its own exigencies. All this Coleridge understood very clearly. The editors, he once said:

> are all of them ready to cry out against Shakespeare's laxities and licences of style, forgetting that he is not merely a poet but a dramatic poet - that when the head and heart are swelling with fullness, a man does not ask himself whether he has grammatically arranged, but only whether (the context taken in) he has conveyed, his meaning.  

And he took to count those critics who would explain 'by ellipses and subaudita in a Greek or Latin classic' what they would 'triumph over as ignorance' in Shakespeare.

Whatever is 'in the genius of vehement conversation', he ex-

1. Raleigh, p.42.
2. See supra, pp. 150 ff.
plained, should not be forced to conform to the cold language of statement. Dramatic poetry obeys a logic of its own, other than the logic of formal grammar, and in it grammar itself is often subservient to expressiveness. Because Shakespeare wrote a kind of verse which was meant to be 'recited dramatically' he sometimes 'broke off from the grammar' in order to 'give the meaning more passionately.' That is why any comparison between the poetry of Shakespeare and that of any other non-dramatic poet as Milton or Spenser is sometimes considered by Coleridge to be 'heterogeneous.' Even at its most lyrical Shakespeare's poetry is still dramatic: A Midsummer Night's Dream is not pure lyrical verse; it is 'one continued specimen of the lyrical dramatized.' And we have seen how Coleridge considers even the songs part and parcel of the plays in which they are introduced.

There are reasons, of course, why Coleridge is generally more sensitive than his predecessors to the virtues of Shakespeare's style. Coleridge's view of the language of

1. Sh.Crit., vol.i, p.159. Coleridge is using the word 'grammar' here in the sense of a 'formal' science. But it may be pointed out that his own view of grammar is essentially dynamic and functional, not formal. The rules of grammar, he writes, 'are in essence no other than the laws of universal logic, applied to psychological material' (B.L., vol.ii, p.38). Also see Kathleen Coburn's Introduction to his Philosophical Lectures (Lond., 1949), p.50: 'Language must, at its best, be governed by the 'order of thought' and its vitality must not be over-ruled by the dead hand of a merely mechanical grammar. The connection of his linguistic theory with his theory of imagination is clear and consistent, as indeed it is with his whole "dynamic philosophy".'
poetry is free from the prejudices and limitations which attend the ideal of clarity. Apart from its failure to accommodate Shakespeare's dramatic poetry, the ideal of clarity and 'prose statement' in fact involves certain basic misconceptions regarding the nature of the language of poetry. Clarity and distinction are the virtues ultimately advocated by the rational spirit and the Royal Society; they are in their proper place in the language of science. But in poetry language fulfills a different function from what it does in a scientific exposition. By setting a great value on clarity and distinction, not only in prose but in poetry as well, the eighteenth-century critics consciously or unconsciously relegated poetry to the position of the handmaid of science, or rational thinking. Side by side with the pleasure theory we find in this complex century the view that the object of poetry is to give instruction. The case is really more complicated than the Horatian utile dulce. Poetry should propagate what is true, not indeed what is poetically true, but what has been proved to be true either by science or by common sense. Poetry therefore becomes a means of propaganda, only an excellent means since it sets forth truth in a pleasant garb. Stylistically the eighteenth-century view is a dualistic view which separates sharply form from content. The content is

1. See supra, P:131 ff.
a hard core of clear thought, what oft was thought; and
the form is the beautiful and decorous verbiage in which
this thought is expressed, an outer clothing and a mere
trapping. But this sharp separation of form and content
is the mark of scientific and not poetic language. If
the language of the eighteenth-century poetry generally
has struck the critic as a language of 'prose statement',
it is really because in it the referential element is used
at its highest potency. Basically the referential element
in language is all that matters in science and even in
everyday life. Of this difference between the poetic and
other uses of language Coleridge is aware.

Coleridge draws a distinction between two kinds, or
uses, of language. There is what he calls 'the language
of man', which is in fact the language of everyday life
and of science. In it 'the sound sun, e.g. or the figures,
S,U,N, are pure arbitrary modes of recalling the object,
and for visual mere objects not only sufficient, but
have infinite advantages from their very nothingness
per se.' At the other extreme from this language is the
world of living objects as they exist in all their reality
and concreteness, what Coleridge metaphorically calls 'the
language of nature'. The language of poetry, at its best
as in Shakespeare, is 'a something intermediate' between
the cold referential use and the concrete living objects,

'or rather it is the former blended with the latter, the arbitrary not merely recalling the cold notion of the thing, but expressing the reality of it.' Again in *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge points out the difference between the two kinds of language: 'the difference is great and evident,' he writes,

between words used as the arbitrary marks of thought, our smooth market-coin of intercourse, with the image and superscription worn out by currency; and those which convey pictures either borrowed from one outward object to enliven and particularize some other; or used allegorically to body forth the inward state of the person speaking; or such as are at least the exponents of his peculiar turn and unusual extent of faculty.

The distinction is then between the language of pure reference and the language of poetry. The former is bare, and because of its bareness it is best fitted for purposes of mere reference, whereas the latter is soaked in experience; its function is not just to refer but to put the mind in possession of reality in all its concreteness. That is why at its best every element in it is functional. 'In my opinion,' Coleridge writes in one of his letters, 'every phrase, every metaphor, every personification should have its justifying clause in some passion, either of the poet's mind or of the characters described by the poet.' At one point he defines poetry as 'the best words in the best order.'

This is not a mere rhetorical assertion as it is sometimes taken to be. It has a serious meaning, and for that we go to Coleridge himself. 'Whatever lines,' he writes, 'can be translated into other words of the same language, without diminution of their significance either in sense, or association, or in any worthy feeling, are so far vicious in their diction.' Again he says that the excellence of verse is that 'it is untranslatable into any other words without detriment to the beauty of a passage.' Because thought and expression are in this way inseparable it will not do to have as a substitute for 'poetic thoughts' 'thoughts translated into the language of poetry.'

We have travelled a long way indeed from the position of Dryden and his tradition with its sharp separation between thought and expression. Coleridge has already laid the basis of the theory of the indissoluble union of form and content, which is to be developed and explained later by De Quincey:

> if language were merely a dress (for thought), then you could separate the two; you could lay the thoughts on the left hand, the language on the right. But, generally speaking, you can no more deal thus with poetic thoughts than you can with soul and body. The union is too subtle, the intermixture too ineffable, each is existing not merely with the other, but each in and through the other.

4. B.L., vol.i, p.11.
In insisting, as he often does, that great poetry like Shakespeare's cannot be translated into other words 'without injury to the meaning', Coleridge does not mean by 'meaning' merely the bare 'sense', using the technical term of I.A. Richards. By meaning, Coleridge, in fact, understands practically all of the latter's four kinds of meaning:

I include in the meaning of a word not only its correspondent object, but likewise all the associations which it recalls. For language is framed to convey not the object alone, but likewise the character and intentions of the person who is representing it. Not only the character and intentions of the speaker, but the situation as well has to be taken into account, for the whole passage or context is also a part of the meaning. And we find him writing of 'the elements of meaning - their double, triple and quadruple combinations.' In poetry these combinations are tighter and more closely woven. The main purport of Coleridge's controversy with Wordsworth over poetic diction is that poetry differs from prose in that in it language has a different function to fulfil: 'the architecture of the words is essentially different from that in prose'. By 'architecture' Coleridge

4. H.S.Crit., p.221; cf. Ibid., p.439
5. ibid., p.204.
has in mind not only metre, but the kind of order and interrelation between the different elements of meaning which he points out in his own famous analysis of Shakespeare's lines from *Venus and Adonis*, and which he puts forward as an example of the effect of the secondary imagination. The function of poetic imagination is precisely to fuse these different elements together, making of them one unified whole.

After this brief account of Coleridge's conception of meaning and the role of language in poetry several features of his criticism of Shakespeare's language become explicable. In his defence of imagery and metaphor we do not find the underlying primitivistic assumption, common enough in the late eighteenth-century, that figures of speech whatever they may be, are a mark of original genius. Coleridge defends imagery and metaphor only when after a thorough critical examination he finds them to be strictly functional. 'Formal similes', he believes, are only *sermo proerior*; they may be a product of 'pleasing moods of mind', but not of the 'highest and most appropriate' poetic moods. If imagery does not extend the meaning, then it is a mere trapping, and as such it ought to be condemned by the critic and eschewed by the poet. In order to see whether or

1. There is nothing primitivistic about Coleridge's attitude to poetry. See especially his discussion (in E.L., vol. ii, pp. 103 ff.) of the reasons Wordsworth states for his choice of simple and rustic characters in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*.

not a figure extends the meaning it is not enough to examine the expression in itself so to speak. A critic must likewise consider the expression in relation to the speaker and to the whole situation, since these latter two also form part of the meaning. It is therefore easy to see how Coleridge's view of poetic meaning makes him a far better qualified critic than his predecessors of the dramatic poetry of Shakespeare.

Similarly in Coleridge's criticism we cease to hear about Shakespeare's lack of decorum in his use of the English language. The eighteenth-century tacit rule that in the high kinds of poetry no familiar or mean word or image should be introduced is really based upon an inadequate and highly artificial view of poetic language. If the thought is separable from expression, then it can be expressed adequately in more than one way, and it is the poet's business to choose the most 'sublime' way. But, thanks to Coleridge, we have now come to regard it as a critical commonplace that thought and expression form an indivisible unity, and that great poetry is untranslatable into other words of the same language. Images are not important in themselves, they only become important when they mean something to the poet. A familiar image acquires significance when it is transformed by the poet's emotional apprehension: 'The most familiar images are given novelty by a new state of feelings'. In fact, 'one of the purposes

a d tests of true poetry,' Coleridge maintains, is 'the employment of common objects in uncommon ways - the felicitous and novel use of images of daily occurrence', and of such 'familiar images and illustrations' Shakespeare is 'full'. Here is implied a criticism of the eighteenth-century view of sublime poetry, which considered the sublime to exist in certain objects and which advised that a poet need only introduce in his poetry images of certain objects and avoid others to merit the epithet 'sublime'. Again this is a criticism directed by the dynamic or organic view against the mechanical. In the former no image is mean or grand per se, and consequently unless every image is melted down and fused by the poet's emotional experience in the heat of the creative process no amount of adding one so-called grand image to another can be sufficient to produce a sublime effect. Thus an image acquires significance only in its context.

Coleridge is aware of the complexity of the function of Shakespeare's imagery. Unlike the eighteenth-century critics, he does not relegate the function of metaphor to illustration and embellishment. In Biographia Literaria he tells us that figures and metaphors must have their

2. See supra, pp.122 ff. In Modern Poetry and the Tradition, (Lond., 1948), for the sake of his general thesis, Cleanth Brooks gives what seems to me to be a misrepresentation of Coleridge's views on metaphor in the chapter 'Metaphor and the Tradition'. He claims that Coleridge's conception of metaphor is substantially the same as that of the eighteenth-century critics. (Ibid., pp.19; 26). But if that were true it would be...
'justifying reasons', and should not be 'mere artifices of 1 connection or ornament', they should not 'degenerate into mere creatures of an arbitrary purpose, cold, technical artifices of ornament or connection.' 2 The relation which

Footnote 2 continued from page 451:

difficult to see why Coleridge defends the very metaphorical style of Shakespeare, which had been the perpetual object of attack from the time of Dryden onwards, except by the extreme and uncritical primitivists. Both in theory and in practice Coleridge conceived metaphors as an indispensable part of poetic meaning. Brooks's own 'heresy of paraphrase' (See The Well Wrought Urn, Lond., 1949, Ch.11) is in fact anticipated by Coleridge's reiterated dictum that the test of poetry is its untranslatability into other words of the same language. It is because Coleridge believes in the indivisible unity of thought and expression that it cannot be said that he holds the eighteenth-century view of metaphor, since the latter is only possible in a dualistic conception of style. Brooks's other assertions about Coleridge's views of metaphor seem to me to be equally ill-grounded. As is shown above, Coleridge does not think that some images are by themselves intrinsically more poetic than others (Modern Poetry and the Tradition, p.18). Nor is he as Brooks claims, (loc.cit.) 'suspicious' of the role of intellect. Perhaps we need not go to his account of imagination, in which he says that in imaginative activity a nice balance between the conscious and the unconscious powers of the mind is maintained throughout (see supra, p.283. ). As early as 1802 he wrote that 'A poet's heart and intellect should be combined, intimately combined and unified with the great appearances of nature, and not merely held in solution and loose mixture with them, in the shape of formal similes.' (Letters, vol.i, p. 404). We should also remember his words in Biographia Literaria that an essential requisite to great poetry is 'DEPTH and ENERGY OF THOUGHT,' that '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' (T.H., vol.ii, p.19). And what about his defence of the Shakespearean puns? It is not true either that Coleridge is a believer in 'the grandeur of generality' (Modern Poetry and the Tradition, p.19). The eighteenth century ideal of generality involves certain assumptions (cont.)
imagery bears to its context should be primarily an organic one. The organic quality which in Coleridge's view characterizes Shakespeare's plays, is also manifest very clearly in his style. The style of the plays, Coleridge writes, is 'so peculiarly vital and organic.' In Shakespeare one sentence begets the next naturally; the meaning is all inwoven; he 'goes on creating and evolving B. out of A, and C. out of B. and so on, just as a serpent moves, which makes a fulcrum of its own body and seems for ever twisting and untwisting its own strength.' But because style is not the mere outward dress of thought, this feature is not really purely stylistic; it is the feature of the whole artistic creation: 'The construction of Shakespeare's sentences, whether in verse or prose, is the necessary and homogeneous vehicle of his peculiar manner of thinking.' The result of this peculiar quality of style, 

Footnote 2 continued from page 451 & 452: which Coleridge cannot be said to have held. (For a discussion of these assumptions see supra, pp. 131 ff. ). Coleridge's quarrel is not with the particular as such, but with the particular in which all the details are brought into the foreground, and in which there is no unifying or leading idea. (See Mis.Crit., pp. 427-428).

Footnotes 1 and 2 from page 452:
2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.64.
2. Ibid., April 7, 1833.
3. Ibid., March 5, 1834.
4. Ibid., March 15, 1834.
or perhaps the cause of it, is the organic nature of Shakespeare's metaphors. Metaphors in Shakespeare seem to be closely tied together by the most subtle bonds. He connects one metaphor 'by unmarked influences of association from some preceding metaphor.' Shakespeare's conceits, he says, 'not only arise out of some word in the lines before, but they lead to the thought in the lines following.' To illustrate his meaning Coleridge quotes the lines from As You Like It, which describe the wounded stag (II.i.38-40).

The big round tears
cours'd one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase:
and where the image in 'cours'd' comes 'naturally from the position of the head, and most beautifully, from the association of the preceding image of the chase, in which "the poor sequester'd stag from the hunter's aim had ta'en hurt".

