1938

Coleridge's Idea of the Drama as the Basis of His Shakespearean Criticism.

Virgina Seabert

Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1938 Virgina Seabert
COLERIDGE'S IDEA OF THE DRAMA
AS THE BASIS OF HIS SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts
With English as Major Subject

by

Sister Virgina Seabert, S.C.C.

Chicago, Illinois
November, 1938
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Various Factors That Influenced Coleridge's Dramatic Theory</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II The Fundamental Principles of Coleridge's Dramatic Criticism</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Application of Coleridge's Basic Theories, Philosophical and Aesthetic, to His Criticism of Shakespeare’s Plays</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Coleridge's Contribution to Dramatic Theory in His Age, His Influence on Shakespearean Criticism, and the Position of His Dramatic Ideas in Relation to Modern Criticism of Drama</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Coleridge's critical writings are fragmentary. His power of discrimination, like his poetic genius and originality, never displayed the regularity that was characteristic of Wordsworth, for his body and will often succumbed to that tragic weakness which was the sad element in his life. Yet, paradoxical as it may seem, it was during the ebb of his moral and physical being, from the age of thirty to forty-three, that he gave to the world some of his most noble and lofty criticism. 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 despondency, these lectures continued in several series from 1808 to 1819.

In the pages that follow the writer has attempted to estimate the nature of Coleridge's conception of drama in both its philosophical and aesthetic aspects as found in his Shakespearean criticism. An effort has been made to show how Coleridge defined a play; how he established the basis of the play in experience, imagination, and technique; and how he analyzed and supported his theory of drama by illustrations from the works of Shakespeare and other English dramatists.

Coleridge viewed romanticism as a philosopher. His interpretations of the dramas of Shakespeare established new atti-
tudes in the traditions of Shakespearean criticism. His ideas of dramatic art influenced the works of such critics as Lamb, Hazlitt, DeQuincey, and Leigh Hunt. In changing the tradition of dramatic criticism Coleridge threw out seminal ideas regarding drama that function even in modern interpretations of dramatic character. No student of Shakespeare's plays can be indifferent to Coleridge's rich findings; no student of criticism can fully appreciate modern criticism on drama without a knowledge of Coleridge's basic ideas of drama.

In matters of form and style Coleridge, together with Wordsworth, was responsible for an entirely new approach in criticism. 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 original impulses, and the psychological powers and processes that created those results in art. The romantic shared the artist's delight in the creative act itself in all its changes and moods. The magic urge of the poet was captured and bound in the fetters of a charming freedom, to be studied, analyzed, and admired. Thus Coleridge dared to hold imagination in his hands and make it exhibit not only its outer charms, but also its being and essence.

Those evidences have been culled from the mass of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism which show his basic idea of
unity, the "manifold in one", the sublimation of the many into one and the expression of this idea as used by the dramatist, Shakespeare.

The writer is deeply indebted to Dr. Morton Dauwen Zabel of Loyola University, Chicago, for suggesting the study and lending kind encouragement to carry it to completion.
COLERIDGE'S IDEA OF THE DRAMA

AS THE BASIS OF HIS SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM
CHAPTER I

VARIOUS FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED COLERIDGE'S DRAMATIC THEORY

Coleridge as poet and philosopher stands silhouetted against the background of his age, a pivotal figure in whom is concentrated the best of the ancient critics and from whom radiates the best of the romantic elements. The slow-growing influences of romanticism played an important part in the formation of Coleridge's critical faculties. He is a true romantic whose poetic genius enabled him to reflect upon the process of poetic creation and analyze the workings of a poet's mind. It was this power that sublimated the poet in the critic. Very often, especially during the early period of his poetic fervor, "the magic, that which makes his poetry", 1 was "but the final release in art of a winged thought fluttering helplessly among speculations and theories; it was the 'song of release'." 2

Various factors united to form the mind of Coleridge. One of the primary influences that shaped his thought is the natural curiosity of his intelligence. His early education, with all its attendant desires to see the "Vast", to know the great powers that lay hidden in the universe, early lead his mind to philosophy.

---

2 Ibid.
Fowell has aptly said that "the history of his development is the gradual substitution of dream for logic."\(^3\) At an early age, Coleridge's fruitful imagination began to project itself. It showed itself in his games, in his dramatizations of the stories he read. Coleridge's eight years at Christ's Hospital in London, with their hours of loneliness and inner reflections, were years in which his native love for the infinite and mysterious was fostered. Early in the first volume of the *Biographia Literaria* there is a note of longing for the unknown and the infinite.

In my friendless wanderings on our leave-days (for I was an orphan, and had scarcely any connections in London) highly was I delighted, if any passenger, especially if he were drest in black, would enter into conversation with me. For I soon found the means of directing it to my favorite subjects.\(^4\)

These favorite subjects were the truths of metaphysics. Coleridge gives expression to what the pursuit in metaphysics and speculation had meant to him.

But if in after time I have sought a refuge from bodily pain and mismanaged sensibility in abstruse researches, which exercised the strength and subtlety of the understanding without awakening the feelings of the heart; still there was a long and blessed interval, during which my natural faculties were allowed to expand, and my original tendencies to develop themselves.\(^5\)

---


\(^4\) Ed. by J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), I, p. 10. All subsequent quotations from the *Biographia Literaria* are taken from this edition.

\(^5\) Ibid.
These "tendencies", characteristic of every true poet, were to him "fancies, and the love of nature, and the sense of beauty in forms and sounds."\(^6\)

Here also, at Christ's Hospital, Coleridge gave evidence of the romanticism that was to dominate his later life. He appraised Pope's poetry as having merit, though to him it lacked the disjointed harmony of classic poetry--that "unity", that "harmonious whole" which was to play so great a part not only in Coleridge's own philosophy but also in his aesthetic.

The natural tendencies of his poetic power, together with the severe mental training received under Bowyer at Christ's Hospital, made the young Coleridge realize 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 and more fugitive causes."\(^7\) These were prophetic words. They told the poet's task, the life's task of finding and analyzing "the fugitive causes" of poetry and poetic activity.

Fortunately for Coleridge the beauties of his native home at Ottery St. Mary had supplied this boy who thirsted for beauty with a store of memories to cloak the squalor at Christ's Hospital. Mere dry speculation did not satisfy Coleridge. To

\(^6\)Ibid.
\(^7\)Ibid., p. 4.
him English philosophy was a contradiction, for possessing great warm emotions, he could not think of Mind as merely a playground for physical forces. Materialistic ideas did not function in his actual life. How account, then, for the wonders of sky and earth?

That fuller understanding of the "object" and "subject" problem which grew out of his philosophy of nature lies hidden in one of his early poems.

On the wide level of a mountain's head,  
I know not where but 'was some faery place,  
Their pinions, ostrich-like, for sails outspread

Two lovely children ran an endless race;  
A sister and a brother  
That far outstripped the other

Yet ever runs she with reverted face,  
And looks and listens for the boy behind:  
For he, alas, is blind!

O'er rough and smooth with even step he passed

And knows not whether he be first or last!8

Here Reality is symbolized by the blind brother; Imagination is the sister. Professor Brandl sees in this allegory a prophecy of Coleridge's own life--that with philosophy alone the poet could not be satisfied. All these early experiences at school and in his own mind and heart formed a firm foundation for his future philosophical and aesthetic growth.

Versed in classic lore, Coleridge left Christ's Hospital in 1790. He was acquainted with Milton, Gray, and Spenser, yet

fully cognizant of the peculiar deficiencies of each, though he himself had not yet the power to define them. The following year Coleridge enjoyed freedom from the restraint of teachers, and his love of the infinite and unknown was put into green pastures. Here he fed upon the philosophies of Voltaire and Hume, strengthening his already assimilated views on association. The Law of Association as Coleridge saw it "established the contemporaneity of the original impressions" and "formed the basis of all true psychology". ⁹ He acknowledges his indebtedness first to Aristotle. Detailed explanations in the *Biographia Literaria* show the attitude Coleridge bore towards Aristotle's idea of the general law of association and that of Hartley. The Law of Association is fundamental in Coleridge's philosophy; it proves and develops the very logic and truth of his "faculty divine". To Aristotle's theory regarding the association of ideas in the mind Coleridge's own principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites harks back. ¹⁰ Aristotle's theory of the occasioning causes of ideas in the mind held a foreshadowing of Coleridge's own principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites. Hartley's theory of association, on the other hand, shows a lack of logical reasoning. There was evident some detachment in his logic which made

---

⁹ *Biographia Literaria*, I, p. 67.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 72. Shawcross lists the five agents Aristotle enumerates in the association of ideas: 1) connection in time, whether simultaneous, preceding, or successive; 2) vicinity or connection in space; 3) interdependence or necessary connection, as cause and effect; 4) likeness; 5) contrast.
it purely physical and materialistic. Coleridge draws out at
length Hartley's fallacious theory.\textsuperscript{11} In Plato, however,
Coleridge was fascinated by the idea of intuitive idealism, and
in Aristotle, by the scientific realism. Similarly, Coleridge
saw no real divergence between Plotinus and these philosophers.
In none of these philosophers did religion function. To the
romanticist religion was of primary interest; therefore, with
Coleridge the spiritual element, not necessarily doctrinal reli-
gion but the love of the infinite, must find a place in his
philosophy. He searched for this spiritual element and found it
in the mystics. The mystics fascinated him because in them he
found the keynote of his own mind. The appeal of the mystics,
especially that of Plotinus, was the appeal to his imagination.
Even during his early life, Coleridge is beginning to build up
the conception of God and Nature as one. He is groping for a
unity of the spiritual and the material; behind the material he
tried to find the spiritual.

That Coleridge was early acquainted with the works of Plato
and Plotinus is evident from the fact that Taylor's translation
was in his hands.\textsuperscript{12} As indicated before, Coleridge began his
speculations on the nature of beauty in Christ's Hospital. The
influence of Plotinus never left him. He himself says

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 72 ff.
\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}
After the dry teachings of Boyer, and of the modern Philosophy, these visionary ideas tasted like a pleasant antidote.\(^{13}\)

Brandl observes that "his fancy took from that time a mystico-theological direction, which he never after entirely threw off; in so far remaining his life long a Platonist--or rather a Plotinist."\(^{14}\) The world is ideal and real, Plotinus reasons, and this unity of the ideal and real is God. The mystic believes that man and nature are derived from God, yet in the essence of their being are capable of unity with the divine source. Man may look out and know the universe only through his senses; he may feel conscious of himself as an individual being. So, Coleridge would say, man sees the world as "a multitude of little things", the material "mechanically directed", and "knows nothing of Reality."\(^{15}\) Man might withdraw into his consciousness and thus relive the original divine life of his existence. He could become one with the divinity and consequently, being a part of that divinity, know it. Therefore, in that state Nature would appear filled with spiritual life.

Although mysticism offered the solution which materialism and atheism failed to offer him, Coleridge remained unsatisfied. True, his imagination was stilled, but he could not fit into this system of thought experience and the facts of observation. When

---

\(^{13}\) Ibid.


\(^{15}\) Powell, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
he tried to harmonize these ideas with his general scheme of reasoning, he found qualities in individual poems which were characteristic of the artist or poet. In other words, something of the poet or artist coloured the art product. The experience to Coleridge was identical with some transcendent and universal reality and therefore had objective existence. He believed that the poet's heart and intellect should be "intimately combined and unified with the great appearances of nature and not merely held, in the shape of formal similes."16 These ideas were forming in Coleridge's mind between the year 1795 and 1798 and appear in the poetry of this period. The note of similarity between Plotinus' Ennead and Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp" is obvious. The predominant thought of his poetry at this time is "Nature representing the chief means of intercourse with the One."17 The One, as understood by Plotinus, is the ultimate source of nature, but nature as cold "because Mind in her is darkened by Matter."18

Coleridge revels in the idea of his oneness with nature. He takes the power of intercourse for granted and believes that with this power he can lay bare reality. But just how this is to be done he does not yet question. The divine life is a

---

16 As quoted in Powell, op.cit., p. 84.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
radiation of

. . . the one life in us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light;¹⁹
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere;

and this divine presence is alive, containing in it all being in
spite of organism of nature.

And what if all animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze.
At once the Soul of each and God of all.²⁰

Thus what Coleridge feels in the presence of nature is that
transcendent living Reality.

The essential development of Coleridge's thought leads
naturally to the next great factor that influenced his life and
theory. It is his friendship with Wordsworth. In Wordsworth he
found a man, a poet in whom his philosophical theory was exempli-
fied. What a tremendous factor this friendship played in the
development of Coleridge's mind can be traced in the Lyrical
Ballads and Coleridge's own analysis of experience and the
imagination.

Gradually Coleridge's poetic powers waned. The heat and
excitement of the contemporary events in England and France were

²⁰ Ibid.
probable causes. Professor Brandl says of the two poets that "what they composed after the Lyrical Ballads is in many respects beautiful and great, but it opened no new paths being only a further application of the art each had acquired."\(^2\)

Coleridge realized that nature would not act by herself; his own powers reflected this fact. Moreover, his poetry gives vent to the feeling that his faith in nature must be modified. Man, he realized, must have some part in the creative process. In fact, his own moods varied when in communion with nature. Sometimes nature solaced and rejoiced him; at other times, she created a feeling of despair in him. His "Ode: Dejection" expresses well this conviction.

... we receive but what we give
In our life alone does Nature live;

... . .

... from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth.

... . .

I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life whose fountains are within.\(^3\)

There are those who maintain that Coleridge plagiarized


Schlegel, but before German philosophy could augment his goodly store of thought, his mind had already formed a solution for the imaginative element. Coleridge was a close observer; his intuitional experience with nature was at times capable of very intimate communion. In his *Anima Poetae* there are descriptions of such experience, but he felt the need of a symbolic language with which to disclose this experience.

In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering through the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking for, a symbolic language for something within me that always and forever exists, than observing anything new... 

He continues breaking away from every materialistic idea of the creative force in mind,

... yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phenomena (sic) were the dim awakening of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature.

How could he reconcile his own mind with the forms and phenomena of nature? In Kant, Coleridge found one form of solution. Although he followed Kant in his reasoning, he could not restrain himself from the pantheistic ideas as found in Plotinus and, as

---

23 For a full account of the parallel passages in Schlegel and Coleridge, see A.A. Helmholtz, "The Indebtedness of Samuel Taylor Coleridge to August Wilhelm von Schlegel", Philological and Literary Series (Madison, 1907), III, p.291.


25 Ibid.
a consequence, his reasoning was that of the imagination rather than that of logic. Coleridge first became interested in Kant through criticism. The view Coleridge took of the sublime and beautiful (1799) was similar to that of Kant. Sensual opinions were held concerning these two aspects of aesthetic. Coleridge opposed Burke who had endeavoured to identify the beautiful with the agreeable, and the sublime with terror and pain (1757). He did not believe the sublime to be connected with terror but rather with beauty; and that it operated not on the powers of the body, but on those of the soul, by bringing about a "suspension of the power of comparison." This opinion coincides with the Kantian theory as expressed in the Kritik der Urteilskraft which places the sublime and beautiful together.

Much might be said on Kant's influence on Coleridge's aesthetics; however, Coleridge did not remain with Kantian views and, therefore, much of his theory is original in the sense of application. He did derive from Kant the idea that the mind is "a faculty of thinking and forming judgments on the notices furnished by the sense."26 Thus, in regard to the understanding, Coleridge derived a hypothesis, but Kant's idea of reason found no sympathy in Coleridge's system. The idea of reason as proposed by Kant was that of a "regulative" faculty; Coleridge formulates the idea of a law of the mind which brings with it a

feeling of necessity. He speaks of the "ideas of the soul, of
free-will, of immortality and of God." Kant's influence is
responsible for giving Coleridge a definition of the limitations
of the understanding but, as is the case with many other ideas,
Coleridge worked upon the idea changing it considerably. He ad-
mits the influence of Kant.

The writings of the illustrious sage of
Königsberg, . . . invigorated and disciplined
my understanding. Coleridge hints in the Biographia Literaria that Kant believed
but did not reveal the fact that there is a power which has some
intimate experience with supersensible reality.

In 1798, at the age of twenty-six, Coleridge entered Germany
with the intention of studying German writers and their litera-
ture. With what enthusiasm he mingled with German common people
as well as with the learned men of the country appears in his
letters to the Wedgewoods (Satyrane's Letters).

Through streets and streets I pressed on
as happy as a child, and, I doubt not, with a
childish expression of wonderment in my busy
eyes, amused by the wicker waggons, amused by
the sign-boards of the shops. . .

While dining in a German restaurant, Coleridge is reminded
by the "pippins and cheese" of Shakespeare, not, however, to see

27 Ibid., I, essay 15, p. 147.
29 Ibid., II (Second Satyrane Letter), p. 152.
a Shakespearean play, but, as he says,

Shakespeare put it in my head to go to the French comedy. 30

And the play seemed worse to him than the English plays for he adds

Bless me! why it is worse than our modern English plays. 31

How much worse is difficult to tell. The English stage at this time produced "inartistic, genuinely careless"32 drama. Much dramatic literature was modelled after the style of the Elizabethans. There was slavish imitation of character and plot, one reason probably for the lack of progress on the modern English stage. Thus, Coleridge is turned away from the modern stage with disgust. Here, in Germany, he sees the same type of drama as that which is being produced on the English stage. The description which he gives of this particular German play might be characteristic also of the contemporary English stage.

The first act informed me, that a court martial is to be held on a Count Vatron who had drawn his sword on the Colonel, his brother-in-law. The officers plead in his behalf - in vain! His wife, the Colonel's sister, pleads with most tempestuous agonies - in vain! She falls into hysterics and faints away, to the dropping of the inner curtain! In the second act sentence of death is passed on the Count - his wife, as frantic and hysterical as before:

31 Ibid.
more so (good industrious creature!) she could not be. The third and last act, the wife, still frantic, very frantic indeed! the soldiers just about to fire, the handkerchief actually dropped; when reprieve is heard from behind the scenes: and in comes Prince somebody, pardons the Count, and the wife is still frantic, only with joy; that was all! 33

A little hint of what the reader might expect of Coleridge later when he has launched upon his dramatic criticism is found in the remark,

... for such is the kind of drama which is now substituted everywhere for Shakespeare... 34

To Coleridge such a play was not art but bombast and exaggerated acting. Many causes led to productions of this sort. Playhouses were large, acoustics and lighting poor, and as a result dramatic effort had to be exaggerated and spectacular. Players shouted their lines, while directors bellowed orders. Coleridge, for whom thought was everything, turned with disgust from the modern play.

