CHAPTER V

The concept of "Inherent Forms": The Genre Critics' debt to Coleridge

Ever since M.H. Abrams claimed that with Romantic Criticism 'mimesis' (the mirror) gave way to expressive theories (the lamp), a tendency has developed to regard Aristotle and Coleridge as the two main influences on the twentieth century criticism. Although it has been argued by John O. Hayden recently that Abrams "is in error, unless he is referring only to distinctly minor theorists" and that both "Coleridge and Wordsworth belong to the Aristotelian tradition", the usually held notion is that American New Criticism adopts the a priori dialectical approach of Coleridge and Genre Criticism the a posteriori approach of Aristoté. How Coleridge explores, through his study of German idealism, the Aristotelian notion of "inherent forms" and how — far from being an exponent of the expressive theory — he reformulated the Aristotelian 'mimetic' theory

and, accordingly, could be regarded as the immediate source of influence for Genre criticism is the main argument presented in the following discussion.

Hayden has rightly pointed out that what appears to be expressionistic in his criticism is not necessarily so because Coleridge was interested in creative theory which is easily confused with expressionism. Hayden's main argument is that "while 'expressionism' and 'mimesis' are by nature mutually exclusive, creative theory and mimesis are not."² The reason for such an argument is that an expressionistic view of literature usually does not support an evaluative approach to a work of art and literature. The usual substitute is either a resort to impressionism or an evaluation, not of the work, but of the author. The unique contribution of Coleridge is that he uses his creative theory for the evaluation of literature, which establishes his link with Aristotle. He writes in the Biographia

According to the faculty or source, from which the pleasures given by any poem or passage was derived, I estimated the merits of such poem or passage ... ³

² See Hayden, Polestar of the Ancients ... pp. 167-91.

In practice this approach to literature results in such qualitative statements as "Milton had a highly imaginative, Cowley a very fanciful mind"⁴ and is evident in such evaluation as his discussion of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' and the evaluation of the work of Wordsworth.⁵

Before indicating how this evaluative method of Coleridge is closer to the method used by the Genre Critics, we may look at some basic aspects of Genre Criticism.

Although a genre critic can be any critic who concentrates on formal distinctions in literature, the movement 'Genre Criticism' is usually associated with the Chicago School, a group of critics who appeared on the scene in the 1950's. Instead of having a 'clear manifesto', these critics offered sweeping reinterpretation of 'existing critical procedures'⁶ thereby proposing a radically different

method of their own. The method is based on the conception that the various literary genres—poetry, fiction, drama, tragedy, comedy, epic etc.—should be judged not merely by applying to them some a priori notion as is done by the New Critics, but by absolute differences in their internal composition. Each kind has its own formal character and by its attainment of this character will it be judged—is what can be termed as the basis of Genre Criticism. There is thus the possibility of applying the standards of judgement derived from the practice of one poet to that of another only if their work is intrinsically similar, so that a common principle governs both. Similarly, "theories of criticism which are not contradictory or incompatible may be translated into one another or brought to supplement one another." 7

The main views of these critics are contained in Critics and Criticism—a collection of twenty essays—published in 1952. In the introduction of the book Crane, the editor of the book, states that he and his colleagues including W.R. Keast, Richard McKeon, Norman Maclean, Elder Olson, and Bernard Weinberg would examine current critical

7 Critics and Criticism (1957) p. 4.
principles and investigate the possibilities of "particular methods in the different arts" which either have not been "developed in the past or have been neglected in modern times." For the philosophical background of this school one needs to pay minute attention to Crane's two Introductions — to 1952 and 1957 editions of the book Critics and Criticism — to Richard McKeon's "The Philosopher Bases of Art and Criticism", and to Elder Olson's "An outline of Poetic Theory" and "A Dialogue on Symbolism."

In the long history of criticism, the writers of the Chicago school find two fundamentally different approaches to poetry: the dialectical method of Plato, which is speculative and a priori, and the inductive and analytical method of Aristotle. Their defence of the Aristotelian method, according to Crane, led Kenneth Burke to bestow on them the label of Neo-Aristotelians. In fact, Aristotle,

8 Critics and Criticism (1952) p. 3.

9 Although Richard McKeon in the third section of "The Philosopher Bases of Art and Criticism" analyses six modes of criticism — one "dialectical" and five "literal" — the argument remains same. See Critics and Criticism (1957) pp. 250-72.