Before Coleridge the associationist Walter Whiter had noted the unconscious association in Shakespeare's imagery as well as the image-clusters which recently Mr. E.A. Armstrong has made better known and collected more systematically in his book Shakespeare's Imagination. But Whiter was so intent on showing the unconscious working

3. E.L., vol.ii, p.193 FN. It may be pointed out here that Walter Whiter also quotes these lines to show the working of unconscious association in Shakespeare's mind (Walter Whiter, 1794: A Specimen of a Commentary on Shakespeare, Lond., 1794, p.77).
of Shakespeare's mind that not only did he fail to see how
Shakespeare's mode of associating one image with another
makes of his style a complex organic texture, but he actu­
ally denied Shakespeare deliberate intention in some of his
most obvious puns. In his preoccupation with 'the most
indubitable principle in the doctrine of metaphysics' (i.e.
the principle of the association of ideas) he lost sight
of Shakespeare's poetic skill and artistry, his esemplastic
power and fusing imagination. And how could he avoid that
if his view of poetic imagination was that of the eighteenth-
century passive associationism? On the other hand, by
maintaining that great poetry is the product of a nice
balance between the conscious and unconscious, Coleridge
restored the dignity of conscious artistry to Shakespeare's
works, and was able to ask intelligent questions about the
significance and effect of a particular mode of associating
or introducing imagery. It is customary nowadays to think
that Walter Whiter was the first critic to point out the
importance of Shakespeare's imagery. But it is important
to realize the limitations of Whiter's interest and treat­
ment. Whiter was interested in the images as such, their
cluster and their revelation of Shakespeare's mind as well
as of the background of his times. His interest was therefore

1. See infra, p. 463 ff.
2. Walter Whiter, On Cit., p. 73.
3. See supra, p. 54 ff.
psychological, sociological and textual; but it was never really artistic. For the realization of the complex nature of Shakespeare's imagery we had to wait until Coleridge's time. Coleridge in fact was one of the first critics, if not the first, to see the dramatic value of Shakespeare's imagery.

Even in Shakespeare's earliest non-dramatic writings Coleridge pointed to the artistic significance of the imagery. In Venus and Adonis and Lucrece the 'series and never broken chain of imagery, always vivid and, because unbroken, often minute' serve to add an extra dimension to the narrative. They '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.' It is through the imagery in these poems that Coleridge could see 'the great instinct, which impelled the poet to the drama', and because of the imagery Venus and Adonis 'seem at once the characters themselves, and the whole representation of those characters by the most consummate actors.' When imagination is working at its highest, even in those early works of Shakespeare, the imagery bears a closer and more organic relation to its context. The image in the lines

from Venus and Adonis, made famous by Coleridge's quotation and analysis, is really the epitome of the whole situation. All the elements of the situation are fused and unified by the image itself:

Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky,
So glides he in the night from Venus eye.  

'How many images and feelings,' says Coleridge,
are here brought together without effort and without discord — the beauty of Adonis — the rapidity of his flight — the yearning, yet hopelessness of the enamoured razer — and a shadowy ideal character thrown over the whole.  

This latter type of imagery is what characterizes the plays of Shakespeare, at least in the period of his maturity. There the imagery 'moulds and colors itself to the circumstances, passion, or character, present and foremost in the mind.' And for 'unrivalled instances of this excellence' Coleridge refers the reader not only to Lear and Othello, but to practically all the 'dramatic works' of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's imagery is then part and parcel of the plays; it is rooted in its dramatic context.

Amongst other reasons, it is because the serious eighteenth-century critics regarded Shakespeare as a poet, and not as a dramatic poet, that they condemned his metaphorical style. Instead of placing a metaphorical expression in its dramatic context and asking themselves whether or not the

1. Venus and Adonis, 11.815-816.
expression becomes then functional, they often wrenched the expression from the dramatic situation and examined it by itself, as if it occurred in a poem purely of the first voice. Thus Pope and Arbuthnot, Coleridge reminds us, chose Prospero's lines to Miranda when he directs her attention to Ferdinand:

> The fringed curtains of th'eye advance
> And say what thou seest yond.  

as an illustration of the 'Art of Sinking in Poetry'. But remembering his golden rule of the untranslatability of good poetry Coleridge writes, 'Taking these words as a periphrase of "Look what is coming yonder" it certainly may to some appear to border on the ridiculous.' And this is precisely how the tradition that considers the object of metaphor to be either illustration or embellishment can take the lines. But by examining the dramatic context in which the lines occur, Coleridge shows how the metaphor is neither strained nor bombastic, but is in fact born of the tone and nature of the particular character uttering it.

But in Coleridge's treatment we notice that the job of imagery is not limited to the negative role of according with the situation and the character. Imagery can have a more positive value. By being the most concentrated form of expression it is especially suited to dramatic poetry. A single image can create a vivid picture of a

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situation in the mind of the reader. Coleridge quotes Prospero's words to Miranda:

One midnight,
Fated to the purpose, did Antonio open
The gates of Milan; and i* the dead of darkness,
The ministers for the purpose hurried thence
Me, and thy crying self.  1

to show how 'by introducing a single happy epithet, "crying",
in the last line, a complete picture is presented to the
mind.'  2  And besides being an echo to the characters imagery
sometimes enforces and clinches the effect of a whole charac­
ter. Thus Caliban who is 'a sort of creature of the
earth gives us images from the earth' while Ariel himself
'a sort of creature of the air' - 'in air he lives, from
air he derives his being, in air he acts; and all his
colours and properties seem to have been obtained from the
rainbow and the skies' 4  - 'gives us images from the air,' 5

1. The Tempest, I.i.123-132.
analysis of this image very far. But it seems to me
that the occurrence of such a vivid image is signifi­
cant in The Tempest, where the tragic past happenings
are not represented on the stage, as in the case of The
Winter's Tale (which obviously forms an earlier stage
in the development of Shakespeare's vision), but, as
Coleridge points out, the audience are informed of the
preceding events by a subtle retrospective narration.
While representing vividly enough the situation to the
audience in accordance with the design and tone of the
play, the image abstracts from that situation the
effect of immediacy and horror which it would have had
on the audience had it been represented on the stage.

4. Ibid., vol.ii, p.178. Schlegel remarks that Caliban
signifies the heavy element of earth while Ariel's name
But he mentions nothing about the imagery; in fact
Schlegel's disregard of the minutiae of Shakespeare's
style such as imagery is striking; see Wolfgang Clemen,
The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, (Lond., 1951),
(cont.)
Besides, imagery itself can have a revelatory function: Coleridge shows how it becomes itself a means of characterization. The imagery in the speeches of Lady Macbeth illuminates to us certain aspects of her character of which she herself is not conscious. In spite of her endeavours to rise above the moral law 'by inflated and soaring fancies, and appeals to spiritual agency', the imagery in which she expresses herself sufficiently reveals that she is no 'moral monster'.

So far is the woman from being dead within her, that her sex occasionally betrays itself in the very moment of dark and bloody imagination. A passage where she alludes to "lucking her nipple from the boneless gums of her infant" though usually thought to prove a merciless and unwomanly nature, proves the direct opposite ... She brings it ... as the most horrible act which it was possible for imagination to conceive, as that which was most revolting to her own feelings ... Had she regarded this with savage indifference, there would have been no force in the appeal ... Another exquisite trait was the faltering of her resolution, while standing over Duncan in his slumbers: "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had don't".

Footnote 5 continued from page 459:

p.14: 'In the great admirers of Shakespeare among the German poets, like A.W. Schlegel or Ludwig Tieck we seek in vain for a single remark on Shakespeare's imagery.' Joseph Warton, however, it may be pointed out, wrote in The Adventurer (No.93), that 'Ariel ... has a set of ideas and images peculiar to his station and office, a beauty of the same kind with that which is justly admired in the Adam of Milton, whose manners and sentiments are all paradisaical.'

And in a single image we may find the crystallization of a whole inner conflict in a character. The example Coleridge points out is the image in Othello's final speech in which he takes stock of the whole of his tragic situation describing himself as

one whose hand,

Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe. 1

Not only Theobald, Warburton, Steevens and Farmer, but strangely enough, some modern scholars prefer to read 'Judean' for 'Indian'. Theobald's reason for adopting 'Judean' is that 'no Indian was so ignorant as not to know the value of pearls', and that Shakespeare would have called an Indian 'rude' and not 'base'. Against this rational explanation one has only to set Coleridge's reasons for defending 'Indian', to see the essential difference in the attitude of the two critics to imagery.

In the first place Coleridge is against the purely illustrative function of the image, and he therefore rejects the reference to the story of Herod, saying contemptuously: 'To make Othello say that he, who had killed his wife, was like Herod, who had killed his!' Secondly, his defence of 'base' shows an understanding of the complex nature of Shakespeare's imagery, which arises from an insight into the working of the mind, not only of Othello, but even of Shakespeare. 'Othello,' he says, 'wishes to

excuse himself on the score of ignorance, and yet not to
excuse himself - to excuse himself by accusing." This
struggle of feeling in Othello, Coleridge thinks, is finely
conveyed by the word 'base'. The word 'base', he goes on,
is applied to the rude Indian, not in his own character,
but as the momentary representative of Othello', taking
'Indian' to mean 'savage in general.' In this way the image
reveals the contradictory feelings of the character; it
is born naturally out of the dramatic situation, which in
its turn it illuminates.

Like his imagery Shakespeare's puns bear an organic
relation to his dramatic poetry. Because the eighteenth-
century conception of the poetic language of Shakespeare
was not particularly dramatic, the nature and function
of puns were not understood, and puns were accordingly de­
nounced by the Shakespearean critics of the period. Those
who defended him on this score did nothing but exonerate
him from being himself responsible for such degradation of
his sublime style. They declared that Shakespeare's faults
were only the faults of his times, and that Shakespeare's

2. See supra, p. 231. It can be safely said that the
attack on puns was universal in the eighteenth-century
criticism of Shakespeare, if we except the attempts
made by Morgan and Whiter, and a solitary anonymous
correspondent to The Gentleman's Magazine, (Vol. 2,
1732, p. 643) who lamented the fact that 'Punning is
reckoned a slow sort of Wit, and a Punster the Subject
of Ridicule, tho' in the last Century in high Esteem',
and maintained that 'the discouragement punning has
met with in our Age shews we are slower in our Concep­
tions than our Forefathers.'
misfortune was that he prostituted his genius in this respect. They were only too anxious to defend the man, and in doing so they forgot that the charge against the plays as works of art still held.

Of course, there were one or two attempts to defend Shakespeare's puns, based not on the familiar general reference to the bad custom of the times, but on a close treatment of the text. Both Morgann and Whiter attempted an analysis of the Shakespearean pun. Of the two Morgann, as is expected, is more to the point. Like Morgann's Whiter's treatment of puns is incidental, but unlike Morgann's his defence consists in vaporizing most of the puns he encounters in Shakespeare's poetry. As his object is to point out the unconscious working of Shakespeare's mind by reference to the principle of the association of ideas, Whiter adduces most of his puns to the working of this principle, thus denying Shakespeare's conscious intention behind them. He undertakes 'to defend our Poet in a variety of instances against the charge of an intended quibble, which the Commentators have often unjustly inputed to him'. He therefore denies the presence of an intended quibble, for instance, in the lines from As You Like It, on the words 'suit' and 'coat':

2. Ibid., p. 84.
Jacques: I am ambitious for a motley coat.
Duke S.: Thou shalt have one.
Jacques: It is my only suit;
Provided that you weed your better judgments
Of all opinion that grows rank in them
That I am wise. 1

By exculpating Shakespeare from the charge of conscious punning Whiter makes him more palatable to the eighteenth-century taste in poetry, but he does not realize that by doing so he also thins out the rich texture of Shakespeare's verse.

Less purely psychological and more literary and artistic is Morgann's criticism of the Shakespearean pun. Like the rest of the eighteenth-century critics, he believes that puns qua puns are 'base things'. But because he is one of the very few eighteenth-century critics - if not the only one - who believe consistently in the conscious artistry of Shakespeare, he admits that Shakespeare converts these base things into excellence. He maintains that some of the puns are not his, but those of them which are undoubtedly his can, with very few exceptions, he justified. The sole example he offers:

For if the Jew do but cut deep enough,
I'll pay the forfeiture with all my heart. 2

he defends on the grounds that it is natural for one 'who affects gaiety under the pressure of severe misfortunes' to

1. As You Like It, II. vii. 43-47. 280-281
2. The Merchant of Venice, IV. i. 276-277. The actual lines are:
   For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
   I'll pay it presently with all my heart.
play on words, and that the pun itself, because it is an unsuccessful effort of fortitude, 'serves the more plainly to disclose the gloom and darkness of the mind.' This is an excellent defence of this particular pun, to be sure. Unfortunately Morgann's criticism of Shakespeare's puns is very brief and relegated to a footnote: he offers only one example for analysis and illustration, and points only to one of the many functions of puns.

It is not until we come to Coleridge that we get any detailed and clear understanding of the role of puns in Shakespeare's verse, and their immediate relevance to his dramatic poetry. It is important, however, at this stage to remove the possibility of any foreign influence on Coleridge on this point. Indeed Schlegel, a critic whose influence upon Coleridge is considerable and explicit at times, though extremely doubtful at others, defended and justified Shakespeare's puns at the same time as Coleridge. But in their treatment the two critics pursued entirely different methods, and of the two one can say that Coleridge's is the more valuable and suggestive for purposes of literary criticism. Schlegel's defence of puns is based on an onomatopoeic theory of the origin of language. There is a desire in the human mind when deeply excited to go back to a primitive stage, when language exhibits 'the object which it denotes, sensibly, by its very sound.' In the

more developed stages of language, this desire finds its gratification when the excited imagination seizes 'any congruity in sound which may accidentally offer itself,' thus restoring 'for the nonce the lost resemblance between the word and the thing.' This is the main argument of Schlegel in justification of puns. There is of course his other argument which consists merely in an appeal to the classic authors:

Whoever, in Richard II, is disgusted with the affecting play of words of the dying John of Gaunt on his own name, should remember that the same thing occurs in the Ajax of Sophocles. 2

But this argument does not really deserve any serious examination. Schlegel's main argument, however, rests on a problematic theoretical basis. We do not know how much onomatopoea plays in the genesis of a language. 3 But even if the theory were true, it would only give us an anthropological or psychological explanation for the general phenomenon of punning. Schlegel's argument in fact amounts to this: Do not object to punning in Shakespeare; it is quite natural, i.e., psychologically feasible, for man to play on words. But he does not provide any useful analysis why certain puns are more valuable than others in

3. There seems to be an intimate connection, however, in the primitive mind as well as in the mind of child between a name and an object, and a 'tendency to "reify" the name' and 'regard it as part of the real thing itself.' See Otto Jespersen, Mankind, Nation and Individual from a Linguistic Point of View, (Lond., 1905), Ch.IX, and C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, (Lond., 1952), Ch.II.
certain poetic contexts, or what role they play, if any, or why Shakespeare's puns are at all relevant to his poetic drama.

These questions Coleridge has attempted to answer. He himself was keenly interested in puns; in fact, one of his innumerable unrealized projects was a whole essay in defence of punning. In his discussion of Shakespeare's puns he remains within the bounds of literary criticism, introducing general psychology only as far as it is necessary for the clarification of our responses to the plays. Puns, Coleridge explains, are first of all the expression of exuberance of mind. An age in which punning is the fashion cannot but be marked by 'vigour of intellect'.