In Germany, Shakespearean productions were on a higher level. Coleridge himself has given the attitude of the English people toward Shakespeare:

The solution of this circumstance must be sought in the history of our nation: the English have become a busy commercial people and they have unquestionably derived from this propensity many social and physical advantages:

34 Ibid.
they have grown to be a mighty empire. 35

This accounts for their lack of speculation. But the very subject condition of the Germans Coleridge attributes as the cause of their progress in philosophy and speculation. He says on this point:

... the Germans, unable to distinguish themselves in action, have been driven to speculation: all their feelings have been forced back into the thinking and reasoning mind. To do, with them is impossible but in determining what ought to be done, they perhaps exceed every people of the globe. Incapable of acting outwardly, they have acted internally: they first set their spirits to work with an energy of which England produces no parallel, since ... the days of Elizabeth. 36

Professor Brandl says that conditions in Germany made possible the deep appreciation of Shakespeare for "many of the princes and princelings who ruled it Germany maintained theatres in their residences; this was perhaps the only note-worthy service done to Germany by the "Kleinstaaterei". The wealthier towns followed suit and built theatres of their own. The people, tired of sermons, and unable to take an interest in politics or sports sometimes even forbidden to travel, flocked to the performances." 37


36 Ibid., p. 165.

37 Alois Brandl, "Shakespeare and Germany", Third Annual Shakespeare Lecture, Proceedings of the British Academy (July 1, 1930).
Further, he points out the chief difference between the temper of the German people and that of the English: "to be successful a play had to be poetical, had to contain a body of thought, and had to be clothed in fine rhetoric; for the average German, though a poor politician, had by his good schools, become an intelligent person, had a satchelful of solid knowledge on his back and would not be satisfied with superficial farces and operettas; he wanted to be amused intelligently."\textsuperscript{38} Such qualifications of a literary drama could be found in the plays of Shakespeare. This demand was answered by Lessing and numerous other translators. Each of the German translators borrowed a particular trait of Shakespeare's drama. Thus, Lessing copied his blank verse; Goethe copied the lawless structure of the Histories. Shakespeare was studied with great interest in Germany, for the German people "want to be shown life, as intense life as possible, which will enable them to pass, while reading, through all the experiences of the persons described, as if they were experiences of their own."\textsuperscript{39} It was this note in the German philosophers that appealed also to Coleridge. Here was the essence of real drama.

What Coleridge derived from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, was grounds for his belief in a noumenal reality, a basis for his

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid.}
idea of the imagination. Professor Muirhead believes that "it was for just such an extension of its functions that Coleridge was looking."\(^{40}\) Evidently, Coleridge had some idea already formed as to this faculty in the mind. Consequently, when he came upon other works of the Germans, he found the same philosophy and seized upon it eagerly. Schelling had sought to show that nature was not the creation of mind, but that it was mind in an unconscious form. In Schelling's scheme "Nature in the narrower sense of which science speaks is not the thing-in-itself. Natural science abstracts from the meanings which Nature symbolized and takes it as something merely finite."\(^{41}\) Coleridge assimilated Schelling's idea and reinforced his whole basis of aesthetic on the differences between what he calls the natura naturata and the natura naturans. Schelling says: "For, as it is in the work of art that the problem of the division which philosophy makes between thought and thing finds its solution: in this the division ceases, idea and reality merge in the individual representation. Art thus effects the impossible by resolving the infinite contradiction in a finite product - a result it achieves through the power of the "productive intuition" we call "Imagination".\(^{42}\)


\(^{42}\) Ibid.
This idea was exactly what Coleridge had been formulating in his own mind and here in Schelling it was strengthened. But Coleridge went further than Schelling. Professor Muirhead says that these ideas were not only important as the foundation of a "true theory of art in general and of poetry in particular" but that "they needed to be adapted to the personalistic metaphysics, which he sought to substitute for the pantheistic impersonalism of Schelling."\(^{43}\) Coleridge held that the sense of beauty is a form of personal communication with the spirit revealed in nature and art as a medium or as an interpreter of the life of nature. Therefore, viewed in its general scheme as a combination of philosophy and the idea of the artistic imagination, there seems to be no direct borrowing from Schelling. Coleridge's defense of himself against the attacks of plagiarism made by Professor James F. Ferrier\(^{44}\) is interesting in the light of what Professor Muirhead has said, "Coleridge need not have been directly indebted to Schelling."\(^{45}\)

Professor Brandl says in this regard: "From no one did Coleridge learn more than from Schelling, and no one would have had a greater right to complain; instead of which, Schelling rejoiced over his English pupil, owing even his obligations to him\(^{43}\)\(^{45}\)

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 203.

\(^{44}\) Cf. Helmholtz, op.cit., p. 291.

in the Essay on Prometheus, where Coleridge in one happy word "tautegory", defined the distinction between mythology and allegory which Schelling had only reached in a roundabout way."  

In general, the contact that Coleridge had with German dramatists and philosophers seems to be more literary than otherwise. To ignore entirely the influence of such men as Lessing, Schiller and the Schlegels would be to understand but half of Coleridge's development. How much of the German thought in philosophy and art can be said to have actually functioned in Coleridge's best criticism is difficult to determine. Coleridge assimilated the German philosophy and aesthetic making it so much a part of his thought that distinction is at times hard to make. One of the chief characteristics, that of subtle critical analysis, was a result of the philosophical training through his study of Kant and Schelling.

Coleridge pays a great tribute to Lessing in his Biographia Literaria, but Raysor would attribute this "weight on the wings of the Greek poets" (Shakespeare's apparent irregularities) to Schlegel rather than to Lessing." Moreover, Coleridge seems to imply that he "reconciled the admiration of Shakespeare with Aristotelian principles", but in his actual criticism of Shakespearean plays he makes a distinction between Shakespearean

and Greek drama. Raysor says regarding the argument of the unities "... it is fairly probable that he learned from Lessing rather than from Kames the argument that the unities of time and place depend upon the chorus. This and the general emphasis upon Shakespeare's art are probable influences from Lessing." 48

In regard to Schiller various opinions are held. Miss Helmholtz says that "Schiller's influence belonged principally to Coleridge's earlier years and suffered a speedy eclipse." 49 Dunstan, on the other hand, finds a similarity in their interpretation of the drama. According to Dunstan, Coleridge derived from Schiller his distinction between ancient and modern poets and also many ideas regarding the dependence of genius on public taste, the comparison between Greek and Gothic architecture, and the "imitation of nature."

Among the lesser influences is Herder. His influence may be regarded as that of attitudes towards the various Shakespearean critics. In this his influence is similar to that of Schiller. To Schiller we must attribute the greater influence. It is not definitely known when Coleridge became acquainted with Schiller's essay On Naive and Sentimental Poetry, but the influence that it had in Germany in 1799 makes it probable that Coleridge read it

48 Ibid.
while he was at Goettingen. In this essay Schiller makes the distinction between the naive and the sentimental. This same distinction is called in Schlegel's lectures the classic and the romantic. Coleridge, therefore, may have been familiar with the distinction before reading Schlegel's lecture. The idea of dramatic illusion may have been borrowed from Herder's book, Von Deutscher Art und Kunst.

The greatest influence upon Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism is that of Schlegel. Although Raysor stresses the influence of Schlegel, nevertheless, he says "...it is almost certain that the great influence of Schlegel confirmed and developed rather than suggested many of Coleridge's ideas. They had both studied Kant, Lessing, Herder, Schiller, and perhaps Richter, and had both been students at Goettingen under Heyne. They were both romantic critics in conscious revolt against the criticism of the previous age, particularly that of Dr. Johnson. Their common background and common subject made coincidences not merely probable but inevitable."50

Miss Helmholtz has listed in detail the passages that are parallel in the two critics.51 In these parallel passages Coleridge makes definite mention of points which Schlegel merely suggests as principles of criticism. Since, too, Coleridge did

not see Schlegel's lectures nor his Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur until after the eighth lecture of the series of 1811-12, it is possible to conclude that what Coleridge says concerning certain passages was already possessed of all the "main and fundamental ideas applied by Schlegel before he had seen a page of the German critic's work."\(^5\)

However, in the interpretation of character Coleridge had nothing to learn from Schlegel. Dunstan definitely states that "from Schlegel Coleridge learnt nothing. Where he agrees with Schlegel, he is stating views he held long before Schlegel's lectures were delivered. His whole debt, if debt it can be called, is found in the adoption of a phrase here and there. Schlegel suggested no fundamental principle and no application of fundamental principle."\(^5\)

Of all these influences, Raysor says: "They frequently affect Coleridge's statements of general principles of poetry and Shakespearean criticism, but almost never affect his detailed criticism of particular plays. \textit{Hamlet}, Lear, \textit{Macbeth}, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, \textit{The Tempest}, Love's Labor's Lost, and \textit{Richard the Second} were the plays which Coleridge emphasized. His psychological and aesthetic criticism of these plays, his essay on Shakespeare's poetry in \textit{Biographia Literaria}, and on \cite{Dunstan, Raysor}.
Shakespeare's method in *The Friend*, - these are the highest attainments of his Shakespearean criticism."

It is well to bear in mind that the German philosophers as well as the English were Coleridge's teachers only in aesthetics. In criticism of an actual work of art Raysor asserts, "he Coleridge 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 he should not be judged by his worst, or even by his average; in criticism, as in poetry, he should be read for his best achievements. These do not depend upon plagiarism or even upon the influence of others. They are the products of his own superb genius."  

With these criteria in mind a consideration of the fundamental principles of Coleridge's dramatic criticism follows.

---

Fragmentary as Coleridge is in his principles of criticism, the body of his work presents a unity of thought readily traceable in his philosophy and in his aesthetic. Everything which played upon his feelings, emotions, or intellect has been fused into one great power. Coleridge, in spite of all his analytic powers, remains ever a true romanticist.

A distinguishing mark of the romantic period is the freedom of the individual imagination, the power that is usually associated with mere caprice. Yet, at the very height of development in the romantic period, Coleridge comes forth with a philosophy of the imagination that says that freedom of the imagination does not mean a power that is lawless and tangential. It is a power that acts as a guiding star, as it were, to the poet to find and follow great law. The idea of the imagination during this period was one of great significance. It came to be considered the peculiar note of divergence between classicism and romanticism. Coleridge's own great gift of imagination gave not only a unique beauty to his own poetry, but lent also to his interpretation of this faculty a power which few other critics have surpassed.

The age itself with its seething activity stimulated his
imagination. Fundamental questions arose in his mind concerning the changes in the social and political order. The age in general was alive with the sense of change. In his early poems Coleridge shows how social and political happenings with their various influences pressed in upon him. In his Religious Musings, he seems to be probing for an explanation of the ultimate problems of life. This bewildering "manifold" he wishes to draw together; he would find some power from within that would unify both the pressing circumstances with their impressions without and the crowding thoughts from within. Coleridge's theory of the imagination in which his entire philosophic thought might be concentrated was to give this unity within the universe; a unity in this world of "manifold experience" and this "world of little things." This unity Coleridge wished to discover within himself. Mere delight in the "Vast" and the "Whole" seemed to satisfy him in his childhood, but it must be remembered that the philosophy of Plotinus was implanted in him at a time when thought experience and impact had creative power. Thus, the core of Plotinus's mysticism became the very condition of Coleridge's thinking. It was the philosophy, also, of Plotinus that helped him supplement and correct modern philosophers when he felt that he could not follow them further. Being a true child of the romantic age, Coleridge needed a solution in terms of the spirit to the problem of the many and the One, the relation of the eternal to the shifting, changing temporal.
Since Plotinus was Coleridge's chief inspiration, it is necessary to understand what that philosophy is. Plotinus, influenced in turn by Plato and Aristotle, worked out a system which, when it was divested of its accidental characteristics of contemporary fancies and superstitions, evinced a remarkable logical reasoning and a certain religious temper of mind which naturally would appeal to Coleridge. The central conception of such a scheme of thought was of a unity that embraced the inner and outer worlds, deriving from the One above all, and beyond the reach of thought. By successive stages, through emanation from the One, man might conceive the divine continuously passing down through all appearance, and through the very soul of man. In such a conception, therefore, nature and the soul of man are fundamentally divine, and one in the unity of their source. Therefore, there exists a relationship because of common origin. Such a system of philosophy, moreover, is spiritually active and dynamic. It is a divine activity that forever shapes souls of men. These souls of men are the Divine Ideas that make up the very thought of God. There is, consequently, a constant passing of the divine upon man, and a striving of man upward toward the divine source. Coleridge did not view the universe thus permeated by a divine intelligence as a material thing. The changes which he experienced in himself and in the world about him were the manifestations of that divine life in inner law. Such a faith that granted a living unity throughout the universe and in
the mind of man became Coleridge's whole metaphysical system and found its fullest expression in his theory of the imagination.

The theory of the imagination, however, is preceded by the theory of the act of knowledge or, as Coleridge calls it in the _Biographia Literaria_, the "coalescence of the Object with the Subject."\(^{56}\) But Coleridge insists upon an "Inner Sense" that cannot have its direction determined by any outward object. Here, Coleridge, very much like Blake with his idea of the manifold visions of men, says that the Inner Sense "has its direction determined for the greater part by an act of freedom."\(^{57}\) As a result, Coleridge argues that these successive stages of the operation of the Inner Sense are stages that cannot be attained equally by all. There must be a certain act of contemplation, an initial act, not mere apprehension. Coleridge denies, therefore, to the Esquimau or New Zealander this kind of imaginative power for, as he says, "the sense, the inward organ for it, is not yet born in him."\(^{58}\) There must be a "realizing intuition" which exists in and by the act that "affirms its existence, which is known because it is, and is, because it is known."\(^{59}\) There-

---

56 _Ibid._, p. 175.
57 _Ibid._, p. 172.
58 _Biographia Literaria_, I, p. 173.
fore, when Coleridge says:

The postulate of philosophy and at the same time the test of philosophic capacity, is no other than the heaven-descended Know Thyself ... as philosophy is neither a science of the reason or understanding only, not merely a science of morals, but the science of BEING altogether.

he makes an act of the direction of the Inner Sense an act of the Will. Coleridge's "Know Thyself" is merely a technique; his theory of knowing is a kind of making, a bringing into being what is known. Thus, the postulate, "Know Thyself" is this coalescence of the Subject with the Object. By Subject Coleridge means the Self or the Intelligence and the sentient knowing Mind: by Object he means Nature, or what is known by the Mind in the act of knowing. The coalescence of the two is that knowing. He is very specific in his explanation of what he means by Subject and Object:

Now the sum of all that is merely objective we will henceforth call Nature, confining the term to its passive and material sense, as comprising all the phenomena by which its existence is made known to us. On the other hand, the sum of all that is subjective, we may comprehend in the name of self or intelligence ...

For the sake of clearness, distinction is made between the self that known, its knowing, its knowledge and what it knows, but in

60 Biographia Literaria, I, p. 173.
61 Ibid.
reality, this distinction does not exist, for when the act of the realizing intuition is developing itself these distinctions are not to be found. Coleridge rises to the height of his philosophy when he says:

... the phaenomena (the material) must wholly disappear, and the laws alone (the formal) must remain. Thence it comes, that in nature itself the more the principle of law breaks forth, the more does the husk drop off, the phaenomena themselves become more spiritual and at length cease altogether in our consciousness.62

Thus, in the products of knowing we may distinguish Subject and Object. A division is made between the two merely to make a discussion of each possible.

Coleridge treats feelings, thoughts, ideas, desires, images, and passions as forms of the activity of the mind, not as "products as opposed to the processes which bring them into being."63 Thus Professor Richards explains it: "Into the simplest seeming 'datum' a constructing, forming activity from the mind has entered. And the perceiving and the forming are the same. The Subject (the self) has gone into what it perceives, and what it perceives is, in this sense, itself. So the object becomes the subject and the subject the object. And as to understand what Coleridge is saying we must not take the

62 Ibid., pp. 175-6.
63 Richards, op. cit., p. 56.
subject as something given to us; so equally we must not take the subject to be a mere empty formless void out of which all things mysteriously and ceaselessly rush to become everything we know. The subject is what it is through the objects it has been.  

Upon such a process Coleridge bases his theory of the Imagination. It is in the Biographia Literaria that Coleridge makes a distinction between a primary and a secondary imagination:

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 a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. 

That is, the Self is active in the finite, working in the Infinite, the "realizing intuition." This primary imagination is, therefore, a faculty that enables man to differentiate his own consciousness from the sensible world without; it makes a declaration of its individual existence, distinct from all else. The first sphere of activity, divine activity, is the mind or rational spirit, in which the sublime unity differentiates itself into the duality of thought and being, in other words, into that of consciousness and its objects.

64 Ibid.
The primary imagination is merely the experience imagination, the normal perception that brings to us the ordinary world of sense. Professor Richards describes it as the power that produces 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 exigences."66 This form of imagination Coleridge would attribute to every human being.

The greater of the two forms of imagination is, of course, the secondary imagination. This he considers

. . . the echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its operation.67

Therefore, creation is going on in the mind, but it is a creation directed by the will.

Coleridge goes on to describe the function of the secondary imagination:

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. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.68

The secondary imagination re-forms the world, takes the

68Ibid.
commonplace things of this world and transfigures them, invests them with other values than those strictly necessary for the exigencies of life. It is the magic power that changed the boyhood scenes of Coleridge into fairy-lands and the sky of stars into a treasure-chest of jewels. It idealizes wherever this is possible, raising the routine of life into something having values other than those of bare necessity.

Professor Richards explains it thus: "Every aspect of the routine world in which it is invested with other values than those necessary for our bare continuance as living beings: all objects for which we can feel love, awe, admiration; every quality beyond the physiology of sense-perception, nutrition, reproduction, and locomotion; every awareness for which a civilized life is preferred by us to an uncivilized. The secondary imagination is, therefore, a God-like activity, for with it man can contemplate the universe, discover the laws that emanate from this divine central energy and can, moreover, assimilate the laws that he may use to govern his own creative art, enabling him to get into his own creation the balance, beauty, and harmony that is found in nature. Nature, Coleridge believes, is continually creating, shaping according to that divine law prevailing in the 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 great poets and artists. With this imagination, the artist operates, shapes, creates with the Creator. He is sense-bound, yet free in an infinity and eternity of thought.

Shawcross says: "The distinction here drawn is evidently between the imagination as universally active in consciousness (creative in that it externalizes the world of objects by opposing it to the self) and the same faculty in a heightened power as creative in a poetic sense. In the first case our exercise of the power is unconscious: in the second the will directs, though it does not determine, the activity of the imagination. The imagination of the ordinary man is capable only of detaching the world of experience from the self and contemplating it in its detachment; but the philosopher penetrates to the underlying harmony and gives it concrete expression. The ordinary consciousness, with no principle of unification, sees the universe as a mass of particulars: only the poet can depict this whole as reflected in the individual parts."70

Fancy, Coleridge defines as power inferior to imagination:

Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other

than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word Choice. But equally with the ordinary memory, the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. 71

But this association is "fixed and dead"; the connection is mechanical instead of organic. Fancy, moreover, plays with the mere images or impressions of the sense, but imagination deals with intuitions.

