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Coleridge's Conception of Tragedy and Its Place in His Criticism of Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama

M. Clement Rixon

Loyola University Chicago

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Coleridge's Conception of Tragedy
And Its Place in His Criticism of Shakespeare
and Elizabethan Drama

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Mother M. Clement (Rixon), S.H.C.J.

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Many authors have written more nobly than they have lived. Into their art has gone the truest part of the soul, thereby giving to their thought that unfathomable profundity and peculiar intuition which constitute its special beauty. Of few men is this more true than of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Skilled in the habit of bringing what the Impressionists called "an innocent eye" to the objects of everyday life he was able to arrive at fresh perceptions. He saw familiar objects, not only in an unaccustomed light, but he also perceived novel relations between them. As one whose sense of the value of poetry is based not upon professional theory but upon passionate conviction, he comes to a detailed study and analysis of that "infinitely plastic mind" capable of such high imaginative response and swift adjustment. To follow Coleridge through the labyrinth of his mind in order to recapture his thought from speculation and theory is the task of this study. The difficulties are obvious and varied. The bulk of his criticism appeared in the form of public lectures on the English Poets, particularly Shakespeare and Milton. Interrupted by intervals of illness and misfortune, these lectures continued in several series from 1808 to 1819. Most of this Shakespearean criticism
has come down to us in the form of chaotic jottings and fragmentary records of his genius and must be gathered from widely diffused sources. Guided by recent scholarship on Coleridge, the writer in this study seeks to reconstruct from the mass of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism his theory of drama, and the moral and psychological problems involved in tragedy; to investigate what constitutes the nature of tragedy in Shakespearean and Elizabethan drama; and finally, to learn how Coleridge analyzed and supported his theory of tragic drama from the great plays of Shakespeare.

In particular, it will be the task of this study to trace the development of the concept in Coleridge's mind, to show that it was the natural outgrowth of his insight, molded by such historical and aesthetic principles as it found congenial and contributory; and to trace the dramatic principles against a background of history and personality in the attempt to suggest the derivations of the theories advanced; and to note how Coleridge substantiated his theory by illustrations from the great tragedies of Shakespeare and Elizabethan dramatists.

Careful examination of his work reveals a comprehensive body of criticism embracing many of the important aspects of literature. Moreover, his judgments, proceeding as they do from a mind highly trained and keenly sensitive to the more
subtle implications of art, have all the inevitability of supremely right pronouncements. Often his critical appraisals, the product not only of his knowledge but of his swift intuitive insight, are strikingly original, and form a definite contribution to literary criticism. Although Coleridge never drew up a formal body of critical theory, nevertheless it is possible to abstract from his writings, the underlying principles governing his decision with their artistic application and to observe how flexible and far reaching were his literary judgments.

Obligations to past and present writers upon Coleridge and editors of his writings, are too numerous in this study to be fully recorded. In the notes and bibliography, the writer has endeavored to give full reference to all authorities and these will supply the best evidence of indebtedness. But, in particular, the writer is deeply indebted to Dr. Morton D. Zabel, of Loyola University, Chicago, whose comprehensive knowledge of the subject under study and whose sure critical insight have been the greatest service and inspiration.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY: HISTORICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLUENCES WHICH MOLDED AND DEVELOPED COLERIDGE'S DRAMATIC THEORIES

The literature of any poet worthy of the name is rooted in all his qualities, with little fibres running visibly into every attribute which he possesses. Thus, in a much more subtle sense than the coiner of the phrase intended, is it true that "style is the man." But if it be true that great art brings the whole soul, unique and indivisible, into activity with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth, the reader who desires to understand the full significance of Coleridge's art must study not only his writings but also his philosophy of life as it sustained and molded the images, thoughts and emotions of his poetic mind.

Obviously, the exterior circumstances of an author's life can never wholly explain his art. The achievements of Thompson, for example, or of Keats, defy the theories of those who attempt to find in environment the explanation of an author's genius. However, when we study an artist's philosophy of life, we are dealing with something more personal, and something which, consciously or unconsciously, finds expression in his every action. No man according to Coleridge's own thought was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound
philosopher, for poetry is the bloom and the fragrancy of all human language. Like every rational creature the poet is governed by an individual attitude toward life which is implicit in his every voluntary action, and which dominates his every decision. Knowledge of Coleridge's philosophy, will not, of course, explain or interpret his literary achievement in its entirety. Yet, it is always helpful to perceive in their details the delicate workings of a temperament and character. Such studies are valuable, especially if they are supplemented by other findings, because they give us a clue at least, which, when discovered, helps to make the complexity of an artist's life and work intelligible.

This is especially true of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. A fretful, sensitive, and passionate child, Coleridge at all times shunned the companionship of other boys and substituted for their pastimes a world of his own creation. To this world, fashioned as he himself tells us largely from the Arabian Nights, Robinson Crusoe, and other works of wonder and fantasy, he attached a livelier faith than to the actual world of his senses.

My mind had been habituated to the vast, and I never regarded my senses as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my sight, even at that age.  

But we must not misinterpret this early acquired habit of detached thinking as indolent day dreaming or slavish yielding to fancy. This would be to read falsely. Rather we must be guided by his own statement when he says, "I know no other way of giving the mind a love of the Great and the Whole." It is evident that the attitude of the empiricist, the avowed self-surrender of the mind to the disconnected impressions of sense, was foreign to Coleridge from the first.

Coleridge's eight years at Christ's Hospital in London with their hours of loneliness and inner reflection gave added impetus to this habit of self-abstraction. In the first throes of homesickness, he clung to the memories of the beauties of his native home at Ottery St. Mary; then, as the yearning gradually abated, the passion for speculation asserted itself, and he made his first acquaintance with the philosophy of Mysticism in the writings of the Neo-platonists. To him

3. Letters, p. 16.
4. See Lamb's Essay, Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago.
English Philosophy was a contradiction. Materialistic ideas did not function in his actual life, for possessing great warm emotions, he could not think of mind as merely a playground for physical forces. These speculations, although they bore little fruit at the time, are yet worthy of note; for they show how early the habit was formed in him of applying philosophical principles to his criticism of poetry and art. From Boyer he was learning, as he tells us in the first volume of the *Biographia Literaria* "that 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 fugitive causes."

Thus a fertile and attractive field of investigation was opened out to him. In the closing years of his school-life and the opening ones of his residence at Cambridge, he devoted much speculative energy "to a solid foundation (of poetical criticism) on which permanently to ground my opinions, in the component faculties of the human mind itself and their exalted dignity and importance." In view of Coleridge's later distinction, it is of interest to observe that Coleridge at

this time busied himself with investigations of "the faculty or source from which the pleasure given by any poem or passage was derived," as a criterion of the merits of the poem in question.

To his study of Aristotle and the Neo-platonists was added, during these years, the study of such mystics as Boehme, Berkeley, Plotinus and others. The influence of Plotinus never completely left him. The writings of these mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent his mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system. They contributed an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death, and were as rattling twigs and sprays in winter into which some unknown sap was yet to be propelled, if they were to nourish his soul with vitalizing energy. Coleridge pays tribute to their influence in the *Literaria Biographia* when he tells us:

> If they were too often a moving cloud of smoke to me by day yet they were always a pillar of fire throughout the night, during my wanderings through the wilderness of doubt, and enabled me to skirt, without crossing, the sandy deserts of utter unbelief.

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8. Ibid., pp. 72 ff.
9. Ibid., p. 98.
With clearness of vision Coleridge traces the fullest and most perfect enunciation of the law of association as established in the contemporaneity of the original impressions to the writings of Aristotle; and of these in particular to the books "De Anima", and "De Memoria."

With the conviction born of correct critical judgment he exposes the errors of Hobbes, Descartes, and Hartley, all of whom differed from Aristotle only to err. Coleridge's own principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites stems from Aristotle's theory regarding the association of ideas in the mind.

The distinction between imagination and fancy outlined itself in Coleridge's mind and he proceeded to investigate it psychologically. In a series of theses he discovers the final principle of knowledge as "the identity of subject and object" in the "Sum, or I Am."

Coleridge was questing for a unity of the spiritual and the material as Brandl remarks; "his fancy took from that time a mystico-theological direction, which he never after entirely discarded." These ideas were evolving in Coleridge's mind between the years of 1795 and 1798 and run through the poetry

10. Ibid., p. 71.
11. Introduction lxvi.
he was writing at this time. He appeals to nature as the chief means of intercourse with the One and we read:

O! The one Life within us and abroad, 
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul 
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light 
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere.

Coleridge was a close observer; his intuitional experience with nature was at times capable of intimate communion and yet a more thorough revolution in philosophic principles, and a deeper insight into his own heart were yet wanting; and it was, doubtless the sense of these deficiencies which turned his thoughts to Germany.

In August 1798 he writes to Poole, "I look upon the realization of the German scheme as of great importance to my intellectual activity, and to my moral happiness." Shawcross cautions that it seems necessary to insist upon two important facts in connection with this supposed crisis in Coleridge's mental life:

The first is, that he was a metaphysician long before he studied German philosophers; and the second, that it was in obedience to, and not in defiance of, his better instincts that he first devoted himself to that study.

15. Letters, I, 386.
and we know that long before German philosophy could augment his
goodly store of thought, his mind had already formed a solution
for the imaginative element. He did derive, however, from Kant
the idea that the mind is

a faculty of thinking and forming judgments
on the notices furnished by the sense.17

It was early in the year 1801, after Coleridge had returned
from Germany, that the intellect of Kant first took hold of him
as he significantly expresses it, with "giant hands." The dis-
tinction as elaborated by Kant, must have been hailed by
Coleridge with especial joy; for it gave a rational basis to a
presentiment of much earlier date. But he was far from
committing himself to Kant's system in its entirety. The divorce
of subject and object, spirit and nature, could not but appear
to Coleridge a contradiction of his deepest intuitions. Thus,
while subscribing to Kant's notion that mere intellect cannot
grasp the supersensuous, he withheld his assent to the idea that
the supersensuous cannot be given in experience, for facts of
his own inner experience spoke otherwise; and the task still

17. Samuel T. Coleridge, The Friend (London, 1844), I, Section I,
essay 3, p. 240.
18. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, tr. T. K. Abbott,
(1898), p. 98, passim. Further studies will be found in
Claud Howard's Coleridge's Idealism: A Study of its
Relationship to Kant and to the Cambridge Platonists
(Boston, 1924) and in The German Influence in the English
The parallels with Schlegel are given in Anna Augusta
remained for him, of constructing a philosophy which would harmonize with his inner convictions. We are brought to the very root of Coleridge's difference with Kant when we study his denial of the essential passivity of our sensible and emotional nature. Coleridge's searching and analytical intelligence urged him to cling steadfastly to his own belief in the creative power of the imagination and to reject his former Hartleian doctrines which he now found inadequate. As early as 1803 he wrote to Southey,

> How flat, how wretched is Hartley's solution of the phenomena (Of memory). Believe me, Southey, a metaphysical solution that does not tell you something in the heart is grievously to be suspected as apocryphal. I almost think that ideas never recall ideas; as far as they are ideas, any more than leaves in a forest create each other's motion - the breeze it is that runs through them - it is the soul, the state of feeling. 19

Coleridge saw, as Prof. Muirhead states:

the devastation which the emaciated accounts current in his time, of the work of the imagination had spread in men's minds upon the whole subject, and the necessity of an energetic assertion of the presence of the

---

element of passion combined with penetrative reflection; fundamental sanity of judgment and a form of expression that would give some sense of the inner harmony of the material presented to the mind and therewith of the essential truth of the presentation.20

Hence, he felt himself faced with the task of explaining the function of Imagination as not only associational but also creative and to reinstate it to its position of lofty importance for he believed Imagination to be the faculty whereby that substance is appropriated toward artistic ends, and placed in the control of the artist.

The discrimination between mere association by which Coleridge meant an act of memory, not of creation, and a definite imaginative function finally crystallized into the famous definition which is to be found in the thirteenth chapter of his *Biographia Literaria*:

The Imagination then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am. . . . . 

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Taylor Coleridge, in Bohn's Standard Library (London 1911) and the "Unpublished Fragments on Aesthetics," by T. M. Raysor in *SP*, xxii (1925), 529-37.
21. See *Memorials of Coleorton* of January 1810 wherein he hailed Boehme as a mystic who might help him to oppose the mechanistic tendencies of his day. Also, Miss Alice D. Snyder, "Coleridge on Boehme", in *PMLA*, xlv (1930), 616-18.
It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify.22

Kant had distinguished three functions or activities of the imagination:

As reproductive, in which it is subject to empirical conditions; as productive, in which it acts spontaneously and determines phenomena instead of being determined by them, but yet in accordance with a law of understanding; and as aesthetic; when it attains its highest degree of freedom in respect of the object, which it regards as material for a possible not an actual and impending act of cognition.23

Coleridge held this last function as distinct to which he ascribed the name Fancy. Coleridge continued to struggle with that principle of reconciling opposites which plays so important a part in his thought; stressing this power of the Imagination by which it makes subject and object realize their interdependence. To express this function he coined the word esemplastic, by which he meant not so much the absorption of the conscious self in the nature which it contemplates, as the unification of self with those objects of nature with which the self shares a community of essence. Coleridge held that the

23. Ibid., I, lviii.
Imagination, partaking of both "thought and feeling" could effect such an identification.

This Principle of Reconciliation led Coleridge deeper into his fundamental problem: the solution of disparities between what he called the conscious creative processes in man and the unconscious order of art to which those same processes are applied. In H. W. Coleridge's reproduction of *Literary Remains* there is an essay on "Poesy and Art" which contains Coleridge's maturest utterance on the subject, though it bears the tentative character of all his speculation. The main object of the essay seems to be to define the true artist's relation to nature:

If the artist copies the mere nature, the *natura naturata* what idle rivalry!

Believe me, you must master the essence, the *natura naturans*, which presupposes a bond between nature in the highest sense and the soul of man. 27

This conception of the essence of art, is in close accord with Schelling's expressed in *Transcendental Idealism*. But, Coleridge who was avowedly theistic could never fully accept it in its fullest implications, for he was convinced that nature symbolizes the spiritual life of man, but cannot originate it.

This symbolic interpretation of nature, and the symbolic use of natural images, was thus a fact and an object of reflection to Coleridge even before the period of his settlement at Stowey, but we have no evidence that he had before that date assigned a definite faculty to this sphere of mental activity, or named that faculty, the imagination. A letter to Thelwall, written before his migration to Stowey, seems to preclude an hypothesis. Further, it must be borne in mind that Coleridge's speculations in the years previous to the closer intercourse with Wordsworth (dating from 1797) were concerned equally with religion and metaphysic as with aesthetic proper. Hence, as Shawcross remarks, we cannot wonder if his analysis of the poetic faculties proved a long and arduous task.

On passing to the study of Fichte, he found a further development of Kantian doctrine from which he turned away in complete disapproval. No account of the imagination in Fichte's system commended itself to Coleridge. For, as is evident from the definition of Imagination cited from his work, this faculty, having no external foundation for its activity, is

29. Letters, p. 228.
30. Fichte, Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre, (1845), i, 214-16; "Imagination is a power that sways to and fro between determination and non-determination, between finite and infinite."
consumed in the perpetual endeavor to outstrip the limits of self, in a restless self-torture which issues in "unsubstantial mockeries of creation." Such a conclusion was assuredly inimical to the faith which never wholly failed him - the belief in a spirit which spoke directly to the soul of man and revealed itself mediately through forms found in nature. Coleridge's efforts to find a philosophical expression for this faith brought him into contact with Schelling and his large verbal borrowings from Schelling in the course of the "deduction of the imagination" indicate to what extent he accepted Schelling's account of the faculty. To unify and so to create is, in the view of both writers, the characteristic function of the imagination and of this unification the principle is found in the self, conceived not abstractly but as the whole nature of man, or all that is essential to that nature.