In this Coleridge is under no illusion regarding the mental quality of Shakespeare's age. But to be of any artistic value, a pun has to observe certain laws, otherwise it becomes a blemish, a mark of pedantry and affectation which the eighteenth-century critics have taken all puns to be, and which Shakespeare himself, Coleridge notes, satirizes in a play like *Love's Labour's Lost* as well as in a character like Osrick in *Hamlet*. In a serious play a pun has to become an integral part of the whole; it has to illuminate or intensify character and situation. When Coleridge fails to see the relation between a pun and its

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context, he condemns it, as we find in the case of the Porter's scene in Macbeth. Here it is important to realize that he does not dismiss the puns (and the best part of the speech in which the puns occur) because they are puns. That would be exceedingly improbable, considering his constant defence of puns. He dismisses them because he fails to see the relation between them and the whole situation. 'Resort to this grace,' i.e., pun, he says, 'may, in some cases, deserve censure, not because it is a play upon words, but because it is a play upon words in a wrong place and at a wrong time.' Coleridge's fault is one in perception and not in principles or attitude of mind, as it is commonly understood. Had any one pointed out to him the ironic relation the whole speech bears to the situation, he would have been the first person to acclaim the artistry and design of the poet. Of course, Coleridge does not pretend that every individual pun that occurs in Shakespeare is justifiable on artistic grounds. He admits that 'even in those which bear the strongest characteristics of his mind, there are some conceits not strictly to be vindicated,' that 'they sometimes detract from his universality as to time, person, and situation.' But what he is constantly combating is the notion that 'whenever a conceit is met with it is unnatural.'

2. _Ibid._, vol. ii, p. 140.
When they are functional puns in Shakespeare's plays serve various purposes. In the comedies, when Shakespeare's aim is other than the explicit satire on affectation and fashion, puns are used as a means of characterization, and are meant to express 'exuberant activity of mind' in the character given to them. In the serious plays, together with their indication of the mental vigour of the speaker, puns become a manifestation of the excess of passion. A pun may be a mark of contemptuous and evil nature, which seizes at every possible occasion to mock and sneer at what is good, as in the case of the scornful expressions in which Antonio and Sebastian indulge at the expense of the good Gonzalo in The Tempest. With them punning is 'a mode of getting rid of their own uneasy feelings.' Or it may be 'the language of suppressed passion' as in the case of John of Gaunt's celebrated quibble on his own name. Or it may be 'the language of resentment in order to express contempt,' which, together with 'suppressed passion, especially hardly smothered dislike' is to be found in Hamlet's quibble, when he says to the king that he is 'too much in the sun.'
In all these examples the mind of the character is wrought to a high pitch of passion, and

He that knows the state of the human mind in deep passion must know, that it approaches to that condition of madness, which is not absolute frenzy or delirium, but which models all things to one reigning idea; still it strays from the main subject of complaint, and still it returns to it, by a sort of irresistible impulse. 1

The phraseology of the passage and the contrast between madness and delirium is strongly reminiscent of Coleridge's distinction between imagination and fancy. The stress, as always with Coleridge, is on the organic aspect of expression and experience. In the successful examples of puns in serious drama the play on words is organically related to the feeling of the character or to the feeling which dominates the situation. Both Hamlet and John of Gaunt pun successfully because both are shown in an impassioned state of mind, and there is 'a natural tendency in the mind immersed in one strong feeling to connect that feeling with every sight and object around it, especially when (it is) opposed and the word addressed to it (is in) any way repugnant to the feeling.' 2 Coleridge seems to have been aware (indeed he does not state it in this connection, but it is apparent from his favourite principle of the reconciliation of opposites) that the tension which arises from the attempt to relate the feeling to whatever is

'repugnant' to it is peculiarly dramatic. But apart from that, he realizes that the play on words which is the manifestation of the excess of passion, plays a role similar to 'gesticulations, looks or tones'. Not only is it, when it is 'congruous with the feeling of the scene', appropriate to drama, and 'allowable in the dramatic dialogue', but it is 'oftentimes one of the most effectual intensives of passion.' Like gesticulations, looks or tones, puns intensify and illuminate the passions, and because they are such concentrated forms of intensification, they constitute an important and integral part of Shakespeare's dramatic poetry. It is therefore wrong to regard them as the unhappy and distracting results of his complying with the vulgar taste of the frequenters of 'paltry taverns'. Of course, we who have lived in an age interested in poetic wit and verbal athleticism, have been taught that there are other uses of pun as well as deeper motives. But it is fair to remember that we have travelled a long way from Coleridge, although along the Coleridgean line; he is, after all, for better or for worse the initiator of the critical interest in the complexity of poetic meaning. He is familiar with the multiple levels of meaning, of the Empsonian ambiguities in Shakespeare's poetry. 'The meaning sense/one/chiefly,' he says, 'and yet keeping both senses in view,'

is perfectly Shakespearean*. For instance, in Bolingbroke's address to the Lords in Richard II:

Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle;  
Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parle  
Into his ruin'd ears, and thus deliver ...  

Coleridge feels that 'ruin'd ears' apply both to the castle and to the fallen king: 'Although Bolingbroke was only speaking of the castle, his thoughts dwelt on the king.'

In his treatment of puns Coleridge seems to distinguish between two kinds: what we may call here organic and inorganic puns. They can both be functional. But the organic has a more complex function to fulfil. The inorganic is largely verbal: it consists in 'connecting disparate thoughts purely by means of resemblances in the words expressing them.' Its function is to 'display wit' in the speaker. It is then only a means of characterization, but

2. Richard II, III.i.ii.32-34.  
3. Crit., vol.ii, p.190. Coleridge actually maintained that Shakespeare purposely used the personal pronoun 'his' to convey this effect. This, of course, is an error caused by Coleridge's unscholarly training, and it was quite rightly pointed out by F.T. Lucas (The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal, p.190): "His" is not necessarily a personal pronoun at all, being the regular possessive also of the impersonal "it". But to charge Coleridge with 'false subtlety' on this account is unfair. We all know that we do not go to Coleridge for scholarly information; in this he is most unreliable. Nevertheless the subtlety and pertinence of the remark remain unimpaired, whether or not the pronoun 'his' has a personal reference, and Shakespeare may well have meant both Richard and the castle by the epithet. Even Lucas himself cannot deny that. Shakespeare in fact is full of this type of ambiguity: the classic example, if example be needed, is in Macbeth's speech to the Doctor (V.iii.39-45) in which he is thinking as much of his own 'diseased' mind and 'stuffed bosom' as of Lady Macbeth's.
has no necessary relation to the whole situation. Consequently, although it is 'in character in lighter comedy' it would disfigure the 'graver scenes', as it 'sometimes' does in Shakespeare — since the latter are normally far more organically conceived.

The organic pun which Shakespeare uses 'more often', unlike the inorganic, loses a great portion of its force and meaning without its dramatic context. It is not purely verbal, but it 'doubles the natural connection or order of logical consequence in the thoughts.' It is not just 'witty' though it fulfils its function by 'the introduction of an artificial and sought for resemblance in the words.' It is a 'forceful and proper' means of intensifying the emotional impact of a situation, and is governed by 'the law of passion which, inducing in the mind an unusual activity, seeks for means to waste its superfluity.' Under an emotional stress the words themselves become, as it were, living things, 'the subject and material for that surplus action, and for the same cause that agitates our limbs.' Coleridge finds examples of organic pun even in an early work of Shakespeare, which is also a comedy. In the King's opening speech in Love's Labour's Lost, which is significantly a solemn one, Coleridge finds in the line

Footnote 4 continued from page 472:
1. Ibid., vol.1, p.96.
And then grace us in the disgrace of death. 1

an organic pun. The relation between 'grace' and 'disgrace' is not purely verbal. Although the expression arouses a sufficient degree of surprise, the dramatic context and the intention of the speaker taken into consideration, 'disgrace' seems to be the only apt word to describe the peculiar effect death is going to produce. The pun here 'doubles the natural connection or order of logical consequence in the thoughts' of the speaker, and by so doing gives it greater emphasis. 2 Shunning the life of action, the King of Navarre decides to set up his court as an 'academe' for learning and contemplative life, thereby hoping to win the immortal glory which knowledge brings to its bearer after death. He is thus giving up the transitory and temporal glory which the life of action brings during lifetime for the sake of the greater glory after death, which is the fruit of knowledge and contemplative life. To him therefore death would be a grace, whereas to those who lead an active life it would mean disgrace, i.e., the loss of worldly goods, glory etc. ... Or 'grace' may be taken in the religious sense, and in this case it can be obtained more by a life of study and contemplation than by an active life. The pun here is organic in the sense that it derives its meaning from, and in turn lends significance to, the context of the situation.

1. Love's Labour's Lost, I.i.3.
Like his organic puns Shakespeare's wit is often 'blended with the other qualities of his works, and is, by its nature, capable of being so blended.' It is often not purely verbal, but 'most exquisite humour, heightened by a figure, and attributed to a particular character.' It works on the level of imagery: without ceasing to produce the degree of surprise we obtain from 'an unexpected turn of expression', the general effect it has is not simply that of surprise, but is often accompanied with a gratification arising from the juxtaposition of imagery. The example Coleridge offers is the comparison Falstaff draws between the flea on Bardolph's nose and a soul suffering in purgatory.

It is clear then that Coleridge does not regard Shakespeare as a primitive dramatist, who complied with the popular and vulgar taste of the times. On the contrary, he believes he is the supreme dramatic poet in English. Even his puns, we have seen, he finds to be often strictly functional and dramatic. Of course, Coleridge does not pretend that the whole dramatic output of Shakespeare is of equal excellence, nor is he blind to the development and improvement in Shakespeare's handling of dramatic poetry. Indeed, he does not trace the growth in his mastery in every

4. Henry V, II.iii.35-40.
individual play. But he points to the occurrence of such marked development. For instance, in a play like Romeo and Juliet, he says, 'the poet is not entirely blended with the dramatist, - at least not in the degree to be afterwards noticed in Lear, Hamlet, Othello or Macbeth.' Capulet and Montague 'not infrequently talk a language only belonging to the poet, and not so characteristic of, and peculiar to, the passions of persons in the situations in which they are placed.' In such passages Shakespeare 'for a moment forgets the character, utters his own words in his own person.' But in the more mature works Shakespeare is no 'ventriloquist', and his poetry becomes really dramatic. He varies his style according to the nature of the character and the dramatic situation.

In such works, therefore, Coleridge reads Shakespeare's minutiae of style with the greatest care and attention. He praises 'Shakespeare's instinctive propriety in the choice of words.' For instance, he finds that the repetition of a word may be meant by the poet to carry an important weight, and to point to the meaning of a whole play, as in the case of the epithet 'honest' in Othello. A stylistic detail may be intended to illuminate a certain aspect of a character. For example, in the words of Macbeth to Angus

2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.137.
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.148.
4. See supra, pp.404 ff.
and Ross, who have just brought him the news of the
honours Duncan has bestowed upon him:

Kind gentlemen, your pains
Are registered where every day I turn
The leaf to read them. 1

he finds 'the promising courtesies of a usurper in inten-
tion.' 2 And in his replies to Duncan's joyful welcome to
him on his arrival from the victorious battle against
Cawdor, Macbeth, we are shown, has 'nothing but the common-
places of loyalty, in which he hides himself in the 'air';
and in the ... language of effort.' Macbeth expresses
'reasoning, instead of joy, stammering repetition of
"duties", using 'a hollow hyperbole.' This type of cri-
ticism, which reads the text with the utmost sensibility
and intelligence, is only too rare in the eighteenth cen-
tury. Indeed Dr. Johnson himself provides one of the few
examples. Of Macbeth's hypocritical exclamations, when he
tries to explain how he killed the king's chamberlains:

Here lay Duncan
His silver skin laced with his golden blood, etc. ... 4

Dr. Johnson writes:

It is not improbable, that Shakespeare put these forced
and unnatural metaphors into the mouth of Macbeth as
a mark of artifice and dissimulation, to show the
difference between the studied language of hypocrisy,
and the natural outcries of sudden passion. 5

3. Ibid., vol.1, pp.70-71.
5. kalem., p.172.
But Dr. Johnson's hesitation in making the suggestion is fairly obvious: we remember his severe condemnation of the whole passage. Coleridge's remarks, on the other hand, often reveal this sensitive textual criticism in a highly developed form. Coleridge would even find the very rhythm of a speech expressive of some fine shade of feeling or other. He sees in Lady Macbeth's welcome to Duncan in her castle 'a laboured rhythm and hypocritical overmuch in which you cannot detect a ray of personal feeling.' Or he would contrast the 'forced flurry of talkativeness' of Macbeth, when he attempts to explain the reasons that led the him to/murder of the grooms, with the terse remarks of Macduff.

Moreover, Shakespeare varies his style and diction to suit the dramatic situation. The players' speeches in Hamlet, Coleridge points out, differ materially in style and diction from the speeches of the chief characters. Here the difference in style is conditioned by the difference in planes of reality. Of the preliminary speech of the "

actor he writes,

This admirable substitution of the epic for the dramatic, giving such a reality to the impassioned dramatic diction of Shakespeare's own dialogue, and authorized too by the actual style of the tragedies before

Shakespeare (Porrex and Ferrex, Titus Andronicus, etc. ...) is worthy of notice.

Similarly in the House Trap itself rhymed verse is used instead of blank verse with the same effect. Style is also varied in accordance with the degree of dignity and solemnity of what is spoken. The Winter's Tale opens with the two lords of Sicilia and Bohemia, Camillo and Archidamus, engaged in pleasant polite conversation, but in the scene immediately following we have the two kings and the queen with their royal courtesies, which will soon develop with grave consequences. The royal conversation is therefore marked by 'a rise in the diction' so that it may be distinguished from the 'chit-chat' of the lords. But the rise in diction can serve other and deeper purposes in Shakespearean drama. In moments of extreme stress, Coleridge notes, rhetoric may be resorted to by a character as a means of mastering his or her emotions. The effort of

1. Sh. Crit., vol. I, p. 27. Coleridge may indeed have taken the hint from Schlegel: See A. W. Schlegel, Op. Cit., pp. 405-407. But it may be pointed out that before Coleridge Lord John Chedworth (Notes Upon Some of the Obscure Passages in Shakespeare's Plays, London, 1809, p. 351) though not quite confidently had also remarked on the effect of this distinction: 'I have sometimes fancied that Shakespeare has made these lines elaborately tumid for the purpose of marking a distinction between the diction of this supposed tragedy, and that of the personages of the drama, whose language he would have taken to be that of real life, and by this artifice, to give the greater appearance of reality to his play.' The critic's hesitation about the conscious artistry of the poet is, nevertheless, significant.


Marcellus 'to master his own imaginative terrors', when he tells Horatio the story of the Ghost's appearance, is revealed in the marked 'elevation of the style.' Likewise, rhetoric and inflated language may betray an attempt on the part of the speaker to escape from an unpleasant reality. This sort of self-deception can be seen in the 'affected bravado' of Lady Macbeth.

The same organic approach which considers language in relation to character and dramatic situation can be seen in Coleridge's treatment of Shakespeare's versification. On the whole Coleridge's view of metre is essentially dramatic. That is what distinguishes it from the eighteenth-century conception. Because their view of metre was largely formal and undramatic, the eighteenth-century critics found a great deal of irregularity in Shakespeare's verse, and endeavoured to smooth some of the lines which their ears felt to be excessively harsh. Indeed in some of the passages corrected the attempts amounted to a complete recasting. This charge of irregularity was levelled not against Shakespeare solely, but against Elizabethan dramatic verse in general, and, naturally, the type of non-dramatic verse like Donne's, which was written in a dramatic vein. And the critics who complained of the irregularity and uncouthness of Shakespeare's versification were not only those

2. Ibid., vol.1, p.80.
haunted by a demon of correctness, like Nurdis and Seymour; they included sympathetic critics as well. William Dodd, the author of The Beauties of Shakespeare, remarked that Shakespeare 'did not study versification' as much as, for instance, Milton, and that he did not 'remember in him any striking instance of this species of beauty.' Even Malone and Francis Douce wrote about the irregularity of Shakespeare's metre.