10 Ibid. p. iii.
according to Crane and his associates, was the main critic to grasp the fact that the poet basically does not express himself to his age, or resolve psychological or moral difficulties, or use words in a particular way but attempts to build materials of language and experience into wholes of various kinds to which is usually, attributed final rather than instrumental value. Aristotle's method is requisite, says Olson, "if one proposes to view poetry in terms of principles of maximum community": that is if one wishes to know the nature of a given kind of poetry, as a certain Synolon or a composite whole with its parts specified with maximum differentiation possible yet without the destruction of the universal. 11

From this conception follows a methodology which preserves the integral unity and wholeness of a work of art; and at the same time, it differentiates one form of poetry from another, without ignoring the nature and function of a given work of art. The nature of this methodology may vary —— and it has to vary because "choice is determined by the questions one wishes to ask

11 "An outline of Poetic Theory" in Critics and Criticism (1957) p. 8; also see Critics and Criticism (1952) p. 120.
and the form of answers one requires" — but its foundation is the same in the sense that it is based on the inductive method of Aristotle. This does not mean that Genre critics judge a living work of art by outmoded critical dogma but they try to bring Aristotle himself up-to-date by attempting "to push the Aristotelian type of theoretical analysis far beyond the point where Aristotle himself left off." They believed Aristotle's method could hardly be used effectively "as an instrument of practical criticism and literary history, except in conjunction with other methods." How far they have succeeded in analysing Aristotle "in the light of new things modern writers have achieved" can be indicated by looking into some aspects of the Aristotelian method.

Both Plato and Aristotle were concerned with the metaphysical question of finding out a relationship between

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12 Richard McKeon, in "The Philosophic Bases of Art and Criticism", op. cit, p. 194 states: "The subject-matter and the meaning of statements about art — what art is and what one discusses when one discusses art — are determined by the principles of discussion and the thing discussed, for the choice of things and of aspects of things relevant to a question is a way of choosing and determining their scope and use."

Crane, The Language of Criticism p. 160.

14 Critics and Criticism (1957) p. IV.
"real" and "actual" but their approaches to the problem were significantly different. For Plato, who was more concerned with the ideal, the 'real' or 'idea' could never be captured in any physical instance or physical object. Accordingly, the word 'form' refers to the archetypal world of form and ideas, and this 'form' is not visible, nor can it be made available in or through sensuous experience. Any attempt to do so is simply an 'imitation' in the Platonic sense of word, and far removed from the reality because the relation between the 'real' and the 'actual' is always oblique, indirect, metaphorical, imaginative, and never literal.

Against the *a priori* method of Plato, Aristotle's method is strictly *a posteriori* based on the metaphysics of 'real'. In other words, Aristotle from a given poem argues back to its four-fold causes because a "form" in Aristotle's terminology, is one of the four-fold causes: the efficient cause, an agent or other external force operating upon a thing; the final cause, or purpose of a thing; the material cause, or substance from which a thing is made; and the formal cause, the organising and unifying principle which gives an individual shape and character to the substance. According to Aristotle a work of art is a *synolon* or a *concretum* or a *whole* thing of which one can give an
adequate account only when one specifies both the matter (elements of which it is composed) and the form (principle of structure) by virtue of which the matter or potential has the character of a definite existing thing. This concept is based on the doctrine of 'interactionist ontology' i.e., the dynamic interaction of form and matter, according to which matter in itself is nothing unless it assumes some form, by a process of change. Thus logically speaking, in order of time, matter exists prior to form; but in order of thought, its form exists earlier for when it is argued that matter is the potentiality of what it is to become, it is implied that what is to become is already present in an ideal and potential form, though not actually. Though paradoxical, it may be argued, that Aristotle's line of thinking will imply that the end is already present in the beginning. The Chicago critics shared this idea of Aristotle and with it they shared the Aristotelian notion of knowing a thing through the four-fold cause, mentioned above. Hence their conclusion that form and matter, or the actual and potential are not separable in any real sense though one may talk about them separately in analytical exposition.