Coleridge says in *Biographia Literaria*:

> Milton had a highly imaginative, Cowley, a very fanciful mind. 72

The comparison is explained elsewhere:

> You may conceive the difference in kind between the Fancy and the Imagination in this way, that if the check of the senses and the reason were withdrawn, the first would become delirium, and the last mania. 73

When fully checked by the senses and the reason, the mind in its normal state uses both fancy and imagination. Discussing Wordsworth's account of the two powers Coleridge clarifies the function of each:

> I am disposed to conjecture, that he Wordsworth has mistaken the co-presence of fancy and imagination for the operation

72 *Biographia Literaria*, I, p. 62.
of the latter single. A man may work with
two different tools at the same moment;
each has its share in the work but the work
effected by each is very different. 74

The same thought Coleridge states elsewhere in the following

passage:

Imagination must have fancy, in fact
the higher intellectual powers can only act
through a corresponding energy of the lower. 75

Indeed, the "counters" with which fancy plays are in themselves
images brought about by earlier acts of perception--they have
been formed by earlier acts of imagination but, when fancy only
is at work, these images are not being re-formed nor integrated
nor coadunated into new perceptions. To distinguish imagination
as a power that brings into one--an esemplastic power--and fancy
as an assembling, aggregating power, a distinction must be drawn
from examples. In several places Coleridge calls fancy

... the faculty of bringing together images
dissimilar in the main by one point or more
of likeness distinguished... 76

A further distinction is found in Biographia Literaria:

These images are fixities and definites... they remain when put together the same as
when apart. 77

In Table Talk, Coleridge speaks of the relation of images thus

74Biographia Literaria, I, p. 194.
75Table Talk (April 20, 1833), p. 185.
76Raysor, op.cit.,I, p. 212.
conceived as having

... no connexion natural or moral, but are yoked together by the poet by means of some accidental coincidence.78

The images are put together by the activity of choice which is really the experience imagination. It is the activity of "selection from among objects already supplied by association, a selection made for the purposes which are not then and therein being shaped but have been already fixed."79

Therefore, fancy conceived in this manner is merely an activity of the mind which Hartley's associationism suggests. Images, whether notions, feelings, desires, or attitudes conceived in this connection are merely accidental links, contributing nothing to the furtherance or growth of the image. The mind sees the image apart from the emotion thus embodied. Richards has explained Shakespeare's lines from Venus and Adonis:

Full gently now she takes him by the hand,
A lily prison'd in a goal of snow,
Or ivory in an alabaster band;
So white a friend engirts so white a foe80

as "Adonis' hand and a lily are both fair; both white; both perhaps, pure (but this comparison is more complex, since the lily is an emblem of the purity which, in turn, by a second

78(June 23, 1834), p. 291.
79Richards, op.cit., p. 76.
80As quoted in Richards, op.cit., p. 77.
metaphor is lent to the hand). But there the links stop. These additions to the hand via the lily in no way change the hand (or, incidentally, the lily). They in no way work upon our perception of Adonis or his hand.\footnote{81}

But when Shakespeare says:

So white a friend engirts so white a foe\footnote{82}

he is rising to the imaginative for the lines bear a second sense and with the second sense "there comes a reach, a percussion to the meaning, a live connexion between the two senses and between them and other parts of the poem consilences and reverberations between the feelings thus aroused."\footnote{83}

Then note the purely imaginative in:

Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.\footnote{84}

Coleridge says of the above lines:

How many images and feelings are here brought together without effort and without discord--the beauty of Adonis--the rapidity of his flight--the yearning yet helplessness of the enamoured gazer--and a shadowy ideal thrown over the whole.\footnote{85}

Richards explains Coleridge's interpretation of Shakespeare's

\footnote{81Cf. Richards, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 81.}
\footnote{82Ibid.}
\footnote{83Ibid.}
\footnote{84Ibid.}
\footnote{85Rayson, \textit{Shakespearean Criticism}, I, p. 213.}
lines in detail when he says: "Here in contrast to the other case, the more the image is followed up, the more links of relevance between the units are discovered. As Adonis to Venus, so these lines to the reader seem to linger in the eye. Here Shakespeare is realizing, and making the reader realize—not by any intensity of effort, but by the fullness and self-completing growth of response—Adonis' flight as it was to Venus, and the sense of loss, of increased darkness that invades her."

The meanings of each word are brought together and as these meanings "come together, as the reader's mind finds cross-connection after cross-connection between them, he seems in becoming more aware of them, to be discovering not only Shakespeare's meaning, but something which he, the reader, is himself making. His understanding of Shakespeare is sanctioned by his own activity in it."

It is this that makes Coleridge see in Shakespeare a true poet

... inasmuch as for a time he has made you one—an active creative being.

Coleridge does not infer that these powers, imagination and fancy, are without a guide. There must be, he believes, an organ that brings the spiritual into play; there must be a medium

86 Richards, op.cit., p. 83.
87 Ibid., p. 84.
88 As quoted in Richards, op.cit., p. 84.
between the sensuous and the supersensuous. This medium is reason. Understanding is a power that can merely classify phenomena and can regard the unity of things only in their limits. It translates abstract notions into language, but it is a language that is static and merely picturesque. When the individual is regarded as having its being in the universal, symbols must become the mode of expression. Shawcross summarizes well this thought: "... the faculty of symbols is none other than the imagination, 'the reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporates the reason in images of the sense, and organizes, as it were, the fluxes of the sense by the permanent and self-circling energies of the reason'. To reason, therefore, the organ of the 'intuition and the immediate spiritual consciousness of God', imagination is related as interpreting in the light of that consciousness the symbolism of the visible world. For of the symbol it is further characteristic 'that it always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible: and while it unicates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative'.

Understanding is the lesser of the two powers. It can have to do with the things of the senses, the details of the things around us. Materials are supplied to it by the senses.

Upon the basis of the creative power of the secondary

---

imagination, Coleridge describes the poet as bringing

... the whole soul of man into activity.\textsuperscript{90}

But, it must be remembered, the poet does this,

... with the subordination of its faculties
to each other, according to their relative
worth and dignity.\textsuperscript{91}

Out of this theory of the imagination grows one of Coleridge's
most characteristic and powerful principles of criticism. He
continues:

This power, first put in action by the
will and understanding, and retained under
their irreissive, though gentle and un-
noticed, controul (laxis effertur habenis)
reveals itself IN THE BALANCE OR RECONCILIA-
TION OF OPPOSITE OR DISCORDANT QUALITIES: of
sameness, with difference; of the general,
with the concrete; the idea, with the image;
the individual, with the representative; the
sense of novelty and freshness, with old and
familiar objects; a more than usual state of
emotion, with more than usual order; judgment
ever awake and steady self-possession, with
enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement;
and while it blends and harmonizes the natural
and the artificial, still subordinates art to
nature; the manner to the matter; and our
admiration of the poet to our sympathy with
the poetry.\textsuperscript{92}

The principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites must be
distinguished from a superficially similar formula which seems
to have been its forerunner, namely, the formula as a combination

\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., II, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{91}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92}Ibid.
of instruction-delight. In the Instruction-Delight theory, poetry was conceived of as a real reconciler of delight. Poetry was a medium for instruction. Writers made art the union, therefore, of various pairs of opposites. Poetry was considered either good or bad according to the degree of the combination of delight and instruction. However, the interest in poetry was not centered in the resulting reconciling concept, but in the beauty and interest of one of the terms, one of the opposites in itself. Up to the time of the sixteenth century, poetry was the handmaid of theology and philosophy. Consequently, such things as morality, truth, delight and instruction were conceived of so narrowly that there resulted merely a compromising combination, and not a transformation such as is the meaning of a real reconciliation. The principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites could function only when formal morality had been removed from literature and had given place to aesthetic and philosophical considerations.

This interest manifested itself during the early nineteenth century. With new values being put on art and the absolute it expresses, "almost everything else that was considered at all in this connection was reduced to that state of relative indifference characterizing the formula of antithesis. Rest and motion, the vital and the formal, man and nature, all were the logically opposed constituents of the definition. Yet in as far as they were reconciled, their meanings were raised (through the
sense of this new value) to a higher plane. The principle signified an almost supreme interest in art."93

In spite of great social and economic unrest that showed itself especially in the French Revolution and in various other ways, there was, during the early nineteenth century, a speculative and idealistic consciousness that had transcended moral and religious conflicts and which could accept the universe as a whole. For such consciousness art had become as big as the universe.

There are two kinds of union of Opposites. To formulate art as the union of such logical opposites as Rest and Motion, the One and the Many or Man and Nature is obviously a very different thing from saying that opposition, symmetry or contrast is a fundamental structural principle of art. In the one case there is an antithesis consisting of terms that are logically opposed, that is, terms whose meanings are opposed; there is no attempt to reflect any structural opposition evident in the work of art. In the other case, there is opposition without a doubt, but the terms have no logically opposed meanings, they are identical units opposed only spatially; the opposition is the scientifically real opposition of the actual structure. Furthermore, there is the logical antithesis in which the terms have meaning or contents, and on the other hand, the mechanical opposition which is

merely a space or direction formula and for that very reason it reflects more directly than the structural opposition revealed in the scientific analysis. In general, however, these two forms are really forms of the same principle, for the mechanical formula has the same general logical significance that belongs to logical antithesis. The real general analysis of antithesis is a certain balance, indifference, and even identity of terms. In the process of being brought together in antithesis, the terms are losing their old meanings, being rendered indifferent and in a sense identical. In both cases there is a process of transvaluation implied.

Coleridge does not use the principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites without a mingling of his philosophy. This principle played no little part in determining his attitude toward his method of defining art.

Coleridge, however, was averse to any form of division, signifying mutual exclusion. Destruction he would allow, but never as a fundamental philosophical fact, division. He once exclaimed:

O, the power of names to give interest. This is Africa! That is Europe! There is division, sharp boundary, abrupt change! and what are they in nature? Two mountain banks that make a noble river of the interfluent sea, not existing and acting with distinctness and manifoldness indeed, but
at once and as one--no division, no change, no antithesis!\textsuperscript{94}

This kind of distinction would, as can be seen, fit into his scheme of imagination. It was his fundamental idea of the universe, as a unity composed of many--the same fundamental idea of the universe that permeated by the divine Intelligence manifests itself in these various antitheses. Unity in variety, similitude and dissimilitude express the inner law, the living dynamic forces shaping matter into form. Alice Snyder says in speaking of this principle in Coleridge's scheme of criticism: "It matters little which way we put it: the temper of his speculative thinking strongly colored his use of this principle; or the principle had so insinuated itself into his thinking that it to some degree determined his philosophical temper. The consideration of the one is practically essential to an interpretation of the other."\textsuperscript{95} Whenever the mystic concept is experienced in some concrete manifestation, Coleridge describes it with a finality that takes it for granted that it is understood by his reader and he gives no practical working out of the principle.

In the study of Coleridge's criticism, it is necessary to keep always in mind the fact that Coleridge had a real concern for the medium of experience manifestations--words. To him words

\textsuperscript{94}Samuel Taylor Coleridge, \textit{Anima Poetae}, ed. by E. H. Coleridge (Boston, 1895), p. 71.

\textsuperscript{95}Op. cit., p. 12.
had vital meanings. He recognized that words had a life of their own. The whole body of his aesthetic and literary criticism shows the importance that he attached to the idea that behind a word is the deepest realism. Miss Snyder gives his attitude toward verbalism when she writes: "A theoretical insistence upon inclusiveness, in spheres, and a temperament that found in abstract metaphysical entities, in mere words, real emotional values of almost enervating ultimateness made it natural that Coleridge should pin his faith to the principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites. And it is natural, that he should employ the logical form of this principle, in which the opposites to be reconciled are words and philosophical concepts rather than the forces and elements of a mechanically construed universe.

The principle in this form serves primarily to define that which is positively inclusive and absolute; at the same time it gives room for all the negations, oppositions and double meanings that must arise in any fundamental dealing with words and metaphysical concepts." 96

All of Coleridge's sense experiences come to him in terms of the great elemental sense contrasts. His Anima Poetae would seem to a reader who was unaware of Coleridge's love of these sense elements in contrast, a book of enigmas. In everything in nature, he sees this conflict of elements. Thus he speaks of one of his

sense experiences:

In the foam-islands in a fiercely boiling pool, at the bottom of a waterfall, there is sameness from infinite change. 97

And again as he looks at the world it becomes to him the expression, half metaphysical, half concrete, of unity and variety:

Oh, said I, as I looked at the blue, yellow-green and purple-green sea, with all its hollows and swells, and cut-glass surfaces--oh, what an ocean of lovely forms! And I was vexed, teased that the sentence sounded like a play of words! That it was not. The mind within me was struggling to express the marvellous distinctness and unconfounded personality of each of the millions of forms, and yet the individual unity in which they subsisted. 98

And again:

The ribbed flame--its snatches of impatience, that half seem and only seem to baffle its upward rush,--the eternal unity of individualities whose essence is in their distinguishableness, even as thought and fancies in the mind. 99

His very fondness for words that carry metaphysical concepts, these pairs of opposites, formed the natural formulae for Coleridge to use in defining any and every experience or phenomena.

The Principle of Reconciliation of Opposites, therefore, is

97 Anima Poetae, p. 100.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
better than any monistic theory to "reflect the truths of actual conditions as well as the ideal to be attained through their union." Coleridge saw that the principle of the union of opposites could be applied to any experience, it was a "universally valid form of analysis; but it was also conceived as a standard or norm--an ideal which was not always realized." 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. Professor Muirhead points out that Coleridge's definition of the poet described in perfection was built up, as it were, intentionally by Coleridge. The student must not forget "... the devastation which the emaciated accounts 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."

Coleridge was constantly subjecting life to intense analysis.

100 Snyder, op.cit., p. 26.
101 Ibid.
102 Muirhead, op.cit., p. 209.
and was frequently positing the various elements of life as unions or opposites. Following logically upon his view of the universe as a universe of unity embracing the inner and outer senses and of a Divine that emanated itself through all appearance to the soul of man, then there must be some kind of reconcillement between the inner world of sense and the outer world of nature.

Upon this basic concept of the universe, Coleridge conceives of beauty. To him the beauty of the visible world was a direct expression of the divine life: the very mind of the Creator expressed itself to sense, therefore. Enjoyment of beauty, although it has a physical element, does not originate in or stop with the senses, which are but physical media of apprehension.

The idea of unity as essential to beauty runs throughout much of Coleridge's aesthetic. In a general statement he says:

The beautiful, contemplated in its essentials, that is, in kind and not in degree, is that in which the many, still seen as many, becomes one.103

One of the best examples that illustrates his definition of the mutlety in unity is that of the coach-wheel. He does not spare details to make himself understood. Thus he says:

An old coach-wheel lies in the coachmaker's yard, disfigured with tar and dirt (I purposely

take the most trivial instances):—If I turn away my attention from these, and regard the figure abstractly, "still", I might say to my companion, "there is beauty in that wheel, and you yourself would not only admit it, but would feel it, had you never seen a wheel before. See how the rays proceed from the centre to the circumferences, and how different images are distinctly comprehended at one glance, as forming one whole, and each part in some harmonious relation of each to all.104

Constantly throughout his criticism of Wordsworth and the other dramatists, the echo of "harmonious relation of each to all" is heard. But more specifically, beauty involves the will and the intelligence and again Coleridge comes back to the object-subject idea. Viewed as a product of the will, beauty has seven conditions or characteristics. Knowledge of them is essential to a full understanding of many of his statements about the characters of Shakespeare's plays, as well as the basic reasoning for his criticism of Wordsworth and the other poets. These characteristics are:

1. The universal condition of Beauty in the beautiful or the beautiful or beauty-exciting object is, that the Form of this Object shall appear to be a product of an intelligent Will, not wholly or principally as intelligence, but as Living Will causative, or reality: in other words, of Will in its own form as Will.

2. But Will may exist in a form in which the Intelligence is not only subordinate but latent--i.e. implied and to be inferred,

104 Ibid., p. 17.
but not evident. In this sense it is, 
that Life is a Will, a form of Corollary. 
The first is seen or felt with greatest 
facility or rather it is only seen with 
pleasurable facility when it exists in 
connection and in combination with the 
second. Therefore every beautiful Object 
must have an association and a Life—it 
must have Life in it or attributed to it— 
Life or Spontaneity, as an action of Vital 
Power.

3. The Beautiful, which demands the Spontaneous, 
forbids the arbitrary and as partaking of 
the arbitrary, the accidental. For the ar­
britary is an exclusion of Intelligence. 
But the Will can not appear in its own form 
without Intelligence, contained though sub­
ordinated. Hence Life and Spontaneity will 
not of themselves but only as Secondaries, 
constitute the Beautiful.

4. . . . The Manifold must be melted into the 
One, and in all but the lowest or simplest 
Products must be felt in the result rather 
than noticed—a beautiful Piece of Reasoning— 
not beautiful because it is understood as 
true; but because it is felt, as a truth of 
Reason, i.e. immediate with the faculty of 
life.

5. . . . There must be a fitness, indeed, for to 
be unfit is to contradict Intelligence or 
Reason which are to be implied not opposed.

6. . . . Design must exist in the equivalence of 
the result, Virtual Design without the sense 
of Design.

7. . . . The Fitness must not be a conspiration 
of component but of constituent Parts, not 
of parts put to each other, but of distinct 
but indivisible parts growing out of a common 
Antecedent Unity, or productive Life and Will. 
It must be an organic not a mechanic fitness.105

105 T. M. Raynor, "Unpublished Fragments on Aesthetics by S. T. 
Coleridge", Publications of the Modern Language Association, 
22:529-30 (October, 1925).
All this the poet or artist can do by penetrating into the inmost divine life of nature, which is one with the divine life in his own soul, and he is able to share it. The creative activity of the divine mind awakens in his soul a corresponding creative activity. The poet or artist achieves form in his product by working as nature works through inner law. The divine law, operating at the heart of nature, operates also in the mind of the poet. But the nature that the poet must imitate, not copy, is the nature at work, the natura naturans, not the natura naturata. Coleridge always advocates freedom for the artist.

Again, there is the idea of unity and harmony in his conception of art. Art, for Coleridge, is the middle quality between a thought and a thing, . . . the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human. It is the figured language of thought, and is distinguished from nature by the unity of all the parts in one thought or idea. 106

How logically Coleridge's entire body of aesthetic and philosophy adheres! After he has explained his meaning of imitation as "two elements perceived as co-existing", 107 he tells us:

These two constituent elements are likeness and unlikeness, or sameness and difference,

106 Miscellanies, "On Poesy or Art", p. 44.
107 Ibid., p. 45.
and in all genuine creations of art there must be a union of these disparates. 108

It is the function of the artist or poet to balance and imitate nature provided

there be likeness in the difference, difference in the likeness, and a reconcilement of both in one. 109

This involves the technique of art. But the artist must fully understand that he is to imitate not copy. Coleridge stresses again the meaning of beauty when he says:

We must imitate nature! yes, but what in nature,—all and everything? No, the beautiful in nature. And what then is the beautiful? What is beauty? It is, in the abstract, the unity of the manifold, the coalescence of the diverse; in the concrete, it is the union of the shapely (formosum) with the vital. 110

However, Coleridge is anxious that his hearers remember that we must not copy mere nature, the natura naturata. With a feeling of disgust, he recalls Ciprani's pictures which as he says

... proceed only from a given form. 111

With precision he says:

Believe me, you must master the essence, the natura naturans which supposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man. 112

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., p. 46.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
What place does the moral element play in Coleridge's aesthetic? He definitely says that nature's wisdom is co-instantaneous with the plan and the execution; nature has no moral responsibility:

... the thought and the product are one, or are given at once; but is no reflex act, and hence there is no moral responsibility.  

But it is for the genius in man to make a choice; he is capable of reflection and enjoys freedom:

In man there is reflexion, freedom, and choice; he is, therefore, the head of the visible creation.

And in his characteristic manner, Coleridge describes the "mystery" of the Fine Arts:

The objects of nature are presented, as in a mirror, all the possible elements, steps, and processes of intellect antecedent to consciousness, and therefore to the full development of the intelligent act; and man's mind is the very focus of all the rays of intellect which are scattered throughout the images of nature.

With all ground fully prepared for the poet, it is then through freedom and choice that the poet must place these images, totalized, and fitted to the limits of the human mind, as to elicit from, and to superinduce upon, the

---

113 Ibid., p. 47.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
forms themselves the moral reflexions to which they approximate... Coleridge supposes, therefore, that every piece of art should be imbued with a moral beauty, not moral in the sense of doctrinal religious morality, but a natural quality which is attributed to man's intellect rather than to his animal nature, the sensuous appetites. For he says that if a moral feeling is associated with the 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.\textsuperscript{117}

Romanticism itself would put a moral value upon art. To the romanticist, the "inner" consciousness is the essence of personality. Since it is a part of the great oneness in nature, an integral part, therefore, of the spirit of God, consequently, it is spiritual. The romanticist's view of nature is nature not primarily a part of the external and objective reality, but nature as the outer or sense-form of the "inner" or spiritual reality. Thus: "The 'inner' being, in all and in any of its terms, including Vernunft, finds its complete embodiment in 'Nature'. And in the same manner in which the individual 'soul' or 'spirit' is an integral part of the 'soul' or 'spirit' of God,

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 41.
the over-soul, each individual 'nature' is an integral part of the universal nature. Likewise, the absolute primacy of the universal or divine spirit in its relation to universal nature is repeated in the primacy of each individual spirit in relation to its individual nature. Nature is thus the symbol of the soul. Romanticism is nature animism. It follows from this that 'nature' offers the complete and sufficient tangible evidence of the soul. The laws of nature, therefore, must be the laws of the inner being. Nature embodies and manifests all the fundamental truths, motives, and standards of conduct.  