The misconception, that in constituting the imagination the peculiar organ of philosophy, Schelling countenances the claim of every visionary to a respectful hearing, be his system never so wild and fantastic, arises from a misinterpretation

32. Cf., "Anima Poetae", x, passim.
of his meaning, and evidences the error of confounding fancy with imagination. By calling it the organ of philosophy, Schelling means that "philosophy must start from a fundamental experience, and that it is the imagination which renders the fundamental experience possible." With increasing age Coleridge's sense of aloofness from external things grew stronger, and his inner life gained in vividness and depth as he realized the all importance of appealing to the purely spiritual consciousness as a common possession of all men. Thus, the imagination, as the faculty of mediate vision, yields place to reason, the faculty of apprehending truth. Thus, the true significance of the moral consciousness which had been among Coleridge's earliest convictions, reasserts itself in his life of thought. Schelling's chief contribution to the ideas of Kant and Schiller was his association of Beauty with goodness and with truth. He defied the Kantian ideal of "disinterestedness" in art by stating that "subjective fascination" is necessary. This he later applied in his Shakespearean lectures, where his influence on Coleridge is beyond question.

It is evident, also, that Schlegel confirmed and developed

33. Shawcross, op. cit., I, lxiii.
rather than suggested many of Coleridge's ideas. Both, as Raysor states, had studied Kant, Lessing, Herder, Schiller and had worked at Göttingen under Heyne. They were, likewise, romantic critics in conscious revolt against the criticism of the previous age, especially that of Dr. Johnson. The records of the 1811-12 lectures, though imperfect, are sufficiently clear to show coincidences between the opinions of the two critics even before Coleridge read Schlegel's book. The most important of these coincidences — barring the common defense of Shakespeare's morality and his puns — is in the statement regarding the historical point of view, in their discussion of the unities: and later, in the distinction between the classic drama of Sophocles and the romantic drama of Shakespeare; and finally, in his borrowed interpretation of Greek tragedy. But Coleridge's explanation of dramatic illusion is his own special contribution to the controversy over the unities, and it represents the characteristically subtle and accurate psychological analysis in which Coleridge surpassed all his English and German predecessors in Shakespearean criticism. As Raysor states:

they are his teachers only in aesthetics, in criticism of an actual work of art he

34. Raysor, op. cit., Introduction 1, xxx.
35. Cf., I, 167-73, "Greek Drama."
was as original as a critic may well be. His originality and power were irregularly displayed because they were frequently nullified by his tragic weakness of body and will but his best achievements are the products of his own superb genius.\(^{36}\)

Coleridge wrote at a moment when a new age of art was imposing new demands upon an idealistic tradition and with his remarkable comprehension of the philosophic issues underlying these problems, initiated and established the great tradition of English Shakespearean criticism.

Before proceeding to a consideration of those problems it might be well to summarize the ramified elements in German thought which shuttled back and forth weaving such a new pattern in the mind of Coleridge. In the latter half of the Eighteenth Century, especially in Germany an urgent attempt was made to effect a reconciliation of the sensory and the rational perceptions of beauty. Kant took up the analysis from which his theory of transcendental idealism evolved. His concepts were passed to Schiller and Schlegel whose modifications did not fundamentally effect the Kantian ideas. The burden of associationist prejudice continued to weight down men's minds, despite Coleridge's open repudiation of it, and furnished a

\(^{36}\) Ibid., I, xxxiii.
\(^{37}\) A. C. Lovejoy's *The Revolt against Dualism* (Chicago, 1926), pp. 38-57.
basis for contention throughout the period. In insisting on the solidarity of the higher functions of intelligence, Coleridge protested at once against a philosophy which makes intellect the measure of all things, and a religion which divorces itself from reason and imagination. The means to human salvation must be open to all humanity and its ultimate attainment must demand the exercise of the true and undivided self, whose operations within the various faculties renders them fruitful or barren. This truth constitutes the philosophical significance of Coleridge's theory of imagination and supplies the basis for his distinction between imagination and fancy.

Coleridge's lifelong vindication of the truth, that the activity of imagination is determined subjectively by the laws of reason and objectively by the truth of things, and thus differs essentially from the accidental and capricious combinations of fancy, rendered invaluable service to the cause of literary criticism for all time. As Shawcross states:

Not indeed that its significance is historical merely. Coleridge's message is not one which any age is likely to find irrelevant or superfluous: and the

critic or artist who runs counter to its spirit will do so at his own peril.\textsuperscript{39}

In order to attune our minds the better to catch and understand this message we now turn to a study of the fundamental principles of drama noting what the Greeks believed, constituted the genuine "clash of tragedy" and how Shakespeare's notion of the tragic dissonance diverged.

\textsuperscript{39} Op. cit., I, lxxxix.
CHAPTER II

AN INVESTIGATION OF COLERIDGE'S LECTURES ON THE TRAGEDIES OF SHAKESPEARE WHEREIN HE TREATS OF THE ORIGIN OF GREEK DRAMA

Before commencing any investigation of what the Greeks believed constituted the genuine "clash of tragedy" it might be well to recall the fact that the mimetic instinct is confined to no single nation; it is universal in its appeal and reveals itself as one of the most primitive of human emotions. Nevertheless, it is fitting that a start should be made with the drama of classical Greece and Rome, although Nicoll warns us that:

in all considerations of the evolution of tragedy it must be borne in mind that the medieval mysteries which later developed into the full florescence of the Elizabethan drama were indigenous to the soil; that the direct influence of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides is not visible till centuries had elapsed, and that even Seneca's tragedies did not come to claim their place in the elaboration of the drama until the sixteenth century.40

"The corruption of a poet," says Dryden, "is the generation of a critic;" but the poets of Greece seem to have been free from this decay. In the fifth century at any rate they left criticism

to the Sophists, such as Protagoras, Gorgias, and Empedocles. Plato, perhaps, is the first Greek writer who really graduated in the art of literary criticism of which Aristotle was the first professional practitioner."

But this we do know. After the Hellenic Art, including literary art, the Poetics of Aristotle is one of the most significant sources for the study of drama that has come down to us from Greek civilization, because it represents the definitive judgment of the Greeks themselves upon two, the leading two, Hellenic inventions: Epic Poetry and Tragic Drama. As Burke states:

Aristotle has spoken so much and so solidly upon the force of imitation (drama) in his Poetics that it makes any further discussion upon the subject the less necessary.42

Furthermore, any pronouncement he made takes on an added value as regards this present study, when we recall Coleridge's own statement in Biographia Literaria:

I adopt with full faith the principle of Aristotle concerning poetry; that poetry is essentially ideal, that it includes all accident; that its apparent individualities

41. Aristotle, Poetics, tr. by W. Hamilton Fyfe. (The Loeb Classical Library Series). This text is based on Vahlen's third ed. (Leipzig, 1885). The prime source of all existing texts of Poetics is the eleventh century Paris MS, No. 1741, designated as Ac.
42. cf., Burke, On the Sublime and the Beautiful, I, p. 16.
of rank, character, or occupation, must be representative of a class and that the persons of poetry must be clothed with generic attributes, with the common attributes of the class; not so much as one gifted individual might possibly possess, but such as from his situation, it is most probable that he would possess.43

We may assume that in the Poetics as elsewhere in the round of knowledge Aristotle is far from being an isolated scholar, but systematizes and completes the work of predecessors, while giving thought to the theories of literature of contemporary scholars, as is evidenced in chapters twenty-five and twenty-six of that work. It might be interesting to speculate, were it not to digress, how much of his contemporary criticism filtered down through the Alexandrian critics to Horace, and later, through channels no longer open to us, to the Italian commentators of the Renaissance, in whom we find unexpected yet seemingly conventional modifications of Aristotle’s doctrines; but the salient fact to be noted is that if literary criticism, in a broad sense, begins with Aristophanes and Plato, in the narrower sense, it begins with this work of Aristotle on poetry which ancient Greece considered as representative and final.

Poetry then, for Aristotle, is a genus which is sharply divided into species, the noblest of which is Tragedy. Taken together these species - tragedy, comedy, the epic, and others, would constitute the genus without any surplus or residuum. There is a fundamental notion in the Aristotelian philosophy which we may recall here "that the universe itself must be likened to an animal, having the Deity as its principle of life." The form or essential structure is to the poem what the soul is to the body; this seems to be a fundamental conception of all human thought. We are not astonished, then, at Aristotle's dwelling on the Platonic comparison of a drama to a living creature. In conjunction with this idea Coleridge says:

The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by form and rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living body is of necessity an organized one, and what is organization but the connection of parts relative to the whole, so that each part is at once end and means. This is no discovery of criticism; it is a necessity of the human mind - and all nations have felt and obeyed

45. Ibid., p. 8-9
47. Ibid., p. 125 passim.
it; hence, the invention of metre and measured sounds as the vehicle and involucrum of poetry, itself a fellow-growth from the same life, even as the bark is to the tree.48

All nature thus becomes a work of art whose soul, or form or creative principle is God. To Aristotle the soul and the body were the inner and outer aspects of one and the same object, so that the immost meaning of a thing is vitally connected with its outer manifestations. According to circumstances he will lay stress upon one aspect or the other. As Lane Cooper remarks:

The hamarita or short-coming in the tragic hero may refer to something within the man, or to an outward act, a particular short-coming or case of misjudgment which brings about his (the hero's) ultimate downfall.49

With regard to the form or structure of poetry Coleridge, borrowing from Schlegel, distinguishes two kinds of form - mechanical and organic. Mechanical form is that which is not necessarily caused by the purpose or function of matter, but that which is pre-determined as a wet clay moulded into any shape. Organic form on the other hand, is innate; it grows of

48. Raysor, Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, I, pp.222-223. Note: This lecture is a separate fragment from Egerton MS, #2800, f. 24.
necessity out of matter:

...it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such is life; such is the form.50

Understanding the fundamental principles of Coleridge's theory, we see this as a supposition in his technique. Coleridge's belief in the Divine in nature as the natura naturans makes it logical that:

Nature the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms.51

In tracing the evolution of tragedy we find that it stems from the improvising poet-leaders in the dithyrambic chorus of satyrs. From this beginning tragedy progressed little by little as successive authors improved upon what preceded them. From the single spokesman of the primitive form Aeschylus increased the number of actors to two; he diminished the part taken by the chorus - that is, he reduced the amount of choral chanting; and he made the spoken dialogue the chief element in the play. Sophocles brought about the innovation of three

51. Ibid., I, p. 199.
actors, and was "the first to make use of painted scenery." Furthermore, there was a change in the magnitude of the action represented; for the little plots of the primitive form were abandoned; and, with its development out of satyr-dance, tragedy also discarded the grotesque early diction. At the same time, the trochaic tetrameter gave way to an imabic measure. Relative to this Lane Cooper states that "the reason for the early use of the trochaic tetrameter was that tragedy retained its connection with satyrs and was more nearly allied to choral dancing than it is at present."

According to Aristotle's conception:

..tragedy is an artistic imitation of an action that is serious, complete in itself, and of an adequate magnitude; so much for the object which is imitated. As for the medium, the imitation is produced in language embellished in more than one way; one kind of embellishment being introduced separately in one part, and another kind in another part of the whole.54

As for the manner, the imitation is itself in the form of an action directly presented not narrated. With regard to the proper function resulting from the imitation of such an object in such a medium and manner, it is "to arouse the emotions of

52. Cooper, op. cit., p. 9.
53. Ibid., p. 18.
pity and fear in such a way as to effect that special purging
and relief (catharsis) of these passions and to similar emotions.

It might be added here that pleasure, to Aristotle, was not a
passive state of being, but a form of activity. In his working
definition he does not allude to the element of pleasure in the
tragic relief, but as he develops his thought we become aware
that the relief of tragedy may be referred to as either the one
or the other.

The true poet, Coleridge felt:

will through his creative genius distinguish
the degree and kind of excitement produced
by the very act of poetic composition. As
intuitively will he know what differences of
style it at once inspires and justifies; what
admixture of conscious volition is natural to
that state; and in what instances such figures
and colours of speech degenerate into mere
creatures of an arbitrary purpose, cold and
technical artifices of ornament and connection.

And the thoughts are obtained "by the power of Imagination pro-
ceeding by meditation rather than by observation." However,
the perfection of literary art depends on the exactitude with
which the artist gives expression to his "vision" by finding

55. Ibid., V. 10-vi. 7. Note: For a conscious explanation of
the Aristotelian catharsis see the Preface of John Milton's
Samson Agonistes.
56. Raysor, op. cit., I, p. 60
57. Ibid., p. 64.
the exact form which corresponds to the interior truth which he wishes to express. As Flaubert, the great literary stylist elaborated it:

There are no beautiful thoughts without beautiful forms, and conversely. As it is impossible to extract from a physical body the qualities which really constitute it — colour, extension, and the like — without reducing it to a hollow abstraction, in a word without destroying it; just so, it is impossible to detach the form from the idea.58

And where do we search for these thoughts? Coleridge gives us the direction when he tells us:

...the thoughts are obtained by the power of the Imagination proceeding by meditation rather than by observation.59

At the conclusion of this lecture Coleridge climaxes his criticism with the following succinct pronouncement:

...could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry and sink into mechanical art. The rules of the Imagination are themselves the very powers of growth and production.60

Coleridge was here voicing a doctrine to which his inner consciousness could amply testify as Alice Meynell says of him, "he had the exaltation of the senses which is the best thing

59. Raysor, op. cit., I, p. 64.
60. Ibid., pp. 65-66.
that can befall any poet" and when at his best she averred:

There is nothing elsewhere in poetry like the pureness of his emotions; the beyond of dreams, the beyond of childhood, the beyond of slight delirium are there together. He takes the sun, the moon, and the stars as apparitions, as a dream takes them when a dream gives warning of a coming illness. From immeasurable hiding places he brings them hither in simple verse, and with them the very secrets of the senses, and with them, too, the secrets of the blood and of the flying breath in sleep. 61

Advancing now from the synthetic definition of tragedy, as stated in the Poetics, we proceed to analyze the elements that separately demand the attention of the tragic poet. In every tragedy there are six constituent elements according to the quality of which we judge the excellence of the work as a whole. There are Plot, Intellect (dianoia), Moral Character (ethos), Diction or the metrical arrangement of words, Melody, and lastly, Spectacle. Two of these, melody and diction concern the medium of imitation; one, spectacle, relates to the manner; while three, plot, moral disposition, and intellect, represent the objects. Apart from the constituent elements to be used as ingredients of tragedy there are the separable members into which it is quantitatively divided. These are Prologue, Episode, Exode, and Choral Song, the last being subdivided into Parode.

According to the Greek conception of tragedy, the most important of the constituent elements was the plot by which they understood:

... an artistic ordering of the incidents so as to secure the ideal tragic effect.\(^{64}\)

for tragedy is not a representation of men but of a piece of action, of life, of happiness or unhappiness, which comes under the head of action, and the end aimed at is

... the imitation not of qualities of character but of some action. Hence, (for them) the incidents and the plot are the end at which tragedy aims, and in everything the end aimed at is of prime importance.\(^{65}\)

Men are better or worse according to their moral bent, but they are happy or miserable in their actual deeds. Hence, the classicist set great store by form and structure; he was the representative and the trustee of order and proportion. Witness his care for the consolidation of part with part in the organization of his materials; but the severity of his logical character is tempered by vision or insight. Likewise, he inclines as Prosser Hall Frye points out, "to a marked subdual of the

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p. 9.
\(^{64}\) Ibid., p. 11.
\(^{65}\) Ibid., v1, 7-13. Compare Socrates in the Phaedrus of Plato, p. 28.
parts of the drama or to such a treatment of them as shall indicate that they are members of a whole from whose solidarity they draw their own supreme importance and validity." In contradistinction to this, Romanticism manifests itself by an emphasis on style above structure because the romanticist himself delights in novelty and variety even more than pertinence and consistency; and his drama is characterized by expansiveness and diffusion. Yet Coleridge considered that:

No work of true genius dare want its appropriate form; neither indeed is there any danger of this. As it must not, so neither can it be lawless. For it is even this that constitutes it genius - that it has power of acting creatively under laws of its own origination.