The 'concrete wholes', according to Aristotle, can be of two types: natural and artificial. In the artificial
type the form is in the mind of an individual or of an artist who imposes it upon the medium to produce the artistic composite. The artistic composite is a concrete whole and its unity is described in the words of Crane that "it is such and such a form embodied in this or that matter, or such and such a matter with this or that form; so that its shape and structure must be included in our description as well as that out of which it is constituted or made." 15 Such is the doctrine of "inherent" forms — a conception of Aristotle integrating the idea and the object. According to this conception of inherent forms the real (idea) is inherent in the actual as a potential to be realized, or, to put it in other words, the physical make up of objects is a potential that constitutes the idea. Though the distinction between the 'real' and the 'actual' persists even in Aristotle, he, unlike Plato, believed the real to be inherent within the actual, and consequently, a work of art was conceived of as an autonomous entity. In other words, Aristotle considers the poem in its internal character, as an autonomous thing. It is conceived as a whole made up of parts; the analysis distinguishes the

15 Crane, The Language of Criticism p. 150.
parts, the material constituents out of which the work is made, and establishes the principle of their unification — the "form" or governing principle which determines the order and connection of the parts and unites them in a single whole.

Viewing from this standpoint, one gets a clear idea as to why the unifying principle of a play — the formal cause which binds together the various incidents, characters, thoughts and words — is its plot. The plot is the 'cause' of a play in the sense that it determines the nature and order of all other elements. In other words, the plot is the presiding and controlling principle of the whole: the play is a unified object, complete and perfect in itself, because everything in it is adjusted to a plot. Aristotle, therefore, speaks of plot as the "soul of tragedy": it is the essence of a play without which it would cease to exist as an integral thing. By the same reasoning, the playwright is a poet (a "maker") not because of his metre or style or characters, but because of his plots; for these are the formal principle of the special kind of objects that he makes.

The idea of 'inherent forms' and the related inductive method of Aristotle constitute the basis of Genre criticism inspite of the individual application of the method by its practitioners. All of them judge a work of art not by its relation to some normative universal but its internal character as a particular object. They start by assuming that the poet's aim is to create a perfect work of art by imposing some form upon his medium. The task of a critic, therefore, is to show, by formal analysis, whether the poem is, or is not, a finely constructed work of art and the criterion for that is simply wholeness; in the aspects, elements, or details the only requirement is fineness, congruity, or appropriateness with the whole. Accordingly, if the poem is good, the criticism will be mainly an appreciation. The critic's analysis will bring out the beauty of the poem's internal structure, revealing the organic unity of a whole in which every part is functional and necessary where it is. Olson's remark is very pertinent to recall here: "Epic, tragedy, and comedy... are ordered, not to a doctrine but to a plot. A plot is not a string of incidents, but a system of incidents so constructed as to give us a specific pleasure by arousing and allaying our emotions." 17 An endorsement of this point is provided by

17 Critic and Criticism (1957) p. 46.
Crane's analysis of the plot of *Tom Jones*, where plot in the "enlarged sense" is described as "not merely a particular synthesis of particular materials of character, thought and action, but such a synthesis endowed necessarily because it imitates in words a sequence of human activities, with a power to affect our opinions and emotions in a certain way."\(^{18}\) The analysis of a prose narrative, therefore, will take the form of the plot as its starting point and then inquire "how for and in what way its peculiar power is maximized by the writer's invention and development of episodes, his step-by-step rendering of the characters of his people, his use and elaboration of thought; his handling of diction and imagery and his decisions as to the order, method, scale and point of view of his representations."\(^{19}\) Similarly, while applying the principle of Aristotle to Yeats's "sailing to Byzantium" as an example of lyric poetry, Olson omits melody and spectacle, which apply to tragedy alone. For "plot" he substitutes "choice" as the principal part, analogous to the action of tragedy. The poem thus consists of four parts

\(^{18}\) "The concept of plot and the plot of *Tom Jones*" in *Critics and Criticism* (1957) p. 67.

\(^{19}\) Ibid. p. 69.
in the order of importance: choice, character, thought and diction.  

Crane too, for example, in his study of the structure of Macbeth derives his account from Aristotle, with a few variations on the Aristotelian formula. He insists on the need for studying the various literary forms, their subdivisions and aspects, in order to understand the principle governing them. His essay on the "Structure of Macbeth" and other similar expositions like the "Plot of Tom Jones" clearly indicate the critical standards by which the Genre critics formulated their judgement.