The eighteenth-century conception of metre formed in fact part and parcel of its conception of poetry. Because the critics then held a dualistic view of poetry, and separated form from content, together with expression, metre became generally something of an external mould, which a line should be made to fit. A line in which syllabic per-

1. James Nurdis, Memoirs Remarks upon the Arrangement of the Plays of Shakespeare, (Lond., 1732), e.g. pp.12,38.
2. W.J. Seymour, Remarks Critical, Conjectural and Explanatory upon the Plays of Shakespeare, (Lond., 1805), vol. i, pp.5-6. Seymour in fact believes that Shakespeare is 'an exemplar of metrical harmony'; but his text is corrupted (Ibid., vol.i, p.11). However, his conception ofmetrical harmony is such that the number of passages in the canon which he attempts to regularise is colossal. See e.g. vol.i, pp.16, 38; vol.ii, pp.79, 97, 150 etc. ...
6. In spite of its syllabic correctness it cannot be said that in the hands of a great eighteenth-century poet metre was an external rigid mould into which the substance of content had to be poured. Any analysis of the best of Pope's poetry will show how absurd such a notion is. But the case of the critics and minor poets is different. Throughout the century the irregularity of Shakespeare's verse was a commonplace of criticism.
fection does not obtain (and Shakespeare's works abound with such lines) was therefore considered faulty. On the other hand, because Coleridge's view of form is essentially organic, his approach to metre is primarily organic and dynamic. In English verse, he writes:

we have first, accent; secondly, emphasis; and lastly, retardation and acceleration of the times of syllables according to the meaning of the words, the passion that accompanies them, and even the character of the person that uses them. 1

In his treatment metre becomes indeed part of the meaning of dramatic poetry. He shows how in the poetry of Shakespeare, and of the best Elizabethans, metre is a rich tool with immense and varied potentialities, which the poet manipulates dynamically, in order to render a precise expression to his experience:

Since Dryden, the metre of our poets leads to the sense: in our elder and more genuine poets, the sense, including the passion leads to the metre. Read even Donne's satires as he meant them to be read and as the sense and passion demand, and you will find in the lines a manly harmony. 2

In this connection Coleridge's theory of the origin and function of metre is significant. If metre is to hold passion in check, then the greater and more intense the passion the less regular metre becomes. At the opposite end of metre is pure unbridled passion, which cannot be checked, an emotional chaos, as in the case of the ravings of the mad Lear which significantly enough Shakespeare did not

2. Ibid, p.67; Cf. Ibid., pp.94; 133 ff.
attempt to formalize in metre. We also remember Coleridge's own experiment in versification in Christabel, which is based upon a truly organic conception of metre. In his preface to the poem he writes that its metre is 'properly speaking irregular,' for it depends not on the number of syllables, but of accents in each line. 'Nevertheless,' he continues, 'this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.'

In fact the intimate relation between metre and the other constituent elements of the plays is always emphasized by Coleridge, whenever he comes to discuss Shakespeare's versification. 'We must observe,' he writes, Shakespeare's varied images symbolical of moral truth, thrusting by and seeming to trip up each other, from an impetuosity of thought, producing a metre which is always flowing from one verse into the other, and seldom closing with the tenth syllable of the line. 1

And again, he says that 'such fullness of thought' in him 'gives an involution of metre so natural to the expression of passion.' 2 In one of his lectures, we are told by a reporter, he demonstrates 'with truth and beauty' 'the connection between the character of versification and of the language, and between the metre and the sense, the one elu-

The body of the lecture is unfortunately missing, and it would seem that a great deal of his practical criticism on this point, as on others, is lost. But such was Coleridge's belief in the organic nature of Shakespeare's versification that he regarded his blank verse 'as criteria of his plays.' One of Shakespeare's characteristics, he again said, is 'impetuosity of thought - so strongly influencing his metre, and furnishing a criterion of what is and is not Shakespeare's.'

It is because Coleridge looked upon metre as an organic part of the meaning and the whole that he could say that 'the sense of musical delight with the power of producing it, is a gift of imagination.' For it is only imagination that can produce a really organic whole.

In Shakespeare's plays verse is then a strictly functional element. For instance, it can be used as a means of characterization. At its lowest level, it indicates the rank of the speaker. Characters of a higher social status use verse, while others use prose, as can be seen in the different conversations of the lords and the kings in The Winter's Tale, already alluded to. For the same reason Coleridge tries to cast Marullus's words in Julius Caesar into blank verse form, so that the tribune may be distinguished from the rabble. But in this Coleridge is

by no means oblivious of the subleties of Shakespeare's prose. Shakespeare, Coleridge is well aware, preserves the same social distinction between any two characters even when they both speak their minds in the same medium. There is a great difference between Hamlet's prose passages and the grave-digger's or the cobbler's in Julius Caesar: in this case the difference lies, among other things, in the rhythm of the prose they use.

But metre does much more than simply 'imitate the personal rank of a character.' It may suggest the temper and quality of the speaker. The peculiar measure of the song of the Fairy in Midsummer Night's Dream, Collier reports, is appropriate 'to the rapid and airy motion of the Fairy by whom the passage is delivered.' A line of irregular length may have artistic justification. In Richard II, Bolingbroke in a speech to be delivered to the King, makes his name 'Henry Bolingbroke' occupy a whole line. By that Coleridge comments, Shakespeare meant to 'convey Bolingbroke's opinion of his own importance.' A syllable may be meant to be dwelt on in reciting, so as to be equivalent to a disyllable to characterize a certain quality in a character. A defective line may detach and draw attention to a certain speech, 'giving it the individuality and

3. Richard II, III.iii.35.
4. Sh. Crit., vol.11, p.120.
5. Ibid., vol.1, p.157.
entireness of a little poem." In the rhythm of a certain line by Brutus he detects 'that sort of mild philosophic contempt characterizing Brutus.' In Lady Macbeth's speech of welcome to Duncan, we have seen, he notes 'a laboured rhythm' revealing insincerity and affectation.

This is how Coleridge treats Shakespeare's versification. He may be oversubtle in his remarks, but he certainly does not regard the metre as an element superadded. Underlying his criticism is the assumption that Shakespeare 'never avails himself of the supposed license of transposition merely for the metre.' This may be an exaggeration if Coleridge really means it to apply to whatever Shakespeare wrote. But it is an exaggeration of an important truth, and Coleridge is right when he contrasts Shakespeare's use of the spoken rhythm with what he thinks a modern tragic poet resorts to in order to suit the metre. And at least it has made him attentive not only to the significance of the position of every word in the line, but also to the significance of every stress. He decides whether the position of a stress in a line is right or wrong from its appropriateness to the character and the dramatic situation.

In Marullus's retort to the cobbler's playful suggestion that he would mend him - a line which for psychological reasons

5. See Crit.
he assigns and quite rightly to Marullus as the first Folio shows, and not to Flavius as Theobald does - he sug- gests that the stress should fall on the word 'mend' and not on 'me' since the dramatic situation implies that Marullus in both surprize and anger is echoing the cobbler's words. This, it may be remarked, is a criticism concerned with the miniatiae. But it is such criticism, which is based on a thorough and detailed knowledge of the text, which is responsible for his often masterly analysis of Shakespeare's poetry. We still remember the 'credibilizing effect' he finds in the word 'again' in Horatio's question regarding the Ghost:

What, has this thing appeared again tonight?

Coleridge stops to ask himself about the dramatic function and meaning of the smallest features of Shakes- pearean drama. He enquires into the purpose of 'the occa- sional interspersion of rhymes, and the more frequent winding up of a speech therewith.' It is not that he be- lieves in a dramatic purpose where there is actually none, for he knows that the frequency of rhymes in the early works of the dramatist is not so much intentional, as a sign of immaturity. But the question he asks concerns the more mature works, in which there is every reason to believe

2. Ibid., vol.i, p.20.
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.146.
4. Ibid., vol.i, p.92.
in the conscious artistry and intention of the poet. He notes that rhymes are sometimes used to mark the patterned sententious speeches, and in such cases 'the rhyme answers the purposes of the Greek chorus, and distinguishes the general truths from the passions of the dialogue.' But rhymes may have a deeper significance. In a serious play a speech that is formalized by rhymes may express 'deliberateness' in the speaker. On such artistic grounds Coleridge tries to solve the mystery of Hamlet's harsh treatment of Ophelia in the nunnery scene, which Dover Wilson attempts to explain away by supplying what he thinks to be a missing stage direction. The manner and form of Ophelia's speech to Hamlet on returning to him his love tokens, the 'penetrating' Hamlet perceives to be 'forced', and he therefore realizes that she is not 'acting a part of her own,' that 'he is watched and Ophelia a decoy.' Accordingly he assumes his madness. Rhyme also has another purpose. Like rhetoric and 'elevation of style', it expresses the effort of the speaker to master his emotions. The winding up of a speech with a rhyme indicates in the character 'an attempt/collect himself, and be cool at the close.' Of course, in some cases, there may be purely stage

4. *Hamlet*, III.i.97 ff.
reasons for the rhyme coming at the end of a speech: a rhyme, we know, may serve simply as a reminder to the other actor that his part is due to begin. But it is significant that Coleridge concentrates on purely artistic considerations.

Poetry then is not the mere outpouring of passion, but even in its minutest detail, it has a logic of its own, as severe as that of science. This logic is what Coleridge describes as 'aesthetic logic.' On the grounds of aesthetic logic he would judge an expression incorrect or a line faulty. And by virtue of this logic a work of art becomes an absolutely self consistent entity, a complete organism. Such is the mature Shakespearean play. Its complete meaning is to be looked for not in the characters or in the plot alone, but in every minute detail, from rhythm and versification to the single word and image. For all these elements are in fact complementary, and have their particular function. But such an organic work can only be the product of the imaginative power in a genius, for only a genius can produce a work that is 'effected by a single energy, modified ab intra in each component part.'

1. Ch.Crit., vol.1, p.120.
2. ibid., vol.1, p.140. loc. cit.
3. ibid., vol.1, p.5.
CONCLUSION

Having completed our discussion of the critical method and assumptions in Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare, we are now in a position to answer the second question raised in the Introduction, i.e., what exactly is Coleridge's contribution to English Shakespearean criticism? I think the present study has made it sufficiently clear that it is impossible to accept Dr. Babcock's conclusions on the subject. The thesis of Dr. Babcock's book on the Shakespearean critics of the last quarter of the eighteenth-century is that:

Point for point, from all the different angles, the early nineteenth century merely echoed the late eighteenth. In short, if the question were raised as to whether the nineteenth century produced any new criticism of Shakespeare, the answer would have to be no. 1

The 'only possible new point' which he concedes to the nineteenth-century critics, and which, he corrects himself, 'is not strictly new', is 'Coleridge's emphasis on first scenes' - as if Coleridge's criticism of first scenes could in fact be isolated from his general critical position. He even goes so far as to deny that Coleridge said 'some glorious things' on Shakespeare. I suppose if one applied Dr. Babcock's method, breaking any apparently new system crudely into small pieces, one would soon reach the conclusion that there is nothing new under the sun. Did Newton, for instance, introduce anything new? Why, his system

2. Ibid., p. 227.
is all there in the ideas of Galileo and Kepler - if only you take the trouble of breaking it into the smallest unit ideas it consists of. This is perhaps the unintended effect of the analytic chemistry method advocated by Professor Lovejoy on literary studies.

Criticism, like any other rational pursuit, becomes valuable, not when it brings something out of nothing, but when it introduces a new approach. The problems of criticism have, in a sense, been fundamentally the same from times immemorial - those of dramatic poetry are all there in the Poetics. But who can deny that we have travelled a long way from Aristotle? that the unit ideas: form, plot, character, imagery etc. ... meant different things in different ages? With every new approach, the basic facts, which remain more or less the same, assume a new significance; they acquire a different meaning in every new system. To say therefore, as Dr. Babcock does, that Coleridge meant the same thing as the eighteenth-century critics when he called Shakespeare an original genius, is obviously a misrepresentation of facts - since the conception of original genius is ultimately bound up with that of the creative imagination. To deny the difference between Coleridge's conception of imagination and that of the eighteenth century is to deny, among other things, all the difference that there is between a mechanical and a dynamic philosophy. But

that is clearly untenable.

Coleridge's contribution to English Shakespearean criticism is precisely the introduction of a new approach. There is a great deal of the eighteenth-century opinion in his principles and practice, but, as our study shows, there is in him a dichotomy between what belongs essentially to the eighteenth century, and what is his own. Besides Coleridge sometimes betrays a critical irresponsibility of the gravest order. Indeed his shortcomings and limitations should not be mitigated or glossed over, although we should try to understand them if our appraisal of his criticism is to be just. And although well known, they deserve to be mentioned in our summing up of his contribution.

Perhaps the most disconcerting feature of his criticism to-day is his occasional idolatry and the tendency to consider Shakespeare entirely by himself without any relation to his time and place. We must remember, however, that it was understandable that Coleridge should react violently against the misguided and uncritical enthusiasm, which the scholars and editors of Shakespeare's contemporaries felt for the subject of their studies in his day. Coleridge had to go to extremes in order to enforce Shakespeare's superiority when contemporary scholars lavished their encomia indiscriminately on Beaumont and Fletcher, or Ford and Massinger at the expense of Shakespeare. For instance, a serious and influential scholar like Gifford wrote in the introduction to his edition of Massinger's works (1805) that
Shakespeare's superiority to his contemporaries 'rests on his superior wit alone', but 'in all other, and as I should deem, higher excellencies of the drama, character, pathos, depth of thought, etc. ..., he is equalled by Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson and Massinger.' Before him, to take another example, J. Monck Mason maintained in his volume of commentary on the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher (1797), that 'if we descend to a comparison of particular plays, many of theirs will be found superior to many of his (i.e. Shakespeare's).' That is at least one reason why Coleridge spared no occasion to explode the preposterously inflated opinion of Beaumont and Fletcher's works, and to point out to his age their true worth. Without underrating the importance of Shakespeare's contemporaries Coleridge emphasized all the time his overwhelming superiority to them. 'Shakespeare's eminence,' he said, is his own and not 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 do not account for the golden hue, the ambrosial flavour, the perfect shape of the pine-apple, or the tufted crown of its head.

and 'the more we reflect and examine, examine and reflect, the more astonished we are at the immense superiority of Shakespeare over his contemporaries — and yet what contemporaries!'

