Conclusion

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All important critical movements possess a common purpose which transcends the apparently irreconcilable barriers between them. Critics of different allegiance live in the same world, respond to the same literature, and possess a common central intention: the elucidation of literature. The main difference in their elucidation of a literary text is that they work either 'from outside a literary work' or 'from inside out'; referred to as 'extrinsic' (interdisciplinary) and 'intrinsic' approaches respectively. Considered intrinsically, a given work of art embodies certain principles and these principles are said to reside in the inner parts of the work and in the relation of these parts to one another and to the whole.

'Intrinsic' criticism has been the concern of those critics who centre their discussion on the text itself, rigidly or may be, with some allowance. This tradition, originating in Aristotle, and developed further by Coleridge and Richards, has found its most effective manifestation in the American New critics and the Chicago group of Genre critics. This critical tradition is informed by a belief that a literary text is a complex
entity composed of different meanings presented not as alternatives and not successively, but as mutually interacting and simultaneous. Though the forefather of this 'intrinsic' critical tradition is Aristotle, the work of the exponents of this tradition in the twentieth century is closely based on the Coleridgean formulation of Aristotle's notion of Organic form.

As indicated in the first chapter, the organicist theory of Coleridge was an answer to the eighteenth century scientific view of man as entirely a product of the physical environment, having nothing inside his mind that had not come from outside. Against this Coleridge saw the human mind as an active self-forming, self-realizing system which far from being passive in the face of the so-called Reality, actually imposes itself on the world, and creatively adopts and shapes it. The faculty by which the human mind is capable of adopting and shaping the "flux of sense" is the "esemplastic" power or Imagination. According to the Coleridgean formulation, the power of Imagination might be centered either in the visionary power, or in the more mundane power of making poems — the former revealing his neoplatonic side while the latter his Aristotelian side. The ambiguity is manifested in the discussion of the secondary Imagination which, on the
one hand, is said to be a mere "echo" of the primary
Imagination and, on the other, an agency which "dissolves
diffuses, dissipates" the materials created by the primary
Imagination "in order to recreate them." Coleridge never
does choose definitively between these possibilities so
that subsequent theorists might make the most of the side
of his thought they preferred. At the same time, it is to
be maintained that the Coleridge of primary vision, for
whom the making of the poem itself seemed to be an
imitation (or "echo") of what was formed in the mind before
that poem came to be made, has been overshadowed by the
other Coleridge — an original source of the intrinsic
and formal tradition. In fact the greatness of Coleridge
as a literary critic should be assessed by noting how he
gave a place in his critical theory to Empiricism and
German Idealism alike; to Plato's search of the one in the
many and also to Aristotle's conception of symbol and
character as a fusion of the particular and the general;
to the autonomy of a work of art as well as to the
significance of individual genres or literary forms.

Most of the twentieth century 'intrinsic' critics
have modelled themselves on Richards and through him, by
inheritance, if not directly, on Coleridge. The conception
of organicism, in its Coleridgean version, appears very
clearly in the well-known critical works of Richards, Empson, the American New critics and the Genre critics. Yet to call these critics organicists is not to pin the romantic label on them as some leading critics such as Richard Foster and Frank Kermode have done, though there is much to be said for the view that they are in some respects more romantic than classical. In their case (in the case of American New Critics in particular) the organicism is to be taken rather as a set of ontological assumptions about life and art involving a mode of intuition that cuts across the categories of 'romantic' and 'classical'. It is also, as discussed in the chapter on genre critics, not in any strict sense a philosophical system to which one is rationally persuaded without a prior subrational disposition in its favour. What remains ultimately there is the idea of art as a separate, existent and, in some sense, autonomous or autotelic entity which is very close to, though not 'identical' with, the idea of a vital organic form as Coleridge had conceived it.