Significantly enough, Crane at the end of "Towards a More Adequate Criticism of Poetic Structure: Macbeth" quotes the Coleridgean criterion concerning a poem, that it aims at "the production of as much immediate pleasure in parts as is compatible with the largest sum of pleasure in the whole " and he observes that it is the criterion of "few relatively perfect productions in the various literary


kinds. Similarly in "The critical Monism of Cleanth Brooks" Crane states:

Whereas for Coleridge at least three sciences are necessary for criticism —— grammar, logic and psychology —— Mr. Brooks finds it possible to get along with only one namely, grammar and with only one part of that, namely, its doctrine of qualification. 23

Having said this Crane goes on to Brooks' acknowledged authority, Biographia Literaria, to show how Brooks, like other New Critics, has combined part of Coleridge's definition of poetry with part of his definition of the poem in an endeavour to constitute poetry as homogeneous in structure throughout all its embodiments in poems by virtue of one common characteristics, irony or paradox. Brooks has ignored Coleridge's interest in the differences among poems, particularly his distinction between "poetry" and "poems". While poetry manifests the synthesizing power of the creative imagination, which "reveals itself in the

22 Crane, The Language of Criticism p. 183.

balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities," 24 Coleridge acknowledged that this power animates not only the poetic but the philosophic genius as well. 25 For Coleridge not "poetry" but the "poem" is opposite to the works of science "by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part." 26 Coleridge's definition of poem is a three-part, dialectical definition. From the artificial arrangement of the metre, which is a purely mechanical matter he goes on to the immediate objective (Aristotle's final cause) of pleasure rather than truth and finally asserts that it proposes "to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a


25 Ibid. vol. II, p. 11.

26 Ibid. vol. II, p. 10.
distinct gratification from each component part. "The "all" is in the "each" as much as the "each" is in the "all". So far Coleridge, like Aristotle, conceives of a wholly functional give-and-take relationship between part and whole. But the parts, for Aristotle, are the incidents as they create the architectural whole that is the plot; for Coleridge the part must be the minimal element in the final poem as written — the word or combination of words. According to Coleridge, 'Poetry' and 'Poem' refer respectively to an ideal concept and an actual object which have in common the idea of imitation. The poet, "described in ideal perfection", voluntarily assimilates 'external reality' (Nature) into his consciousness, diffuses a tone and spirit of unity (reconciliation of opposites), forms ideas (poetry) and projects those ideas into a symbol (poem) which partakes of reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is representative." Hence,


according to Coleridge, true poetic form is not a mould which is separate from the material into which the material is poured: "could a rule be given from without" he says, "poetry would cease to be poetry and sink into a mechanical art."\(^29\) If every part of a play, every scene, and almost every word in poetry contribute towards the setting forth of 'truths' embodied in the play, its meaning and its main theme and interest, then the form of the play is to be praised. Otherwise the play is deficient in form.

It is to be noted, therefore, that if Brooks and the New Critics are indebted to Coleridge, so is Crane and other Genre critics because in Coleridge there is a great deal of Aristotle. Thus Crane speaks of "the actual cause of a poem" by which he means simply a cause without the assumption of which, as somehow effective in the writing, "the observable characteristic of the parts, their presence in the poem, their arrangement and proportioning and their interconnections cannot be adequately understood."\(^30\) That this conception is

\(^29\) Coleridge's *Shakespearean Criticism*, vol.II, p. 127.

\(^30\) Crane, *The languages of Criticism*, p. 166.
related to Coleridge's principle of "organic form" which he found illustrated in the plays of Shakespeare needs hardly arguing. To Coleridge the complete interdependence of constituent elements of a play is always the criterion of dramatic excellence. That is one of the main reasons why in spite of his enthusiasm for *Romeo and Juliet*, Coleridge still considers it an "immature work compared with the great plays of Shakespeare."\(^{31}\) The same consideration is at the root of his distinction between the 'mechanical' and 'organic' form. The 'form' is mechanic when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material. Organic form, on the other hand, is innate, it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the "fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form."\(^{32}\)

Coleridge follows Aristotle also in holding 'imitation' to be the end of drama but differs from the eighteenth century

\(^{31}\) *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, vol. II, p. 127.

conception of imitation which had acquired the sense of copying. The difference between 'copy' and 'imitation' is that in a copy one only meets with the external appearances of the world in which the artist does not enter whereas in an imitation one gets not so much the external world as it appears objectively, but rather a vision of the world experienced and felt by an individual poet. Applying this to Shakespeare, Coleridge says "Shakespeare shaped his characters out of the nature within; but we cannot safely say, out of his own nature, as an individual's person ... Shakespeare in composing had no but the I representative."