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Similarly Coleridge's idolatry, which is sometimes couched in rapturous terms unbearable to the modern ear, is not a compound of primitivistic enthusiasm and of dumb and uncritical emotionalistic appreciation; but it is essentially the result of a critical approach that has confirmed for him the greatness of Shakespeare and laid it on secure grounds. When Coleridge maintained that 'the task (of Shakespearean criticism) will be genial in proportion as the criticism is reverential', we must remember that he could venture to make such a statement only after his repeated experience of finding aesthetic reasons and merits in parts of Shakespeare's works, with which he had previously found fault. It must be indeed difficult for a critic to curb his enthusiasm, when after an analysis of the plays, he is led to the conclusion that 'in all points from the most important to the most minute, the judgment of Shakespeare is commensurate with his genius.' Besides, Coleridge believed the first duty of a critic to lie in the analysis and explanation of the beauty of a work, and not in the drawing up of a balance sheet of beauties and faults weighing the ones against the others. 'He who tells me,' he said,

that there are defects in a new work, tells me nothing which I should not have taken for granted without his information. But he, who points out and elucidates the beauties of an original work, does indeed give me

2. See supra, p. 230.
interesting information, such as experience would not have authorized me in anticipating. 1

The attitude is essentially Longinian. As a reader his 'golden rule' was that 'until you understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding.' 2

Coleridge's idolatry, however, does not always reveal itself in harmless, albeit meaningless statements. It can lead him to frankly false criticism, and here is the danger. His occasional tendency to disengage Shakespeare from his historical context and view him as a being wholly above his times sometimes ends in complete distortion and misrepresentation. It is not that Coleridge is unaware of the importance of the historical method. In 1807 he writes to Humphry Davy about his first course of lectures, telling him that his intention is to discourse 'on the genius and writings of Shakespeare relatively to his predecessors and contemporaries.' 3 But on the whole it cannot be said that in his criticism of Shakespeare he resorts to the historical method often. On the contrary, we find him asserting at some point that Shakespeare is 'least of all poets colored in any particulars by the spirit or customs of his age.' This is of course true, if by it Coleridge means that the values of Shakespeare's work transcend his time and place. Again, when he points out that there is in

him 'who lived in an age of religious and political heat
'nothing sectarian in religion or politics', we agree with
him, because he himself has shown us the essentially im-
personal nature of Shakespeare's art. But Coleridge goes
much further and asserts that 'there is nothing common
to Shakespeare and to other writers of his day - not even
the language they employed,' thus unwittingly making of
Shakespeare the almost superhuman phenomenon he very
sensibly attacks and explodes in other places. And when
he maintains that although he lived in an age of misers,
witchcraft and astrology he presented to us neither misers,
nor witches, we realize how far his critical irresponsi-
bility can go.

Such statements are the product partly of his bardo-
latry, partly of his occasional tendency to make facile
and ill-grounded generalizations. He would say, for in-
stance, that 'there is no character in Shakespeare in which
envy is portrayed, with one solitary exception - Cassius
in Julius Caesar.' But, we may ask, what happened to Iago,
Edmund or the numberless characters in the History plays?
Or driven by his idealization of womanhood he would declare
that in Shakespeare 'all the elements of womanhood are holy,'

1. See supra, p.234 ff, 309 ff.
3. Ibid., vol.i, p.245; vol.ii, p.145-6. Coleridge, how-
ever, seems to realize that he has jumped far too
easily to this generalization. This is at least
apparent from his hastened qualification which Car-
wardine reports: 'Shylock no miser, not the great
(cont.)
having apparently forgotten characters like Goneril and Regan or Lady Macbeth about whom he elsewhere said some fine things. His dictum that Shakespeare's female characters are characterless is proverbial, and was indeed swallowed hook, line and sinker by Hazlitt. But what of Beatrice, Portia or Cleopatra? Although he fully realized the functional nature of double-epithets and compounds, when they are not reduced to the status of 'mere printer's tricks,' he would dismiss them on the ground that English is 'in its very genius unfitted for compounds,' and would claim that their number grows remarkably smaller in Shakespeare's mature plays like Lear, Macbeth, Othello and Hamlet, in comparison with early works like Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet and Venus and Adonis, which is clearly not true. It is this tendency to make easy generalization that explains why the man who realized as early as 1796 that we should not 'pass an act of uniformity against poets,' adopted not only Schlegel's distinction be-

Footnotes 4, 5, and 6 continued from page 496:
5. Ibid., vol. i, p. 46.
6. Ibid., vol. i, p. 133.
3. E.L., vol. 1, p. 2 TN.
tween classic and romantic, but his sweeping condescension to what is Greek — although to be fair to Coleridge we must point out that later on, in his conversation with Henry Crabb Robinson, he 'accused Schlegel of Einseitigkeit in his exclusive admiration of Shakespeare.' 'Sublimity is Hebrew by birth,' he declared as a general statement; but not a long time afterwards we find him talking of 'the sublime simplicity of Aeschylus.' Similarly, Coleridge's antipathy to what is French may have a political basis, but it would not have been possible to make the sweeping statements about French literature and drama, which he often made, had it not been for a constitutional tendency to do so. Coupled with that tendency there is his digressive habit of mind. Shakespeare's treatment of love in Romeo and Juliet would serve as an occasion for him to deliver a long sermon about his own view of love. Instead of applying his keen powers to an analysis of Shakespeare's play he would provide us with material which may be interesting in itself, but which certainly has no relevance immediate or otherwise to Shakespeare's dramatic poetry. In fact, a hostile critic can extend this list of Coleridge's faults to a much greater length.

However, it is neither fair nor indeed instructive to judge Coleridge's criticism solely by his failings. For that

matter what critic is wholly reliable at all times? Yet even when we have exhausted all the shortcomings of Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare, it seems to me, and I hope this study has made it clear, that his contribution remains incalculable. With all his faults Coleridge brought in a new approach to Shakespearean drama, an approach which has become part and parcel of most of the subsequent criticism of Shakespeare. I do not think that Mr. Eliot was in the least exaggerating when he wrote that 'it is impossible to understand Shakespeare criticism to this day, without a familiar acquaintance with Coleridge's lectures and notes.'

The value of Coleridge as a Shakespearean critic lies in the introduction of a new and serious understanding of creative imagination, resulting in a new attitude to Shakespearean drama. This new attitude regarded each play as the poet's dramatic vision of human existence - a vision which forms an essentially organic whole. The dramatic interest and meaning of the mature Shakespearean play, Coleridge has taught us, is only to be arrived at through a careful consideration of every word, scene and act. For the vision penetrates its whole fabric, and finds expression in plot, character and poetry alike. A consideration of any one of these constituents elements, by itself and dissociated from the others, would seriously distort the dramatic vision. It is therefore dangerous to concentrate on the so-called

Beauties of Shakespeare. Coleridge considered the Beauties of any sort 'objectionable works - injurious to the original author, as disorganizing his productions, pulling to pieces the well-wrought crown of his glory to pick out the shining stones, and injurious to the reader, by indulging the taste for unconnected, and for that reason unretained single thoughts.' This is roughly what Coleridge taught us, as well as his own contemporaries. In fact, without him the course of English Shakespearean criticism, one ventures to say, would have been different from what it is. One finds it difficult to imagine that without Coleridge even Lamb would have been able to say in the preface to his Specimens of English Dramatic Poets (1808): 'I have chosen wherever I could to give entire scenes, and in some instances successive scenes, rather than to string together single passages and detached beauties.' For we have seen what the 'beauties of Shakespeare' meant until Coleridge's time.

That this is an advance in the history of Shakespearean criticism none but the prejudiced can really deny. Mr. Isaacs's valuable essay on Coleridge's critical terminology has shown us the host of new critical terms, which Coleridge introduced in the body of his criticism, and most of which have taken roots in the English language, becoming an indispensable part of the vocabulary of any critic.

suppose one does not need to analyze what the introduction of a new critical term means. But Coleridge himself once said, quite rightly, I think, that 'every additament of perception requires a new word.' We have seen, in the first part of this study, how the eighteenth-century criticism resulted eventually in the breaking up of the organic unity of Shakespearean drama. Coleridge's supreme service lies in the new attitude which he adopted both in theory and in practice to Shakespeare, and which treated his works with more critical respect. The restoration of the organic unity of the plays is therefore a significant event indeed in the history of Shakespearean criticism. By introducing a new conception of form, Coleridge was able, not only to write, and to point the way to writing, formal criticism in the best sense, but to provide a more satisfactory view of poetic drama in general. And one result of this view, and not the only result, is the reinstatement of poetry — not in the sense of shining passages which have a value in themselves other than their dramatic value — but as an indivisible part of drama. Likewise by his insistence that in imaginative activity a nice balance is kept between the conscious and the unconscious, that Shakespeare's works reveal superb judgment and conscious artistry, he managed to explode the popular notion that Shakespeare is an inspired but wild genius, and to encourage the serious reader to ask intelligent questions about the meaning of Shakespeare's plays.

Besides in his criticism of Shakespeare Coleridge raises fundamental questions—a thing which makes the reading of it an invigorating and inspiring experience. Coleridge does not dissociate his experience of Shakespeare from the serious business of life. He discusses the problem of science and poetry, the problem of poetic belief, the nature and the function of poetic imagination. His new approach to Shakespeare is in fact one aspect of his approach to the problems of the spirit. If his conception of form is organic it is because his philosophy is a dynamic philosophy. Very often his Shakespearean criticism is not just a literal interpretation of the plays, but an interpretation of them, still as works of art, but in relation to the whole world of the spirit. But, to remain within the bounds of literary criticism proper, Coleridge once explained to a correspondent that one of the objects of his lectures on literature was to 'leave a sting behind, i.e., a disposition to study the subject anew, under the light of a new principle.' I think, especially coming to Coleridge by way of the eighteenth century, one can easily say that his lectures, notes and marginalia on Shakespeare's works have left that sting.

APPENDIX A

ON UNDERSTANDING POETRY

(Note on p.30)

Recently in The Listener (see the numbers from March 26, 1953 to May 7) a controversy arose about Coleridge's supposed dictum that "poetry gives most pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood" (A.P., p.5). The question ultimately involved is directly relevant to a major theme in my thesis. It is one thing if Coleridge considers the end of poetry to be indeed nothing but an emotion, and is therefore satisfied as long as a tragedy, say, arouses in him the emotion sought, without making any very careful attempt to understand its 'meaning'. It is another if he believes that poetry offers 'values', or 'living ideas', as he calls them. I may, therefore, be permitted to submit a few remarks, with the object of clarifying some possible misunderstanding on this point. The passage, thanks to Miss Coburn's careful editing, now reads as follows:

When no criticism is pretended to, and the Mind in its simplicity gives itself up to a Poem as to a work of nature, Poetry gives most pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood. It was so by me with Gray's Bard, and Collins' Odes. The Bard once intoxicated me, and now I read it without pleasure. From this cause it is that what I call metaphysical Poetry gives me so much delight.

(Inquiring Spirit, ed. by Kathleen Coburn, p.156)

Both Miss Coburn and Mr. Humphry House think that the qualifying clause almost reverses the implications of the sentence, which, without the clause, used to be taken as an expression of the non-analytic approach to poetry. As it now stands, the sentence means, says Mr. House, that "when criticism is pretended to, then the pleasure follows in proportion to the understanding", (Humphry House, Coleridge, p.30). Mr. Herbert Read cannot agree that this is Coleridge's attitude in criticism, and with him side Mr. A.P. Rossiter. Since, as Mr. Rossiter rightly points out, the final sentence "can equally mean that such poetry (what he calls metaphysical) gives a sense of infinity, of illimitableness of mind, and never is perfectly understood", 
one can only rely on external evidence to support either
interpretation. I shall therefore deal with Mr. Rossiter's
quotations from Notebook 21 in support of his view one by
one. The notes he adduces are the following:

(a) a quotation from Caesar to the effect that an
orator should avoid the 'insolens verbum';

(b) a quotation from Luther concerning the learning
of the German language, of which the point is
that one must not go to the Latin tongue to ask
how German should be spoken but "Man muss die
Mutter im Hause, die Kinder auf der Gasse, den
gemeinen Mann auf dem Markte darura fragen;"

(c) the jotting:
"Was im eigentlichsten und scharfsten Verstande
erfunden wird, ist fur die menschliche Gesellschaft
nur selten wirklich nutzlich".

As "it is risky to extract them from context", to use
Rossiter's own words, I shall attempt to place these quota­
tions in their context, hoping to find out on which side
their meaning tells. Now I do not know whether Mr. Rossiter
is aware of this; but luckily the first two notes have
found their proper place in Biographia Literaria, and so it
is not difficult to see how Coleridge himself understood
them.

(a) The first quotation from Caesar Coleridge uses in
a footnote in vol.1, p.2, where he discusses "the profusion
of new coined double epithets", a fault in his own juvenile
poems. The main argument of the note is that if new double-
epithets are to be introduced, they must not be joined "by
mere virtue of the printer's hyphen", but they must be
justified functionally. They must be one word (cf. A.P.,
p.155) "the instinctive passion in the mind for a one word
to express one act of feeling"; the two ideas must be seen
and felt as one idea which the two words, if separated,
could not equally precisely express. (cf. Mis. Crit., p.307,
where he discusses the same point.) If that is not the case,
then the author must express himself in some other mode than
the double epithet, otherwise the double epithet will only
sound strange and alien to the genius of the language; it
will only be "insolens verbum". Why the poet should avoid
the "insolens verbum" is not because it is a scholarly word
and therefore perfectly understood, as Mr. Rossiter suggests,
but because, in Coleridge's opinion, it does not fit the
genius of the language the poet is using. Coleridge's grounds seem to be purely artistic.

(b) As for Luther's passage it must not be forgotten that it occurs in a place where Coleridge is discussing the subject of learning a foreign language (B.L., vol.1, pp. 137-138, F.N.). Coleridge points out the advantage of learning a foreign language by a direct method, i.e., without translation, "without the intermediation of the English terms" - a method which still remains the best. By it he obtained "a more home like acquaintance with the language, than I could have acquired from works of polite literature alone". The passage from Luther in this context, does not at all mean that one should prefer the vague and homely to what is perfectly understood. If anything in order to understand the subtleties of a foreign language perfectly one should not only know the scholarly phraseology, but one needs to know the homely and concrete terms as well. To that even Dr. Johnson, who believed that poetry should have a hard core of sense, would agree (see The Rambler, No. 168). The import of the passage is the simple truth that in order to learn a foreign language, particularly how to speak it, one must live among the people actually speaking it and try to be acquainted with its various idioms and expressions. The knowledge of the Latin tongue in this context is a figurative expression signifying, not 'the scholarly', or 'perfectly understood', as Mr. Rossiter understands, but only 'knowledge by principle' to distinguish it from 'knowledge how', which latter is certainly what is needed in learning how to speak a foreign language. One can be a believer that the right critical approach to poetry is that which attempts to understand perfectly, and yet hold all the difference in the world between 'knowledge by principle' and 'knowledge how'.

(c) The last quotation I am in no position to comment on, since even German scholars could not be agreed on its meaning. Until its significance is ascertained it cannot, therefore, be justly used as evidence either for or against. On the other hand, I may offer another bit of evidence, which, to say nothing of Coleridge's practical criticism itself, seems to corroborate the interpretation of Miss Coburn and Mr. House. In Shakespearean Criticism, vol.1, p. 165, we read:
How awful is the power of words! fearful often in their consequences when merely felt, not understood; but most awful when both felt and understood.