Genius, then, works by laws, and Coleridge tells us in the *Anima Poetae*:

the Imagination becomes the laboratory in which thought elaborates essence into existence.

And he further distinguishes between observation and meditation in the creation of drama when he states that the creation of

67. Note: This sentence is based directly on Schlegel (*Werke*, vol. 1, 157), and furnishes a perfect instance of the difficulty of assessing Schlegel's influence with any degree of accuracy.
characters on the part of Shakespeare was in some sense self-expression; it was meditation of his own and then reproduction:

...he had only to imitate certain parts of his own character and they were at once true to nature. Some may think them of one form some of another; but they are still in truth Shakespeare and the creatures of his meditation. 69

Since characters in Shakespeare's plays were regarded by Coleridge as "representations of abstract conceptions" the universal became an idea. Of the idea he wrote in his notes:

Shakespeare studied mankind in the Idea of the human race. 71

This statement is basic in all his psychological method. Shakespeare's drama then became "the vehicle of general truth" and all of his characters have the primary purpose of expressing this truth.

It may further be stated that like every work of literature a tragedy is the product of two factors. There is first the substance or "the myth" which serves as the foundation of the action, and second, the handling or treatment, the "art" which gives the raw material its value. In this regard Frye indicates that:

...the tragic story should involve, on the one hand, a discrepancy between our

69. Powell, op. cit., p. 110.
sense of fact, as illustrated in the incidents of the action and, on the other, our conception of justice and right reason. 72

It is the consciousness of inconsistency, implicit in the perception of the dramatic data, as between our knowledge of things as they are or seem to be and our vision of them as they should be, which it is one of the duties of the tragic dramatist to reinforce and deepen in his treatment. The incongruity is such as to shock profoundly the moral prepossessions of the race - to shake, if not to unsettle, confidence in the moral order, in the moral reality of the universe, and to confound belief in the equitable regulation of mortal affairs.

It is this feeling of insecurity and confusion, as it were a sort of moral dizziness, due to the vivid realization, in the dramatic fable, of a suspicion which is always lurking uncomfortably near the threshold of consciousness that the world is somehow out of plumb, which constitutes what may be termed "the tragic qualm." When an act of which happiness may be consistently predicted, Frye tells us, turns out disastrously, like Antigone's celebration of her brother's funeral rites, the conscience is deeply shocked. Herein lies the genuine "clash" of tragedy - not in the mere collision of persons or interests,

but rather in the contradiction life is perpetually opposing to human values and standards. Consequently the very verisimilitude of a drama, and hence its reality, is measured not by the exactitude with which the dramatist is seen to reproduce the spectator's own sensations, but by the justice with which he is felt to have voiced the tragic qualm.

In discussing the relationship of tragedy to the Poetics, Lucas states that:

If the tragic problem of Shakespeare and the Elizabethans is compared with that of Sophocles and the Athenians, it will be found to arise from quite another notion of the fatal incongruities of life and to be differently constituted with respect to its emotional notes; while the solutions tacitly proposed by the two dramas will naturally diverge to an equal extent.73

And Frye comments:

With Shakespeare the tragic dissonance would seem to engage man's possibilities or pretensions and his fate. The incompatibility of his desires and aspirations, which are illimitable, with the conditions which actually dispose of him - mean, trivial, absurd, belittling as they may be but always at odds with his higher nature and impulses and frequently ruinous of his life and happiness - something like this would appear to be what moved Shakespeare in his graver moods.74

73. Lucas, F. L. Tragedy in Relation to Aristotle's Poetics (New York, 1938), pp. 76-78.
74. Frye, op. cit., pp. 149-150.
Coleridge, in his lecture on Classical and Romantic Drama remarks:

Tragedy carries the thoughts into the mythologic world in order to raise the emotions, fears, and hopes which convince the inmost heart that their final cause is not to be discovered in the limits of mere mortal life (and) to force us into a presentiment, however dim, of a state in which those struggles of inward free will with outward necessity, which form the true subject of the tragedies, shall be reconciled and solved.  

Coleridge, true romanticist that he was, believed that in tragedy the moral law either obeyed or violated, above all consequences - its own maintenance or violation constituting the most important of all consequences - forms the groundwork of tragedy while comedy is based on prudence or imprudence, on enlightened or mis-led self love. Coleridge concluded the above lecture from which these ideas have been cited with these remarks:

The whole moral system of entertainment, exactly like that of fable, (here is a hint concerning its unfitness for children) consists in rules of prudence. With exquisite conciseness and at the same time with exhaustive fullness of sense an old critic said

75. cf. Raysor, op. cit., I, p. 172. (Egerton MS, 2800, ff. 10-14)  Note: An eloquent development of these ideas of Schlegel which may be found in various passages of Werke, V, 220.
that tragedy was the flight or elevation of life, comedy (that of Menander) its arrangement or ordannance.\textsuperscript{76}

In the foregoing chapters of this thesis we saw that one of Coleridge's fundamental philosophical principles was the theory of the Reconciliation of Opposites. We recognize the force of this doctrine here when he gives as the first cause or origin of meter:

\begin{quote}
...the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

from which thought may be concluded: "first, that as the elements of meter owe their existence to a state of increased excitement, so the meter itself should be accompanied by the natural language of excitement." But these elements are created by a voluntary act with the view to balancing emotion and delight and must be felt in metrical language. A reconciliation must be effected. Hence,

There must be not only a partnership but a union; an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and voluntary purpose.\textsuperscript{79}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p. 176.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Griggs, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 207.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 210.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Raysor, \textit{op. cit.}, II, p. 215.
\end{itemize}
Moreover, meter is an "indication of the pulse of passion" whose essential function Coleridge considered to be:

...the high spiritual instinct of the human being impelling us to seek Unity by harmonious adjustment and thus establishing the principle that all the parts of an organized whole be assimilated to the more important and essential parts. 80

Meter thus interpreted was held by Coleridge to be the "fusing agent." Passion gives to expression its meter, but it must be passion excited by poetic fervor. However, Coleridge would have his reader understand that the true drama although possessing pleasure and beauty of the individual parts, must have unified beauty - the beauty of the whole. Likewise, the dramatist must create under spontaneous inspiration, for thus created the play will possess living vitality which enables the reader to assimilate the poet's emotions and feeling unto himself.

Meter, thus, is closely related with the passion that aroused it and the pleasure it evokes "will vary with the different modes of poetry" for which reason Coleridge firmly asserts that passion provides that neither thought nor imagery shall be simply objective, but "that the passio vera of humanity shall warm and animate both."

80. Shawcross, Biog. Lit., II, p. 56.
In this we see the advancement of the romantic drama over that of the classic since Aristotle clearly regards verse not as essential but as the customary adjunct of art. It is the principle of imitation that is essential and the embodiment in metrical or non-metrical language is a secondary consideration.

In general terms Euripides derives his drama from the conflict of the ethical with the moral. Unlike his predecessors Euripides fails to sustain the supremacy or even the importance of the latter principle, and failing to do so, misses the distinctive double note of Greek tragedy. His favourite procedure is to represent morality as a hollow convention or tradition with little or no title to reverence or credit. If it is moral at all, it is so, not in the Aeschylean or Sophoclean sense, but in the modern, the humanitarian, manner. Euripides, Lane Cooper asserts, always contended that "the order of the universe is not moral but emotional."

Hence we may assume that Euripides "the most imitated as the most consonant of classic dramatists with later tastes,"

81. Cooper, op. cit., p. 4.
82. Ibid., p. 203.
serves as a kind of transition between the serious drama of the ancients and that of modern times. In his case interest shifted from moral to psychological problems, from the quality of actions to the characters of men and the activities of nature. As one critic states: "It is as though he had undertaken to forecast the terminals toward which the modern drama would move in its evolution, even to the indiscriminate \textit{drame} into which tragedy proper finally degenerated," not to speak of Shakespearean tragedy of character, which he may have influenced in a measure through Seneca, and the Racinean tragedy of passion of which he was obviously the direct and immediate inspiration, while the deformation of his tragedy as a \textit{genre} was evidently in the direction of modern comedy.

The record of the 1811-12 lectures wherein Coleridge with characteristically subtle analysis pointed the distinction between the classic drama of Sophocles and the romantic drama of Shakespeare ends with this summary criticism:

Ancients, statuesque; moderns, picturesque.  
Ancients, rhythm and melody; moderns harmony.  
Ancients, the finite, and, therefore grace, elegance, proportion, fancy, dignity, majesty, -

\cite{83} Dowden, E., \textit{Shakespeare: His Mind and Art} (New York, 1874), p. 68.
whatever is capable of being definitely conveyed by defined forms or thoughts. The moderns, the infinite and (the) indefinite as the vehicle of the infinite; hence more (devoted) to the passions, the obscure hopes and fears - the wandering thro' (the) infinite, grander moral feelings, more august conceptions of man as man, the future rather than the present, - sublimity.  

Habituated, as Coleridge was to the "vast" these sublime, more august conceptions of man as man brought the whole soul of Coleridge into activity, an activity which was to yield a rich harvest of subtle and lofty criticism, especially when he was analyzing the drama of Shakespeare. Throughout the period of classicism men were content to view the results of genius, the results of aesthetic and literary thought, rather than the urges, the poetic impulses and psychological processes which generated these results in art. But not so the romanticist. He shared the poet's delight in the creative act with all its varying moods. Consequently it was for him that certain characteristics which have long been growing more definite, now acquire an extreme intensity.

We witness the realization in all its plentitude of a type of emotional and imaginative literature that has escaped from the constraining forces of sovereign Reason, as even from those incorporated in the expression itself. This consummation is brought about by an inner progress, but at the same time

it is favoured by the general influences of the social and moral surroundings.

But the capital difference is always of a more inner nature. The history of thought is less apt to repeat itself than any other sequence. The reason is that a new state of the mind could not possibly be identical with a former one which it recalls, since it adds to it the continuous experience inscribed in the very perception of its intrinsic newness. This subtle impression of regret mingled with the joy of discovery, this recognition of a land at once strange and yet familiar, where the heart finds itself at home, as it proceeds to explore it, impregnates all the fibres of true Romanticism. And it is ever through a probing deeper into self, than through the sole exercise of pure imagination, that the heart's desire is attained. Coleridge was slowly but surely learning this. He was progressively lighting up the inner horizon, which extends beyond the limits of clear consciousness; and endowed with these fresher visions which escaped more tired eyes, Coleridge out distanced his contemporaries in his interpretive analysis of Shakespearean dramas, particularly the tragic dramas.

Thus, from this study of the evolution of tragedy as it took its rise in Greek civilization we come to a consideration of the basic principles of Coleridge's dramatic criticism.
CHAPTER III

COLERIDGE'S ANALYSIS OF THE MORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES: HIS THEORY OF DRAMATIC ILLUSION AND HIS METHOD OF DECIDING THE BASIS OF DRAMA

Those who would appreciate the depth and subtlety of Coleridge's philosophy of poetry and art, must remember that the philosophy and the principles of analysis which Coleridge lays down are, it is true concerned with theory, but "since the theory is of life in all its departments, it is concerned with will and feeling as well as with intellect." Coleridge's master mind possessed two great powers, the power of penetrating the work at hand and, likewise, that of culling from the work the very reasons and causes of its being. Being a subjective poet he saw in Shakespeare a great prober of the human soul. For Coleridge once wrote of him:

Give to a subtle man fancy, and he is a wit; to a deep man imagination, and he is a philosopher. Add, again, pleasant sensibility in the threefold form of sympathy with the interesting in morals, the impressive in form, and the harmonious in sound, - and you have a poet. But combine all - wit, subtlety, and fancy, with profundity, imagination.

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and moral and physical susceptibility of 
the pleasurable, - and let the object of 
action be man universal; and you have -
a Shakespeare.

It was abyss calling unto abyss, and Coleridge read in 
Shakespeare's plays the counter part of his own inner specu-
lations concerning that inward life of reality so much 
cherished by him. In the plays of Shakespeare every man sees 
himself and does not always know it as when at sunrise

... the brilliant beams are shot askance, 
and you see before you a being of gigantic 
proportions, and of such elevated dignity, 
that you only know it to be yourself by 
similarity of action. So in Shakespeare 
every form is true, everything has reality 
for its foundation; we can all recognize 
the truth, but we see it decorated with 
such hues of beauty and magnified to such 
proportions of grandeur, that, while we 
know the figure, we know also how much it 
has been refined and exalted by the poet.87

Three parallel movements mark the period in the social, 
spiritual and literary history of England. They are the 
governmental or social reform, the Oxford or Tractarian Move-
ment within the Church, and the Romantic Movement in Letters.

Years of political reaction throughout Europe followed 
the overthrow of Napoleon in 1815. On the day of Waterloo

87. Ibid., p. 163.
England was farther from Parliamentary reform than it had been a century earlier because of this reaction to conservatism. However, the younger generation which had inherited liberal ideas, revived the causes of reform and became the leaders of the liberal movements which followed 1815.

These reforms consisted of political problems on the one hand and problems of existing social conditions on the other. To give all classes a share in the government was the purpose of reform in politics. A revision of the borough system was demanded by the industrial bourgeoisie which would establish proportionate representation. This was attained by the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832. The industrial cities now had representation in Parliament. Continued phases of the liberal tendency in politics were the Chartist Movement with its demand for a vote for every man; agitation for free trade and the Corn Law of 1842.

In Religion, the Oxford Movement proved one of the most significant of the romantic expressions of the age. As Newman wrote "the Tracts were the growth of a new perception," and more and more Newman came to realize the derivative nature of Anglicanism and the untenability of its historical claim and truer ideal of faith and practice.

When Wordsworth wrote his defense in "The Preface of 1800" for the kind of poetry which The Lyrical Ballads gave to English
readers both he and Coleridge were fully cognizant that the old traditions were passing. Great national events, such as the French Revolution made literature a medium for the more vital thought of the people and critics came to view literature not as apart from life, but rather as an outlet for truth and knowledge. Thus, the historical attitude gained the ascendancy. Wordsworth studying the change from the literary viewpoint says: "A multitude of causes unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfit it to a state of almost savage torpor." But Coleridge although alert to the value of Wordsworth's defence, realized most keenly that the age itself was deficient not only in poets and dramatists who could effect the requisite adjustments, but likewise it lacked competent critics to evaluate a truly poetic genius, critics who committed the sin of overloading their pronouncements with personality — and in a long passage in the Biographia Literaria Coleridge cries aloud his grievances toward these unintelligent writers, lamenting the fact that "...Providence has given England the greatest man that ever put on and put off mortality, and has thrown a sop to the envy of other nations, by inflicting

upon his native country the most incompetent critic." And he would hasten the advent of "reviewers who would support their decisions by reference to fixed canons of criticism, previously established and deduced from the nature of man." Coleridge, himself, possessed in an eminent degree this critical faculty which enabled him to reflect upon the process of poetic creation and analyze the workings of the poet's mind. This it was that sublimated the poet in the critic. Yet in spite of his analytical powers, he remains ever the true romanticist. Hence, Coleridge affirms:

The true poet brings the whole soul of man into activity... he diffuses a tone and a spirit of unity that blends and fuses, each into each by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power first put in action by will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive though gentle and unnoticed control (laxis effertus habenis) reveals itself in the balance of reconciliation of opposites or discordant qualities.91

In an earlier lecture Coleridge had the same idea in mind when

89. Raysor, op. cit., p. 165, (Lecture 1811-12).
90. Shawcross, op. cit., I, p. 44.
91. Ibid., II, p. 12.
he said: "In the tragic drama, the free will of man is the first cause."