Accordingly to speak of Coleridge's 'influence' does not mean that the twentieth century 'intrinsic' criticism has necessarily accepted wholly either the philosophical view-point or the methods of Coleridge. However, the two of Coleridge's principles which have proved most fruitful
in the writings of these critics are 'organic unity' and 'reconciliation of opposites'. But due to the influence of such diverse and often contradictory movements as symbolism, expressionism, and Imagism — and sometimes as a reaction against them — these principles have hardened into something like dogma, or have been rashly overstated and generalized in the heat of argument with the obvious result that they seem to mirror the confusions and contradictions of our age as well. In other words, the full spectrum of Coleridge's 'organicist' view of art is not to be found in the contemporary criticism in which this doctrine has been fostered to the exclusion of attention to the theories of language and the function of literature. Richards (the psychologist) with his tenderly balanced scepticism and his norm of sincerity, Empson with his semantic bent of mind investigating the 'multiple layers of meaning', the New critics with their repeated major premises of 'drama' and 'metaphor' advancing to an emphasis on 'inclusiveness', and the Genre critics with their avowed belief in 'pluralism' and 'inductive method' leading to an analysis of 'inherent' structure have attempted to understand the ways which enable words to become an 'artifact' in the world rather than remain unformed and private.
Mere superficial reading may give the impression that these critics were trying to hide the fact of their indebtedness to Coleridge in order to claim originality for what they had to say. Had that been the case they could easily have avoided alluding to Coleridge altogether. But there is no evidence to suggest any such tawdry purpose. On the other hand, they always refer to Coleridge and that too at very crucial moments when they are applying their own theories to literary texts.

So neither the divergent approaches of the New and the Genre critics, nor labels like 'mimetic' and 'expressionistic' nor the sharply divided 'monistic' and 'pluralistic' approaches can hide the fact that their exponents are 'intrinsic' critics and that their critical principles are largely a reworking of Coleridge's *organicism* — a term near universal in its application though most often used for certain interrelated conceptions of how a poem comes into being and of its peculiar structure.

Seemingly any of these modern critical methods is a tortuous route to arrive at so familiar a destination. One might ask: why baffle readers with a set of terms far less satisfactory than the vocabulary of Coleridge's organicism? Yet right from Aristotle's times to our own there has often arisen a need to defend art against the literary and
non-literary onslaughts. Consequently, new literary theories have emerged. Such a view will justify not one, but a number of valid theories, all in their several ways self-consistent, applicable and relatively adequate to the analysis of literary processes and products. The relative merit of these diverse critical theories is to be judged by looking at the scope, precision, and coherence of the insights each yields into the properties of single works of art and the adequacy with which the theory accounts for diverse kinds of art. Even while analysing a single work of art the relative merit of a theory can be judged by the insights it yields to the reader.

Analysis, interpretation and assessment of value are the three stages in the study of poetry as an intellectual and cultural discipline. Evidently, therefore, the analytical approach, whether 'semantic' or 'formalistic' and 'structural' is only a half way house because it emphasizes either the artist's experience (real or imagined) or the work itself, not the man who made it, or the reader's response. A complete criticism, on the other hand, would not only deal with the text, the part of the literary process over which the author has control, but also with that part of the literary process over which the author has no control, the part that takes place
before the reader opens the book and after he closes it. Here the reader has to pass from the meaning of the work to the experience of the artist, on the one hand, and determine its quality on the other. The determination of the quality will lead to a discrimination between what Pater has called "good art" and "great art". The final stage in the critical exploration will be reached when the reader is able to visualize the artistic personality which pervades the work as its soul or animating principle. Without this recognition of the human element in the work the reader will not be able to enter into a real communion with the great minds, which perhaps is the one genuine, gainful and ripe fruit of the life-long pursuit of literature. The foregoing chapters of this thesis have suggested that such a critical theory is to be found in Coleridge who worked out a scheme of 'organicism' and 'imagination' that would unify the description of the poet, his equipment and faculties, with a description of the work of art itself and its effect on the reader. Again Coleridge, who provided the twentieth century 'intrinsic' critics many of their central definitions and concepts had far too subtle, strong and discursive energy to be rigid and dogmatic. His successors who became inflexible and exclusive, one way or another, succeeded in presenting only an incomplete and partial version of his vastly inclusive theories of organicism and imagination.