We should not forget, however, that the man most responsible for propagating the semantic approach in English literary criticism calls Coleridge a "semasiologist" (I.A. Richards, *Coleridge on the Imagination*, p.xi).
APPENDIX B

COLERIDGE AND ACTING

It is generally assumed, far too easily, I think, that Coleridge was hostile to the idea of performing Shakespearean drama on the stage, and to acting in general. Of course, there is some justification for this general opinion in Coleridge's own writings. In Omniana we read an account of a visit he made to the theatre to see The Beggar's Opera, in which we are told of the "horror and disgust" aroused in him by the performance of a work that had always "delighted" him with "its poignant wit and original satire". The "immorality" of the work which had not given him "any offence" in reading became palpable in the stage representation, and it is then, he wrote, that he "learnt the immense difference between reading and seeing a play". A play acted seems to be more real than a play read silently. "Even the sound of one's own or another's voice takes them (the thoughts of which a play consists) out of that lifeless, twilight realm of idea, which is the confine, the intermundium, as it were, of existence and non-existence. Merely that the thoughts have become audible, by blending with them a sense of outness gives them a sort of reality" (Omniana, vol.1, pp.20-22). Here, it is true, Coleridge deprecates the representation of what is immoral and in no way refers to Shakespeare. But the distinction between the world of the stage and the mental world is significant, and in this fragment of Coleridge's we notice the highest point of awareness of, and withdrawal from, the world of the senses. But is this the whole story?

In his writings on Shakespeare Coleridge clearly does not reveal any deep interest in the theatrical productions of his plays. In this respect he differs from either Lamb or Hazlitt. Of course, he cannot be charged with initiating the attitude that made of Shakespeare's works the object of the study alone, for the attitude existed long before his time and we know of Dr. Johnson's hatred for the stage: "A play read affects the mind like a play acted", Dr. Johnson writes in the Preface (Raleigh, p.28), and Boswell reports him as saying that "many of Shakespeare's plays are the worse for being acted". (James Boswell, Life of Dr. Johnson,
Yet paradoxically enough the complete denunciation of the stage representation of Shakespeare at any time came, not from Coleridge, but from Lamb and Hazlitt. In spite of his enthusiasm for the stage, in his essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare considered with Reference to their Fitness for Stage Representation" Lamb declared that "the plays of Shakespeare are less calculated for performance on the stage than those of almost any other dramatist whatever" (The Works of Charles Lamb, ed. William Macdonald, Lond., 1963, vol.iii, p.20). Again he said that "Lear is essentially impossible to represent on the stage. But how many dramatic personages are there in Shakespeare which though more actable and feasible (if I may so speak) than Lear, yet from some circumstance, some adjunct to their character, are improper to be shown to our bodily eye" for "what we are conscious of in reading is almost exclusively the mind, and its movement" (ibid., vol.iii, pp. 33, 34). Clearly the critic shrinks from the world of the senses, from seeing "an old man tottering about the stage with a walking stick etc..." pass for Shakespeare's Lear, from having a "fine vision" materialized and brought down "to the standard of flesh and blood" (ibid., vol.iii, p.19). Similarly Hazlitt states categorically that "Poetry and the stage do not agree together. The attempt to reconcile them fails not only of effect, but of decorum. The ideal has no place upon the stage, the imagination cannot sufficiently qualify the impressions of the senses" (William Hazlitt, The Complete Works, ed. P.P. Howe, vol.5, p.234). For this distrust of the senses, Coleridge who attacked materialism in all its aspects and scoffed at the "despotism of the eye" in Hartley's psychology (B.L., vol.i, p.74), seems to me to be chiefly responsible. He himself said that "so little are images capable of satisfying the obscure feelings connected with words" (B.L., vol.ii, p.142). Yet there are several points which need clarification in Coleridge's attitude to the stage representation of Shakespeare's plays, and it does seem to me unfair to declare summarily and without any qualification, as Miss Bradbrook does, that "Coleridge, Hazlitt and Lamb all three rejected the stage" (M.C. Bradbrook, Elizabethan Stage Conditions, Camb., 1930, p.12).

Coleridge does not reject the idea of representing Shakespeare on the stage as such, but a particular mode of performing the plays. In his view, dramatic poetry is not essentially incompatible with stage representation. In fact we know that he actually contemplated writing a long essay on "Dramatic Poetry exclusively in its relation to
Theatrical Representation" (Letter to John Murray, May 8th, 1816, U.L., vol.ii, p.168). What Coleridge objects to is the naturalistic style of performing Shakespeare, which treated his poetic drama as if it were the same kind of thing as the contemporary realistic drama. Indeed, in his preoccupation with the lasting element in Shakespeare's works, Coleridge sometimes goes so far as to say that the stage Shakespeare wrote for is really "that of the universal mind" (Sh. Crit., vol.i, p.4). But such a statement, in spite of the weight it carries, should not be taken to mean that Coleridge did not recognize the fact that Shakespeare wrote for a "particular stage". Coleridge undoubtedly benefited from the facts which were recently unearthed by the late 18th century scholars about the Elizabethan stage conditions. Capell and Malone had already pointed to the bareness of Shakespeare's stage, and its freedom from the modern sophisticated paraphernalia of scenery and decor, as well as to the fact that the appeal of the plays was made to the ear and the imagination. Coleridge therefore felt justified in believing that the plays were acted originally as dramatic poetry. He realized the essential difference between the stage, and consequently the manner of acting, in Shakespeare's times and his own. "The circumstances of acting", he said, "were altogether different from ours; it was much more of recitation, or rather a medium between recitation and what we now call recitation. The idea of the poet was always present, not of the actors, not of the thing to be represented. It was at that time more of a delight and employment for the intellect, than an amusement of the senses". But this was possible when "the theatre had no artificial, extraneous inducements - few scenes, little music .... Shakespeare himself said: We appeal to your imagination" (Sh. Crit., vol.ii, p.85). Again he said, "how different from modern plays, where the glare of the scenes with every wished for object industriously realized, the mind becomes bewildered in surrounding distractions; whereas Shakespeare, in place of ranting and music, and outward action, addresses us in words that enchain the mind, and carry on the attention from scene to scene" (Sh. Crit., vol.ii, pp.279-280). Obviously Coleridge believed that the peculiar structure of the Elizabethan stage and manner of Elizabethan acting emphasized the poetic nature of drama, and it is not true therefore to say, as Miss Eradbrook does, that he "condemned Shakespeare's age and stage by implication" (Elizabethan Stage Conditions, p.14). On the contrary, he himself explicitly said that if Shakespeare "had lived in the present day and had seen one of his plays represented he would the first moment have
felt the shifting of the scenes" and "he would have constructed his plays on a different model". But Coleridge was grateful that Shakespeare lived at a time when theatrical conditions were more favourable to poetic drama, for he would much rather have poetic drama than mere stage plays in the modern naturalistic style (Sh. Crit., vol.ii, pp,85, 97 and 278). Through the lips of a satirical portrait of a defendant of the contemporary practices of the stage he wrote, in the second of his "Satyrene Letters", "And what is done on the stage is more striking than what is acted. I once remember such a deafening explosion, that I could not hear a word of the play for half an act after it; and a little real gunpowder being set fire to at the same time, and smelt by all the spectators, the naturalness of the scene was quite astonishing" (B.L., vol.ii, p.163).

The naturalistic performance of Shakespeare's plays, which relied more upon scenery and colours than upon poetry was therefore one reason why Coleridge was averse to the contemporary stage representation of them. But there were other reasons as well. Coleridge objected to the one or two stars performances of Shakespeare, which seemed to have been common in his days. He deplored the custom of giving the important roles to celebrated and gifted actors and actresses like Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, while allotting the minor parts to completely incompetent persons, who were singularly incapable of reciting poetry, and "who owed their very elevation to dexterity in snuffing candles" (Sh. Crit., vol.ii, p.97). The result of such a custom was a serious distortion of the pattern of the plays, since Shakespeare "shone no less conspicuously and brightly" in the minor characters. Indeed it would seem that the public in its turn came to expect this type of performance, as the contemporary criticism shows. Even intelligent theatre critics like Lamb and Hazlitt wrote their essays, not on the production of a certain play, but on this or that eminent actor in this or that important role. But, according to Coleridge, this was evidently the wrong approach to the plays. He lamented the fact that few people went to the theatre "to see a play, but to see Master Betty or Mr. Kean, or some one individual in some one part" (Mis. Crit., p.339). Again he complained that "those who went to theatre in our own day, when any of our poet's works were performed, went to see Mr. Kemble in Macbeth, or Mrs. Siddon's Isabel" (Sh. Crit., vol.ii, p.97). What Coleridge obviously wanted was an integrated and unified performance, a thing which the theatres of his time did not provide. And when we recall the mangled version in which the plays were acted, we cannot
wonder that they should be condemned by a critic who valued above anything else the organic unity of a work. For one, who strongly believed that "the fairest part of the most beautiful body will appear deformed and monstrous, if disassembled from its place in the organic whole" (B.L., vol.1, p.162), it was quite natural to write: "To the disgrace of the English stage, such attempts have indeed been made on almost all the dramas of Shakespeare. Scarcely a season passes which does not produce some of this kind in which the mangled limbs of our great poet are thrown together in most admired disorder" (Sh. Crit., vol.ii, p.350). We must remember that it was not until 1838 (i.e. after Coleridge's death) that Macready restored e.g. Shakespeare's Lear and the Tempest, or rather produced them with a minimum number of alterations. (See Shakespeare Adaptation, with introduction and notes by Montagu Summers, London, 1922, pp. vii, cv).

Coleridge's view of Shakespearean acting, in fact, forms an inseparable part of his general Shakespearean criticism. What he wanted in the first place was Shakespeare's own works, and these interpreted by a group of uniformly competent actors in such a way that the pattern of the play should not be distorted. The plays should be represented primarily as poetic drama without any of the pernicious and prosaic effects of naturalism. "A good actor, comic or tragic", he wrote, "is not to be a mere copy, a feeble image, but an imitation of Nature .... A good actor is Pygmalion's statue, a work of exquisite art, animated with and gifted with motion; but still art, still a species of poetry" (Letters, vol.11, pp.622-623). But in order to ensure the intimate and appropriate atmosphere for the exercise of the imaginative power in an audience it is best that the performance should take place in a fairly small theatre (Sh.Crit., vol.ii, p.278).

Finally a word perhaps should be said here to remind those who may think Coleridge was an inveterate hater of the stage.

On his return from Germany Coleridge was full of enthusiasm for Lessing's critical powers. Not only did he for long contemplate the writing of his biography but he also intended to follow his example in England. In January 1800 he wrote to Thomas Wedgwood from London, telling him that he then spent his evenings in the theatres because he
was about "to conduct a sort of Dramaturgy or series of essays on the Drama both its general principles and likewise in reference to the present stage of the English Theatres" to be published in the Morning Post (Biog. Epist., vol. 1, p. 187). We do not know if he had actually written any, but if he had, then the loss would be indeed great, judging by the excellent sample of contemporary dramatic criticism, which he published on Laturin's play, Bertram. (See E.K. Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Oxf., 1935, p. 122: "If he wrote any, they have not been identified"). This, however, may be sufficient to refute any notion that Coleridge was not interested in the theatre as such or that he had a strong aversion for the stage. And in the body of his criticism there are indications (they may be of little importance in themselves, still they are present) here and there that he did go to see Shakespeare on the stage, as well as suggestions as to how parts should be acted or lines should be delivered. See e.g. Sh. Crit., vol. 1, pp. 31, 33, 87, 107, 122.
At one time in his life Coleridge contemplated working on an edition of Shakespeare. On September 7, 1825 he wrote to the Rev. Edward Coleridge, "Montagu has undertaken to arrange an engagement with his publisher for an edition of Shakespeare by me" (U.L., vol.ii, p.362). This prospected edition was to contain "properly critical notes, prefaces, and analyses, comprising the results of five and twenty years' study" (Biog. Epist., vol.ii, p.295). As is expected, this project, like the many other projects his mind was only too fertile in producing, never materialized. However, from the marginal notes scribbled on the pages of the Stockdale and Theobald editions which he used, we know enough about his editorial method to guess what that edition would have been like.

The textual problems Coleridge tackles are mainly problems of prosody and problems of interpretation and emendation of obscure or incomprehensible words. Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare's versification reveals certain assumptions about his art, which have already been discussed in the main body of this thesis. No fresh treatment of this particular point is, I feel, therefore required. But a word on his textual criticism will not be amiss here, particularly as Coleridge's reputation has suffered probably more on account of this part, than of the rest, of his work on Shakespeare (see for instance, F.L. Lucas, The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal, p.191, FN.1). It is undeniable that, because of his lack of scholarship, Coleridge's weakness shows itself most clearly in his handling of the question of emendation and textual interpretation; but his lack of scholarship has been rather exaggerated. I am not trying to make out a case for Coleridge's abilities as a scholar; my aim is only to remind the reader that his editorial blunders are not as many as they are made out to be, and that to every blunder in his textual interpretation there are several sound points which deserve to be mentioned.
While Coleridge's knowledge of Elizabethan literature was not like that of Thomas Warton, the historian of English poetry, it yet was not the very superficial acquaintance Swinburne, for instance, assumed (see A.C. Swinburne, Three Plays of Shakespeare, Lond., 1909, p.64: "Coleridge, whose ignorance of Shakespeare's predecessors was apparently as absolute as it is assuredly astonishing in the friend of Lamb ...."). Moreover, it was a living knowledge. The late eighteenth-century commentators on Shakespeare, it is true, knew immeasurably more than he did; but theirs was often an accumulated mass of information, an unwieldy heap of names and dates without shape or system, which smacked of an antiquarian interest, and was very often closely allied to it. How many of these commentators were members of the Society of Antiquaries? With Coleridge, on the other hand, whatever he knew was vital to him, and was soon reduced to order and system in his own mind. In this sense, it can be said that the little he knew of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature developed his sensibility—a thing which, we have been taught to believe, is the mark of a good critic.

And it was not so very little after all. In his recorded criticism Coleridge refers to Gorboduc, to the work of Kyd (he is aware of some similarity between The Spanish Tragedy and some parts of Shakespeare's work), Marlowe, Chapman, Raleigh, Harington (the translator of Ariosto), Sidney, Spenser, Davies, Daniel, Drayton, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford and Massinger, Donne and the metaphysical poets (who, apart from Dr. Johnson, whose verdict was so often echoed, knew the last in the eighteenth century?). Besides, he is acquainted with the work of some of the eighteenth-century scholars. He knows Johnson, Farmer, Tyrwhitt, Whalley, Ayscough, Steevens and Malone, not to mention early editors like Pope, Theobald and Warburton. From these as well from his close friend Lamb he must have had even a second hand knowledge of the background of Shakespeare. And who can honestly say for certain if such an omnivorous reader as Coleridge did not know this book or that?

Perhaps we may as well start with those questions of emendation and elucidation of text which require scholarship, and in which Coleridge appears to go wide of the mark. Let us take, for instance, the 'fishmonger' of Hamlet (II.ii.172). Coleridge's interpretation of the passage is: Hamlet insinuates that Polonius is sent to fish out the secret from
him (Sh. Crit., vol.1, p.16). Coleridge perhaps never read such books as Barnaby Rich's Irish Huhhuh to discover with Malone what the true meaning of the word is. But we may do well to remind ourselves that until Malone's edition none of the previous editors deigned to honour the expression with an interrogatory comment. And both Whiter and Gifford resorted to conjecture. The explanation of the now much publicized Whiter is:

"Probably it was supposed that the daughters of these tradesmen, who dealt in so nourishing a species of food, were blessed with extraordinary powers of conception." (Walter Whiter, op.cit., p.152).

At least Coleridge's interpretation, given no other clue, is the only reasonable sense the passage can yield, as, far from being a pure conjecture, it is intimately related to the context of the dramatic situation. And in spite of the fact that we know now from the multiplicity of evidence that the word means "a seller of woman's chastity", I am not sure whether to an Elizabethan ear, trained in subtleties, puns and ambiguities, some implication of fishing out secrets, arising from the situation itself, does not remain in the word.