That Coleridge should establish this doctrine of the imagination operating under the aegis of free will as one of his basic principles of literary criticism is not surprising, for one of the major points of divergence between classicism and romanticism was this very fundamental notion of imagination and the rôle of importance which it assumed. Coleridge taught that far from being mere caprice "imagination is a power that acts as a guiding star to the poet to find and to follow great law." In the case of Coleridge it was truly the great gift which lent not only a unique beauty to his poetry, but also gave to his interpretation a power which few other critics have surpassed.

Professor I. A. Richards describes the imagination as: "the power that produced to our senses the world of motor-buses, beef-steaks, and acquaintances, the framework of things and events within which we maintain our everyday existence, the world of the routine satisfaction of our human exigencies."

93. Ibid., I, p. 78.
94. Richards, I. A., On Imagination, p. 56.
This form of imagination Coleridge attributed to every human being. But the greater of the two forms is the secondary imagination which Coleridge holds to be:

... the echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its operation.95

Hence, we see that poetic creation takes its direction from the will. Nature, Coleridge believes, is continually creating, shaping and molding according to that divine law prevailing in the artistic universe. The genius of the artist or poet lies in his power to divine the correspondence between the power that is working in him and in the world without – to see the correspondence of this nature which serves as his background and himself. Such is the imagination and genius of the really great artist. Such a poet is "sense-bound, yet free" in an infinity and eternity of thought. Coleridge would join in the true poet fancy and imagination for:

Imagination must have fancy, in fact the higher intellectual powers can only act through a corresponding energy of the lower.96

To distinguish imagination as a power that coalesces into

96. Coleridge, Table Talk (New York, 1833), p. 185.
one - an esemplastic power - as contrasted with fancy as an assembling, aggregating power, many examples might be cited but space does not permit. In *Shakespearean Criticism* Raysor states that in several places Coleridge speaks of fancy as "... the faculty of bringing together images dissimilar in the main by one point or more of likeness distinguished." Having stated that Shakespeare possessed in a high degree the poetic power of fancy, in proof of which he quotes some passages from *Venus and Adonis*, Coleridge continues:

Still mounting, we find undoubted proof in his (Shakespeare's) mind of imagination, or the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others and by a sort of fusion to force many into one - that which shewed itself with such might and energy in *Lear*, where the deep anguish of a father spreads the feeling of ingratitude and cruelty over the very elements of heaven. Various are the workings of this greatest faculty of the human mind both passionate and tranquil.

In its tranquil and purely pleasurable operation, it acts chiefly by producing out of many things, as they would have


appeared in the description of an ordinary mind, described slowly and in unimpassioned succession, a oneness even as nature, the greatest of poets, acts upon us when we open our eyes upon an extended prospect. Coleridge instances the following:

> Come night, come Romeo, come thou day in night; For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night Whiter than new snow on a raven's back. (III, ii, 17-19)

Coleridge affirms that "here we have imagination strained to the very highest" and we feel that his understanding of Shakespeare is sanctioned by his own activity and experience. Thus Coleridge sees in Shakespeare the true dramatic poet

> . . . inasmuch as for a time he has made you one - an active creative being."99

During the early nineteenth century art was beginning to be recognized as a medium between the universe and man. But Coleridge realized the still undefined relationship of the imagination to art; as Muirhead on this point counsels:

> . . . the student must not forget the devastation which the emaciated accounts

99. Richards, op. cit., p. 84.
current in Coleridge's time of the work of the imagination had spread in men's minds upon the whole subject, and the necessity of an energetic assertion of the presence of the element of passion combined with penetrative reflection, fundamental sanity of judgment, and a form of expression that would give some sense of the inner harmony of the material presented to the mind and therewith of the essential truth of the presentation. 100

Coleridge was making this "constant and energetic assertion," throughout his criticism of the dramatists, the echo of "harmonious relation of each to all" is stressed. But more specifically, beauty involves the world and the intelligence and Coleridge returns to the object-subject idea. Knowledge of characteristics of beauty which Coleridge enunciated in one of his lectures is basic to a full understanding of his pronouncements about the characters of Shakespeare's plays. They are seven in number and although too long to quote here they are, nevertheless, worth while investigating. Having postulated that "man's mind is the very focus of all the rays of intellect which are scattered throughout the images of nature," Coleridge further tells us that the true poet

100. Muirhead, op. cit., p. 209.
102. Ibid., p. 46.
must "place these images totalized, and fitted to the limits of the human mind, as to elicit from, and to superinduce upon, the forms themselves the moral reflexions to which they approximate." Because, Coleridge goes on to state, if a moral feeling is associated with pleasure "a larger sweep of thoughts will be associated with each enjoyment, and with each thought will be associated a number of sensations; and consequently, each pleasure will become more the pleasure of the whole being." The wonder lies in making "the external, internal; the internal external . . . nature, thought and thought nature." Consequently the artist or poet needs must

... eloign himself from nature in order to return to her with full effect. . . He, must, out of his own mind, create forms according to the severe laws of the intellect, in order to generate in himself that co-ordination of freedom and law, that involution of obedience in the prescript in the impulse to obey, which assimilated him to nature and enables him to understand her. 106

106. Ibid., p. 48.
One is inclined to think that Coleridge supposes the universe to be a single abstract truth. However: "Say not that I am recommending abstraction, for these class characteristics which constitute the instructiveness 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. . . Aristotle has required of the poet an involution of the universal in the particular.

Coleridge in his Lectures of 1811-12 states "that Shakespeare was almost the only dramatic poet, who by his characters represented a class, and not an individual;" other writers for the stage, and in other respects good ones, too, had aimed their satire and ridicule at particular foibles and particular persons while Shakespeare at one strike lashed thousands: Shakespeare struck at a crowd; Jonson, for example, picked out an especial object for his attack. Hence we see that Shakespeare, while his eyes rested upon an individual character, always embraced in his vision a wide circumference, without diminishing the separate interest he intended to

108. Ibid., II, p. 33.
attach to the being he portrayed. Othello was a personage of this description as was Hamlet; and in a greater or less degree it is true to say that all his chief characters possessed this claim to our admiration.

Hence it was that Shakespeare's plays gained Coleridge's admiration and praise not only for the exquisite beauty of the poetry itself, but largely because Coleridge found in them these very laws and truths which govern and dominate life itself. The characters of Shakespeare's plays exemplified the many and varied experiences of real life. The essence of poetry is universality. The character of Hamlet "affects all men, addresses to personal feeling, the sympathy arising from a reference to individual sensibility." Instance the character of Romeo and how it draws forth Coleridge's dissertation upon the nature of love. The poet whose sensibility is excited by the beauty of the world about him adds to the object or experience his own sympathetic emotion which arises in him during the act of creation - "that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the very act of composition." Coleridge would have us believe that this state of emotion attendant upon creative

110. Raysor, op. cit., I, p. 163.
genius, the dramatist stresses the individual experience hidden in the universal experience of mankind. Experience lies at the base of all great drama, experience whose very roots it is the poets privilege to probe. Not solely in the light of his own affections but as they are hidden in the universal experience of mankind.

Doubtless, this could not be, but that he turns Bodies to spirits by sublimation strange, As fire converts to fire the things it burns - As we our food into our nature change! Thus, doth he, when from individual states He doth abstract the universal kinds, which then reclothed in divers names and fates Steal access thro' our senses to our minds. 111

Commenting on the character of Richard II Coleridge states in this connection: "Shakespeare has presented this character in a very peculiar manner. He has not made him amiable with counter-balancing faults; but has openly and broadly drawn these faults without reserve, relying on Richard's disproportionate sufferings and gradually emergent good qualities for our sympathy; because his faults are not positive vices, but spring entirely from defect of character." This species of accidental and adventitious weakness is

111. Shawcross, op. cit., II, p. 79.
112. Raysor, op. cit., p. 149.
brought into parallel with Richard's continually increasing energy of thought, and as constantly diminishing power of acting; - and thus it is Richard that breathes a harmony and a relation into all the characters of the play. Thus far we see, then, that Coleridge conceived of great dramatic poetry as rooted in experience and imagination. The concept or the reason for which the poem existed was an experience, a "fact of mind", a "form of being". In the hands of the poet experience is transformed into more vivid reality by the poet's own creative act. The truths of nature and the human heart are the experience, "the stuff" of the poet's creative imagination, and the characters thus created, Coleridge maintains must contain a "living balance" - the heterogeneous united in a nature by the spontaneous activity of the poet's imagination and fancy which while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature, the manner to the matter, and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the images, passions, characters and incidents of the drama. Such Coleridge knew the art of Shakespeare to be. And in the light of these basic principles

Coleridge pursued his psychological analysis of his drama.

So much for the principles, we come now to a consideration of the play itself and the question which arises may be stated in various ways: What is the substance of a Shakespearean tragedy, taken in abstraction both from its form and from the differences in point of substance between one tragedy and another? Or, what is the nature of the tragic aspect represented by Shakespeare?

These expressions do not imply that Shakespeare himself ever asked such questions; that he set himself to reflect on the tragic aspects of life, that he framed a tragic conception, and still less, that like Aristotle or Corneille, he had a theory of the kind of poetry called tragedy. These things are possible; how far any one of them is probable we need not discuss. But by way of caution it might be stated here that we want to remember that the tragic aspect of life is only one aspect and hence, we cannot arrive at Shakespeare's whole dramatic way of looking at the world from his tragedies alone as we might with Milton by examining almost any one of his important works. A Shakespearean tragedy may be viewed as a story of exceptional calamity leading to the downfall of the hero. But such an aspect, however, would not be completely comprehensive for it is clearly much more than this. No amount of calamity descending from the clouds like lightning,
or stealing from the darkness like pestilence, could alone provide the whole substance of tragedy. The calamities of tragedy do not merely happen, nor are they sent as they were to Job of old; they proceed from actions, "and those the actions of men."

Place a number of human beings in certain circumstances and we see arising from the co-operation of their characters certain actions. These beget others, until a series of interconnected deeds leads by apparently inevitable sequence to a catastrophe of tragic proportions. The effect of such a series on the imagination is to make us regard the sufferings not only as something which effects the persons concerned, but equally as something that is caused by them. The hero inevitably contributes to the disaster in which he perishes. The center of Shakespearean tragedy, therefore, may be said to be an action issuing from character. We feel strongly as a tragedy advances to its close, that the calamities follow inevitably from the actions of men, actions which are rooted deeply in their characters. Likewise we find a close union of morality and passion and it is Coleridge who tells us: "Shakespeare conceived that these should never be separated,

in this, differing from the Greeks who reserved the chorus for the morality."

We further notice, and this is of the highest importance in Shakespeare's tragedies; that as a rule, the hero, though he pursues his fated way, is, at least at some point in the action, and sometimes at many points, torn by an inward struggle; and it is in the handling of such psychological problems that Shakespeare exhibits the greatness of his dramatic skill. It is this concentration of interest on the inward struggle which, Coleridge believes, constitutes one of the excellences of Shakespeare's dramatic art.

Turning now to the tragic characters themselves, we notice that Shakespeare conceives of them as above the average level of humanity. By the very intensification of the life they share with others they are raised above them. But despite this sublimation we observe a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a total incapacity in certain circumstances, of resisting the force which draws in this direction; a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion or habit of mind. This, Professor Dowden sees as a most fundamental trait, as

it were the "tragic flaw".

In most cases the tragic error involves no conscious breach of right; in some, that of Brutus or Othello, it is accompanied by a full conviction of right. In Hamlet there is painful consciousness that duty is being neglected; in Anthony a clear knowledge that the worse of two courses is being pursued; but Richard and Macbeth, on the contrary, do what they recognize to be villainous. This is important to observe, for Shakespeare must meet the difficulty which arises from their admission. The spectator must desire their defeat and even their destruction, yet this desire and the satisfaction of it are not tragic feelings. Shakespeare, with consummate dramatic skill, gives to Richard, therefore, a power which excites astonishment, and a courage which extorts admiration. He concedes to Macbeth, a similar though less extraordinary greatness, and adds to it a conscience so terrifying in its warnings and so maddening in its reproaches that the spectacle of inward torment compels a horrified sympathy and awe which balance the desire for the hero's ruin.

It is appropriate here perhaps to discuss the main features of Coleridge's analysis of the character of Hamlet

in order to further clarify our concept of what he believed constituted the tragic hero as Shakespeare conceived him. The seeming inconsistencies in the conduct and character of Hamlet have long exercised the conjectural ingenuity of critics: and some explained the mystery away by resolving the difficulty into the "capricious genius of Shakespeare."

Coleridge, in his lecture, has effectually exposed the shallow and stupid arrogance of so indolent a decision. He has shown that "... the intricacies of Hamlet's character may be traced to Shakespeare's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy." That this character must have some common connection with the laws of our nature, was assumed by Coleridge from the fact that "Hamlet was the darling of every country where literature was fostered." In his analysis of Hamlet, Coleridge unconsciously reveals the characteristics of his critical genius at its best. He thought it essential to the understanding of Hamlet's character that the reader should reflect on the constitution of his own mind and in this, he practiced what he preached. He held

Man was distinguished from the animal in proportion as thought prevailed over sense.

118. Ibid., I, p. 272.
and in the healthy thought process,

a balance was maintained between the impressions of outward objects and the inward operations of the intellect: if there be an overbalance in the contemplative faculty, man becomes the creature of meditation, and loses the power of action. 119

Now in Hamlet Shakespeare seems to have conceived a mind in the highest degree of excitement, with this overpowering activity of intellect, and to have placed him in circumstances where he was obliged to act on the spur of the moment.

Coleridge points out with penetrating judgment: "...that the effect of this type of overbalance of imagination is beautifully illustrated in the inward brood of Hamlet - the effect of a superfluous activity of thought." This admirable and consistent character deeply acquainted with his own feelings, painting them with such wonderful power and accuracy, and firmly persuaded that a moment ought not to be lost in executing the solemn charge committed to him still "yields to the same retiring from reality, which is the result of having a world within himself." Such a mind is near akin to madness as Dryden says: "Great wit to madness nearly

119. Ibid., I, p. 273.
120. Ibid., I, p. 273.
is allied." And Dryden was right for he means by "wit" that greatness of genius which led Hamlet to a perfect knowledge of his own character, which, despite the strength of motive, was yet so weak as to be unable to carry into act his own most obvious duty. Hamlet is full of purpose but void of that quality of mind which accomplishes purpose. His mind, "unseated from its healthy balance", is forever occupied with the world within him, and abstracted from external things; his words give a substance to shadows, and he is impatient of realities. We feel here the force of Coleridge's criticism when he said:

He (Shakespeare) was not a mere painter of portraits, with the dress, features, and peculiarities of the sitter; but a painter of likenesses so true that, although nobody could perhaps say they knew the very person represented, all saw at once that it was faithful.123

It is the nature of thought to be indefinite, while definiteness belongs to reality. Coleridge consistent with his philosophical theories would have us remember: "The sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward

123. Raysor, op. cit., II, p. 34.
object, but from the reflection upon it; not from the impression, but from the idea." It is only by reflection that the idea comes full into the mind, bringing in its wake a train of sublime associations. Hamlet experienced this truth, as his soliloquy, "Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt" testifies, a truth, which arises from a craving for the indefinite: "a disposition or temper which most easily besets men of genius; a morbid craving for that which is not." This scene is one of Shakespeare's lyric movements in the play, and the skill with which it is interwoven with the dramatic parts is peculiarly an excellence of Shakespeare's genius. Hamlet, as Coleridge notes, mistakes the seeing of his chains for the breaking of them, and so delays action, till action is of no use; Shakespeare wished to impress upon us the truth that action is the chief end of existence - that no faculties of intellect, however brilliant can be considered valuable, or indeed otherwise than as misfortunes, if they withdraw us from, or render us repugnant to action, and lead us to think and think of doing, until the time for effective doing has elapsed. In enforcing this moral truth, Shakespeare has

124. Ibid., II, p. 273, cf., Kant, I, Critique of Aesthetic Judgement, ed. by Meredith, p. 94, passim.
125. Ibid., II, p. 273.
shown the fulness and force of his powers: all that is amiable and excellent in nature is combined in Hamlet, with the exception of one quality. He is a man living in meditation, called upon to act by every motive human and divine, but the great object of his life defeated by continually resolving to do yet doing nothing but resolve, - the most tragic of tragic heroes.