Therefore, there is no need for objective doctrinal standards. There is identity between organic functions and spiritual emotions. To the mind of the romanticist, integrity is "... the quality of only those acts which are the immediate resultants of the spontaneous push of the totality of his nature. This totality is beyond the analytic understanding, a mystic force, amenable only to the immediate apperception and expression of the soul. Its specific manifestation is its indissoluble spontaneous oneness of impulse. Only in complete loyalty and obedience to spontaneous impulse does the Romanticist acknowledge and follow supreme law of his and in that of universal being. In this sense integrity to him is complete naturalness. The Romanticist denies original sin; he

asserts original godliness."119 The laws that nature gives are the only norms, therefore, and "the supreme authority and integrity of impulse implies freedom from external, objective, mediate motives or standards of truth and conduct."120 The mystery lies in making

... the external internal, the internal external, . . . nature thought and thought nature. . . . 121

Another keynote of Shakespeare's genius in the creation of characters, Coleridge found was that

To the idea of life, victory or strife is necessary; as virtue consists not simply in the absence of vices, but in the overcoming of them.122

The artist or poet must, furthermore,

... 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 assimilates him to nature and enables him to understand her.123

But intellect alone does not constitute a guide in the technique of the poet. To intellect, Coleridge would add

119 Ibid., p. 283.
120 Ibid.
121 Miscellanies, p. 41.
122 Ibid., p. 52.
123 Ibid., p. 48.
sensibility. It is, he says, a "component part of genius."\(^{124}\)

In his lectures of 1811-12, he defines taste as

... an attainment after the poet has been disciplined by experience, and has added to genius that talent by which he knows what part of his genius he can make acceptable and intelligible to the portion of mankind for which he writes.\(^{125}\)

Professor Muirhead writes on this point: "It is a merit in contemporary writers on "Taste" to recognize the place in art of the emotional response which they called "sensibility". Their mistake was to interpret this as a form of self-feeling. On a view like Coleridge's the whole emphasis fell upon depth of feeling, but it was feeling for a world in which the self in any personal sense no longer occupied a place, but might be said, as in love, to have 'passed in music out of sight'.\(^{126}\)

Those who would appreciate the depth and subtlety of Coleridge's philosophy of beauty and his system of the art of criticism, must remember that philosophy and the principles of criticism which Coleridge is concerned with 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."\(^{127}\) All experience in that theory of life; moral,

---

\(^{124}\) Biographia Literaria, I, p. 30.

\(^{125}\) Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, ed. by T. M. Raysor, II, p. 129.


\(^{127}\) Muirhead, op. cit., p. 213-14.
aesthetic, intellectual, is dealt with throughout Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare and other English poets. Just how these principles of criticism are used by Coleridge in his interpretation of the Shakespearean play will be the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER III
APPLICATION OF COLERIDGE'S BASIC THEORIES,
PHILOSOPHICAL AND AESTHETIC,
TO HIS CRITICISM OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

The application of Coleridge's philosophical and aesthetic theories as found in the mass of his critical works is both complex and illusive. Coleridge's master mind possessed two great powers, the power of penetrating the work at hand and, likewise, the power of culling from the work the very reasons and causes of its being. These two powers fuse in the great critic, making it hard at times to distinguish between the philosophic and purely aesthetic principles, and until the reader has "got the habit", as Miss Snyder aptly puts it, Coleridge may baffle even an admirer.

The subject-matter of his criticism yields itself to three phases which, although treated separately, are a composite of Coleridge's art. What part does experience play in the building up of the Shakespearean play? What function has the theory of the imagination in the essence of Shakespearean drama? Does Coleridge allow for a real technique in the development of the Shakespearean drama? It must be remembered that Coleridge was not a professional theater man. This fact is apparent in his approach to Shakespearean drama. The literary qualities of the
Shakespearean play were to Coleridge of far more interest and importance than the dramatic elements. As a consequence, there is very little comment on plot structure and popular appeal among his critical works. English audiences were tired of pompous kings and queens, and sought in the drama the things that touched their more commonplace lives.

Subjective poet that he was, Coleridge saw in Shakespeare a great prober of the human soul. Coleridge was an idealist who read in Shakespeare's plays his own inner musings on that inner life of reality so dear to him. Hazlitt and Lamb, his intimate friends and contemporaries, in whom he sought affirmation of his own theories, were vague in determining what ought to constitute drama. Hazlitt would admit that drama was more than a panorama of actions. Lamb would judge a play good if it possessed a few passages of lyrical grandeur. Coleridge, representative of the romantic critics, "over-stressed the abstract, and as a consequence those concrete elements which are of such importance in drama were more or less neglected."128

The periodicals of the day evidence the spirit of discontent and complaint that arose among the professional active theater critics. This note of discontent was shown in the London Magazine in which the critic writes: "Action is the essence of drama; nay its definition: business, bustle, hurly and combustion

dire, are indispensable to effective drama. ... But (addressing the dramatist) you seem to think that the whole virtue of tragedy lies in its poeticity. ... At any rate if you don't think thus, you write as if you did. ... In short, your action is nothing and your poetry everything." 129

In the second of the "Satyrane Letters" Coleridge has given us the attitude of the ordinary theater-goer toward the drama of the day and that of the idealist's conception of it. In an imaginary conversation the citizen defends the modern type of drama by saying that it is filled "with the best Christian morality." 130 To which the idealist answers that it is "that part of Christian morality which can be practised without a single Christian virtue, without a single sacrifice that is really painful." 131 The idealist avers that the sterling conflicts of an Antony or a Caesar are the essence of dramatic action. Against this remark the defendant argues that the ordinary citizen of London or Hamburg has not much contact with kings or queens; and besides, he knows just how such stories turn out, for they are stories known to all. This knowledge of the story detracts from the interest and curiosity of the audience. The idealist argues that it is "the manner and the language, the

129 Ibid.
130 Biographia Literaria, II, p. 160.
131 Ibid.
situations, the action and reaction of the passions" that should hold the audience's attention. The practical minded citizen says that he is interested in his "friends and next-door neighbours--honest tradesmen, valiant tars, high-spirited half-pay officers, philanthropic Jews, etc." These types are not such, the idealist argues, that can perform "actions great and interesting." He asks the citizen what such characters can do that is really noteworthy. The attitude of the average contemporary producer is evident in the citizen's reply: "what is done on the stage is more striking than what is acted." To Coleridge's romantic mind such characters styled as "friends and next-door neighbours" could not be associated with that "sublimest of all feelings, the power of distinction and the controlling might of heaven which seems to elevate the characters which sink beneath its irresistible blow." These were "mere fancies" to the London play-goer who finds in the play a portrayal of his own life of action with this difference--in the play all turns out exactly as he desires.

With a note of disgust Coleridge then sums up the reasons for the popularity of contemporary plays:

132 Ibid.
133 Ibid., p. 162.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid., p. 163.
136 Ibid.
... the whole secret of dramatic popularity consists... in the confusion and subversion of the natural order of things, their causes and effects; in the excitement of surprise, by representing the qualities of liberality, refined feeling, and a nice sense of honor... 138

Poetry in Coleridge's mind is always identified with philosophy. It is when he is dealing with concrete criticism of works of art that he seems to forget that he is dealing with abstract thought. Like Aristotle, Coleridge believed that the aim of poetry should represent the universal through the particular to give a concrete and living embodiment to a universal truth. This universal of poetry is not an abstract idea. It is particularized to sense; it comes before the mind clothed in the form of the concrete, presented under the appearance of a living organism whose parts are in vital and structural relation to the whole. Butcher concludes in his Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art 139 that although Coleridge adhered to Aristotle's theory in many respects, he, nevertheless, was careful to explain that poetry as poetry is essentially ideal. He himself states this in the Biographia Literaria:

I adopt with full faith the theory of Aristotle that poetry as poetry is essentially ideal, that it avoids and excludes all accident; that its apparent individualities 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 attri-

138 Ibid., p. 164.
139 P. 183.
butes of the class; not such as one gifted individual might possibly possess, but such as from his situation, it is most probable that he would possess.\footnote{140}

His attitude on this subject of universal and particular is:

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 individual.\footnote{141}

The differences are

. . . in geometry it is the universal truth, which is uppermost in the consciousness; in poetry the individual form, in which the truth is clothed.\footnote{142}

One is inclined to think that Coleridge here supposes the universal to be a single abstract truth. It is all the truths that are held within bounds of the individual. He stresses the fact that although the poet is dealing with the particular, the "concrete fact which the poet uses is so changed that the universal is represented by it."\footnote{143}

At times Coleridge's praise of poetic qualities, his appreciation of unity, poetical imagery and harmony does not seem to

\footnote{140}Biographia Literaria, II, p. 33.
\footnote{141}Ibid.
\footnote{142}Ibid.
\footnote{143}As quoted in Butcher, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 393.
agree with his theory of the imagination. He conceives of poetry as identified with philosophy when he views poetry thus connected with philosophy as a sublime experience whose expression is more or less independent and irrelevant to him. Experience of this nature is the first step in the poet's creative process; the imagination then becomes as Coleridge himself says in the *Anima Poetae*

... the laboratory in which the thought elaborates essence into existence.¹⁴⁴

Experience is considered as a form of self-expression. Coleridge distinguishes between observation and meditation. The creation of characters on the part of Shakespeare was in some sense self-expression; it was meditation of his own nature and then a reproduction, for he says:

... he had only to imitate certain parts of his own character, or to exaggerate such as existed in possibility, and they were at once true to nature. ... some may think them of one form, and some of another; but they are still nature, still Shakespeare, and the creatures of his meditation.¹⁴⁵

Experiences within the poet Shakespeare afford the patterns, as it were, that convey the universal in life. The poet first meditates upon the universal and then recreates it and concentrates it in the individual. In his "Essay on Method" Coleridge says:

¹⁴⁴P. 186.

¹⁴⁵Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
. . . the observation of a mind, which, having formed a theory and a system upon its own nature, remarks all things that are examples of its truth, and, above all, enabling it to convey the truths of philosophy, as mere effects derived from what we may call, the outward watchings of life.

Characters in Shakespeare's plays were regarded by Coleridge as "representations of abstract conceptions." Thus the universal became an idea. Of the idea Coleridge says

Shakespeare, therefore, studied mankind in the Idea of the human race.

This statement is basic in his psychological method. Shakespeare's drama then became "the vehicle of general truth" and all his characters have the primary purpose of expressing this truth. Genius works by laws, not only those which regulate the outer form of the poem or entire drama but others which are dependent upon the

. . . external objects of sight and sound.

Shakespeare is a great dramatist simply because he possesses knowledge of law

147 Powell, op.cit., p. 111.
148 As quoted in Raysor, Shakespearean Criticism, II, p. 344.
149 Ibid.
150 As quoted in Powell, op.cit., p. 113.
Art becomes then a "form of knowledge", a "store-house for bits of reality", "facts of mind". Shakespeare possessed this "store-house" for he knew the essential "reality of things and deep truths underlying human life." 

Shakespeare's poetry gained Coleridge's admiration and eulogy not for the beauty of the poetry itself, but because Coleridge found in it these laws and truths underlying life itself. The characters of Shakespeare's plays exemplified the many experiences of real life. Shawcross summarizes a few instances of these when he says: "Constance's personification of grief, in King John, is justified on the ground that Coleridge had heard a real mother utter similar words--and that the passage therefore represented a 'fact of mind'." 

In a similar way Shawcross says: "The character of Romeo draws Coleridge's dissertation upon the nature of love." Again, "Wordsworth's Betty Foy is an impersonation of instinct abandoned by judgment." But such a theory naturally led

---

151 Ibid.
153 Ibid., II, p. 36.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
Coleridge to look for a concept in every poem. The concept or
the reason for which the poem existed or from which it was born,
was an experience, a "fact of mind", a "form of being." In this
case the experience is not regarded as emotional experience of
an individual, but as a peering into the very nature of the uni-
versal. This is Coleridge in theory. When he puts aside this
theoretical attitude, his idea assumes emotion and passion. In
the hands of a poet experience is transformed into more vivid
reality by means of the poet's own act of creation. Passion be-
comes necessary before the experience becomes an experience of
the poet. The stronger the state of emotion becomes, the more
vivid the reflection becomes. This experience Coleridge called
the primary imagination. The poet whose sensibility is excited
by the beauty of the world about him adds to the object or ex-
perience his own sympathetic emotion which arises in him during
the act of creation. When these experiences which are aroused or
created by nature, or when the passions, or the various accidents
of human life are expressed in ordinary language by the man who
does not possess genius, that expression Coleridge would not con-
sider a poem. To the powers of observation or the pure experi-
ence something must be added: there must be a

. . . pleasurable emotion, that peculiar
state and degree of excitement, which arises
in the poet himself in the act of composi-
tion;--and in order to understand this, we
must combine more than ordinary sympathy with
the objects, emotions, or incidents con-
templated by the poet, consequent on a more
than common sensibility, with a more than ordinary activity of the mind in respect of the fancy and the imagination. 156

Consequent upon this Coleridge says

... a more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and of the human heart. . . 157

is produced. The truths of nature and the human heart are the experiences, the stuff of the poet's imagination. Experience is the framework of objectivity, that definiteness and articulation of imagery, and that modification of the images themselves, without which poetry becomes flattened into mere didactics of practice or evaporated into a hazy, unthoughtful, day-dreaming. 158

To this Coleridge would add the great secondary imagination which superimposes or rather "fuses" passions which give a new life to the experience:

... passion, provides that neither thought nor imagery shall be simply objective, but that the passio vera of humanity shall warm and animate. . . 159

the images of the primary imagination. The poet with the aid of the secondary imagination produces some new phase of the image or thought of the primary imagination. Coleridge would have us believe that in the state of emotion attendant upon creative

156 *Shakespearean Criticism*, I, p. 163.
genius, the poet stresses the individual experience hidden in the universal experience of mankind. Poetry is experience; it is experience of a rare individual. It is from this point of view that Coleridge criticizes Shakespeare, and from which Shakespeare selects from history the individual characters that possess that rare experience. Coleridge stresses more the experience than the idea. His definition of poet implies that the secondary imagination is the power that can recapture living experiences:

The poet . . . brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and a spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irrepressible though gentle and unnoticed control (laxis effertur habenis) reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities. . .

Coleridge places experience at the base of all true drama. Every man's experience is universal yet individual. The dramatist is not merely an observer; he probes the very root of the experience, traces it to the individual in the human being. Therefore, to do this the poet must meditate in order to distinguish passion from general truths when creating characters. The characters of the play must contain a "living balance" for, as Coleridge maintains,
The heterogeneous united as in nature. Mistakes of those who suppose a pressure or passion always acting—it is that by which the individual is distinguished from others, not what makes a separate kind of him.\footnote{Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. 228.}

Consequently, it is not the poet's business to analyze and criticize the affections and faiths of men. He must not interpret in the light of his own affections, but must ask, "Are these affections and emotions and truths true of every human nature?" This is the criterion by which Coleridge would test the genius of Shakespeare or any other playwright. That Coleridge believed that Shakespeare's characters were ideal and the creatures of meditation is true, yet he maintained also that

\[\ldots\] a just separation may be made of those in which the ideal is most prominent—where it is put forward more intensely—where we are made more conscious of the ideal, though in truth they possess no more nor less ideality; and of those which, though equally idealized, the delusion upon the mind is of their being real.\footnote{Ibid., II, p. 168.}

The characters of Shakespeare's plays, as characters in real life, differ. It is sometimes the real that is disguised in the ideal; sometimes the ideal hidden by the real. This difference is obtained by the poet through his use of the different powers of mind employed in the creation and presentation of character.

Among the real Coleridge classifies Shakespeare's historical
plays. In historical plays Coleridge required the following essential characteristics:

In order that a drama may be properly historical, it is necessary that it should be the history of the people to whom it is addressed. In the composition, care must be taken that there appear no dramatic improbability, as the reality is taken for granted. It must, likewise, be poetical; -- that only, I mean, must be taken which is the permanent in our nature, which is common and therefore deeply interesting to all ages.\(^{163}\)

The essential unity basic in Coleridge's concept of drama is not gained in the historical play by the fusing of the ideal in the real but is

... of a higher order, which connects the events by reference to the workers, gives a reason for them in the motives, and presents men in their causative character.\(^{164}\)

Coleridge further distinguishes between the art that is created by the experience imagination and that which is created by the higher power and evinced by the secondary imagination when he says pointedly:

The distinction does not depend on the quantity of historical events compared with the fictions, for there is as much history in Macbeth as in Richard, but in the relation of the history to the plot. In the purely historical plays, the history informs the plot; in the mixt it directs it; in the rest, as Macbeth, Hamlet, Cymbeline, Lear, it subserves it.\(^{165}\)

---

163 Ibid., I, p. 138.
164 Ibid., p. 139.
165 Ibid., p. 143.
In historical plays characters are not introduced . . . merely for the purpose of giving a greater individuality and realness, as in the comic parts of Henry IV, by presenting, as it were, our very selves. 166

Regarding the presentation of the character of Richard II, Coleridge indicated that Shakespeare exercised the power of the primary imagination:

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 those 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. 167

Coleridge justifies Shakespeare's use of the pun in the historical drama by saying that it is . . . the passion that carries off its excess by play on words, as naturally and, therefore, as appropriately to drama, as by gesticulation, looks, or tones. . . . 168

all of which are necessary adjuncts to the play. For all these things belong, he reasons very logically, . . . to human nature as human, independent of associations and habits from any particular rank of life or mode of employment; and in this consists Shakespeare's vulgarisms. . . . 169

166 Ibid.
167 Ibid., p. 149.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
which have a definite place in the dramatic dialogue, for they have a place in the human existence of man. In the analysis of Richard II Coleridge gives his definition of historical drama,

... the events are all historical, presented in their results, not produced by acts seen, or that take place before the audience...  

The main object of the historical drama is to

... familiarize men to the great names of the country, and excite patriotism.  

Free will and fate form the elements of historic drama. Coleridge would attribute to Shakespeare good judgment in the introduction of accidents thus making them drama, not pure history. However, in general he does not believe that accidents are allowable in romantic or ideal drama.

An historic play would not require the same genius as romantic play. As regards experience in Shakespeare's plays, Coleridge notes,

... he shows us the life and principle of each being with organic regularity.  

The person of the boatswain in the first scene of The Tempest is an example of experience without the coloring of the poet's imagination. When danger threatens, the boatswain throws off the feelings of reverence toward Gonzalo and shouts at him,
Hence! What care these roarers for the name of King?
To cabin: silence! trouble us not. 173

After this vulgar speech Gonzalo does not moralize nor comment on the boatswain's language. He soliloquizes and tries to comfort himself by meditation on the ill expression of the boatswain's face. Coleridge sees in this instance the language of men such as would be actually used under similar circumstances. Characters thus drawn are real—they are the embodiment of life and its experiences. In Miranda's exclamation upon seeing the ship at a distance dashed to pieces there is the feeling of sympathy with her fellow beings:

O! I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel,
Who had, no doubt, some noble creatures in her,
Dash'd all to pieces. 174

It is important in the study of Coleridge to remember that to him poetry possesses vital reality whose essence is the intimate experience of the poet. For this reason Coleridge tries to recreate the poet's mood within himself and then analyzes that poet's expression as a living experience.