There are other examples in which Coleridge relies on intuitive rather than historical or scholarly grounds. In King John (III, ii.1-2) he defends the word 'ayery', which he prefers to Warburton's suggested 'fiery', accepted by Theobald:

This day grows wondrous hot

Some ayery devil hovers in the sky.

Coleridge's reason for rejecting 'fiery' is that it is implied in the word 'devil' if "a full and strong emphasis" is laid on it in reading, and the alteration is therefore "useless and tasteless" (Sh. Crit., vol.1, p.142). Bishop Percy, being a scholar, had pointed out the possibility of Shakespeare's alluding to the "distinctions and divisions of some of the demonologists, so much regarded in his time" and quoted in support of his suggestion Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy. Yet modern scholars are almost agreed on the authenticity of 'ayery' which Coleridge defends for non-scholarly reasons.

The typical Coleridgean non-scholarly approach in
textual criticism is perhaps best seen in his defence of the word 'fool' in The Winter's Tale (III. ii. 132-4). Paulina addresses Leontes:

That thou betray'dst Polixenes, 'twas nothing;  
That did but show thee, of a fool, inconstant  
And damnable ingrateful.

Theobald finds it "too gross and blunt" in Paulina to call the king a fool and he accordingly suggests reading instead 'of a soul' since "it is more pardonable in her to arraign his morals, and the qualities of his mind, than rudely to call him idiot to his face". Coleridge, on the other hand, like Johnson, rejects this emendation; but the reasons he adduces are so characteristic of one part of his textual criticism that they deserve to be quoted at length:

I think the original, he says, to be Shakespeare's.  
1 - ly ear feels it Shakespearian; 2 - the involved  
grammar is Shakespearian - i.e., 'shew thee, being a  
fool naturally, to have improved your folly by in­  
constancy,' etc. 3 - the alteration is most flat and  
un-Shakespearian. As to grossness, (she calls him)  
'gross and foolish' below (Sh. Crit., vol. i, p.120).

In this example 'fool' happens to be the right word, and it has been accepted by editors since. But the method which relies exclusively or even largely on 'my ear' is, we immediately perceive, an extremely precarious method. It is this which makes Coleridge fall into the most outrageous and preposterous errors. The 'my ear' approach is indispensable to a good critic; but to overemphasize it, one hardly needs to say, is soliciting trouble, even for a critic, and of course most of all for an editor, since no individual ear is all the time an infallible judge in matters of poetry.

When Coleridge's ear errs, it then errs egregiously.
The porter soliloquy in Macbeth is a notorious example. The eighteenth century critics had condemned the porter scene altogether, because it offended their idea of decorum. Bad as it was found to be, its authenticity was not disputed. Coleridge, on the other hand, finds the greater part of the soliloquy 'low' and declares his belief that it was "written for the mob by some other hand" (Ibid., vol. i, p.75). His reason for considering it "an interpolation of the actors" is none other than the personal impression that "not one syllable has the ever present being of Shakespeare". Similarly
in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Coleridge suggests an absurd emenda-
tion in the passage in which Enobarbus describes Cleopatra's
barge:

> Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
> So many mermaids, tended her 'i' the eyes,
> And made her bands adorning; at the helm
> A seeming mermaid steers; (II, ii. 210-213).

In order that the epithet 'seeming' may not become as he finds
it "so extremely improper" and that "the fine image" of the
seeming mermaid at the helm may not be "weakened by so use­
less an anticipation," he strongly suspects that Shakespeare
wrote either 'sea-queens' or 'sea-brides' instead of 'mermaids'
or still worse 'submarine graces' in place of 'so many
mermaids' (Sh. Crit., vol.i, p. 88). Not even the likelihood
that Coleridge obtained the word 'graces' directly from
North's Plutarch could redeem the proposed emendation. The
other notorious emendation of Coleridge is in *Henry IV*, Part.
II, ii, 11. 182:

> This Doll Tear-sheet should be some Rode.

where he proposes to read 'Tear Street' for 'Tear-sheet'
(Sh. Crit., vol. i, p.158). Taking 'Rode' to mean just a
'troad', he asks whether Shakespeare did not "name this
street-walker Doll Tear-street - terere viam (stratam)."
This is largely, but not wholly, a fault of scholarship -
although some excuse may be made on behalf of Coleridge that
the word 'road', which, as Coleridge rightly finds it, is
problematic without an explanatory note, did not trouble the
previous editors, and that the figurative meaning pertinent
to this text was not discovered until late in the nineteenth
century by Skeat.

These, together with his equally absurd suggestion of
'blank height of the dark' for 'blanket of the dark' (Ibid.,
vol.i, p. 73) in Lady Macbeth's soliloquy (Macbeth, I,v.54) are
the only major examples of unscholarly work that strike
one in the body of his textual criticism. There are minor
instances, of course. In *Hamlet's* words to Laertes over
Ophelia's grave

> Voo't drink up eisel? (Hamlet, V.i.299)

Coleridge, like Steevens, understands 'drink up' to mean
necessarily 'totally to exhaust', oblivious, as Malone was
not, of Sonnet 114, where, the latter points out, 'drink up' means simply 'drink' (Sh. Crit., vol. i, p.36). Against these, however, we ought to set Coleridge's contribution. It is a small contribution indeed, but then Coleridge never actually worked on his intended edition. His approach, when not purely intuitive, is a tentative one in which he does not hesitate to make use of the modicum of scholarship at his command. Even in the 'drink up eisel' question - although he could not reconcile himself to the use of the particle 'up' - his contribution to the full understanding of the passage cannot be altogether overlooked without a loss. His suspicion that Hamlet is alluding to "the cup of anguish at the Cross" will appear to us all the more strongly grounded when we know that Skelton says of Jesus:

He drank eisel and gall.

(see The Sonnets of William Shakespeare, ed. Edward Dowden, Lond., 1883, p.222). Undoubtedly this allusion will enhance the significance and solemnity of the various ways of showing grief Hamlet enumerates, and the sarcastic crescendo will appear the more powerful by the contrast between the sincere manifestation of grief, so deepened by the sacred association, and the eating of crocodile to induce hypocritical tears.

In King John (I.i.231) where the bastard Philip resents being called Philip by Gurney, Coleridge's reading causes him to rail against Warburton's emendation, accepted by Theobald, of 'sparrow' into 'Spare me':

Philip! sparrow; James.

"Had Warburton read old Skelton's Philip Sparrow", he says "an exquisite and original poem, and no doubt popular in Shakespeare's time, even Warburton would scarcely have made so deep a plunge into the bathetic as to have deathified 'sparrow' into 'spare me'. (Sh. Crit., vol. i, p.41). There may be an allusion to Skelton's poem here, or Philip may be just a common onomatopoeic appellation of a sparrow at the time. What is important, however, is that Coleridge is using his learning satisfactorily to justify his point. And when he finds that his learning does not help he often suggests a reasonable emendation, as in the line in Julius Caesar (II.i.81):

For if thou path thy native semblance on,

where he proposes to read 'put' instead of 'path', since he
fails to find a text where Shakespeare or any other writer of his age "uses 'path' as a verb for 'walk'" (Sh.Crit., vol.1, p.16). Even Steevens' discovery of a similar, though not altogether the same, use of 'path' in Drayton, does not make Coleridge's 'put', which to my mind is more satisfactory than 'hadat' suggested by some scholars, much less acceptable. But if he can find for an obscure word in one place a parallel in another place of Shakespeare, he often resorts to it to elucidate the text. The common sense of his comparative approach is clear in his interpretation of the word 'unbonneted' in Othello's words to Iago (Othello, I.i.i. 22-24):

\[
\text{my demerits}
\]

\[
\text{May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune}
\]

\[
\text{As this that I have reach'd.}
\]

by reference to a similar one in Coriolanus (II.i.i.25), while at the same time being aware of the danger of the assumption that Shakespeare could not use the same word differently in different places (Sh. Crit., vol.1, p.48). His rejection of Theobald's interpretation, which is based on an analogy from King Lear, shows how mature his employment of this comparative method is: he maintains the need for an editor to distinguish between a 'direct' use of a word in one context, and a 'metaphorical' use of it in another. On the other hand, when the text does not yield him any sense, he not infrequently admits simply his inability to understand it (see e.g. ibid., vol. i, p. 90).

When, however, the question is to be decided not so much by scholarship as by critical insight, Coleridge is most reliable. The best example of this is his defence of the word 'Indian' in Othello's final speech (Othello, V.i.i.347), which we have discussed earlier (see supra, pp.44-45). This is Coleridge at his best. But he can be blinded by a prudish sense of morality: he sees a "very indelicate anticipation" put in the mouth of Rosalind when she speaks of "my child's father" (As You Like It, I.iii. 10-12), a thing which makes him find the phrase "strange" (Sh. Crit., vol.1, p.105). Similarly his view of the characters can prejudice his interpretation of the text. Although he realizes that Hamlet's words to Polonius (Hamlet, II.i.i.172):

\[
\text{For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good-}
\]

\[
\text{kissing carrion - Have you a daughter?}
\]
are purposely obscure, yet his interpretation of the words, which are admittedly difficult, does suffer from the inflated idealization of Shakespeare's female characters. The lines, he writes,

referred to some thought in Hamlet's mind contrasting the lovely daughter with such a tedious old fool, her father, as he represents Polonius to himself. "Why, fool as he is, he is some degrees in rank above a dead dog's carcase; and if the sun, being a god that kisses carrion, can raise life out of a dead dog, why may not good fortune that favours fools, have a lovely girl out of this dead alive old fool. (Sh. Crit., vol.1, pp.26-27).

Coleridge accepts Warburton's 'noble emendation', as Dr. Johnson calls it, but he attacks his interpretation for his "attention to general positions without the due Shakespearean reference to what is probably passing in the mind of his speaker, characteristic and expository of his particular character and present mood". Yet he himself, in his attention to his view of the character of Ophelia and what Hamlet, as he conceives him, should think of her, misses Hamlet's cynical mood. And just as Warburton's error consists in relating the passage to what precedes it alone, Coleridge's lies in linking it only with what follows - Warburton prejudiced by his moral bias, Coleridge by his idealistic view of Ophelia and Hamlet.

After this sketchy view of the characteristics of Coleridge's editorial method, we may conclude that the value of his intended edition of Shakespeare would have been, as is expected, critical rather than scholarly. Although Coleridge, as has been shown here, does not infrequently apply some sort of scholarship, we have seen how much his method is on the whole fraught with dangers, and how much it is not scholarly in the modern, nor even in the eighteenth century, sense of the term (we have no evidence that he once consulted any early folio or quarto). This appears most clearly especially in his attempts to establish a chronological order of Shakespeare's plays.

Coleridge fully realizes the importance of the chronological order for the understanding of a poet's whole output: "After all you can say, I still think the chronological order the best for arranging a poet's works. All your divisions are in particular instances inadequate, and they
destroy the interest which arises from watching the progress, maturity, and even the decay of genius". (T.T., Jan. 1, 1834).

But he starts by flouting the authority of the scientific, historical or factual method. "Various attempts", he says, have been made to arrange the plays of Shakespeare, each according to its priority in time, by proofs derived from external documents. How unsuccessful these attempts have been might easily be shown, not only from the widely different results arrived at by men, all deeply versed in the black-letter books, old plays, pamphlets, manuscript records and catalogues of that age, but also from the fallacious and unsatisfactory nature of the facts and assumptions on which the evidence rests (Sh. Criti, vol. i, p.235).

If Coleridge rejects the historical method for its failure to give us absolute certainty as to the order of Shakespeare's plays one may sympathize with him. Yet what can be more certain in such matters than the date of the publication of a play or its entry in the Stationers Register - if only we get to know it. It is symptomatic of the weakness and unscientific and wholly subjective nature of the internal evidence method that if one relies solely upon it, one is likely to conceive a different order for the plays every time one develops, changes, or sees the plays in a new light. Coleridge himself has not left us only one scheme of arrangement. Of course, Coleridge is right when he points out that the question of deciding the actual date of every play is not an easy one, that the plays of Shakespeare "both during and after his life were the property of the stage, and published by players, doubtless according to their notion of acceptability with the visitants of the theatre" (ibid., vol.i, p.236; cf. vol.ii, pp. 37 ff.). We admit with him that in such an age "an allusion or reference to any drama or poem in the publication of a contemporary cannot be received as conclusive evidence"; but all we can conclude from this is that we should be extremely wary in applying the historical method, and not, as Coleridge believes, that the method itself is useless and ought to be discarded in favour of the internal evidence approach of his.

Having tried to excuse himself for not meddling in black-letter scholarship, Coleridge proceeds to construct an order for Shakespeare's plays, "turning his researches towards the internal evidence furnished by the writings themselves", though not completely rejecting the fruit of
historical research, since he accepts Malone's dating the commencement of Shakespeare's dramatic career. From internal evidence he gathers that Venus and Adonis was the first heir of his invention. After that Coleridge divides up Shakespeare's plays into different periods, or rather epochs or eras, as he prefers to style them. These periods differ from one time to another. Coleridge has left us three main and other subsidiary attempts: the first is undated; but the other two were made in 1810 and 1819 respectively. And the weakness of his method manifests itself in the fact that he could never make up his mind definitely about the placing of some plays in the perspective of the whole output. For instance, in the first attempt, apart from placing three spurious plays in the first period, i.e., The London Prodigal, Cromwell and Edward III (which he drops in the two other main attempts), he assigns quite rightly The Tempest, Winter's Tale and Cymbeline to the last period (Ibid., vol.1, pp.237-238); yet in the classification attempted in 1810 he relegates The Tempest to the second class together with Midsummer Night Dream, As You Like It and Twelfth Night, immediately after his earliest period which includes Love's Labour Lost, All's Well, Comedy of Errors and Romeo and Juliet; and Cymbeline is promted to the third class together with Troilus and Cressida (Ibid., vol.1, p.239). In the fragment designed for his lecture at the Crown and Anchor in 1819 he again changes his mind and includes Troilus and Cressida and Measure for Measure in the last period of Shakespeare's creative activity (ibid., vol.1, p.241).