And so in the other great plays the tragic world is one of action, "and action is the translation of thought into reality." The characters strike into the existing order of things in pursuance of their ideas. But what they achieve is not what they intended; it is terribly unlike it. They act freely, and yet their action binds them hand and foot. And it makes no difference whether they meant well or ill. No one could mean better than Brutus, but he contrives misery for his country and death for himself. No one could mean worse than Iago, and he too is caught in the web he spins for others. Hamlet, recoiling from the painful duty of revenge, is plunged into blood-guiltiness he never dreamed of, and forced at last on the revenge he could not will. Othello agonises over an empty fiction, and, meaning to execute solemn

justice, butchers innocence and strangles love. They failed to understand themselves as they failed to comprehend the world about them. Coriolanus thinks that his heart is iron and it melts like snow before a fire. Macbeth thinks that to gain a crown has brought him all the honors of that life. He seems to forget that everywhere in this tragic world, as Shakespeare makes the player-king in Hamlet say: "our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own." Yet we are convinced that the tragic collision arises not from a fatal power, but with a moral power, a power akin to all that we admire and revere in the characters themselves. And one feature of the tragedy is not so much the expulsion of evil: the tragedy is that it involves the waste of good. And again sometimes from the very furnace of affliction a conviction seems borne to us that somehow, if we could see it, this agony counts as nothing against the heroism and love which appear in it and which thrill the human hearts. Sometimes we are driven to cry aloud that these mighty or heavenly spirits who perish are too great for the little space in which they move, and that they vanish not into nothingness but into freedom. But these

127. As quoted in Raysor, op. cit., II., p. 274.
faint and scattered intimations that the tragic world, being but a fragment of a whole beyond our vision, must needs be a contradiction and no ultimate truth, avail nothing to interpret the mystery. We remain confronted with a world travelling for perfection but bringing to birth, together with glorious good an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste. And this fact is tragedy, the very substance of Shakespearean tragedy.

Though there are in Hamlet more direct utterances of Shakespeare's inmost spiritual life than in any other of his earlier works, he has none the less succeeded in disengaging his hero's figure, and making it an independent unity. Coleridge tells us that "what he gave him of his own nature was its unfathomable depth." Goethe, in his celebrated exposition of Hamlet maintains that a great deed is imposed upon a soul which is not strong enough for it:

There is an oak-tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom; the roots expand, the jar is shivered. A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength

128. Raysor, op. cit., I, pp. 79-84.
of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath
a burden which it cannot cast away.\textsuperscript{129}

The interpretation is brilliant and thoughtful, but not entirely just. One can trace in it the spirit which pervaded German thought at this period. Hamlet cannot really be called, without qualification "lovely, pure, noble and most moral" - he who says to Ophelia those penetratingly true, unforgettable words, "I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me." The light of such a saying as this takes the color out of Goethe's adjectives. No doubt Hamlet is too weak for his task, or better, wholly unsuited to it; but he is a child of the Renaissance, with its impulsive energy, its irrepressible fulness of life, and its undaunted habit of looking death in the eyes.

During the course of the play it is sufficiently proved that he is not incapable of action. He does not hesitate to stab the eavesdropper behind the arras. But it is clear, likewise, that he has a great inward obstacle to overcome and

\textsuperscript{129} Goethe, \textit{Wilhelm Meister}, Book IV, Chap. 13, passim.
reflection hinders him, his "resolution is sickly o'er with pale casts of thought" as he himself confesses.

Everything is strife with him. He is already so much more than what he was at first - the youth chosen to execute a vendetta. He has become the great sufferer, who jeers and mocks, and rebukes the world that mocks him. He is the cry of humanity horror-struck at its own visage. Something is "rotten in the state of Denmark." Denmark is a prison and our world is full of such prisons. The world is out of joint and must needs be set right, yet our arms fall powerless at our sides as did Hamlet's. Evil is too strong, evil is too cunning for us. Hamlet is then one of the greatest pieces of psychological development and Coleridge, by his subtle analysis and keen penetration has given to us a study which reveals the great moral and psychological problems which are at the heart of all great tragedy. It shows us the intense strife between the ideal and the actual world; the chasm between power and aspiration; the complexity of a nature which reveals itself in wit without mirth; cruelty combined with sensitiveness; frenzied impatience at war with inveterate procrastination.

In order to clarify further what Coleridge conceived to be the moral and psychological problems involved in tragedy, as part of their very essence we shall examine his treatment
of Macbeth which called forth some of his most penetrating criticism and which is marked, as Raysor says, "with that philosophical tact which perceives causes and traces effects impalpable to the common understanding." He gave twice as much attention to Hamlet as he gave to Othello, King Lear or Macbeth, yet the last named play which Coleridge coupled with Hamlet in his lecture reveals his psychological analysis at its best.

Giving most of his attention to the first act and to the birth-date of Macbeth's guilt, he develops on his way the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth with tremendous forcefulness. He mounts to his greatest point of excellence when he discusses the most delicate problems which ever confronted a critic; the degree of the Witches's responsibility for Macbeth's guilt and Lady Macbeth's character.

Contrasting the opening of Macbeth with that of Hamlet Coleridge points out that:

The gradual ascent, in Hamlet from the simplest forms of conversation to language of impassioned intellect, allows the intellect to remain the seat of passion; in Macbeth the invocation is made at once to the imagination, and the emotions connected therewith.

130. Raysor, op. cit., I, p. 87.
Yet there is superstition in both not merely different but opposite.\textsuperscript{131}

With regard to the idea of superstition called into play Hartley N. Coleridge interpolates these two sentences; "In the first (Hamlet) it is connected with the best and holiest feelings; in the second, with the shadowy, turbulent, and unsanctified cravings of the individual world. Nor is the purpose the same; in the one the object is to excite, while in the other it is to mark a mind already excited."\textsuperscript{132}

In his criticism of the Weird Sisters, Coleridge seems to have gained admission into the closet of Shakespeare's mind; to have shared his secret thoughts, and been familiarized with his most hidden motives. These awful beings he tells us . . . are as true a creation of Shakespeare's as his Ariel and Caliban, the Fates, the Furies, and the materializing witches.\textsuperscript{133}

And further we find this:

They are wholly different from any representation of witches in contemporary writers . . . their character consists in the imaginative disconnected from the good; they are the shadowy, obscure and fearfully

\textsuperscript{131} Raysor, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., I, pp. 68-69.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., II, p. 269. \textbf{Note:} Coleridge is probably influenced by Schlegel not directly but by reaction.
anomalous of physical nature, the lawless of human nature—elemental avengers without sex or kin. 134

They lead evil minds from evil to evil, and have the power of tempting those who have been the tempters of themselves. Schlegel calls our attention to the different language of the Witches with each other;—fierce, grotesque, and shot with terror—and with those whom they address; the latter being solemn, dark, mysterious and elevated.

In his Lecture (1813-14) Coleridge, having shown that Macbeth became early a tempter unto himself, instances as a striking example of this self-temptation "the disturbance of Macbeth at the election of the Prince of Cumberland," and the alarm of conscience appears even while meditating to remove this bar to his own advancement, as he exclaims:

Stars! hide your fires!

Coleridge takes occasion to mark the ingenuity with which a man evades the promptings of conscience before the commission of a crime has been committed, as compared with his total inbecility and helplessness when the crime has been done and conscience can be no longer dallied with or eluded; and with the

134. Ibid., I, p. 67.
first distinct notion as to the plan of realizing his ambitious selfish wishes Macbeth's cowardice of his own conscience discloses itself. No sooner is the murder perpetrated than all the concerns of mortal life are swallowed up in the avenging feeling within him as he hears a voice cry: "Macbeth has murdered sleep." (II, ii, 42-43)

Intellectually considered Macbeth is powerful in all things but has strength in none. "His power lacks the direction of a controlling will." And further on Coleridge says of him: "If he could have everything he wanted, he would rather have it innocently — ignorant, as alas! how many are that he who wishes a temporal end for itself does in truth will the means; hence, the danger of indulging fancies."

Like all in Shakespeare Lady Macbeth is a class individualized — "of high rank left much alone, and feeding herself with day-dreams of ambition; she mistakes the courage of fantasy for the power of bearing the consequences of the realities of guilt. Hers is the mock fortitude of a mind

137. S. F. Gingerich, "From Necessity to Transcendentalism in Coleridge" in PMLA, XXXV, 1920.
deluded by ambition; she shames her husband with a super-human audacity of fancy which she cannot support, but sinks into remorse and dies of suicidal agony. Coleridge points out in his analysis that Shakespeare exposes in Macbeth all the false efforts of a mind

... accustomed only to the shadows of the imagination vivid enough to throw the every day realities into shadows, but not yet compared with their own correspondent realities. 139

Coleridge makes a significant remark when he says "there is an entire absence of comedy, nay even of irony and philosophical contemplation in Macbeth - because wholly tragic.

Summarizing then, the chief points of contrast which Coleridge makes we notice the rapid movement of Macbeth as compared to Hamlet which is the slowest of the great tragedies; the entire absence of comedy the reason for which was discussed above; no reasonings of equivocal morality which would require a more leisurely state and consequent activity of mind; and no sophistry of self-delusion except only that previous to the tragic act. Intense rage from the disruption of anxious thought with the quick transition of fear to rage, and

139. Raysor, op. cit., II, pp. 66-76.
vulgarity of bad passions are present. How judiciously then, Macbeth is drawn - inflated with success, in the inebriation of victory, heated by the struggle of combat and torn by the turmoil of body and mind, action done from terror and cowardice; but yet, a cowardice compatible with the heroic character. No wonder that even in the midst of patronizing apologies for Shakespeare's violation of the unities, the neo-classical critics habitually recognized the universality and excellence of Shakespeare's characters, which they could laud without the least disloyalty to Aristotle.

Among the points of objection raised by critics against Shakespeare, this criticism of his violation of the unities has been brought forward time and again, especially by the French critics, perhaps because hallowed by the practice of their own exalted tragedians. They hold, of course, that after Corneille and Racine, Sophocles is the most perfect model for tragedy and Aristotle its most infallible censor; and that as *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Macbeth* and other dramas are not framed upon that model, and consequently not subject to the same laws, they maintain "that Shakespeare was a sort of

140. Ibid., p. 71.
irregular genius - that he is now and then tasteful and touch-
ing, but generally incorrect; and in short, that he was a mere child of nature, who did not know any better than to write as he had written."

Rising to his defence on this point Cole-
ridge says:

They remind me of a congregation of frogs involved in darkness in a ditch, who keep an eternal croaking until a lantern is brought near the scene of their disputation, when they instantly cease their discordant harangues. All are apt enough to discover and expose the ignorance of their friends, but their blind faith in their own sufficiency is something more than marvelous.

Coleridge brought forth arguments in defence of Shakespeare, which were destined to have a greater historical influence upon Shakespearean criticism than anything else which he ever wrote, except his interpretation of the character of Hamlet. Like Herder, before him, Coleridge refused to accept the Greek tragedy as a criterion of all drama. He demonstrated that the chorus was the historical cause of the Greek adherence to the unities which not unfrequently "led even the best Greek dramatists into absurdities and always restricted the number

141. Ibid., p. 74.
of their subjects." Raysor suggests that this argument was an echo of Kant and Lessing. Be that as it may, Coleridge unaided by former critics saw that the argument had wider ramifications, one of which could not be fully grasped without a correct knowledge of the effect of a play upon the imagination of the audience. In this, Coleridge was entirely original. With devastating power Dr. Johnson had "ridiculed the orthodox French defence of literal delusion but in his desire to carry his point he over-reached himself. He made the exaggerated statement that "a play read affects the mind like a play acted." This exaggeration demonstrates his characteristic limitations as a critic as do many other of the doctrines embodied in his famous Preface to Shakespeare. In defence, Coleridge alleged that the audience feels

... a sort of temporary half-belief, which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part.

As we find this expressed in the Biographia Literaria:

that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.

144. Ibid., pp. 89-109.
146. Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare, as quoted in Raysor, II, p. 87.
147. Shawcross, op. cit., II, pp. 188-96.
This is perhaps the most succinct definition of Coleridge's theory of dramatic illusion. In its full statement this interpretation of dramatic illusion is a deeply significant achievement of literary criticism. The germinal idea may have been furnished by Schlegel but the watermark of the manuscript and the date of the Tomalin shorthand report both collaborate to make this highly improbable, and in the fullness of his explanation and the finality of his pronouncements Coleridge greatly exceeds all his predecessors. His explanation of dramatic illusion is his own contribution to the controversy and it represents characteristically enough a subtlety and genius by which Coleridge surpassed his English and German predecessors in the art of literary criticism.
CHAPTER IV

COLERIDGE'S CONCEPT OF TRAGEDY AS IT MAY BE SYNTHESIZED FROM THE BODY OF HIS SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM

Not by any process of reasoning does tragedy have its inception but by a direct intuitional act on the part of the poet himself when brought into communion with emotional reality "the one omnipresent mind." To this activity Coleridge assigned a distinct faculty of the soul and the salient point to be noted is that Coleridge regarded the attainment of this highest creative act as consequent upon a volitional effort, in which "the finite mind is brought into direct contact with an infinite whose essence is itself activity."

Thus, Coleridge denounces the futile endeavours of those who

... within this gross and visible sphere
Chain down the winged thoughts, scoffing ascent,
Proud in their meanness: and themselves they cheat
With noisy emptiness of learned phrase,
Their subtle fluids, impacts, essences,
Untenating creation of its God. 148

Coupled with this exercise of free will and basic to all of his dramatic interpretation is the imaginative faculty which if allied with creative power makes the poet, but which is indeed in a sense creative wherever it exists. The beautiful in nature is symbolic of a spiritual reality, but not

co-existent with it, nor yet an essential medium of its full fruition - hence the true poet should be able to skirt the dangerous pitfalls of pantheism. Coleridge was himself singularly free of such nature worship for while he "idealized he never idolized."

While individual objects appear to some as parts of an undiscoverable whole, to the imaginative faith of the poet they are the symbol of that totality which is its object. Such a spiritual experience does Coleridge prophesy for the poet who with heart rightly attuned:

... might lie on fern or withered heath,  
While from the sun, and from the breezy air,  
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;  
And he with many feelings, many thoughts,  
Made up a meditative joy and found  
Religious meanings in the forms of nature,  
Till all his senses gradually wrapt  
In a half-sleep, he dreams of better worlds  
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing Lark,  
That singest like an angel in the clouds!  