When Coleridge combines the idea of experience and creative imagination, a piece of art is produced. But mere raw experience, such as contact with life affords, is not art in itself. It must be recreated, infused with spiritual values. The

173 Ibid., p. 171.
174 Ibid., p. 172.
presentation of life's experience requires the aid of the audience. This aid will be obtained, Coleridge believes, by the theory of dramatic illusion.

In accord with his theory of dramatic art, Coleridge views the stage not as a permanent mechanical structure. To him:

A theatre, in the widest sense of the word, is the general term for all places of amusement thro' the ear or eye in which men assemble in order to be amused by some entertainment presented to all at the same time. . . The most important and dignified species of this genus is, doubtless, the stage (res theatralis histrionica), which, in addition to the generic definition above given may be characterized (in its Idea, or according to what it does, or ought to, aim at) as a combination of several or of all the fine arts to an harmonious whole having a distinct end of its own, to which the peculiar end of each of the component parts, taken separately, is made subordinate and subservient, that namely, of imitating Ideality (objects, actions, or passions) under a semblance of reality.175

This is an idealist's definition of the stage. It is upon this stage of the "universal mind"176 that the great Shakespearean characters as Coleridge singles them out pass in review. Therefore, in order to hold the individual mind as the stage of life's individuals, mind must be put in the state in which universal truths and experience will best be seen and understood. This state is equivalent to delusion created by a picture upon a little child. The picture gives real delight. The scene on the

---

175 Ibid., I, p. 199.
176 Ibid., p. 4.
stage has the chief purpose of producing as much illusion as will make the spectator contribute his own imaginative power and make him feel that the scene is real. Stage scenes are to men what the picture is to the child. The dramatic illusion that is put upon the mind of man suspends the act of comparison and creates poetic faith in the spectator. This is accompanied by a child's sensibility.

Experiences thus presented before an audience must resemble reality. The genius of the poet will bring about a balance and antithesis of feeling and thought. The condition of all consciousness "that without which we should feel and imagine only by discontinuous moments," is

... that ever-varying balance, or balancing, of images, notions, or feelings... conceived as in opposition to each other; in short, the perception of identity and contrariety, the least degree of which constitutes likeness, the greatest absolute difference.\(^1\)

Between these two, the identity and contrariety or likeness and difference, there is a gradation of feelings and emotions, which forms the source of interest for our intellect and moral sense.

What place does the unities hold in Coleridge's concept of a play? The unities as conceived as an inherent part of the ancient drama had their merits, Coleridge conceded. He rejected the unities in his theory, for he believed drama to be a living,

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 205.
dynamic growth and this growth, an organic wholeness. The idea or concept of a vital unity as opposed to mechanical structure appears not only in Coleridge's consideration of plot and character, but also in the very words and phrases that express this dynamic dramatic whole. If, therefore, the dramatist is to be successful in throwing over his audience that "poetic faith" or "disbelief", the elements of man's entire being must be fused. To see these principles actually at play in Coleridge's criticism, the creative imagination and experience imagination, and his actual technique must not be considered as acting separately, but as commingling, giving a oneness of impression.

Coleridge dwells at length on the details that create this oneness of impression, but deals with the imagination as the power from which this unity proceeds. It is imagination that distinguishes romantic drama from every other kind. He himself justifies the distinction when he says,

... I have named the true genuine modern poetry the romantic.178

Then he defines Shakespearean drama as

... romantic poetry revealing itself in the drama.179

Thus, The Tempest which Coleridge classifies as a romantic drama is one

178 Ibid., p. 197.
179 Ibid.
... the interests of which are independent of all historical facts and associations, and arise from their fitness to that faculty of our nature, the imagination I mean, which owes no allegiance to time and place,--a species of drama, therefore, in which errors in chronology and geography, no mortal sins in any species, are venial, or count for nothing.\textsuperscript{180}

The laws of the unities would be a restriction upon the full play of the imagination. The structure of the play is equivalent in Coleridge's mind to the growth of character and the appropriate unity in that case would pervade the whole, attendant upon it, balancing or positing the universal in past experiences or, as he calls them, "facts of mind". The romantic drama appeals to the imagination. Anything exterior that might disturb the illusion or withdraw the mind from that inner realm would destroy the essence of romantic drama for

... the excitement ought to come from within,--from the moved and sympathetic imagination; whereas, where so much is addressed to the mere external senses of seeing and hearing, the spiritual vision is apt to languish, and the attraction from without will withdraw the mind from the proper and only legitimate interest which is intended to spring from within.\textsuperscript{181}

In other words, there must be a sublimation of the natural with the spiritual--the spiritual, we must remember, is the union of the individual with the universal, the contact with the living nature or the \textit{natura naturans}.

\textsuperscript{180}Ibid., p. 131.

\textsuperscript{181}Ibid., p. 132.
Imagination becomes in the hands of Shakespeare the brush that paints not only the characters in living colors with the light of sunshine and the shadow of interplay between the souls of these characters, but also the background of the picture.

Furthermore, imagination is the power that creates dramatic characters. Coleridge's Principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites is his main technique. Sometimes this reconciliation is a union of opposites, especially of the universal and the individual. In the individual it is often modified by circumstances such as environment or heredity. This fact Coleridge definitely states when discussing Shakespeare's women characters. He says:

... there is essentially the same foundation and principle; the distinct individuality and variety are merely the result of the modification of circumstances, whether in Miranda the maiden, in Imogen the wife, or in Katherine the queen.\textsuperscript{182}

Coleridge makes the theory of the imagination the basis of his entire system of art. For Coleridge nature and art are one and it is the function of the secondary imagination to "fuse each into each by a synthetic and magical power".\textsuperscript{183} The poet must possess the vision of the universe as Divine activity and must imitate not the real in himself but the real in the universal.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., p. 134.

\textsuperscript{183} Biographia Literaria, II, p. 12.
It is the lack of imagination in Ben Jonson that makes Coleridge say with disgust:

... he Ben Jonson cared only to observe what was external or open to, and likely to impress the senses. He individualizes, not so much, if at all, by the exhibition of moral or intellectual differences, as by the varieties and contrasts of manners, modes of speech and tricks of temper. ... 184

In the works of Beaumont and Fletcher, Coleridge points out the lack of imaginative power. These two dramatists presented the experiences of the primary imagination without the infused emotion:

... these poets took from the ear and eye, unchecked by any intuition of an inward impossibility;--just as a man might put together a quarter of an orange, a quarter of an apple, and the like of a lemon and a pomegranate, and make it look like one round diverse-colored fruit. 185

This to Coleridge is not drama because nature does not work in that manner. Coleridge says:

... nature, which works from within by evolution and assimilation, according to a law, cannot do so, nor could Shakespeare; for he too worked in the spirit of nature, by evolving the germ from within by the imaginative power according to an idea. 186

Therefore, first of all, drama must be essentially real; it

185 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
must be a product of the imagination, that power which draws out of the universal the individual, yet gives to the individual something of the universal. Coleridge interprets Shakespeare's dramatic characters according to the degree of experience and imagination that constitutes them. The reconciling and balancing of extremes may create a mediocre character, but in comparing Shakespeare's characters with Chaucer's, Coleridge finds that

Shakespeare's characters are the representatives of the interior nature of humanity, in which some element has become so predominant as to destroy the health of the mind.187

In noting the basic use of this theory in Coleridge's interpretations, one is aware of a constant positing of opposites in the building up of the characters. The dramatist must be able to distinguish the surface qualities from the essentially inner reality. He must not shape from his own individual person. Coleridge charges Beaumont and Fletcher with such inconsistency. Shakespeare, on the other hand, shaped or created his characters . . . out of the nature within; but we cannot so safely say, out of his own nature as an individual person. No! this latter is itself but a natura naturata, an effect, a product, not a power. It was Shakespeare's prerogative to have this universal, which is potentially in each particular, opened to him, the homo generalis, not an abstraction from observation of a variety of men, but as the substance capable of endless modifications of which his own personal existence was but one, and to use this one as the eye that beheld the other, and as the tongue that could

187 Ibid.
convey the discovery. . . Shakespeare, in composing, had not I, but the I representative. In Beaumont and Fletcher you have descriptions of characters by the poet rather than the characters themselves; we are told, of their being; but we rarely or never feel that they actually are. 188

Sometimes the dramatic element in character consists of a balance of imagination and experience. Often Shakespeare develops character by the exclusion of one tendency and the development of the other. Contrast brings out reciprocal traits and "by means of the contrast the balance is established, opposites are created, and since they are part of one artistic unit, in a sense reconciled." 189 Don Quixote and Sancho exemplify such contrast.

Don Quixote's leanness and featureliness are happy exponents of the excess of the formative or imaginative in him, contrasted with Sancho's plump rotundity, and recipiency of external impression. 190

Imagination becomes the predominant force in Don Quixote. Coleridge sees in him lack of knowledge of the sciences. Or, in other words, experience is lacking and for that reason Don fails to see the invisible in the world of the senses; he failed to see life in its symbolic forms. Consequently, Don creates for

188 Mrs. H.N. Coleridge, op. cit., p. 45.
189 Alice Snyder, op. cit., p. 40.
190 H.N. Coleridge, Literary Remains (London, 1836), I, p. 117.
himself a world of reality or a world of experience out of the romances which he read. Coleridge affirms the necessity of experience for Don when he says of him:

... the dependency of our nature asks for some confirmation from without, though it be only from the shadows of other men's fictions. \(^{191}\)

Therefore Don Quixote created a world for himself. The will was active in the realm of the imagination where

Don Quixote's will lived and acted as a king over the creations of his fancy! \(^{192}\)

On the other hand, Sancho represents common sense without the modifying power of reason or imagination. Don Quixote is the result of a complete lack of judgment and understanding. In the creation of these two characters, Coleridge sees the defect in the picture of the two men, for there is a need for both elements in the well developed character. Coleridge gives this idea clearly when he comments in his summary on Cervantes:

Cervantes not only shows the excellence and power of reason in Don Quixote, but in both him and Sancho the mischiefs resulting from a severance of the two main constituents of sound intellectual and moral action. Put him and his master together, and they form a perfect intellect; but they are separated and without cement; and hence each having a need of the other for its own completeness, each has at times the mastery over the other. \(^{193}\)

\(^{191}\) Ibid., p. 118.
\(^{192}\) Ibid., p. 119.
\(^{193}\) Ibid., p. 120.
The same idea regarding the need which seeks to be fulfilled in man's nature, Coleridge states in his theory of love elsewhere. Again, it is the basic idea of unity that runs as a red thread through the entire weave of Coleridge's system of thought. Here Don Quixote's love for the country lass is a love of the inward imagination, for he makes no attempt to learn to know the country lass. Don refrains from seeking her love because of his fear of having his

. . . cherished image destroyed by its own judgment.\textsuperscript{194}

Therefore, he constantly lives and loves in his imagination.

Another characteristic of the imagination is exemplified in Don Quixote when he describes the things of the senses and sensations, especially in the description of the dawn which he does

. . . without borrowing a single trait from either.\textsuperscript{195}

Imagination makes Don Quixote eulogize himself or rather,

. . . the idol of his imagination, the imaginary being whom he is acting.\textsuperscript{196}

Finally, with a promise of glory to himself, Sancho also comes under the spell of the imagination. Coleridge remarks:

At length the promises of the imaginative reason begin to act on the plump, sensual,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{194} Ibid., p. 121.
  \item \textsuperscript{195} Ibid., p. 122.
  \item \textsuperscript{196} Ibid., p. 123.
\end{itemize}
honest common sense accomplice,—but unhappily not in the same person, and without the copula of the judgment,—in hope of the substantial good things, of which the former (the imagination) contemplated only the glory and the colours. 197

But Sancho soon comes back to normal. He is soon cured of his seeking for the imaginative glory and his cure Coleridge notes is... through experience. 198

Experience is one of the balancing effects. Sancho and Don Quixote together would

... form a perfect intellect... 199

The chief characteristic of imagination is that it is "all-generalizing"; the memory or the primary imagination is "all-particularizing". Coleridge says of the two:

Observe the happy contrast between the all-generalizing mind of the mad knight, and Sancho's all-particularizing memory. 200

Imagination works slowly under the guidance of Shakespeare's genius presenting the work of imagination upon his characters and in them. The audience is prepared slowly for the terror that is pervading Hamlet's imagination. Coleridge points out the way in which imagination operates:

197 Ibid., p. 125.
198 Ibid., p. 126.
199 Ibid., p. 120.
200 Ibid., p. 127.
Compare the easy language of common life in which this drama Hamlet opens, with the wild wayward lyric of the opening of Macbeth. The language is familiar: no poetic descriptions of night, no elaborate information conveyed by one speaker to another of what both had before their immediate perceptions. . . yet nothing bordering on the comic on the one hand, and no striving of the intellect on the other. It is the language of sensation among men. 201

Later in the play Horatio translates the late individual specter into thought and past experience and gains new courage. Hamlet's inactivity is caused by an overbalance of imagination over reason and intellect. In Hamlet Coleridge explains:

The effect of this overbalance of imagination is beautifully illustrated in the inward brooding of Hamlet—-the effect of a superfluous activity of thought. 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 dissatisfied with commonplace realities. 202

Action was not, therefore, consequent upon Hamlet's thought.

It is the nature of thought to be indefinite, while definiteness belongs to reality. 203

Hamlet makes several attempts, however, to escape from this inward thought. Although the scene which follows the interview with the ghost may have been censured as eccentric on the part of Shakespeare's genius, nevertheless, Shakespeare understood that

---

201 Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. 20.
202 Ibid., II, p. 273.
203 Ibid.
... after the mind has been stretched beyond its usual pitch and tone, it must either sink into exhaustion and inanity, or seek relief by change. Persons conversant with deeds of cruelty contrive to escape from their conscience by connecting something of the ludicrous with them, and by inventing grotesque terms, and a certain technical phraseology, to disguise the horror of their practices.204

Further, imagination fuses the comic and the tragic elements of Shakespeare's characters. Coleridge reconciles the two:

The terrible, however paradoxical it may appear will be found to touch on the verge of the ludicrous. Both arise from the perception of something out of the common nature of things,—something out of place: if from this we can abstract danger, the uncommonness alone remains, and the sense of the ridiculous is excited.205

This supposition Coleridge derives from experience. He says:

The close alliance of these opposites appears from the circumstance that laughter is equally the expression of extreme anguish and horror as joy: in the same manner that there are tears of joy as well as tears of sorrow, so there is a laugh of terror as well as a laugh of merriment.206

Coleridge does not believe that Shakespeare introduced humour in his tragedies merely for comic relief nor for the sake of exciting laughter in his audience, but because comedy heightened the tragic. His fools are introduced merely to make the passion

204 Ibid., p. 274.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
of the play stand out in bolder relief and thus to intensify the tragic element. Miss Snyder observes on this point: "The fusion of the comic and tragic may be justified by the psychological effect produced on the audience by the contrast, or again by a real, dramatic interaction between the tragic and comic character."207

The theory of the imagination served Coleridge as a theory not only for analysis of dramatic character and the fusion of comic-tragic elements in Shakespeare's plays, but also as an agent that produced the atmosphere in them. It is the prime function of the imagination "to spread the tone". Coleridge comments frequently upon the harmony and unity of Shakespeare's plays; the unity that exists between the characters and their background, the unity of thought and action.

... the highest and the lowest characters are brought together, and with what excellence!
... the highest and the lowest; the gayest and the saddest; he is not droll in one scene and melancholy in another, but often both the one and the other in the same scene. Laughter is made to swell the tears of sorrow, and to throw, as it were, a poetic light upon it, while the tear mingles tenderness with the laughter.208

The keynote of Shakespearean drama is to make the audience laugh and weep in the same scene. Underlying this thought is the fusion of the ideal and the real, the unity of all the elements of life.

207 Snyder, op. cit., p. 49.
208 Shakespearean Criticism, II, pp. 169-70.
To sum up the importance of experience and imagination in Coleridge's concept of a play, it must be remembered that he considered each equally important in its own way. Experience and imagination function in a well-rounded out character; each must be judged from the standpoint of its function in the play. Coleridge saw in the average contemporary play a predominance of the experiential side of nature and life; it lacked that ideal, imaginative element. Life and nature to Coleridge were, as has been noted, the "manifold in one."209

Throughout his criticism of Shakespeare and the other English poets, Coleridge uses the principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites not only as a means of metaphysical abstractions, but also as a scheme of structural analysis. In introducing the third phase of this chapter, technique or method, the meaning of which for Coleridge implies great genius, his own words are most significant:

... Method... demands a knowledge of the relations which things bear to each other, or to the observer, or to the state and apprehension of the hearer. In all and each of these was Shakespeare so deeply versed, that in the personages of a play, he seems 'to mold his mind as some incorporeal material alternately into all their various forms.' In every one of his various characters we still feel ourselves communing with the same human nature. Everywhere we find individuality: nowhere mere portraits. The excellence of his productions consists in a happy union of the

209 Ash, op. cit., p. 20.
universal with the particular. But the universal is an idea. Shakespeare, therefore, studied mankind in the idea of the human race; and he followed out that idea into all its varieties, by a Method which never failed to guide his steps aright.210

This method involves the Principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites and results when the passive impression received from external things or reality is balanced by the internal activity of the mind in reflecting and generalizing.

Coleridge would attribute to Shakespeare two methods, the psychological and the poetical. Thus far in this thesis an attempt has been made to bring out the psychology and philosophy of Coleridge's master criticism. These play, likewise, a part in his technique. Of the poetical method he maintains that it

. . . requires above all things a preponderance of pleasurable feeling: and where the interest of the events and characters and passions is too strong to be continuous without becoming painful, there poetical method requires that there should be what Schlegel calls 'a musical alleviation of our sympathy.' This we call Method.211

In this statement Coleridge is defending Shakespeare against the critics. In all of Shakespeare's works Coleridge discerned method, method in his moral conceptions, in his style, and in the structure of his plays. With a tone of appeal to his hearers, Coleridge bursts forth:

\[\text{References:}\\]
\[210\] Shakespearean Criticism, II, Appendix, p. 344.\\
\[211\] Ibid., p. 348.\]
What shall we say of his moral conceptions? Not made up of miserable clap-trap and the tag-ends of mawkish novels, and endless sermonizing;—but furnishing lessons of profound meditation to frail and fallible human nature. He shows us crime and want of principle clothed not with a spurious greatness of soul; but with a force of intellect. . . . 212

Othello, Lear, and Richard are instances of these moral pictures. The test of greatness of Shakespeare's moral element in the plays is that the reader or spectator will arise

. . . a sadder and wiser man . . . 213

Shakespeare's

. . . sweetness of style. . . 214

Coleridge says, is occasioned by the adaptation of language to the type of character presented:

Who, like him, could so methodically suit the overflow and tone of discourse to character lying so wide apart in rank, and habits, and peculiarities, as Holofernes and Queen Catherine, Falstaff and Lear. 215

Of Shakespeare's failure to observe the unities, Coleridge comes back to the fundamental ideas of his entire structure of criticism, when he says to the critics:

O gentle critic! be advised. Do not trust too much to your professional dexterity in the use of the scalping knife and tomahawk.