If we compare these attempts of Coleridge with any of the schemes drawn up by the late eighteenth century scholars, the difference of method at once becomes salient. It is true that the scholars themselves differed from one another in their proposed arrangements. Compare for example the schemes of Capell and Malone. Edward Capell (Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare, Lond., 1783, vol.11, Part IV) dates The Winter's Tale 1613 whereas Edmond Malone (The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare, ed. Edmond Malone, Lond., 1790, vol.1, Part I, pp.266ff.) fixes it at 1604; the former assigns to Hamlet the probable date of 1605 while the latter suggests 1595, and so on. Yet each has an argument, which is often based on some fact or other. In their method there is room for argumentation: you are at liberty to accept or reject the fact, to be convinced by, or refute the argument. Coleridge's method is not like that. Of course occasionally, and only occasionally, he gives what is near to a scholarly argument for placing a
play in a particular period. Consider for example his reasons for deciding that Love's Labour's Lost is an early play, "the earliest of Shakespeare's dramas" (Sh. Cat., vol. I, p. 92; cf. vol. II, pp. 106-107). Coleridge here puts forward as an argument the number of the rhymes with which the play abounds - just as Malone does (op. cit., vol. I, Part I, p. 294). But Coleridge moves further and takes into account, not strictly scholarly, but directly aesthetic, considerations. "The characters", we are told, "are either impersonated out of his own multiformity, by imaginative self-position, or of such as a country boy and a schoolboy's observation might supply - the curate, school-master ...." We are asked to notice the satire on " follies of words", the abundance of "acute and fancifully illustrated aphorisms", the "sweet" and "smooth" metre; we are shown that the characters of Biron and Rosaline are "evidently the pre-existent state of his Beatrice and Benedict". All these belong to the strict category of aesthetics, and they become dangerous in pure scholarship, and after all attempting a chronological order of Shakespeare's plays is a matter which a disciplined scholar is the only fit person to undertake. In Coleridge's hands the aesthetic method does not go far wrong very often, but that is because he is a critic of the first order. In its general features Coleridge's scheme does not strike us as completely unfamiliar or totally unperceptive. For instance, we tend to agree with him when he links together the four great tragedies, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and Lear and places them at the summit of Shakespeare's fourth period, the period which "gives all the graces and faculties of a genius in full possession and habit of power", and when he assigns to Antony and Cleopatra an even later date. This is nearer to us than Malone's fixing the date of Hamlet in 1596, immediately after Romeo and Juliet and in the same year as King John (op. cit., vol. I, Part I, p. 266). And when he groups together The Tempest, Winter's Tale and Cymbeline, we know that he is justified, that these plays have common aesthetic elements. The value of Coleridge's arrangement lies in fact not in presenting an accurate time scheme for the plays, but in suggesting certain landmarks in the development of Shakespeare's dramatic power. The periods or epochs into which Coleridge divides Shakespeare's work are not divisions in time; in proposing them Coleridge is motivated by aesthetic rather than temporal considerations, and that is why they vary from one time in Coleridge's life to another. His scheme is therefore the parent of such schemes as
Dowden's later on in the century. When we find that Dowden places Troilus and Cressida and Measure for Measure in the "serious, dark, Ironical" period, (Edward Dowden, Shakespeare, His Mind and Art, Lond., 1889, p. x), we should not forget that Coleridge in the first scheme classifies Troilus and Cressida under the phrase "Übergang in die Ironie", and he later links it with Measure for Measure (Sh. Crit., vol. i, p. 238).

But in the hands of an incompetent critic this aesthetic method can be disastrous. The example of James Hurdis, who incidentally was appointed professor of poetry at Oxford in 1793, immediately suggests itself. Hurdis was not satisfied with Malone's proposed order, and accordingly he published a slim volume in which he offered a "new disposition of the plays" (James Hurdis, Cursory Remarks upon the Arrangement of Shakespeare's Plays, Lond., 1792, pp. 43-46). But what he suggested was almost completely the reverse of the present accepted order. He believed that Shakespeare had begun his dramatic career by writing Antony and Cleopatra, Winter's Tale, Cymbeline, Coriolanus and The Tempest. Of Antony and Cleopatra, a play which Coleridge describes as "one of the most gorgeous and sustained of all Shakespeare's dramas" (Altsop, vol. ii, p. 139), and in which he finds "a formidable rival of the Macbeth, Lear, Othello and Hamlet" Hurdis wrote: (Sh. Crit., vol. i, p. 36)

Of all Shakespeare's plays, that which most abounds with faulty lines, is Antony & Cleopatra ... Add to this that Antony & Cleopatra is, in almost every scene, dull and tedious. There is action enough, but it is not made interesting by any nice discrimination or elevation of character, nor by artful display of nature. The dialogue is always flat and often foolish, abounding with passages which provoke a smile by their absurdity, when the action is solemn and important. (James Hurdis, op. cit., p. 40).

Since of Shakespeare's works there is none written "with less spirit and less knowledge of his art", Hurdis concludes that it is the earliest of Shakespeare's plays (ibid., p. 41). Likewise, he has no doubts that the Two Gentlemen of Verona was "certainly written after The Winter's Tale, Cymbeline, Antony & Cleopatra, Timon Coriolanus and The Tempest", because he finds that all these plays "abound in defects of stile and rhythm", whereas the Two Gentlemen is "so generally good in both" (ibid., p. 9). But such are the vagaries of the
aesthetic method, when it encroaches on scholarship and is used by someone not competent enough to pass just judgments.

Coleridge did not entertain much respect for scholarship. This was his weakness, although he prided himself on not being one of the Malones. In various parts of his work he directs many a bitter invective against the Shakespearian scholars, editors and commentators, ranging from Theobald and Warburton down to Malone (see e.g. Sh. Crit., vol.ii, pp. 165 ff.). His Notes on the plays abound with such attacks delivered sometimes in the harshest language. Of Warburton and Theobald he says in contempt and indignation, "Thus it is for no poets to comment on the greatest of poets" (ibid., vol.1, p.54). In Anima Poetae (p.38) we find him mischievously poking fun at Malone.

The disregard for black-letter scholarship, however, was growing rapidly universal by Coleridge's time. The general reader was getting tired of the endless volumes of notes and commentaries, and sometimes longwinded discussions of minute textual points that hardly deserve such a ponderous treatment. Even the scholars themselves were becoming conscious of this growing impatience of the public. Francis Douce, in his valuable book written to illustrate Shakespeare, had to defend himself against the abuse levelled at black-letter learning in the periodicals of the time (Illustrations of Shakespeare, Lond., 1808, vol.ii, p.xi). Another scholar, John Croft, prefaced his very slim book of notes with an apology for the number of notes that had already appeared on Shakespeare. "The press", he wrote, "has groaned and not stood still for near half a century past under the pressure, though clogged with the weight of such an enormous multifarious mass of notes" (Annotations on the Plays of Shakespeare, York, 1810, p.iii). The author admitted he was aware "that Shakespeare was so bewildered with Notes, and the Text so stormed that it appears contrived for a Peg for the Notes to hang upon, that there is not any elbow room left to add to the already amplified list or levee en masse of commentators" (Ibid., p.iv). Even Malone complained that the 'idle notion' that Shakespeare has been buried under his commentators was being propagated by the "tasteless and the dull" (The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare, ed. Edmond Malone, Lond., 1790, vol.1, Part 1, p.iv).

From the closing years of the eighteenth century onwards there poured a flood of satires, skits, parodies and
burlesques on the commentators of Shakespeare. A few examples will suffice to show this trend of opinion at the time. In 1794 S.T. Mathias published a satirical poem called The Pursuits of Literature, in which he likens Shakespeare being torn to pieces ruthlessly by his commentators to Actaeon in the Greek legend devoured by his own hounds. The popularity of these verses may be measured by the fact that they were known then even to a German critic. In 1799 a parody appeared under the title of Capell's Ghost (published in The School for Satire, Lond., 1802), in which we read:

On a sudden strangely sounding,

Doubtious notes and yells were heard,

Grammar, sense and points confounding

A sad troop of Clerks appeare.

In 1800 and 1801 the two skits of G. Harding were published, called respectively The Essence of Malone and Another Essence of Malone, or The Beauties of Shakespeare's Editor. Lastly, a certain author writing under the pen name of Martinus Scriblerus produced an even more ferocious and ironical attack on the commentators in 1814, called Explanations and Emendations of Some Passages in the Text of Shakespeare and of Beaumont and Fletcher.

Of course, Coleridge should have known better; but against such a background his disrespect for the scholars ought, in all fairness, to be set.
APPENDIX D

HOW IS THE Slanderer Believed?

Does Othello really believe Iago 'promptly' and without sufficient reason? To be able to answer this question satisfactorily we must not, as some critics do, isolate the temptation scenes from the rest of the play, judging them as if they were events in everyday life. We must first try to understand the whole of the relationship between Iago and Othello within the framework of the drama, and watch it vigilantly from the very beginning. In doing so, we shall be following Coleridge's advice and examining the 'germ' before it develops (see supra). This note does not attempt to cover the whole question, but only to point out certain aspects of this relationship, which are usually neglected or overlooked by some critics.

When we first meet Iago, we find him plotting to poison Othello's delight (Othello, I.i.68), and yet after he has incited Brabantio and his attendants to 'plague' him, we see him in the following scene rush immediately to Othello, and give him a completely distorted account of his meeting with Brabantio. Now this account serves two purposes: first it removes any suspicion that might be laid upon him as the author of this mischief. But the second and dramatically more important purpose is to assure Othello that he is concerned about his happiness and well being - so that when the time comes he will thrust his blow at Othello when the latter is least suspicious, when, in fact, he has complete faith in his honesty and love. It may be objected that it is too early yet to think of the fatal plot; but we know right from the beginning that Iago follows Othello only "to serve his turn upon him" (Ibid., I.i.42), that his object is to "do" himself "homage" (Ibid., I.i.54) and that he is only hiding his time until some opportunity presents itself for him to snatch at it. The exact nature of the plot Iago does not know yet, but he is already skilfully preparing the right atmosphere for it. Besides, surely it must have been clear in Shakespeare's mind how the whole action would develop when he wrote these opening scenes. The value of the opening scenes is therefore to reveal to us not only character, but also the "germ" of the dramatic situation. We find Iago losing no time in creeping into the affections of the Moor, and, while putting on the...
appearance of the plain, blunt and outspoken soldier, he is in fact doing it more effectively. When in the same scene the enraged Brabantio and his men come to apprehend Othello, and both sides draw their swords, it is Iago, and not Cassio or anybody else, who, singling out Rodrigo, draws attention to his offering to fight for Othello (Ibid., I.ii.59). In fact we are meant to understand that Iago's attempts have certainly succeeded in that direction, when we find Othello choosing among his men none other than his ancient, who by now has become known as "A man of honesty and trust" (Ibid., I.iii.285), to assign to him the responsibility of bringing his wife to Cyprus. This is the first time we hear of Othello's belief in Iago's honesty. From thence forth it is always as honest Iago that Othello addresses him. By the time we reach the scene in which Cassio disgraces himself, Othello has a perfect assurance of Iago's love and honesty:

Honest Iago, that look'st dead with grieving,
Speak, who began this? On thy love, I charge thee.
(Ibid., II.iii.177-8)

And Iago has shown Othello his perfectly dissimulated reluctance to give him an account of the Cassio incident—a thing which convinces him that "his honesty and love (for Cassio) doth mince the matter" (Ibid., II.iii.247). Consequently there is more than a little justification in Othello's words when later on, seeing the same kind of reluctance in Iago to tell him his own thoughts, he says:

And, for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,
And weigh'st thy words before thou givest them breath,
Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more;
For such things in a false disloyal knave
Are tricks of custom, but in a man that's just
They are close delations, working from the heart
That passion cannot rule. (Ibid., III.iii.118-124).

It is by overlooking this relation between Iago and Othello, amongst other things, that Stoll, for instance, finds Othello's behaviour in lending an ear to Iago incredible (E.E. Stoll, Art and Artifices in Shakespeare, pp.10, 17). But the picture of Iago's character, as Othello conceives it in these lines, is not really very different from Hamlet's account of Horatio (Hamlet, III.ii.66-78).

Indeed an analysis of the dramatic structure of Othello will reveal certain salient points that are particularly
relevant here. Shakespeare thought it necessary first that Iago should show Othello in his actual behaviour in his presence his honesty and the love he bears for him. Secondly, Othello should by degrees develop a perfect trust in Iago. Thirdly, Cassio, whom we are told, Othello loves, should not, like Iago, make any profession of his love for Othello in the latter's presence. The audience is continually reminded of it, but not Othello — except, of course, when Desdemona advances his suit, and then it is too late, anyway, and Desdemona's commendation of his virtues to him only confirms his suspicions. But great care is taken that Cassio should first disgrace himself in Othello's eyes by showing himself unreliable and incapable of the trust he has placed in him. Fourthly, Othello should be convinced of Iago's good intentions; he should not be given any cause whatever to suspect that Iago bears a grudge against, or harbours any ill-feeling for, Cassio. Nearly all this Iago accomplishes. At least, we are asked by Shakespeare to think so. It seems therefore that any interpretation of Iago, which makes him a crude piece of machinery, can be easily dismissed on the ground that it overlooks such important aspects of dramatic structure. And indeed if the play is to have any serious meaning at all, the character of Iago must appear convincing.

But besides building up Iago's character Shakespeare resorts to another means by which he makes Othello's acceptance of Iago's story probable. We must not forget that from the very beginning of the play Shakespeare stresses the unnaturalness of the marriage. Iago plays on the theme to Brabantio twice in the opening scene (Oth., I.i.91; 116-18). Brabantio, himself, despite his admiration of Othello ('Her father loved me, oft invited me' etc. ...), recognizes it as "too true an evil" (Ibid., I.i.61), and a "treason of the blood", and immediately attributes it to charm and witchcraft both in his pathetic lamentation (Ibid., I.i.172) and in his indignant outburst to Othello (Ibid., I.ii.61 ff.), as well as in his speech to the senate. It is, he says, against "all things of sense", and "against all rules of nature" (Ibid., I.iii.101):

For nature so preposterously to err,
Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
Sans witchcraft could not (Ibid., I.iii.62-4).

and

- in spite of nature,
  Of years, of country, credit, everything -
  To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!
(Ibid., I.iii.96 ff.)
But perhaps both Iago and Brabantio are prejudiced in their view. When, however, we hear the Duke, who has no cause to underestimate Othello's character, still refer to the affair as a "mangled matter" and in effect ask Brabantio to make the best of a bad job:

Take up this mangled matter at the best:
Men do their broken weapons rather use
Than their bare hands (Ibid., I.iii.173-5).

we have no doubt that such a marriage as that of Othello and Desdemona, if not unnatural, is to be considered at least something unusual. And the unusual nature of this marriage is driven home to Othello and thrust right in his face in the opening scenes. Rehearsing on Roderigo, Iago uses the same argument of the unnaturalness of the marriage to convince him that Desdemona is in love with Cassio (Ibid., II.i.1230). But when in his first colloquy with Othello he most cunningly uses the argument in the temptation scene, it apparently has a devastating effect (Ibid., III.iii.223). Then, but not until then, it is clear that Othello's mind begins to be unsettled. A short while before he has been saying (Ibid., III.iii.183 ff.):

'Tis not to make me jealous
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays and dances well;
Where virtue is, these are more virtuous;
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt;
For she had eyes, and chose me. No, Iago;
I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, I prove; ...

But soon Iago prepares him for the argument. The function of the incantatory reiteration in "I see this hath a little dash'd your spirits" (Ibid., III.iii.214), "I'faith, I fear it has" (Ibid., III.iii.215), "But I do see you're moved" (Ibid., III.iii.217) and "My lord I see you're moved" (Ibid., III.iii.224) - coming close one after the other is really to put Othello, by means of suggestion, in that state of mind most congenial for the working of Iago's poison, to blind him by arousing his emotions. Then comes the thunderbolt couched in the argument of the unnaturalness of the marriage (Ibid., III.iii.229-233), and already in lines III.iii.242-3 we find Othello saying:

Why did I marry? This honest creature doubtless
Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds.
And in lines 263-267 he seems to be convinced of the argument himself:

Haply, for I am black
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declined
Into the vale of years — yet that's not much —
She's gone.

From now on his language begins to change, and foul thoughts and images invade his poisoned mind. Iago is quite right when he says a little later, "The Moor already changes with my poison" (Ibid., III.iii.326).

Othello therefore would not have believed Iago as he does had it not been for certain dramatic features in the play. To claim that Othello believes Iago 'promptly', or to minimize the importance of Iago's role, is really to fail to respond properly to these dramatic features, thus confusing art with life.
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