Thus we see that Coleridge establishes as the basis or formal cause of great tragedy - in fact of all exalted poetic creation - the faculty of free will operating together with

the faculty of imagination. "In the tragic the free will of man is the first cause and accidents are never introduced by way of causing the hero's death." In this sphere then of mental activity tragedy finds its very inception. This concept of beauty as a revelation of spirit through matter, is never relinquished wholly by Coleridge even in his most divergent excursions into other theories; and ultimately he returns to it when he sets himself the task of analyzing the great plays of Shakespeare, and we note, that what was at first conjecture has matured into full conviction. This was the year 1796. All the while a more intimate analysis of the human faculties was being pursued with the result that the distinction between fancy and imagination was perceived and formulated. Likewise, its fuller elaboration and application in the concrete was studied in order to bring about the initiation of genuine poetry. As long as the theory or doctrine of association was accepted by Coleridge as applicable to the whole range of mental experience, so long would fancy (that mode of associating objects subjectively necessary, but objectively arbitrary and contingent) appear an adequate designation for

150. Shawcross, op. cit., II, p. 81, passim.
the highest forms of poetry. And thus, we see that Coleridge viewed the mind "no longer as a passive spectator of mechanical processes" or "the passive recipient of external impressions" but rather, as endowed with an active and creative perception of the reality underlying experience, an insight independent of that experience and inherent in its nature. The truth of these assumptions seems to be born out by the fact that Coleridge's own vein of poetic creation which flowed so freely, clotted and almost ran dry when ill health and growing domestic discord clouded his imagination and paralyzed his will so that he complains of "a total inability to associate any but the most languid feelings with the Godlike objects" and he remains very "strangely indifferent before the beauties of nature." He seems to have lost "his shaping power and spirit of imagination" and we read:

And still I gaze - yet with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars
That give away their motion to the stars

I see them all, how excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are.

And the cause of the apathy he feels lies within . . .

My genial spirits fail
And what can these avail
To lift the smoldering weight from off my breast?

It were a vain endeavour
That I should gaze forever
On that green light that lingers in the West.

I may not hope from outward forms to win
That passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

Thus it is that Coleridge reminds us that it is not only through the stress of emotion that the imagination can exercise its interpretative power but that any really fundamental notion of the concept of tragedy must take the principle of will into consideration. "Life is limitless sensation", Coleridge writes to T. Wedgwood . . . "and feelings die by flowing into the mould of the intellect, becoming ideas."

In this projection of his inmost being into the forms and appearances of nature lies, according to Coleridge, the secret of the poet's insight. He brings out this thought in his letter to Mr. Sotheby (September, 1802) when he writes: "A poet's heart and intellect should be combined, intimately combined and unified with the great appearances of nature."

And the condition of such union is **passion** in the poet which Coleridge defined as "not mere undetermined feeling but the deepest stirring of the whole nature, emotion tempered by thought, thought vitalized by emotion."

In illustration of the truth of these theories Coleridge turned to the greatest genius, perhaps, that human nature has produced - our "myriad-minded Shakespeare" who had the wit, which discovers partial likeness hidden in general diversity; the subtlety, which discovers the diversity concealed in general apparent sameness; and the profundity which discovers an essential unity under all the semblances of difference. Coleridge recognized these excellences in Shakespeare and therefore held him to be the greatest of dramatic writers. In his lecture he stated that "the chief concern of the dramatist, as of all literary artists, is the creation of beauty rather than the posing of problems or the setting forth of propaganda. It would seem that the hope of the drama of the future centers around the poetic dramatist with his imaginative approach to life, and his command of beautiful speech, the achievement of which beauty is more easily attained in the

rhythm and cadences of metrical form."

In this matter of posing principles the propagandist will always obscure the artist when the instinct for preaching gains the ascendancy. This is observable in the nineteenth century poets most of whom were doctrinaire, "they sometimes abandoned the bare slopes of Parnassus to preach pathetically from somewhat rickety pulpits." Didacticism may be honorable in its rightful sphere but to the drama it must be anathema. The playwright may show his opinions indirectly if he pleases; he may state a problem or lay open some festering social sore; but as soon as he begins to use his plays as if they were sermons, and his theatre as if it were a church, he then inevitably lowers the character of his work and often he fails. We shall see that later writers did not always agree with these principles. The dramatic creed which George Bernard Shaw expounded with such clarity and force would not parallel these ideas at all for Shaw claimed that the drama should be "an elucidator of social conditions" and "a factory of thought." But he was only repeating a controversy as old as the theatre

itself. Should the dramatists be content to reflect—to imitate the actions of men which most vividly reflect the many facets of their character, while they themselves remaining passively in the background; or should they arrange the plot and develop the characters so as to demonstrate the goodness and badness of a particular man's conduct or of a new social doctrine? Pointedly, is it their mission to expose, or must they propose and dispose?

The age-old poet, Horace, sagely recommended the "golden mean." Speaking broadly all great drama subscribes to this principle, for, as Corneille argued, every character teaches its own lesson. If it is true that Shakespeare's portraits of certain types of men have never been rivalled, then by that very fact he is great. The history of aesthetics could attest much in terms of this perennial conflict concerning the twofold viewpoint of what constitutes the true function of art.

Since frequently it is overlooked, it may be recalled here that some of the world's greatest drama has been created

160. Horace, Epistle, translated by Johnson, V. 1, 511-16.
from the latter point of view. The function, if not the tone, of Greek tragedy was decidedly didactic; performed as it was as part of religion and served to emphasize the power of the avenging gods on those who offended them, with the resultant fact that tragedy helped to stabilize their moral order. Medieval drama, both in tone and function, was definitely didactic, not only in its crude beginnings, but in its more natural and polished phase which gave us Everyman. Of all the arts, none is better fitted to bring about such results because of the universality of its appeal and the immediacy of its method. Nor is it unworthy of tragic drama to put it to a didactic purpose, unless the primacy of its ultimate aim be challenged. Vital drama has always been in touch with the spirit of its age, supporting or interrogating the morals and social standards to which that age subscribed. Not to function thus is to be decadent. But when Shaw states that, "Shakespeare's weakness lies in his complete deficiency in that highest sphere of thought in which poetry embraces religion, philosophy and morality; that there are no heroes,

and that Shakespeare comes out of his reflective pessimism oppressed with a logical demonstration that life is not worth living. We withdraw and seek shelter in the school of Coleridge and await the crash of such exaggerated theories which bloated with such prejudice and sarcasm must inevitably topple and fall. Shaw's criticism is the product of an age in which the sense of the tragic came more and more to be considered not a matter of individual guilt, but of social evil. Consequently, Shakespeare's superb exposition of human character is for him not enough. However, we cannot agree with Shaw. He stands convicted by the verdict of the age, a verdict which Coleridge himself voiced when he said in defence of Shakespeare that:

... that such a mind evolved itself in the normal bounds of a human form is a problem indeed. Powers tenfold greater than mine would be incommensurate to its solution, which in its nearest and most adventurous approach must still leave a wide chasm which our love and admiration alone can fill, superfluous must all praises be of that myriad-minded man; least of all poets colored in any particulars by the spirit or customs of his age (so) that the spirit of all that it has

pronounced intrinsically and permanently good concentrated and perfected itself in his mind. 164

We are grateful to Shaw for his honesty and frankness - much needed in his day and age - but we take our direction from Coleridge in the matter of dramatic criticism.

And in the creation of tragedy Coleridge gives "as the morning star - the guide and pioneer - the poet himself." The road down which he must travel is "the high road of human affections" a road from which Coleridge seems to have felt Beaumont and Fletcher wandered or, perhaps, never really discovered. Coleridge says: "It is not the business of the poet to analyze and criticize the affections and faiths of men, but above all to assure himself, that such and such are affections and faiths grounded in human nature, not in mere accident."

The greatest tragedy is idealistic in essence but fundamentally "it lays its basis in the common aspirations and passions of mankind."

Coleridge states further, that the cardinal passion of Shakespeare's tragedies is dependent upon the central character - the tragic hero - and not "character dependent upon preconceived passion." For the "imagination attains its highest

164. Raysor, op. cit., I, p. 244.
165. Ibid., I, p. 246.
potency when transfusing into the outward forms which it contemplates the emotional life which determines its activity."

Elsewhere, Coleridge has pointed out that the man who has not music in his soul can indeed never be a genuine poet for true "poetic genius requires the sense of musical delight with the power of producing it (which gift flows from imagination) together with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling."

In Shakespeare's work the creative power and intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace; each threatening by its excess of strength the extinction of the other. But Coleridge tells us that "in the drama these are reconciled and fuse into one intense power" - the exercise of which power seated Shakespeare on one of "the two glory-smitten summits" of dramatic achievement with "Milton as his compeer, not his rival."

168. Synder, A. D., "A Note on Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism" in MLN, XXXVIII, 1923. See also by the same author "Coleridge's Cosmogony: A Note on Poetic 'World-View'" in SP, XXI, 1924.


With regard to the ground work of the passions, Coleridge states:

... the accidental is nowhere the groundwork of the passions, but the essential that which in all ages has been and ever will be close and native to the heart of man.\textsuperscript{171}

Lear is the only tragic performance of Shakespeare the interest and situations of which are derived from the assumption of gross improbability; where as Beaumont and Fletcher tragedies and those of lesser playwrights are almost all founded on some out-of-the-way accident or exception to the general experience of mankind. In the case of Lear, Coleridge defends Shakespeare's choice by emphasizing the matchless judgment he exercised in handling the use of improbability. Coleridge says:

First, improbable as the conduct of Lear is, yet it was an old story, rooted in the popular faith - a thing taken for granted already, and consequently, without any of the effects of improbability. Secondly, it is merely the canvas to the characters, and passions, a mere occasion - (as in Beaumont and Fletcher) perpetually recurring, as a cause and sine qua non of the incidents and emotions.

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., pp. 60 ff.
Coleridge considered Kent "the nearest to perfect goodness of all Shakespeare's characters, and yet, the most individualized." His passionate affection and fidelity to Lear acts on our feelings in Lear's own favour; virtue itself seems to be in company with him. We may also note that Coleridge discussing Lear's anticipation of his own madness points that "the deepest tragic notes are struck by a half sense of an impending blow" and similarly in the making of Hamlet's wildness only half-false. Coleridge further remarks upon the "subtle trick to pretend the acting only when we are very near being what we act."

It will serve to further clarify in our minds Coleridge's concept of tragedy to observe with regard to the dramatic art that in every drama Shakespeare quickly reveals something greatly to be desired, a "maximum consummation". Opposed to this great desire, two obstacles arise, the one minor, the other major. In the keen conflict incident to overcoming or "resolving" these obstacles lies the secret of dramatic

appeal and the "chief source of dramatic interest." Again, in his sixth Lecture Coleridge says:

But as of more importance, so more striking is the judgment displayed by our truly dramatic poet of the drama in the management of his first scenes. 175

With the single exception of Cymbeline they either place before us in one glance both the past and the future in some effect which implies the continuance and full agency of its cause, as in the feuds and party spirit of the servants of the two houses in the first scene of Romeo and Juliet, or in the degrading passion for shows and public spectacles, and the overwhelming attachment for the newest successful war-chief in the Roman people, already become a populace, contrasted with the jealousy of the nobles, in Julius Caesar; or they strike at once the key-note, give the predominant spirit of the play, as in Macbeth; or the first scene comprises all these advantages at once, as in Hamlet.

In Macbeth the great ambition is revealed as early as Scene II, Act I, in the speech:

"We wish to see Macbeth King in Duncan's place."

In the next scene, the minor obstacle is raised— the hero's "reluctance to act for himself"—his own decision to await passively whatever may befall:

"If chance will have me King, why chance may crown me without my stir."

This obstacle is removed only after Lady Macbeth's brilliant championing of Macbeth's rights where Macbeth is finally brought to declare:

"I am settled, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat."

(Act I, Scene VII)

The major obstacle is raised when, in the fourth scene of the first act, Duncan pronounces the succession to the kingship upon Malcolm. Such an obstacle can be removed only by killing the King and Macbeth's daggers do the deed bunglingly in Act II Scene II. Both obstacles are now removed. Macbeth is King but what an unkingly king. The cult of the beautiful always weakens when it vibrates on the surface. As the drama mounts "Macbeth's unworthiness is rapidly established" and as rapidly; Malcolm's fitness to reign revealed.

That Coleridge assigned the true reason for the first appearance of the Weird Sisters, as the keynote of the character of the whole play, is proved by the re-entrance of the sisters after such an order of the King's as established their super-
natural powers of observation. As Hazlitt observed Shakespeare's genius in this took its full swing, "and trod upon the fartherest bounds of passion." Macbeth is the tragedy of twilight and the setting in of thick darkness upon a human soul. To the last, however, one thin hand's breadth of melancholy light remains - the sadness of the day without its strength. Macbeth remembers "that he once knew there was such a thing as human goodness"; he stands a haggard shadow against this thin streak in a dark sky which yields sufficient light for us to see him - a tragic figure indeed.

One of the smaller, but most difficult tasks which Cole­ridge had to face was the general defence of Shakespeare's conceits and puns. Raysor tells us that "earlier critics had almost unanimously condemned their use as contrary to the classical ideals of pure diction summed up in the word correctness." The neo-classical rationalist favoured wit, but it taxed his indulgence to overlook the "exuberant fancifulness of Shakespeare." It seemed to him merely trivial, and in the

177. Raysor, op. cit., I, p. 68.
179. Raysor, op. cit., I, 78.
serious drama it offended his "sense of decorum," in much the same way as "Lamb's punning offended the literal earnestness of Carlyle." Coleridge felt constrained to attack the neoclassical point of view, yet he was himself sufficiently serious minded to feel some sympathy with their contention.

Raysor states that Coleridge rested his defence upon philosophical explanations, which do not always bear up sufficiently to satisfy even himself. Even the historical argument which he used was not wholly adequate and Coleridge was forced to admit that it failed in the face of a dramatist of Shakespeare's stature, who was not for any age but for all time. In some instances Coleridge "attempted to explain away as interpolations some of the plays on words "and thereby he exposed his unwillingness to make the necessary admissions to hostile criticism.

We gather that the complete tragedy is characterized by the absence of irony and philosophic contemplation:

Remark the entire absence of comedy, nay, even of irony and philosophic contemplation in Macbeth - because wholly tragic. 181

180. cf., Ibid., I, xxxiv.
181. Ibid., I, p. 78.
For the same reason:

... no reasonings or equivocal morality, no sophistry of self-delusion are included which would require a more leisurely state and consequently a more active state of mind. 182

Comic scenes in Shakespearean tragedy, he further taught, ultimately reinforce the tragic effect by ironical contrast. In the cases which Coleridge cites this is profoundly true; but his discussion obviously fails, Raysor notes, to cover the whole subject. If the principle of comic relief means anything at all it means that comic scenes are sometimes used in tragedy not for any ultimate tragic effect, "but for a temporary vacation from tragedy."

In the ancient tragedy Coleridge observed, "a certain sentiment or passion was exhibited in all its purity, unmixed with anything that could interfere with its effect." But this is not like life and Shakespeare imitates life, mingled as we know it to be with joy and sorrow.

This resembles Johnson's defence of tragi-comedy. It depends upon a naturalistic conception of art which the

182. Ibid., p. 80.
183. Ibid., I, xxxviii
classical critic could not accept, since he would argue that "the prime function of art is to eliminate the actual dissonances of life in the interest of a total single effect." Coleridge believed that drama which admitted the emotional variety of life could attain to perfect harmony and unity. He frequently refers to this and implied it in all that he said of the harmonious union of the "heterogeneous in tragic drama" and he cited in support of this contention the actual impression made upon an audience of Shakespeare's tragedies. And elsewhere Coleridge averred: "Tragedy carries the thought into the mythologic world in order to raise the emotions, fears, and hopes which convince the inmost heart that their final cause is not to be discovered in the limits of mere mortal life, and to force us into a presentiment, however, dim of a state in which those struggles of inward free will with outward necessity, which form the true subject of the tragedies, shall be reconciled and solved.