212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid., p. 349.
Weapons of diviner mould are wielded by your adversary: and you are meeting him here on his own peculiar ground, the ground of idea, of thought, and of inspiration. The very point of this dispute is ideal. . . . unity, as we have shown, is wholly the subject of ideal law.\footnote{216}{Ibid.}

In the matter of technique Coleridge holds every principle or theory regarding form secondary to the importance of subject-matter. However, Shakespeare's works are not devoid of all laws, for it is evident from the form of his plays that perfect judgment coupled with genius shaped them. Coleridge admits that Shakespeare's plays reveal many differences from those of his contemporaries but these differences are additional proofs that Shakespeare showed true poetic wisdom: they are

\[
\text{. . . results and symbols of living power as contrasted with lifeless mechanism, of free and rival originality as contradistinguished from servile imitation, or more accurately, (from) a blind copying of effects instead of a true imitation of the essential principles.}\footnote{217}{Ibid., I, p. 223.}
\]

Coleridge does not disregard rules, for he admits that genius must be governed by rules even if they do nothing more than

\[
\text{. . . unite power with beauty.}\footnote{218}{Ibid.}
\]

Genius is such that it acts creatively under laws of its own making. In fact, he states that genius must embody itself in
form in order to be presented to another—in order to reveal itself. The form, however, must not be predetermined upon the matter, for the matter will determine the form.

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; form grows of necessity out of matter:

... it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such is the life, such the form.219

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

Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms.220

Consequently, the forms of poetry, the expressions of thought, will each have an original form—and this implies imitation. For

... each exterior is the physiognomy of the being within, its true image reflected and thrown out from the concave mirror.221

219 Ibid., p. 224.
220 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
To investigate the true nature and foundation of poetic probability, it is necessary that each form be examined as to what it is to serve: in other words, to study the end or aim of dramatic poetry. Dramatic poetry is not to present a copy, but an imitation of real life. In order to bring about that "suspension of disbelief" or, in other words, to create the atmosphere of illusion the dramatist must avoid anything that may disturb, such as harshness, abruptness and improbability. Shakespeare was therefore careful to avoid these disturbing qualities. Everything was tempered to the feelings of his audience.

Coleridge lays down no hard and fast laws for the dramatist. Perfectly in harmony with the subtle imaginative element in his system of criticism, Coleridge attributed to Shakespeare

> **Expectation in preference to surprise. . .**
> As the feeling with which we startle at a shooting star, compared with that of watching the sunrise at the pre-established moment, such and so low is surprise compared with expectation.222

Coleridge points out several instances where Shakespeare prepares his audience for the appearance of a character or a situation or an incident. The audience is made to re-live the experience. The storm in *The Tempest* is a preparation for what follows. The tale itself serves to develop the main character of the play; the heroine is charmed into sleep in such a manner that Ariel's

222 Ibid., p. 225.
entrance is expected. Coleridge says:

... the moral feeling called forth by the
sweet words of Miranda, 'Alack, what trouble
was I then to you!' in which she considered
only the sufferings and sorrows of her
father, puts the reader in a frame of mind
to exert his imagination in favour of an
object so innocent and interesting. 223

Again in speaking of the manner in which the lovers are
introduced, the same quality is noted:

The same judgment is observable in
every scene, still preparing, still inviting,
and still gratifying, like a finished piece
of music. 224

This unity of feeling is a mark of Shakespeare's genius,
characteristically manifested in Romeo and Juliet. Art is a
thing of growth and like all forms of growth is slow. The
growth of the sunrise is analogous to building meanings out of
truths that foreshadow them.

Most remarkable in technique is the first scene of The
Tempest:

The romance opens with a busy scene
admirably appropriate to the kind of drama
and giving, as it were, the keynote to the
whole harmony. It prepares and initiates
the excitement required for the entire
piece, and yet does not demand anything from
the spectators, which their previous habits
had not fitted them to understand. It is
the bustle of a tempest, from which the real
horrors are abstracted; therefore, it is

223 Ibid., II, p. 175.
224 Ibid., II, p. 178.
poetical, though not in strictness, natural—
(the distinction to which I have so often
alluded)—and is purposely restrained from
concentrating the interest on itself, but used
merely as an induction or tuning for what is
to follow. 225

Coleridge says of the second scene that it is

... retrospective narration. 226

Prospero's speeches before the entrance of Ariel excite immediate
interest and give the audience all the information necessary for
the understanding of the plot. In this scene in which Prospero
tells the truth to his daughter, there is a reconcilement of the
possible repulsiveness of the appearance of the magician in the
natural, human feelings of the father. The moment chosen by the
dramatist to reveal the tenderness of Miranda for her father was
timely, for Coleridge notes:

... it would have been lost in direct
contact with the agitation of the first
scene. 227

Another mark of dramatic skill is shown in the introduction
of the subordinate character first. In Hamlet, he comments on
the King's speech:

Shakespeare's art in introducing a most
important but still subordinate character
first. 228

225 Ibid., I, p. 132.
226 Ibid., p. 132.
227 Ibid., p. 133.
228 Ibid., p. 22.
The play must have relief, but that relief must be gained without destroying the atmosphere or unity of feeling. In Act I scene ii, this comment is found:

Relief by change of scene to the royal court. This (relief is desirable) on any occasion; but how judicious that Hamlet should not have to take up the leavings of exhaustion... 229

Moreover, the dramatist must not introduce many different characters at the same time in the same scene portraying them suffering under the same emotions. Coleridge criticizes the incident in Act IV, scene v of Romeo and Juliet, in which Juliet is supposed to be dead:

Something I must say on this scene--yet without it the pathos would have been anticipated. As the audience knew that Juliet is dead, this scene is perhaps excusable. At all events it is a strong warning to minor dramatists not to introduce at one time many different characters agitated by one and the same circumstance. It is difficult to understand what effect, whether that of pity or laughter, Shakespeare meant to produce--the occasion and the characteristic speeches are so little in harmony: ex. gratia, what the Nurse says is excellently suited to the Nurse's character, but grotesquely unsuited to the occasion. 230

Unity must be diversified. Of the dialogue in Act III, scene ii Coleridge remarks:

One and among the happiest (instances) of

229 Ibid., p. 22.
230 Ibid., p. 11.
Shakespeare's power of diversifying the scene while he is carrying on the plot.231

No mere irrelevant incidents must be introduced into the plot. In Act IV, scene vi of Hamlet, a letter is brought in explaining the capture of Hamlet by the pirates. On this incident Coleridge's comment is:

Almost the only play of Shakespeare, in which mere accidents, independent of all will, form an essential part of the plot.232

Character must dominate over plot. Nor does the main interest of the play lie in the story alone. Men in all their truth must appear as men. For he says:

... we should like to see the man himself.233

But men are to be considered as living and their natures are to be inferred by a round about method:

If you take what his friends say, you may be deceived—still more so, if his enemies; and the character himself sees himself thro' the medium of his character, not exactly as it is.234

The dramatist, furthermore, must be consistent in the development of characters; they must be people who walk on the "highroad of life". Contradictions in habits, feelings, emotions, in a character are not found in Shakespeare, for with him

231 Ibid., p. 30.
232 Ibid., p. 35.
234 Ibid., p. 343.
. . . there were no innocent adulteries; he never rendered that amiable which religion and reason taught us to detest; he never clothed vice in the garb of virtue, like Beaumont and Fletcher, the Kotzebues of his day: his fathers were aroused by ingratitude, his husbands were stung by unfaithfulness. . .

This idea is in keeping with Coleridge's idea of reality and an application of his concept of imitation. The dramatist must portray men and women whose affections are closely connected with character portrayal and unity of feeling is the importance of language. There are many instances in which Coleridge comments on the perfect harmony or adaptation of the language to the character. This characteristic he notes in Hamlet, in Lear and in Macbeth. Although Coleridge advocated care and nicety in the expression of a dramatist, he would never admire a pedantic stiffness or artificiality of style. In his lectures of 1811-12, Coleridge defines poetry as

. . . an art (or whatever better terms our language may afford) of representing, in words, external nature and human thoughts and affections, by the production of as much immediate pleasure in parts, as is compatible with the largest sum of pleasure in the whole.236

Words were living for Coleridge; they were mediums through which human affections were reproduced for others to enjoy. Pleasure must accompany the poetic experience. This is the aim of poetry, and each part of the poem must in itself add to the composite

235 Ibid., p. 346
pleasure of the whole. But this pleasure the novelist also can produce. However, the poet must cause this pleasure in his reader while conveying the truths of nature or he ceases to be a poet. This pleasure it is the function of meter to create. Meter must produce such pleasurable feeling where the feeling seems to call for it as an accompaniment. Passion gives to expression its meter, but it must be passion excited by poetic impulse or fervor. Coleridge, however, would have his reader understand that the true poem although possessing pleasure and beauty of the individual parts, must have a unified beauty—the beauty of the whole. The poet must also have a greater sensibility, a warmer sympathy with the nature or the incidents of human life. The dramatist must create under spontaneous inspiration. The poem thus created will possess living vitality which will give to the reader the same pleasurable feelings and emotions under which it was created by the poet. The reader will relive the poet's experience and assimilate the emotions and feelings to himself.

Meter is closely related with the passion that aroused it and, therefore, passion portrayed in prose may have a certain meter. The language of the poet must be an imitation and not a copy of the human feelings and emotions or experiences of life. The pleasure . . . will vary with the different modes of poetry; and that splendour of particular
lines, which would be worthy of admiration in an impassioned elegy, or a short indignant satire, would be a blemish and proof of vile taste in a tragedy or an epic poem. 237

Indeed, Coleridge firmly asserts that

... passion provides that neither thought nor imagery shall be simply objective, but that the passio ver a of humanity shall warm and animate both. 238

This last statement is what explains the language of Shakespeare. Sometimes the language shows deep imaginative power, sometimes it is purely fancy. Of Fielding, Coleridge notes:

... in all his chief personages, Tom Jones for instance, where Fielding was not directed by observation, where he could not assist himself by the close copying of what he saw, where it is necessary that something should take place, some words be spoken, some object described, which he could not have witnessed (his soliloquies for example, or the interview between the hero and Sophia Western before the reconciliation) and I will venture to say, ... that nothing can be more forced and unnatural: the language is without vivacity or spirit, the whole matter is incongruous and totally destitute of psychological truth. 239

On the other hand, Coleridge finds in Shakespeare's characters a perfect fitness of language to the dramatis personae. But his question is: How was Shakespeare to observe the language of Kings and Constables or those of high or low rank? It was

237 Ibid., I, p. 164.
238 Ibid., p. 166.
239 Ibid., II, p. 135.
through observation with

the inward eye of meditation upon his own
nature.240

Thus for the time Shakespeare

became Othello, and spoke as Othello, in
such circumstances, must have spoken.241

The language thus spoken is the language of passion. In Romeo
and Juliet the poet is heard. Likewise, Capulet and Montague
are mere mouthpieces of Shakespeare. Shakespeare

not placed under circumstances of excitement,
and only wrought upon by his own vivid and
vigorous imagination, writes a language that in-
variably and intuitively becomes the condition
and position of each character.242

Coleridge admits that there is a language that is not descrip-
tive of passion and which at the same time is poetic. It is the
language of fancy. It is the language of the poet speaking
rather than that of the dramatist. But Coleridge would stress
the fact that when a thought or expression is not usual it must
not necessarily be considered unnatural.

The dramatist

represents his characters in every situation
of life and in every state of mind, and there
is no form of language that may not be intro-
duced with effect by a great and judicious
poet, and yet be most strictly according to
nature.243

240 Ibid., p. 136.
241 Ibid.
242 Ibid., p. 137.
243 Ibid., p. 139.
In the lectures of 1811-12, when discussing Hamlet, Coleridge points out:

Here Shakespeare adapts himself so admirably to the situation—in other words so put himself into it—that, though poetry, his language is the very language of nature. . . . No character he has drawn, in the whole list of his plays could so well and fitly express himself, as in the language Shakespeare has put into his mouth.244

When language has meter added to it, the pleasure derived from it is doubled. In the Biographia Literaria, Coleridge explains at length the origin and elements of meter.

Again Coleridge uses his principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites when he gives the first cause or origin of meter as:

... the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion.245

Out of this reasoning, two conditions necessary to effect reconciliation present themselves:

First, that, as the elements of metre owe their existence to a state of increased excitement, so the metre itself should be accompanied by the natural language of excitement.246

But these elements are brought about by a voluntary act with the aim of balancing emotion and delight and must be felt in the metrical language. These two conditions must be reconciled:

244Ibid., p. 193.
245Griggs, op.cit., p. 207.
246Ibid.
There must be not only a partnership, but a union; an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose.\textsuperscript{247}

Such an interpenetration creates picturesque and vivid language which would be unnatural under circumstances other than those accompanying this poetic fusion. The reader expects picturesque language because the emotion is voluntarily encouraged for the pleasure that ensues. But this is conditional. Meter, moreover, is an indication of the pulse of the passion. The very act of poetic composition produces an unusual state of excitement which brings with it a difference in language from the everyday prose of experience. Thus,

\begin{quote}
Strong passions command figurative language and act as stimulants.\textsuperscript{248}
\end{quote}

But the most essential function of meter, the one which brings out the true essence of poetic power and that essential unity inherent in nature and in the poet, Coleridge describes as

\begin{quote}
. . . 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 must be assimilated to the more important and essential parts.\textsuperscript{249}
\end{quote}

Then, in perfect harmony with his entire system of thought, Coleridge returns to the distinction between copying and

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{248} Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. 206.

\textsuperscript{249} Biographia Literaria, II, p. 56.
imitating and says:

... the composition of a poem is among the imitative arts; and imitation, as opposed to copying, consists either in the interfusion of the same throughout the radically different, or of the different throughout a base radically the same.250

Thus conceived, meter is the fusing agent. What thoughts are appropriate for meter and the language that should be adapted to convey experience is obtained

by the power of imagination proceeding upon the all in each of human nature by medita-

With the poetic genius and through the creative process

the poet will distinguish the degree and kind of the excitement produced by the very act of poetic composition. As intuitively will he know, what differences of style it at once in-

spires and justifies; what intermixture 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 technical artifices of ornament or connection.252

Coleridge climaxes his criticism with this succinct state-

ment:

Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into mecha-

ical art. The rules of the Imagination are them-

selves the very powers of growth and production.253

250 Ibid.

251 Ibid., p. 64.

252 Ibid.

253 Ibid., p. 65.
CHAPTER IV

COLERIDGE'S CONTRIBUTION TO DRAMATIC THEORY IN HIS AGE,
HIS INFLUENCE ON SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM, AND
THE POSITION OF HIS DRAMATIC IDEAS IN RELATION TO
MODERN CRITICISM OF DRAMA

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 aware that old traditions were passing. The period of transition was, however, not marked by a radical change; it was a continuation of the old with a gradual coloring of the newer, more cosmopolitan dye of utilitarianism. Critics began to view literature not as literature apart from life. Great national events, such as the French Revolution, made literature a medium for the more vital thought of the people. This attitude was seen in the theater. Wordsworth gives a fair picture of the spirit of the age in his "Preface of 1800" in which with a note of disgust he condemns England's sordid love for the "frantic" novel and the "German tragedies." Life evinced a need for giving an outlet to the new impulses and aspirations stimulated by the French Revolution. Consequently, with this change in literature critical thought and standards had to be readjusted. Critics began to treat literature as an outlet for truth and knowledge and sought for the
expression of philosophical and religious intuitions in the work analyzed. A work of art was considered in all its aspects and not isolated from the poet and its setting. Thus, the historical attitude gained importance. Both Coleridge and Wordsworth comment on the change in the critical attitude. Wordsworth views the change from the literary standpoint when he says in the "Preface of 1800", "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." He laments the fact that literature and the stage lower their standards to satisfy the vain curiosity and pleasure-loving desires of the mass for "frantic" novels and "German tragedies." Coleridge was keenly alert to the importance of Wordsworth's defense, but realized that the age itself was deficient not only in poets and dramatists who could bring about readjustments, but also lacked competent critics to evaluate a truly poetic genius. In his Biographia Literaria he gives vent to grievances of his own toward unsympathetic, unintelligent critics:

... till reviews are conducted on far other principles and with far other motives; till in the place of arbitrary dictation and petulant sneers, the reviewers support their decisions by reference to fixed standards of criticism, previously established and deduced

---

from the nature of man; reflecting minds will pronounce it arrogance in them thus to announce themselves to men of letters as the guides of their taste and judgment.  

False standards of criticism grew out of the changing standards of life. The causes of false criticism, Coleridge alleges, were accidental and permanent. Chief among these accidental causes was the over-stimulation of mind brought on by current events of political strife. It was an age in which everyone tried to play critic:

... the greater desire of knowledge, better domestic habits, which yet, combining with the above, make a hundred readers where a century ago there were one, and of every hundred, five hundred critics.

The permanent causes of false criticism arose from the general principles of our nature.

Man is reluctant and indifferent to the cultivation of his thinking powers. He neglects the use of his own inward experience in the interpretation of the arts and takes too readily the opinions of others.

England was beginning to feel the necessity of breaking away from a tradition of meaningless rules. However, rules were not entirely abolished, but the critic was becoming an interpreter.

---

255 I, p. 44.
256 Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. 248.
257 Ibid., II, p. 57.
258 Ibid.
of society and of nature. He no longer stood apart from the poet's work and looked at it as an isolated piece of art, but he began to consider the poet as a human being who possesses a temperament peculiar to himself as poet.

Coleridge admired the romantic drama, though he also acknowledged the merits of the classical. He believed that the modern reader could appreciate the merits of both if he understood the fundamental differences between the two. That is why Coleridge points out in his *Shakespearean Lectures* the famous passage in Plato's *Symposium* suggesting that it is natural to genius to excel both in tragic and comic poetry. It is for this reason that Shakespeare is the ideal poet. Likewise, the minor unities of time and place were accidents, mere inconveniences that grew up with the Athenian drama. With equal freedom Coleridge changes the principle of unity of action to unity of homogeneity, proportionateness, and totality of interest. Again, he does not say that Shakespeare's plays have Grecian symmetry, but they do possess artistic harmony.

In this manner, Coleridge does not interpret by rules, but seeks to rediscover the fundamental laws of poetic creation. He uses the aids offered by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, but he does not feel bound to follow the *Poetics* because it was written by the great Aristotle, or because it was used by scholars and critics before him. Butcher finds that "formal method in the
Aristotelian sense, actually fills a relatively small space in Coleridge's criticism. He often begins, as in his lectures on Shakespeare, with a few generalizations based on the Poetics; but he devotes most of his attention to the individual beauties of the plays. Once his fundamental position is taken, he adopts the more popular method of 'Longinus' that deals with beauty, taste and style."259

This is not a new note in English criticism. Johnson was a classicist, but he allowed a leeway where Shakespeare mingled tragic and comic scenes, which he says, is "... contrary to the rules of criticism. ... but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature."260 In the Lives of English Poets, Johnson praises John Gay when he says "... Whether this new drama was the product of judgment or of luck, the praise of it must be given to the inventor; and there are many writers read with more reverence, to whom such merit of originality cannot be attributed."261 However, Johnson's appreciation was the exception not the rule, for he tried to follow Aristotle directly in the application of the rules. Regarding the essential unity of action Johnson was most rigorous. "Unity of action", he says, "is to be understood in all its rigour only with respect to great


261 Samuel Johnson, II, p. 41.
and essential events... He approved of the minor unities in principle, but realized that the realism which they were to produce was diminished by their observance. With Johnson the artistic effectiveness of classical unity was so important to him that he would not relinquish that principle even when it failed. The division of a play into acts was arbitrary to him. He says of an act: "... it is so much of drama as passes without intervention of time or change of place. A pause makes a new act. In every real, and therefore in every imitative action, the intervals may be more or fewer, the restriction of five acts being accidental and arbitrary."  