Coleridge commenced his Lecture of 1813-14 by tracing the history of tragedy and comedy among the ancients. The

187. Ibid., II, p. 266.
contrast which Coleridge drew between the two forms might very well serve to further clarify and as it were summarize the principles which have been brought forward in this chapter wherein the endeavour was made to synthesize from the body of Coleridge's dramatic criticism his concept of tragedy. He says: "Shakespeare though he had produced comedy in tragedy, had never produced tragi-comedy; with him as with Aristophanes opposites served to illustrate each other." The arena common to both was ideal; the comedy of both the Greek and English was much above real life as was their tragedy. They write "from a principle within and the appeal is to our imagination, our passions and to our sympathies." But tragedy was poetry in deep earnest, comedy was "mirth in the highest zest, exulting in the removal of all bounds;" an intellectual wealth squandered in sport; it had nothing to do with morality. "Its lessons were prudential; it taught to avoid vice but if it aimed at admonition, it became a middle thing, neither tragedy nor comedy . . . following the best tragedies he (Shakespeare) puts general reflections into the mouths of non-important personages for his great character

188. Ibid., II, p. 287.
189. Ibid., II, p. 283.
creations never moralize except under the influence of violent passion; for it is the nature of passion to generalize."

He uniformly elicits grand and noble truths from passion, as "sparks are forced from heated iron." And the language is "that of nature - so correct that in it we see ourselves" - yet the characters were not pompous men apart but drawn from the whole of the play, or out of the mouths of enemies or his friends. All served as a substratum on which his creative genius might erect a super-structure. Yet, always these "tragic figures must be people who walk the high road of human affections" not puppets or mere figments of the mind, for such are not found in Shakespeare. Such puppet types would fail to give pleasure and Coleridge held that "pleasure must accompany the poetic experience." Pain there must be, too, but:

... pain no more than what is compatible with co-existing pleasure and to be amply repaid by thought, else onions may serve as satisfactory substitutes for tragedy.  

192. Ibid., II, p. 289, cf., I, p. 204.
Violent and vivid action moves alongside of mental conflict, which flows from the very character of the tragic hero and which conflict sweeps the tragic hero into such conflicting circumstances that his downfall or complete destruction is inevitable. We are confronted with a world travelling for perfection yet bringing to birth together with glorious good an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-destruction and this is the very substance of tragedy. We come now to a consideration of the influence of this critical writing which Coleridge created, not only upon his contemporaries but upon the entire body of critical literature.
CHAPTER V

COLERIDGE'S SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM AND ITS SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE ON LITERARY CRITICS

To take a wider and more removed view of any subject after long engrossment in its detail is almost always to discover questions of the first importance which were not apparent on close examination. A very little reflection will convince us of the truth of this when the subject under discussion is Coleridge's contribution in the whole field of dramatic criticism and the subsequent influence of this Shakespearean criticism on modern drama. It becomes enlightening to consider the ancient masterpieces in this genre which were the after-results of masterpieces in poetry, drama, and oratory; while the modern literatures, we notice, were theory-conscious by the time they were art-conscious and that the Renaissance formulated nearly all the rules for neo-classicism and followed none of them.

Nor should this surprise us for man is not infrequently reluctant to cultivate his thinking powers. He fails to use his "inward experience in the interpretation of the arts and takes too readily the opinions of others."  

England in this matter felt constrained to loose the bonds of aimless tradition and meaningless rules which chained

down critical thought. The critic must be an interpreter and so study the poet as a human being possessed of a temperament peculiar to himself as a poet. Nor must he sacrifice the artistic and cultural claims of his art by freighting his subject matter with subjective views or the claims of tradition. As a contemporary critic has recently stated: "His (the critic's) office is so easily and commonly reduced to the cruder uses of journalism and propaganda that it is easy to forget that it can also be one of the most influential in the well-being of society, and one of the few trustworthy indexes we have to the prosperity of intelligence and culture. For literary criticism is not identical with a mere study of words or language, or yet texts or "documents"; it is not to be confounded with philology or with the exploration of origins or derivations, or the investigation of manuscripts. Literature is something more than mere words and lives with another life than theirs; they are but the appurtenances, and neither phonology nor phonetics will ever furnish the basis for a satisfactory criticism of literature, any more than a chemistry of pigments will suffice for a criticism of painting.

Wordsworth, in his protest against the assumptions of professional critics, has put his finger upon the inherent weakness of any system of criticism which attempts to measure new works of creative literature by rules based solely upon a knowledge of previously existing models. Smarting under the mingled injustice and indifference with which his own work had been received, Wordsworth writes:

If there be one conclusion more forcibly pressed upon us than another by the review which has been given of the fortunes and fate of poetical works it is this: that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time original, has the task of creating the taste by which he is to be enjoyed. . . he must clear his own road. 195

Hence with great courage and pioneering freedom Coleridge changes the principle of unity of action to which the neoclassicists clung so tenaciously to unity of homogeneity, proportionateness and totality of interest. With independence of thought Coleridge uses the aids proffered by Aristotle in his Poetics but he does not constrict his interpretation by these standards alone but seeks to penetrate the fundamental laws governing poetic creation. Butler quotes that the Aristotelian formal method fills a relatively small space in

Coleridge's criticism; rather Coleridge favors the more popular method of "Longinus" which deals with beauty, taste and style.

Coleridge believed that the Poetics is in a class by itself among critical works. One feels that the philosopher had little relish for the course of lectures which he delivered on the subject of poetry. There was a task confronting Aristotle and he could not resist the inborn urge to classify this literary output and to formulate for it certain laws. But its future possibility seemed to receive from him a modicum of interest. And this declaration of laws seemed to explain how dramatists had worked rather than how they might or should work. We read that "Longinus, Horace, Ronsard and others explained how to write; DuBellay and Sidney, the privilege of writing."

It is no simple task to evaluate ancient criticism. We read much of it with dissatisfaction. We are prone to resent what its influence did to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. We wonder and question whether poetizing was indeed

so rife among the Greeks and Romans as to require such curbing. But our indebtedness is more fully realized and acknowledged when we detach ourselves from smaller considerations, and hear poetry defined as nature's representation in the ideal, and we realize that modern criticism has based itself upon antiquity even as literature has done.

Renaissance criticism brought forward a two-fold problem: to establish the vernaculars as fit modes of expression and to justify the existence of fiction. The critical objections to "poetry" were being lodged by the Neo-Platonic philosophies. The defenders sought support in "rediscovered" Horace; while the best summary of the objectors is in Sidney's Defense, which became the Magna Charta for poetry in England. The dread of enthusiasm which inhibits the Eighteenth Century shows how far reaching was the influence of this moral condemnation. For those dangers which the Puritans attributed to poetry, the Neo-Classicists attributed to imagination. And fear of being deceived by fiction yielded place to terror of going insane from an unrestricted exercise of the fancy.

A comprehensive view of these Renaissance questions is found in Sidney's Defense of Poesy and Spingarn says:

It is a veritable epitome of the literary criticism of the times, and that no other work, Italian, French, or English can be
suggested to give so complete a conception of the temper of Renaissance criticism. 198

It is surprising to observe in what degree the cardinal principles of neo-classical doctrine were current before and during the Elizabethan period; in how many instances the liberals (DuBellay, Daniel, etc.,) formulated ideas that were to develop into hard and fast rules for subsequent writers and critics.

Literary historians have told of a malignant French influence in the Seventeenth Century but a study of that field would involve a too lengthy digression; it is sufficient to point to the fact that a careful perusal of the Dryden translation of Boileau will in all probability alter the popular conception of him and his theory of les trois unités. While Dryden's judgements remain generally within the pale of neo-classicism, he himself is beyond it. One of the great critics of the world, he advocated the tenets of his century with enviable saneness, and he represents a liberalism which from lack of a like saneness was lost in the century that followed. The ample growth of creative literature in Europe which followed

the Renaissance, had been itself succeeded by an epoch of mingled reflection and creation. In this epoch - the study both of nature and literature was recommended with fresh ardour and more successful equipment. When this body of new literature was passed under review attention was further placed upon criticism. What canons were supplied? Those based upon the epics of Homer and the works of the Athenian dramatists!

Mr. Saintsbury writes:

French dramatic critics adopted certain fixed rules according to which a poet had to write just as a whist-player had to play the game.199

The general effect of this artificial system may be seen from the result which is produced upon the great poets of the French "Classical" drama, Corneille and Racine. "This was the source", says Demogeot, "of that severe unity to which Corneille submits and of which Racine bears the yoke so lightly . . . we might say wherein there is not so much severe unity as a nullity of time and place." Even Addison when he set himself to vindicate the greatness of Milton's genius, was compelled to

show that Paradise Lost conformed to the Aristotelian tests. However, in the Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination, Addison avails himself of the knowledge of the processes of thought embodied in the writings of Descartes, Hobbes, and Locke, and it is with the assistance of this new psychological knowledge - in particular the doctrine of association of ideas - that he discusses and applies the principle of the appeal of art to the imagination, which marks a cardinal difference between ancient and modern criticism, and of all subsequent critics who have availed themselves (consciously or unconsciously) of these critical principles. The Laocoon of Lessing published in 1766, which is a further development of a formal or external criticism of Aristotle is likewise an important factor in this critical movement. It might be inserted here that Mr. Meredith in Diana of Crossways made a remark which elucidates some of Lessing's teaching; "the art of the pen" Meredith writes, "is to arouse the inward vision, instead of laboring with a drop-scene brush, as if it were to the eye; because our flying minds cannot contain a protracted description. This is why poets, who spring imagination with a word

201. Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 33.
or a phrase, paint lasting pictures. The Shakespearean, the Dantesque (pictures) are in a line, or two at the most."

Victor Cousin's researches form a direct contrast and an admirable supplement to those of Lessing but these - Du Vrai, du Beau et du Bien - were delivered in 1818 and published in 1853 which includes a later period.

Young men, generally termed pre-Romanticists, came forward with a variety of new subject matter for poetry. But Neo-Classicism died at the hands of its defenders, who argued themselves out of supremacy.

We come now to the cross roads and we find standing there elevated by reason of a superior genius above other literary men of his day Samuel T. Coleridge, philosopher and critic, erect against the background of his age, a pivotal figure in whom is concentrated the very best of the ancient critics and from whom radiates the very finest of the romantic elements. The critical Preface has raised a wall between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries; it has dated a new era - it served to make intelligible forever the dividing line between two regions in criticism which might otherwise have seemed to flow into one another. We do not often have such a dividing wall.

202. Ibid., p. 41.
The principle architects were Wordsworth and Coleridge, the occasion was the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. Although the period of transition was not marked by cataclysmic changes, none the less both Wordsworth and Coleridge were conscious of the fact that the older order was yielding place to the new. The French Revolution along with other events of national significance made literature a potent and ready medium for the more vital thought of the people, and with such a transition the standards of critical thought had, perforce, to be readjusted. It is Arnold who tells us that "Criticism must maintain its independence of the practical spirit, it is not to be sacrificed to gaining actions: a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world is above, free of, alien to practical considerations; its ends are not things; it achieves its purpose in the promotion of a fresh current of ideas."

For such promulgation and furthering of ideas Coleridge held that openness of mind was necessary: the insularity and conceitedness of contemporary critics, he greatly deplored. In his *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton*, he indicates the chief causes of this false criticism and the obstacles which impede, and possibly prevent, the formation of effective critical

judgment. These may arise out of the particular circumstances in which we live and would, therefore, be accidental causes; or they might flow from the general principles of our nature, and hence be permanent causes. Coleridge specially tirades against "the prevalence of reviews, magazines, newspapers and novels," asserting that:

... where the reading of novels prevails as a habit, it occasions in time the entire destruction of the powers of the mind: it is such an utter loss to the reader, that it is not so much to be called pass-time as kill-time. 204

And reviews are pernicious because the writers determine without reference to fixed principles - because reviews are filled with personalities; and above all "they teach people rather to judge than to consider, to decide than to reflect thus they encourage superficiality, and induce the thoughtless and the idle to adopt sentiments conveyed under the authoritative We, and not, by the working and subsequent clearing of their own minds, to form just original opinions." The crying sin then of modern criticism as Coleridge judged it was that it was "overloaded with personality". Political gossip was worshipped in proportion to the venom of its sting; poems, especially satires, were valued according to the number of

204. cf., Biographia Literaria, p. 34 note.
205. Ibid., p. 58.
living names contained in them. And finally, Coleridge viewed with alarm the vague use of terms as a cause of false criticism. This is a grievous complaint in as much as it tends to the corruption of language.

Against these evils Coleridge set himself to work. The task of the new criticism was to understand the new relations of literature and life "in the perceptions of the laws according to which genius works, and especially in the establishment of the principles of literary judgment."

Coleridge defines the ultimate end of criticism when he lays down the statement that it should aim "...much more to establish the principles of writing, than to furnish rules how to pass judgment on what has been written." To a mind such as his, the vividness of any conscious experience is the measure of its truth; and as the conclusions of his intellect, while they remained intellectually irrefutable, failed to satisfy his ultimate needs, Coleridge was driven to question the unworthiness of the intellect as a universal guide.

The attitude of distrust was fostered by the writings of the Mystics, who gave him "an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment that the products of the more reflective

It is significant to note that in thus turning the intellect against itself, and causing it to assign bounds to the sphere of its own validity, Coleridge, though at the time of this statement still a stranger to Kant, is adopting the critical attitude. Unknowingly he further prepares himself for Kantian influence by his recognition of the importance of the will, of self-activity in the attainment of truth - the conviction, that a "mortal act" is indispensable to bring us into contact with reality.

This latter conviction, however, he owed, partly to his training in idealism which was, as Shawcross tells us, "forced upon him by experiences whose very strength was the testimony of their truth - the experiences of his religious, his moral, and also of his imaginative self, in all of which he was conscious that his will was not merely active but in a sense even, originative." Coleridge received assurance of a reality transcending that of the senses not from religious and moral feelings alone but from penetrating the sensible world itself. Viewed under this sense faculty, "all things counterfeit infinity."

208. Ibid., Introduction, xv.
209. Ibid., II, p. 234.
The symbolic interpretation of nature, and the symbolic use of natural images were objects of Coleridge's deep reflection. Very soon influenced by his psychological analysis he was to assign to a definite faculty this particular mode of apprehending objects - a faculty which he termed imagination which he establishes as a basic principle of dramatic criticism, and whose "modifying colours," he compares to, "the sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape."

Not the least engrossing of his critical investigations, the results of which may be found scattered here and there throughout his writings but never unified into a single system, must have been the distinction of fancy and imagination. This, which had originally suggested itself as a distinction of poetic qualities, had come to have a deeper meaning. His growing conviction that "insight into truth is essentially dependent upon the will, and the emotions which mould the will, and are themselves moulded by it, would here find a ready application. For whereas the activity of fancy is practically independent of the artist's emotional state, it is only under

210. Ibid., II, p. 236.
stress of emotion that imagination can exercise its interpretative powers." In the school of experience, where his own deep craving for love made itself so often felt, he won his conviction of the vivifying power of emotion - a conviction soon extended beyond the realm of personal relations. Writing to T. Wedgwood he says:

Feelings die by flowing into the mould of the intellect, becoming ideas.²¹¹

Hence, the total inadequacy of the theory of mechanical association to which Hartley and many other contemporary writers subscribed. Coleridge inveighed against all influences which chain the mind in the prison-house of actuality (such as the tyranny of the senses) and which deprive the imagination of its motive power and render it even in the presence of surroundings the most stimulative, wholly passive and impotent. Coleridge was here laying the foundation of "that wall" which was to divide eighteenth from nineteenth century critics.

It is not surprising that "the greatest of English critics" should expend his best efforts on the greatest of English creative writers nor, that he should adopt the lecture platform as his avenue of approach and literary history testifies the

correctness of Miss Helmholtz's claim in saying: "had he not assumed the role of public lecturer, it is safe to say, that England would be without a body of literary criticism of which the vital influence or thought-engendering power cannot be questioned."

In defending Shakespeare from the many absurd statements which were leveled against him by uncritical critics, Coleridge was faced with the problem of breaking down the neoclassical prejudices which withheld Shakespeare from his rightful place among dramatists. Therefore in one of his first and most important lectures (1811-12) Coleridge significantly says:

It has been stated from the first that one of my purposes in these lectures is to meet and refute popular objections to particular points in the works of our great dramatic poets. 213

In reply to their criticism of Shakespeare's use of conceits and puns, Coleridge answers that:

Abruptness of thought, under some circumstances, is true to nature. 214

and he cites the death-bed scene of Gaunt, wherein he sends

214. Ibid., II, p. 185.
for the young King, who comes in and engages with him in witty repartee and after punning on the word "gaunt" Richard inquires,

"Can sick men play so nicely with their names?"

(Act II., Scene I.)

In the answer Gaunt gives, Coleridge finds the true justification for his defence of Shakespeare's use of conceits:

"No, misery makes sport to mock itself:
Since thou dost seek to kill my name in me,
I mock my name, great King, to flatter thee."

(Act II., Scene I.)

Coleridge knew that 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; abruptness of thought, under such circumstances, is true to nature, and no man was more sensible of it than Shakespeare. It is natural to the excitement and agony of grief. Censure may sometimes be deserved but not because of a play upon words but because of a play upon words in a wrong place and at a wrong time. Speaking of this matter Coleridge says: "I feel strongly that the importance of these remarks ought to be very well emphasized, because the greater part of the abuse, I might even say filth, thrown out and heaped upon Shakespeare has originated in this
215. Ibid., II, p. 186.
218. Ibid., I, p. xlvi.
219. Ibid., I, p. 11.
Another critic also states of him, that no one before him in England had brought such breadth to the discussion of aesthetic values. His judgments are all permeated by a trend of thought that is strongly under the influence of great doctrinal perceptions; even in this domain he is the metaphysician.

Second in importance to Coleridge's penetrating analysis of character and one which was destined to have a greater influence upon Shakespearean criticism - and in fact, all dramatic criticism - was his defence of Shakespeare's violation of the unities. Raysor gives a clear exposition of this point in his scholarly work, *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, which may be referred to for a further investigation of this controversy.

Very probably Coleridge was influenced in his destructive analysis of the three unities by the liberal critics of the eighteenth century. True it is that in his discussion of this crucial subject, he borrowed from Schlegel, but Raysor points out that it is none the less true that he also produced much of his most original and most valuable criticism.

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One phase of Coleridge's dramatic criticism, which ought not to be passed over, was his coinage of new terms. Coleridge was actuated by the "instinctive passion in the mind for one word to express one act of feeling" - a passion shared by Flaubert. By this attitude he stimulated the establishment of distinct meanings of terms which greatly influenced nineteenth century critical thought. Isaac discusses this matter very well and lists the more important phrases which were definite contributions to the body of English critical terminology among which he includes: poetic-logic, aesthetic logic, accrescence of objectivity, real-life diction, esemplastic, undercurrent of feeling, mechanical talent, and polarity. The last named term, "polarity", Isaac states, "is a valuable contribution to our critical armoury and its uses have not yet been exhausted; the Old English Dictionary can find no earlier use of the term in this special shade of usage. The fact that this use is a subtle and thought-out transference of a known term to the great central problem of Coleridge's critical researches into the esemplastic power, the coadunating faculty, and the problem of multeity in unity, gives an emotional significance of the highest order to this otherwise cold technical term."

Coleridge's fertile though discontinuous mind touched, and not in vain, upon many subjects, such as religious philosophy, in which "he attempted to establish Anglicanism upon a rational foundation"; ethics, a branch of philosophy, which he tried to recapture from the utilitarian system in vogue; politics in which a passion for Burke in his aversion to all progress asserted itself but where, on the other hand, he discerned certain vices born of a social individualism which repelled him. His judgments are all permeated by a trend of thought that is strongly under the influence of great doctrinal preconceptions. The well-known differentiation between imagination and fancy, which Wordsworth interpreted after his own fashion, is a way of laying stress upon the creative activity of the mind, as opposed to the passive association of mental pictures; but for Coleridge it has a mystical significance. This feeling for the secret link existing between problems, however, by no means deprives him of a penetrating sharpness of vision on precise points.

In Biographia Literaria certain intentions, as well as certain successes or failings, of Wordsworth are caught and illuminated to their depths; so searching is the power that it is almost cruel. His remarks on Shakespeare show a profound intuition of the importance of unity in dramatic art.
Accustomed as he was to penetrate to the very heart of things, to find there the same vital impulse which animated his own thought, and to see this secret life produce what becomes the apparent world of the senses, Coleridge was thus able to discern with an unerring insight the paths along which a central pulse had radiated, so to speak, towards all the fundamental ideas, aspects and characteristics of a literary work.

"Coleridge's power of psychological analysis was original in the highest degree", Raysor tells us, "and it was supplemented by vast learning." He drew not only from the thought of his predecessors in the eighteenth century but from foreign sources as well, particularly from the great writers of Germany did he gather ideas which imparted scope and dignity to his criticism. Maurice Morgann in his Essays on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff (1777) certainly was one who anticipated Coleridge in his character studies more fully than any other critic and most probably exercised a definite influence on Coleridge.

Just as the insistence upon the unities, the criterion of excellence used by the neo-classical critics, forced them to conclude that Shakespeare was devoid of dramatic skill; even

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223. cf., Raysor, op. cit., I, xxiii.
so, the critics of this new school by their character-studies in which they preferred to emphasize "beauties" rather than "faults" upheld the belief in Shakespeare's conscious art.

The emotional and imaginative sensitiveness of these critics marks them as followers of Addison, and through Addison, of Longinus. It would be too extended and beyond the scope proposed in this thesis to attempt to trace all the multiple ramifications of Coleridge's influence in the field of criticism. Besides the difficulties would be many and varied. Yet before concluding an endeavor might be made to cite a few examples of critics who seem to give evidence of Coleridge's influence in their writings or of poets who drew their influence from his works.

The following is a very interesting comparison which A. H. Thompson makes in speaking of Scott's sure touch. He says: "Nevertheless, Scott recognized his indebtedness to the model of fluid freedom offered by Coleridge, though he was himself a born poet." And again we read: "Just as Southey and Coleridge had contributed to the collective stimulation which gave us the Tales of Terror by Lewis, so too, in Mrs. Shelley's Frankenstein do we find the preoccupied interest in

the marvellous and morbid which enters into so much of Byron's work."

We find another interesting comparison in the following which shows Coleridge's influence on Keats: "It does not come as a surprise to find that Keat's idealism encouraged by the teaching of Samuel Taylor Coleridge easily mounted to the realm of mysticism and certain passages in Endymion are possessed of a symbolic value." And again we find in reference to Hazlitt:

A strong and direct sense of inner life, a penetrating sympathy which lays bare to his gaze the secrets of other souls, are the gifts from which Hazlitt's work derives its originality and they imply an intensified, vivid faculty of imagination and feeling, borrowed from the age of Coleridge and Wordsworth. In the Victorian period, likewise, Coleridge's influence is detected by certain critics who observe in the work of George Barrow (1803-81) that:

Strangeness here, as in Coleridge is not a property of beings, but a quality of the imagination in which they are reflected.

227. Saintsbury, Essays in English Literature, 1890, pp. 88, ff.
Again to quote another source:

It is said of Walter de la Mare, contemporary of Maeterlinck, that he is a poet of dim suggestions, of fugitive thrills who evokes the wondering of a child and communicates the feeling of invisible presences which method of art is derived from Coleridge. 228

Coming closer to our own times we find that Herman Melville saw the value of Coleridge's formula for creating a tragic hero, a formula which Coleridge thought he discerned in Shakespeare's method of creating the tragic Hamlet, and Melville used it in his own attempt to create a hero of like tragic proportions. The dramatic character and the Elizabethan qualities of Moby-Dick are well known, and Melville's enthusiasm for Shakespeare during the period of its composition is clearly established. But it has not been always pointed out as clearly that Melville looked at Shakespeare through the medium of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and in so doing, he discovered an artistry that appealed strongly to the author of Mardi.

Duyckinck was Melville's closest intellectual associate. Likewise, "Duyckinck," so Lamb tells us, "was a particular admirer of Coleridge and he directed much of his attention to

228. Legouais, op. cit., p. 1304.
Coleridge's interpretations of Shakespeare's art in *Literary Remains*. *Moby-Dick* indicated that Coleridge's lecture on Hamlet came into Melville's mind whenever he stopped to comment on Captain Ahab as an artistic creation. Remembering the dictum that "one of Shakespeare's modes of creating characters is to conceive any one intellectual or moral faculty in morbid excess, and then to place himself . . . thus mutilated or diseased, under given circumstances, (a doctrine which was a transition from the eighteenth century method to the romantic conception of the creative and conscious genius). Melville prepared for the introduction of his own hero as a "mighty pageant creature formed for noble tragedies," by explaining that it would not "at all detract from him, dramatically regarded, if either by birth or other circumstances, he have what seems a half-wilful over-ruling morbidness at the bottom of his nature."

Later, in a rather elaborate discussion of Ahab's disease, Melville used an ambiguous phrase that again echoed Coleridge and apparently referred both to the captain's physical and

mental disability: "deliriously transferring" his broodings to the white whale, in his "frantic morbidness" Ahab "pitted himself, all mutilated, against it." And his effort, as a "tragic dramatist" to justify his selection of a hero who lacked "all outward majestical trappings" is further evidence that he consciously thought of his protagonist as a tragic hero of the sort found in Hamlet and King Lear. Ahab is a Shakespearean tragic hero, created according to the Coleridgean formula. He is certainly not Melville, but he is certainly vivified by Melville's sympathetic emotions as though the author fancied himself "thus mutilated or diseased" under the "given circumstances." Furthermore, Ahab's disease has many symptoms of that diagnosed by Coleridge: surely he may be described as a man with a "craving after the indefinite," who "looks upon external things as hieroglyphics," and whose mind, with its "everlasting broodings" is "unseated from its healthy relation" and "constantly occupied with the world within, and abstracted from the world without - giving substance to shadows, and throwing a mist over all commonplace actualities."

233. Moby-Dick, I, 92.
236. Ibid., p. 205.
237. See Coleridge, op. cit., p. 146.
The difference between Melville's Ahab and Coleridge's Hamlet is not so much, so Leon Howard thinks, in the disease as in the basic character "thus mutilated" and in the given "circumstances" in which he is placed. The literary art which makes *Moby-Dick* different from Melville's earlier works was an art learned under the tutelage of Coleridge and adjusted to Melville's own peculiar temperament.

It is important to realize that the writings of Coleridge upon Shakespeare must be read in their entirety, for Coleridge is an authority of the kind whose influence extends equally towards good and bad, as a study of the limitations of certain critics within the last few decades reveals. It would be unjust to father upon him, without further ceremony, the psychoanalytic school of Shakespeare criticism: The study of individual characters which was begun by Morgann, to the neglect of the pattern and meaning of the whole play, was bound to lead to some such terminus, though we do not blame Morgann for such excesses. When Coleridge released the truth that Shakespeare in *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* gave proof of a "most profound, energetic and philosophic mind" he was perfectly right, if we use these adjectives correctly, but he supplied

238. Howard, op. cit., p. 205.
a dangerous stimulant to the more adventurous. Granville Barker tells us, that "philosophic is not the right word, but it cannot simply be erased." The sense of the profundity of Shakespeare's thought has so oppressed some critics that they have been forced to "explain themselves by unintelligibles."

With the waning of philosophical idealism, the new realism, though not always the new science, treated matters differently. The new science which was seen in Dr. Ernest Jones's The Oedipus complex as an explanation of Hamlet's mystery (1910), reissued in the more receptive post-war year of 1922. This is the last flicker of the Richardsonian method but employs all the subtleties of the new Freudian technique of psycho-analysis. Apart from the initial fallacy, which is Morgann's fallacy, the justification of the method lies in its attempt to add to our information concerning Shakespeare's choice of material and his adventures among motives. The psycho-analytical technique as applied to Coleridge by J. L. Lowes in The Road to Xanadu is valuable because, as Harrison tells us,

241. Ibid., II, pp. 96-98.
the evidence is available, i.e., the patient gives his replies, but we know nothing about Shakespeare except what we can learn from his behaviour; but according to this theory his plays are his behaviour, and therefore a valuable set of clues to his interests, passions, tensions, thoughts, and complexes of association.

The new realism turned to less subtle and less debatable sources for dealing with character. E. E. Stoll, the most powerful of the American school of realists, and L. L. Schücking, the penetrating author of Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays have both turned to the evidence of the plays and above all of contemporary dramatic conventions for their proofs. The new realism has tried to isolate and display, not the Romantic Shakespeare, nor the Victorian Shakespeare, but the Elizabethan Shakespeare. The tendency of the criticism is to face the author squarely rather than to dodge him by excursions into philosophy, history or ethics and the movement owes much to the diverse shock-tactics of T. S. Eliot and of G. Bernard Shaw, as well as to the valuable

work by H. B. Charlton who views Shakespeare's early plays in the light of Renaissance critical conceptions of drama and the European picture of romance in Elizabethan times.

In conclusion we may note that recent scholarship on Coleridge has made considerable progress in discovering the extent of Coleridge's research and speculation in dramatic science, particularly his penetrating analysis of the tragedies of Shakespeare. Conjectures on the role of Shakespearean tragedy were a concern of both student and philosopher long before Coleridge appeared on the scene; yet no work of English criticism surpasses in interest his thought - particularly his integration of the psychological with the poetic method which in recent years has noticeably caused such a revival of interest in Coleridge, especially among contemporary critics such as T. S. Eliot, T. M. Raysor, J. H. Muirhead, J. Shawcross, I. A. Richards and others. Guided by these writers who have so excellently mapped out paths, bridged gaps and erected literary sign posts we have attempted in this thesis to study the development of the concept of tragedy in Coleridge's mind showing that it was the natural outgrowth of his insight, moulded by such historical and aesthetical principles as it

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found congenial and contributory and in so doing to clarify our own notion of how he defined tragedy. There is no department of literature in which it is more difficult to establish a distinction between "traditional" and "experimental" work than literary criticism. Being a critic Coleridge shares in this indictment. Yet Coleridge was one of the most learned men of his time and "no man of his time had wider interests except Goethe." His impulse of criticism was the defence of the "new type" poetry and it was reinforced at every point by poetic practice. He had not the historical point of view, but by the catholicity of his literary lore, and his ability for sudden and illuminating comparisons drawn from poetry of different ages and different languages, he anticipated some of the most useful accomplishments of the historical method. But one thing that Coleridge did effect for literary criticism; "he brought out clearly the relation of literary criticism to that branch of philosophy which has flourished amazingly under the name of esthetics;" and following German writers whom he had studied he puts the criticism of literature in its place as one "department of the theoretic study of the Fine Arts in general." His fine discrimination of Fancy and Imagination cannot be held as permanent, for terms and relations change; but it remains one of the important texts for all who
would consider the nature of poetic imagination; and he makes it necessary for the "literary critic" to acquaint himself with general philosophy and metaphysics. "The simplicity of great art vouches for the beauty it transcends; it answers for the riches it forbears; and it implies the art which it fulfills" - as with art; so with Lamb's "damaged-archangel". His critical program was an attempt to educate the exact and conscientious sensibility which is basic to all genuine criticism through discipline in the ideal conditions and formal principles of art, and only then in the ulterior purposes which art may serve.
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The thesis submitted by Mother M. Clement Rixon, S.H.C.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

December 3, 1943
Date

Signature of Adviser