Such were the opinions prevailing just before Coleridge's time. Classic standards were being held simply because they had always been norms. The condition of the stage at this time was a reflection of the age. The half-hearted adherence to classical standards and a leaning toward broader interpretations influenced, without a doubt, the dramatists. Professor Watson in his discussion of the conditions of the stage at the time of Sheridan to Robertson says: "... the drabness of the age accounts for much."  

It was a period of industrial change and "in literary realms Thackeray could only sneer at the pretensions

---

264 As quoted in Nicoll, *op.cit.*, p. 75.
of the aristocracy, and Dickens in dealing with the mob had to resort to false pathos and melodramatic effects.\footnote{265} The melodrama of the period, then, was largely dependent upon the social circumstances. It was not until this industrial unrest began to adjust itself that a higher type of drama developed in England. Playwrights, unable to adjust the stage in harmony with the spirit of the day, looked abroad for inspiration. By this time German drama found little favor with English audiences. It was Paris that furnished inspiration. Fitzball in 1859 found drama "nearly all composed of translations."\footnote{266} Although German drama was popular in 1799, especially editions of Kotzebue and Schiller, by 1819 these same editions were being sold at second-hand bookstalls; nevertheless, individual attempts were being made to edit anew the greater German masterpieces. The collected works of Goethe and Schiller were being issued by larger publishers.

The renewed interest in Elizabethan literature is particularly characteristic of this time. This period, due to the criticism of Coleridge, Schlegel and Hazlitt, and many others, brought to the realization of English and German audiences the profundity of Shakespeare. Shakespeare had not been forgotten during the eighteenth century, but rarely did the critic point out the psychological depth manifest in his works. Rarely

\footnote{265}Ibid. 
\footnote{266}As quoted in Nicoll, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 76.
before this time did dramatists try to imitate Shakespeare. The modern poetic dramas of the time show an imitation of Elizabethan and Shakespearean imagery.

The contemporary novel became popular. The minor dramatists found in these novels the type of plots, characters, and dialogues upon which hastily written plays might be built. Such adaptations led to careless stringing together of episodes and it is this episodical characteristic of the plays of the half century that led to poor dramatic workmanship. This same carelessness caused dramatists to neglect the better works of France and Germany. Often the force of the tale itself, regardless of poor opportunities for characterization and higher stage technique, caused it to be selected. Incidents alone could make an appeal to the average English audience.

This period produced a class of dramas which may be called closet-dramas. No sure distinction was made between the acted and the unacted drama. Some dramatists such as Talfourd wrote dramas with no thought of actual production on a stage, though these plays met with popular favor. Others who wrote with ambitions for theatrical success had their plays merely printed. There was no set classification along these lines. Dramas of a purely poetic kind also prevailed. Some of our most famous poets and prose writers wrote poetic dramas that were never produced on the stage. Such men as Coleridge, Scott, and Byron felt the German influence--felt the urge to teach in a direct manner the
philosophy of German and English thought. The changing world about them teemed with urges and impulses that displayed themselves in literature. Thus Coleridge's Osorio (1798) which was rewritten and named Remorse was played at Drury Lane in January, 1813. With Coleridge the consideration of passion came first and only secondarily the adaptation of a passion to a person. He realized, however, that action is necessary to enliven the long soliloquies. As Nicoll says, "Both for Coleridge and Wordsworth it is the abstract passion that counts, Wordsworth writing his drama to prove the thesis that "sin and crime are apt to start from their opposite qualities", and Coleridge, as his later title shows, dealing primarily with passion."267

Miss Wylie has given a succinct summary of the chief marks of the new criticism when she states: "The new criticism, like the old, declared taste to be supreme; but now taste is the intuition of creative genius acting in unconscious harmony with intellectual law, and educating the world to finer perception. The recognition of this higher law appears in the new stress laid on the sanity of genius. The poet, no longer the mere master of knowledge or the victim of an overwrought sensibility, finds in his own genius the law of perfect harmony. In this conception irregularity of life is as impossible as irregularity of work. Shakespeare's dramas were perfect because in them the imagination

and intellectual faculties won a perfect balance and harmony of expression."268 It was natural that with a growth in principles in the new philosophy and an increasing interest in the historic attitude that the conceptions of the functions of criticism must change. 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."269 The need for writing made Coleridge declare that the ultimate end of criticism is

... much more to establish the principles of writing, than to furnish rules how to pass judgment on what has been written.270

English critics before Coleridge praised Shakespeare grudgingly; none possessed the critical power that was worthy of his subject. Whether it was to Coleridge's advantage or disadvantage that he was born in an age when few critics might aid him is not within the scope of this paper. The age lacked true critics; there were no terms adequate to express the new attitude toward emotions, feelings, and characteristics of life.

Contemporary criticism was of a general nature, and nothing seemed to indicate that Coleridge's poems were viewed as

269 Ibid.
270 *Biographia Literaria*, II, p. 62.
indicative of a new order in literary endeavors. Graham says of Coleridge's writings, "The Monthly Review discovered a certain amount of uncouthness and obscurity, and a tendency of extravagance, but declared the Religious Musings reached the top-scale of sublimity." Most of Coleridge's poems published before 1798 complied with the standard criteria of the eighteenth century and, consequently, the tone of criticism toward them is for the most part favorable. From 1798 the aims and values of Coleridge as a poet were constantly misunderstood, for "most of the reviewers took all the poems in The Lyrical Ballads to be the work of one writer. They did not know what to make of the "Ancient Mariner", and except for this one had little to say about the poems contributed by Coleridge. Graham gives a true estimate of the type of criticism which was prevalent in Coleridge's day when he says: "Blackwood's Magazine, which in 1817, in a thoroughly hostile and unjust review of the Biographia Literaria had held the character as well as the work of Coleridge up to scorn, because of his 'inveterate and diseased egotism', and had published as late as June 1819 a burlesque third part of Christabel, suffered a sudden change of heart. In October 1819 appeared an excessively flattering review, written in such language as to make one suspect the motives that prompted it. Blackwood's criticism was general and indiscriminative. It

was the old criticism of rules rather than that of interpretation and impression."272

Coleridge realized fully the injustice of such criticism. During the course of his lectures he stressed the importance of the use of words in criticism when he says that one cause of false criticism is

... the vague use of terms and therein the necessity of appropriating them more strictly than in ordinary life. ... 273

A fascinating study in Coleridge's body of criticism is the study of his critical terminology. It is evident from his writings that the heritage of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries he made his own. Originally, many terms were technical terms used in the arts, crafts, and sciences. Later, toward the end of the sixteenth century, comparisons of ancient and modern works began to appear. The noun "critic" and the adjective "critical" were first terms ordinarily used in medicine. Terms of philosophy and psychology were established during the seventeenth century, the age of reason. During the age of classicism, England imported critical terms from Italy and France. The eighteenth century, the age of "Romantic Unrest employed, though it did not originate, the facile terminology of connisseurship, the notions of amusing and picturesque, but more seriously

272 Ibid., p. 283.
273 Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. 248.
expanded these terms dealing with the processes of artistic creation and originality which justify the pre-Romantic period as a period of decadence rather than a triumphant culmination of the later eighteenth century."^{274}

Most of Coleridge's inventions in critical terminology were the result of a definite aim at more precise expression. It was the precision and logic of terms that made Scholastic reasoning and diction appeal to him. The terms "objective" and "subjective" had occurred occasionally as remnants of Scholastic use during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. When Kant's philosophy indicated the need for greater discrimination in the explanation of its doctrines, the terms "objective" and "subjective" came into use. Isaacs states that "to Coleridge's example in 1817 is due entirely the widespread adoption of these indispensable terms."^{275} One of the most interesting words that Coleridge derived from the German is "aesthetic". Isaacs says that Coleridge was "the earliest English literary critic to concern himself with an aesthetic system."^{276} Most of Coleridge's contributions are no longer used in criticism. A few of these terms are busyness, credibilizing, presentimental, expectability, novellish, poematic, esemplastic, and interadditive. Among the


^{275}Ibid., p. 92.

^{276}Ibid., p. 95.
more important phrases which Isaacs lists as real contributions to English critical terminology are totality of interest, mechanical talent, aesthetic logic, accrescence of objectivity, real-life diction, technique of poetry, undercurrent of feeling, and poetical logic.\textsuperscript{277} Of Coleridge's use of the term "polarity", Isaacs says: "when Coleridge speaks in 1818 of 'contemplating in all Electrical phenomenon the operations of a Law which runs through all Nature, viz., the law of polarity, or the manifestation of one power by opposite forces', we are up against a serious and complicated problem. First of all by his underlining of the word, it is clear that Coleridge is either proud of his invention of it, or regards it as a significant and careful use; secondly; the work is a valuable contribution to our critical armoury and its uses have not yet been exhausted; the O.E.D. 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."\textsuperscript{278} Coleridge "was actuated by 'the instinctive passion in the mind for one word to express one act of

\textsuperscript{277}Ibid., p. 98.
\textsuperscript{278}Ibid., p. 87.
feeling', a passion shared by Flaubert."\textsuperscript{279} By his attitude Coleridge stimulated the establishment of distinct meanings of terms which influenced even nineteenth century thought.

Although Coleridge wrote exquisite poetry after 1799, his interest was centered in aesthetics and philosophy. He was very fragmentary and, consequently, never finished his many projected schemes. The only finished work was the translation of Wallenstein. Miss Helmholtz claims that "if he had not taken up 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."\textsuperscript{280}

It was through the influence of Sir Humphrey Davy that Coleridge delivered his lectures at the Royal Institution in the winter and spring of 1808. Henry Crabbe Robinson has preserved these lectures in his Diary and two letters which he wrote to Mrs. Clarkson. It is necessary to remember that Coleridge had to attack neo-classical prejudices which kept Shakespeare from his true place among dramatists. In his Lectures of 1811-12, Coleridge states definitely his purpose:

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 poet. . . \textsuperscript{281}

\textsuperscript{279}As quoted in Isaacs, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 90. \\
\textsuperscript{280}Helmholtz, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 291. \\
\textsuperscript{281}Shakespearean Criticism, II, p. 184.
Such was the task Coleridge undertook with the help of liberal English and German criticism. He singled out Dr. Johnson's _Preface to Shakespeare_ as a target and frequently returned to the subject. Among the smaller points of defense for Shakespeare which earlier critics had condemned was Shakespeare's use of puns and conceits. The neo-classical rationalist condemned Shakespeare's exuberant fancifulness for in "serious drama it offended his sense of decorum."\(^{282}\) Coleridge himself was serious minded and was not entirely in sympathy with the comic in the serious drama, but explains them by saying that they were Elizabethan custom.

Another prevailing note of eighteenth century manners was the sentimental movement on decorum among the English middle-class who attributed coarseness and immorality to Shakespeare. But as Raysor says of Coleridge in this respect, "his characteristic philosophical arguments were more appropriate in discussing Shakespeare's morality than in defending his puns."\(^{283}\) However, because of insufficient knowledge of Shakespeare's period, Coleridge seemed to be ignorant of the fact that Shakespeare purified his sources. Coleridge believed that Shakespeare's essential purity is evident in his whole treatment of love, which is the supreme test.\(^{284}\)

\(^{282}\)Ibid., I, p. xxxiv.

\(^{283}\)Ibid., p. xxxv.

\(^{284}\)Ibid., p. xxxiv.
Raysor would credit Coleridge for his rebuttal, after Richardson,\textsuperscript{285} of the curious criticism that Shakespeare was inferior to Fletcher in representing women characters and the passion of love.

The central controversy which interested eighteenth century critics was Shakespeare's violation of the unities. Raysor says that "... in defending Shakespeare's violation of the unities ... he brought forward arguments which have probably had a greater historical influence upon Shakespearean historical criticism than anything else which he ever wrote, except his interpretation of Hamlet."\textsuperscript{286} In the study of the unities, however, Coleridge was anticipated by Kames and Lessing. "Coleridge had an argument of his own, which is more important and more original than any other which he had used."\textsuperscript{287} This argument appears in the \textit{Literary Remains} bearing a 1805 water-mark. Coleridge saw that the imagination had a part to play upon the audience. "The orthodox defence of the three unities was the French theory of literal delusion which Dr. Johnson ridiculed with devastating power. But in the heat of debate Johnson emphasized too strongly the contrary view that 'a play read effects

\textsuperscript{285}William Richardson, Professor of Humanity at Glasgow, gives an appreciation of Shakespeare's women in \textit{Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff and on his Imitation of Female Characters}, (London, 1789).

\textsuperscript{286}Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. xxxviii.

\textsuperscript{287}Ibid.
the mind like a play acted'."\textsuperscript{288} Johnson in his \textit{Preface to Shakespeare} concludes that dramatic performances are unreal. Raysor says: "This is surely as extreme as the doctrine which Dr. Johnson destroyed, for it recognizes only the rational and not the imaginative state of the audience. There is no rational belief in a dramatic action, like that assumed in the term 'delusion', but there is an imaginative belief, which may be described as an 'illusion', almost like that of dreams."\textsuperscript{289}

The problem of dramatic illusion had been a subject of discussion. Coleridge's interpretation of dramatic illusion is "a deeply significant achievement of literary criticism, because it gives for the first time a simple and obviously sound explanation of a problem on which critics had been confused for more than a century and a half."\textsuperscript{290} Although Farquhar, Kames, Herder, Schiller and Schlegel realized to a degree the attitude of the audience toward the play, Coleridge went far beyond these critics in the extent and precision of the explanation. "His explanation of dramatic illusion is his own contribution to the controversy over the unities, and it represents the characteristically subtle and accurate psychological analysis in which Coleridge surpassed

\textsuperscript{288}Ibid., p. xxxix.
\textsuperscript{289}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{290}Ibid.
Coleridge borrowed from Schlegel the argument which played a prominent part in his Shakespearean criticism. This argument is the distinction between Greek classical and Shakespearean romantic drama. His chief distinction was that "even though Greek tragedy appealed partly to the reason, it was forced to accommodate itself to the senses, while romantic drama appealed directly to the reason and imagination." His explanation of the argument indicates that the dramatist must be allowed freedom in the use of the unities:

The reason is aloof from time and space; the imagination has an arbitrary control over both; and if only the poet have such power of exciting our internal emotions as to make us present to the scene in imagination chiefly, he acquires the right and privilege of using time and space as they exist in the imagination obedient only to the laws which the imagination works by.

The antithesis between romantic and classic affects not only the three unities but every phase of dramatic method. "Shakespeare's profound interest in individual personality, over and above the needs of the action and sometimes perhaps at the expense of the action; the rich lyrical suggestiveness of his

291 Ibid., p. xxxix-xl.
292 Ibid., p. xl.
293 Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. 198.
style; and above all, his modern naturalistic impartiality toward life, his refusal to mould the chaos of experience into a definite moral meaning—all these set his dramatic genius in opposition to that of the Greeks and associate it with the spirit of modern romanticism and naturalism." 294

Coleridge generalized his defense of Shakespeare by proving that Shakespeare's art was equal to his genius. In the discussion of this problem Coleridge introduced much into English criticism that was later to become essential in the study of English literature. Criticism of Shakespeare's plots disappeared with the disregard of the three unities and character-analysis became a popular method of dealing with his plays. This characteristic was due to the love of personal individuality which merely emphasized ideas that were latent in neo-classical criticism. The method of character-studies was established by the end of the eighteenth century. 295 Coleridge was not the first to use the method of character-analysis. His attitude shows the general sympathetic tone of the eighteenth-century critics who selected the beauties, rather than the faults of Shakespeare's art. Addison and, through Addison, Longinus possessed an emotional and imaginative sensitiveness which foreshowed the romantic point of view. Coleridge never fell into "the extreme romantic relativism

294 Ibid., p. xli.
of some of his followers, never questioned the possibility and value of general principles of criticism. ... Relativism seems to be an essential characteristic of romantic criticism, because of its love of the immediate aesthetic impression and its distrust of all fixed standards; but in this regard Coleridge was not romantic."296 His attitude toward the romantic movement was shown in his insistence on a sympathetic criticism. In the neoclassical theory certain standards were applied impartially to all literature and "by balancing beauties and faults",297 established its literary worth. Critics maintained this unsympathetic attitude up to the time of Addison when there was a protest against it. Although there was a great deal of liberal criticism in the last quarter of the century a break was not brought about until Coleridge and his contemporaries came. On the other hand, "in their anxiety to avoid the dogmatism of their predecessors the romantic critics hurried to the other extreme and initiated a worship of Shakespeare which confined criticism to appreciation, without leaving room for standards of judgment. In one flight of rhetoric Coleridge permitted himself to say that 'Shakespeare. ... never introduces a word, or a thought, in vain or out of place: if we do not understand him, it is our fault or the fault of copyists and topographers'; and his general

296 Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. xlvi.

297 Ibid.
policy in defending Shakespeare against the critics of the eighteenth century was to admit absolutely nothing." 298 This is one of the many deficiencies of Coleridge's criticism.

His opposition to neo-classical critics marks the beginning of the new school of Shakespearean criticism. "If his lectures and marginalia sometimes seem sentimental, that is the defect of their virtue, of the constant moral reflectiveness which gives them their characteristic elevation and dignity, and their richness in humane wisdom." 299 But Coleridge never substitutes his own impressions for the work of art under hand. His greatest resource was in the psychological analyses and although he possessed the strong romantic strain he also possessed keen powers of analysis. Raysor says: "It is this side of Coleridge's genius which makes him seem so much less the type of romanticism than Lamb or Hazlitt or Pater, the great impressionists." 300 The psychologist and the poet appear together in most of Coleridge's criticism, but the more detailed and brief comments convey the true poet's delight. Many of his aesthetic notes are found in his criticism of the eight selected plays and even there they may be lost to the casual reader because "his poetical sensitiveness appears chiefly in the imaginative depth and

298 Ibid.
299 Ibid., p. 1.
300 Ibid., p. 11.
delicacy of his psychological analyses, and in his style. 130
It is the poet in Coleridge that made him superior to his
English predecessors and even to Schlegel. This characteristic
of Coleridge as a critic is summed up by Legouis and Cazamian
thus: "It is, however, in literary criticism that his achieve­
ment is the most lasting. No one before him in England had
brought such mental 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 pre­
conceptions; even in this domain he is the metaphysician. The
well-known differentiation between imagination and fancy which
Wordsworth interpreted after his own fashion, is a way to laying
stress upon the creative activity of the mind, opposed to the
passive association of mental pictures; but for Coleridge it has
a mystical significance. . . . His remarks on Shakespeare show
a sound intuition of the profound unity of dramatic art. Accus­
tomed as he is to reach the heart of things, to find there the
same vital impulse which animates his own thought, and to see
this secret of life produce what becomes the apparent world of
the senses. Coleridge is thus able to discern with an unerring
insight the paths along which a central impulse has radiated, so
to speak, towards all the fundamental ideas, aspects and

301 Ibid., p. lx.
characteristics of a work. 302

Of Coleridge's contemporaries much that would be of interest could be written but this discussion must confine itself with those who are most closely associated with Coleridge, not only in the intimacy of his life but also with his literary endeavors. A study of Coleridge would be incomplete without reference to the most potent influence in his intimate life. His relationship with Wordsworth is an outstanding friendship in the history of English letters. Coleridge, on his side, worshipped Wordsworth and called him

the only man to whom at all times and in all modes of excellence I feel myself inferior. 303

Coleridge's finest criticism is in his famous essay on Wordsworth in the Biographia Literaria. Although Coleridge praises Wordsworth, he "has nothing to say about the core of Wordsworth's genius." 304 Their influence upon each other was considerable; Wordsworth had the stronger nature, more enduring and, consequently, he exerted the greater influence. Not only did the two men themselves differ, but in all the circumstances and motives of their literary and critical endeavors they differed as well. Wordsworth wrote his Preface to Lyrical Ballads

304 Ibid.
while he was still young and possessed poetic genius; Coleridge wrote the *Biographia Literaria* when his poetic genius had waned and youth had also departed.

Although the *Biographia Literaria* is the principal document in which Coleridge reveals his loss, "Dejection; an Ode" is a passionate self-revelation. The tone of sad regret contrasts with Wordsworth's *Prelude*:

> There was a time, though my path was rough,  
> This joy within me dallied with distress,  
> And all my misfortunes were but as the stuff  
> Whence Fancy made me dream of happiness:  
> For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,  
> And fruits and foliage, not my own, seemed mine  
> But now affliction bows me down to earth:  
> Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;  
> But oh! each visitation  
> Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,  
> My shaping spirit of imagination.  
> For not to think of what I needs must feel,  
> But to be still and patient, all I can;  
> And haply by abstruse research to steal  
> From my own nature all the natural man  
> This was my sole resource; my only plan:  
> Till that which suits a part infects the whole,  
> And now is almost grown the habit of my soul."}

Coleridge had a remarkable ability to inspire friendship and devotion. Soon after his entrance into Christ's Hospital, he formed a friendship with Charles Lamb which lasted until his death. Since they were of opposite temperaments, they stimulated each other. Coleridge possessed the stronger intellect, yet the light humor of Charles Lamb acted as an inspiration to his

---

philosophical musings. Lamb had the greater degree of sustained effort. He was an excellent literary critic. Griggs says of him, "he often shared his literary discoveries with Coleridge, whose interest in the Elizabethan dramatists, perhaps, can be partly attributed to Lamb." Coleridge was undoubtedly the most brilliant man of his day but he was inconstant and irregular and always in need of encouragement. Charles Lamb often drew from Coleridge his best literary endeavors.

To Byron Coleridge appealed when his financial status was low. "The contact between Coleridge and Byron was brief, their correspondence being confined to the period between Easter 1815 and April 1816, the time at which Byron finally departed from England. It is known that in 1812 Byron interceded with the managers of Drury Lane for the production of Coleridge's Remorse and that he attended at least two of Coleridge's lectures in 1811 and 1812; but their personal intercourse apparently did not extend beyond those incidents and the exchange of a few letters." His first letter to Byron was at Easter, 1815. Coleridge wrote it when he was trying to finance his son Hartley's entrance at Oriel. In the first letter he asked Byron to intercede for him at the publishers. The works that he

wished to publish were various poems not contained in *Lyrical Ballads*, the second edition of his *Juvenile Poems*, and the *Remorse*[^308] which he had enlarged with some revisions in plot and character. Besides these were a proposed general Preface and a particular Preface to the "*Ancient Mariner." Again in October, 1815, Coleridge wrote:

> All my leisure Hours I have devoted to the Drama, encouraged by your Lordship's advice and favourable opinion of my comparative powers among the tragic Dwarfs, which exhausted Nature seems to have been under the necessity of producing since Shakspear. Before the third week in December I shall I trust be able to transmit to your Lordship a Tragedy, in which I have endeavoured to avoid the faults and deficiencies of the *Remorse*, by a better subordination of the characters, by avoiding a duplicity of Interest, by a greater clearness of Plot, and by a deeper Pathos. Above all, I have labored to render the Poem at once tragic and dramatic.[^309]

Dire necessity made Coleridge realize that modern drama required more than character-analysis. It needed plot, and a simple interest together with a deeper feeling. Necessity drove him to attempt drama-writing although his sympathies were not with the acted play. In the same letter Coleridge comments on his proposed plan of writing historical plays:

[^308]: In her article, "*Wordsworth's Relation to Coleridge's Osorio*", Miss Hamilton points out connections between *Osorio* and three characteristic poems by Wordsworth—"*The Idiot Boy*", "*The Blind Highland Boy*", and "*Ruth.*"

[^309]: Griggs, "*Coleridge and Byron*", p. 1089.
During my stay in London I mentioned to Mr. Arnold or Mr. Rae my intention of presenting three old plays adapted to the present stage. The first was Richard the Second—perhaps the most admirable of Shakespeare's historical plays, but from the length of the speeches, the entire absence of female interest, and (with one splendid exception) its want of visual effect the least representable in the present state of postulate of the stage.310

Here is Coleridge's more practical idea concerning the stage. It was more of a condescension than his sincere views on essentials of true drama. Two other intended adaptations are mentioned:

... The second play which I mentioned to Mr. Arnold, and I believe to Mr. Rae, was B and F's Pilgrim—this I had determined to rewrite almost entirely, preserving the outline of the plot; and the main characters and to have laid the scene in Ireland; and to have entitled it Love's Metamorphoses... But the third was that, on which I not only laid the greatest stress, and built most hope, but which I have more than half written, and could complete in less than a month, was the Beggar's Bush.311

Of the last play Coleridge, characteristic of his love of preaching, says:

... I was struck with the application of the Fable to the Present Times.312

Zapola, a romance, was rejected by the Drury Lane

310 Ibid.
311 Ibid., p. 1090.
312 Ibid.
Committee, but was published in 1817. Remorse was presented at Drury Lane in 1813 with considerable success. The research of Professor Griggs in 1937 brings to light a fragment of an unpublished play. Griggs sees in the Diadeste evidence of a striving on the part of Coleridge to "bend his genius to the demands of the contemporary theater."313 It contains the Eastern setting and the characteristic romantic extravagance of the early nineteenth century. Griggs says of Diadeste: "The value of this fragment lies first in what it shows of Coleridge's dramatic tendencies and second in its occasional poetic lines. Throughout his life Coleridge hoped for dramatic success as a means of emancipating himself from the slavery of hack-writing; but except for Remorse his attempts were abortive. . . . I am unable definitely to date the fragment. The handwriting resembles that of the years 1812-20; and very probably the piece was written when success of Remorse (1813) suggested dramatic writing as a means of financial independence."314

Coleridge's relationship with Hazlitt is one of influence. The question of Hazlitt's relation to Coleridge and his indebtedness is evident from the words of Hazlitt himself. In his lectures on "The English Poets" Hazlitt says of Coleridge that he is "the only person from whom I ever learnt anything."315 In

314 Ibid., p. 378.
point of philosophy Hazlitt, like Coleridge, was opposed to a materialistic attitude. However, Miss Elizabeth Schneider in her book, The Aesthetic of William Hazlitt, says of Coleridge and Hazlitt regarding influences: "Hazlitt's philosophical direction... in the only important way in which it was similar to Coleridge's (in its opposition, that is, to the materialist) was already determined before he met the poet; in most other respects his philosophy was, from first to last, utterly unColeridgean..."316

It is evident that Hazlitt and Coleridge were interested in different spheres of thought. Coleridge was interested in that of the mind; Hazlitt in that of the emotions. Hazlitt's definition of imagination is found in his criticism of the drama of Racine. The French people, he says, are devoid of "... the faculty of imagination, if by this we mean the power of placing things in the most novel and striking point of view."317

When Hazlitt discusses wit and humour he says: "imagination is the finding of similarity in things which are essentially similar as contrasted with wit, which consists in finding similarities in things generally unlike."318 This definition finds

316 (Philadelphia, 1933), p. 89.
a parallel in Principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites. But Miss Schneider observes, "his Hazlitt's earliest account of the faculty borrows interest from the fact that it preceded by some years the earliest published remarks on the subject by Wordsworth and Coleridge." 319 It was with the aid of Hazlitt's "brilliant but reluctant and contemptuous discipleship that Coleridge's lectures initiated and established the great tradition of English Shakespearean criticism." 320

Characteristic of the romantic critic, Coleridge treated Shakespeare's plays as closet-drama. Raysor affirms regarding Coleridge's criticism, "Though Coleridge was capable of excellent technical dramatic criticism, his primary point of view as a critic was not dramatic but literary." 321 In the Tomalin Report of the Third Lecture of 1811-12 Series, Coleridge is represented as having stated definitely his mode of reasoning: "In speaking of the dramas of Shakespeare, Coleridge said he should be inclined to pursue a psychological rather than a historical mode of reasoning." 322 It is consequent upon this fact that the many conventions of the drama were of secondary importance. "Like Lamb and Hazlitt, he did not hesitate to say that he preferred reading Shakespeare to seeing his plays performed on the stage.

319 Schneider, op.cit., p. 99.
320 Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. lxii.
321 Ibid., p. liiv.
322 Ibid., II, p. 96.
Closet-drama is not an anomaly in art, as we have sometimes heard, but it is certainly not animated by the purposes of Shakespeare. The result of such criticism is always to subordinate plot to character, that is, to criticize plays as if they were novels, and to forget the numerous conventions of the drama for the sake of psychology. With the best modern naturalistic drama, as for example with Ibsen, this is possible; but not with Shakespeare. Shakespeare filled his plays with condensed meaning, which can be fully comprehended only by means of detailed study; but his central intention was not esoteric. The dramatist who writes with full knowledge of the theater, and with actual performance on the stage as his first and chief objective—and surely this is the case with Shakespeare—must adapt the general meaning of the play to the comprehension of the groundlings, and has little regard for the paradoxes and hidden meanings beloved of scholars and critics. 323

A deficiency of Coleridge's criticism is his lack of historical knowledge. Although Coleridge was a "vigorous exponent of the historical point of view toward Shakespeare", 324 he was very often limited by his actual knowledge of Elizabethan drama which was wide but not always accurate nor detailed. Coleridge knew the plays of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger

323 Ibid., I, p. lv.
324 Ibid.
as is evident from his frequent successful comparisons of these dramatists with Shakespeare. In his desire to prove that Shakespeare was superior to his age, Coleridge seems to set Shakespeare up as "a final criterion of the drama."\textsuperscript{325}

Coleridge's field lay in psychological analysis, the best of which is his study of Hamlet. "At every turn of his acute psychological analysis, he generalizes his perceptions of universal qualities in human nature, which may be read, as in the analysis of Edmund's shame, which generates the guilt... without the need of reference to Shakespeare's plays."\textsuperscript{326} Coleridge's analysis of Hamlet is, as Raysor states, "probably the most influential piece of Shakespearean criticism which has even been produced."\textsuperscript{327} Miss Snyder, in a more detailed study of Coleridge's criticism, asserts, "Coleridge's literary criticism owes much of its significance to keen psychological analysis."\textsuperscript{328} There is evident in much of his criticism anticipations of our modern psychological point of view. He discusses characters rather in terms of vital activity than states facts about their external actions. This is the tendency of the modern psychologist. Many of Coleridge's comments show that he tried "to do

\textsuperscript{325}Ibid., I, p. xlv.
\textsuperscript{326}Ibid., I, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{327}Ibid., I, p. 111.
away with philosophic dualism, to prove to himself that extremes
do meet, to reconcile opposites. This is entirely natural for
the contemporary thought tendency referred to is really the
modern, psychological rather than metaphysical, way of resolving
dualism. It shows itself as the attempt, now to explain the ob-
jective or external--reality as grasped by the intellect--in
terms of vital activity; now to explain the conscious in terms
of the subconscious; and now to explain the pathological in terms
of the normal, and the destructive in terms of the constructive
or creative."\(^{329}\) Many of Coleridge's comments find parallels in
the field of modern psychology, especially that of abnormal
psychology. When Coleridge describes Shakespeare's characters
as "the representatives of the interior nature of humanity, in
which some element has become so predominant as to destroy the
health of the mind",\(^ {330} \) he is anticipating modern psychologists.
"This very statement", Miss Snyder points out, "is 'a significant
anticipation of the view of one of our contemporary psychologists
who note that among others Iago, Richard III, Macbeth, Hamlet,
Anthony, and Timon can all be studied like patients suffering
from neuroses'."\(^ {331} \)

Again and again Coleridge manifests a tendency to use

\(^{329}\) Ibid., p. 23.

\(^{330}\) As quoted in Snyder, "A Note on Coleridge's Shakespearean
criticism," p. 25.

\(^{331}\) Ibid., p. 25.
Shakespeare's characters as means to propound his theory and as such his criticism loses in dramatic value. As a dramatic critic he offers very little that is of practical value to the stage critic. His mass of critical matter may serve as a textbook of criticism to the literary student.

With all Coleridge's deficiencies even the most fastidious will acknowledge him a master critic. Raysor, who perhaps has made the best comprehensive study of him, summarizes Coleridge's qualities in these words: "In rich ethical reflectiveness, in delicate sensitiveness of poetic imagination, and above all, in profound insight into human nature, Coleridge is a critic worthy of his place at the head of English criticism of Shakespeare. The greatest of English creative writers received his due tribute from the greatest of English critics."332

The story of Coleridge's private life is one of weakness and failure. No other man of his time possessed greater gifts than he did, yet he was his own greatest enemy. His was the strength born of suffering: while his body succumbed to mortal weakness, his soul ever hungered after eternity. There are critics who condemn Coleridge a dreamer, a failure; theirs is a judgment that bears deeper penetration. Paradoxical as it may seem, out of the failure of his life—if it be so—sprang a new growth in English poetry and criticism.

332 Shakespearean Criticism, I, p. lxi.
CONCLUSION

Coleridge attempted to bridge the gap between the world of reality and the world of ideality. He was torn between sentimentality and materialism, but managed, unlike Blake, to stabilize his explorations through a discipline that was almost incompatible with his original genius. In Coleridge's body of criticism there is a balance of the old with the new. He was imbued with the ideas of Plato and the Cambridge Platonists and the German transcendentalists; therefore, eighteenth-century materialism made no appeal to him. He looked with skepticism upon the idealist's theories. The universe that exists outside of man is not the limit of man's experience. Mind's creative power can not adequately explain the existence of apparent realities. Coleridge constructed his whole philosophical system upon the theory that mind has a being because it recognizes itself. Mind is object and subject at one and the same time. Mind possesses a faculty and a state of being. Since self-consciousness enables man to recognize what is within as well as what is without, the reason is independent of the senses. Between mind and sense, therefore, Coleridge recognizes a higher and a lower reason; the first is the divine or spiritual; the second is the power of intellectualizing on the material that is presented to the senses. Below the two is the understanding, a
faculty that deals only with matter supplied by the senses. Coleridge's basic theory or thesis is the *I AM* or the *Sum quia sum*; man's reason endows him with powers above those of the animal world. In one sense, man bears a resemblance to the animal world and is finite; in another sense, man has the divine spirit in him and is infinite. Coleridge's distinction between understanding and reason is similar to his distinction between imagination and fancy. As the reason in its higher sense is the divine in man, so the imagination is the power of creation in him. As the practical reason is intelligence, so the secondary imagination is creative power manifesting itself in art. The understanding is limited by time and space; likewise, fancy plays no counters but those of association. Consequently, imaginative power is that which makes a work of the dramatist supreme. Whenever the mind understands, it observes particular things and draws common sense inferences concerning them and becomes the practical imagination. But through the understanding alone the dramatist can not arrive at universal truths and values. When the mind submits itself to the understanding only, it submits itself to the environment, to things as they appear to be. Therefore, by the understanding man cannot attain to knowledge of God, free-will, immortality, or conceptions of similar value.

When mind does not allow itself to become bound by sense-impressions from the external world, it looks within itself,
becomes self-conscious and thus derives the nature of the universe. Within man himself, man finds the divine. In this way the reason rises to genuine universals, to eternal truths.

Thus far Coleridge's ideas were similar to Kant's. Kant believed that the human mind could not arrive at a knowledge of God. Coleridge leaned toward a mystical interpretation of the universe; consequently, in his system of thought Christianity harmonized with philosophy and the essential doctrines of Christianity were eternal truths of the reason. The God whom the reason thus recognized was active throughout the universe. It was God who had created in everything—in nature, in man, in society, past and present—its essential idea and man's reason will find in each its purpose and destiny.

When Coleridge says that Shakespeare is a dramatic poet, he means that the poet himself does not speak or appear in his own person, but carries on the action by agents who display, not the poet's individual thoughts and ideas, but universals embodied in individuals and types. Characters grow out of the natura naturans, the living, divine nature of the universe.

There is a war between the creative power and the intellectual energy. In the drama Coleridge conceived of these two as reconciled. They may be considered as opposite analytical tendencies that waylay the outburst of language. It is in the juncture of the two that Shakespeare's power as a dramatist lies, and in that fusion we find the keynote of Coleridge's idea of the
drama. He himself has expressed this idea:

In Shakespeare's poems the creative power and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace. Each in its excess of strength seems to threaten the extinction of the other. At length in the drama they were reconciled and fought each with its shield before the breast of the other.333

By the Principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites all the elements of life become fused and thus strive toward the perfect harmony. The imagination brings this fusion about, throwing over the characters upon the stage the illusion which creates the proper atmosphere by which the imagination of the audience recognizes the real in the imitation. This dramatic illusion is obtained not by external stage setting or theatrical contrivances, but by a positing and balancing of all the elements of nature and life.

Morality will necessarily permeate the great dramatist's work because there is harmony between nature and nature's laws so far as these are inherent in the divine in nature. Coleridge finds no inconsistency in Shakespeare's interpretation of nature's laws and if inconsistencies do show themselves in Shakespeare's works, Coleridge attributes them to Elizabethan custom, or to Shakespeare's defects of concept and art.

Experiences of life can become the subject of poetry only when they are interfused by the poet's passion. The poetic passion will determine the form and style of the work. Meter is

333Shakespearean Criticism, II, p. 333.
the servant of passion, superimposed to accentuate and carry the
song in its unified whole into the heart of the audience.

Coleridge's distinction between imagination and fancy is at
the base of his principles of criticism. All art must of neces­
sity possess organic unity, not determined by arbitrary conven­
tions, but by the subject matter and by the poet's imaginative
power. Shakespeare's characters are not merely types or copies
of nature, but vital creations of the poet's mind which is in
perfect union with the divine in nature. These creations are
true to life; therefore, they are universal. The true poet and
dramatist does not copy, but gives creative interpretations of
nature. It is Coleridge's intuition of the unity of dramatic
art that lends power to his criticism of Shakespeare's dramatic
characters. To Coleridge, the dramatist is not merely an inter­
preter or a seer; he is a creator forming his characters out of
the realities which he takes from the God-head itself. There­
fore, the poet must be allowed perfect freedom; he must look
within, meditate, and imitate the universal truths of nature.

Had Coleridge never lost his original poetic power, he
might have become one of England's greatest romantic poets, but
the world would have lost a great critic. Coleridge's loss is
gain to the world of criticism.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Coleridge's Works


Table Talk and Omniana. Edited by Thomas Ashe. London, 1885.


Other References


----- "Shakespeare and Germany", Third Annual Shakespeare Lecture, Proceedings of the British Academy (July 1, 1913).


Dodds. Cf. A. E. Powell.


Howard, Claud. Coleridge's Idealism: A Study of its Relationship to Kant and to the Cambridge Platonists. Boston, 1924.


Lovejoy, A. O. *The Revolt against Dualism*. Chicago, 1926.


----- "Coleridge's Theory of Life", Modern Language Notes, 47: 299-301 (May, 1926).


The thesis "Coleridge's Idea of the Drama as a Basis of His Shakespearean Criticism," written by Sister Virgina Seabert, S.C., has been accepted by the Graduate School with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is therefore accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Morton D. Zabel, Ph.D. November, 1938

Samuel M. Steward, Ph.D. November, 1938