Similarly, while defining poetry as "the expression of imagination" Coleridge attributes to man the active power to respond creatively to the impressions made upon him by the external world. He acknowledges that, for the most part, the mind is a receptacle for the sensations

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produced upon it by external nature, in the manner of the 'wind harp' that is sounded by what it strikes: "the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association." In this admission Coleridge does not dispute the claims of the British empiricist tradition, nor does his view run counter to the central imitationist doctrine that sees the poet as passively reproducing the data furnished him by the external world. But Coleridge attributed to man that 'esemplastic' power or imagination which, in the manner of "eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM", "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate ... it struggles to idealize and to unify." This 'esemplastic' power or imagination, which is to say the power of producing an order among sensory impressions, is an original and synthetic power of the mind.

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
The above discussion is intended not only to indicate the relation between Aristotle and Coleridge but also to point to the need for reformulating (as Coleridge did) Aristotle's 'mimetic' theory into a creative theory. Coleridge's main reason for doing so, as indicated in the first chapter, was that with increased urbanization and industrialization of society there was felt a need to consider emotional and psychological states of creativity. Wordsworth alludes to this fact when he writes: "For a multitude of causes unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind" and one needs to pay attention to "poet's own feelings" because "they are his".\textsuperscript{38} Again, the empirical psychology stemming from the theories of Hobbes and Locke, led literary theorists to a new interest in creativity. Coleridge objected to the mechanistic epistemology of Locke and other empiricists, where the mind was seen as predominantly, if not exclusively, passive. The scholars

of the period, particularly Coleridge, felt (in the words of R.L. Brett): "If Hobbes and Hartley were true then poetry was reduced to elegant trifling and the poet could, at best, only take over the truths of science and decorate them with the fanciful trappings of verse."  

In order to refute the eighteenth century empiricist philosophy Coleridge advocated the idealistic doctrine which came to England from Germany. Accordingly, it has been argued that his concept of organic form is of German origin. For Coleridge, as has been pointed out in the first chapter, organicism is not just a metaphor reflecting a harmony of parts as in a living body where a whole is made up of parts and no part has value on its own. His organic form, as G.N. Orsini puts it, "is not materially separable from its content, and is present in all parts of the whole."  


40 James Benziger in "Organic Unity: Leibnitz to Coleridge" PMIA 66 (1951) p. 27 has traced this concept of unity from Leibnitz to Kart Phillip Moritz, from Moritz to Schlegel and thence to Coleridge.

41 G.N. Orsini, "Coleridge and Schlegel Reconsidered", Comparative Literature 16 (1964) p. 113.
His organicist structural theory, "discovers a value in the parts as well as in the context formed by their interaction, so that the whole is more than the sum of its parts ... Each part thus contains the essence of the whole." \(^4^2\) Again, the organicist concept, as explained above, was not a purely theoretical issue in Coleridge's criticism, but was used in his analysis and evaluation of literature. Fogle has rightly pointed out that when analysing a work Coleridge first searched for the "germ" or "informing" principle and followed it throughout the work. \(^4^3\) The argument of such critics as Appleyard, Wellek, and Raysor that "the formal or structural aspect of dramatic art seems to have concerned him not at all" \(^4^4\) has been challenged by recent scholarship. M.M. Badawi has explained how Coleridge's theory of imagination led him to the belief that a truly imaginative work is a complete


organic whole in which the constituent parts mutually explain and support each other. Coleridge's criterion of artistic excellence is the complete interdependence of these parts. A Shakespearean play, in his view, is always marked by its totality of interest; in it the main theme pervades all its constituent elements. In his search for the play's "meaning" therefore, Coleridge abstracts elements like character or plot or language from the whole context and discusses them in relation to each other.

It is true that Coleridge associated himself with the Platonic school of criticism — a point which the American New critics rigidly followed — but as the above discussion would indicate in his theory of Imagination Coleridge was attempting to achieve an amalgam of Platonism and Aristotelianism. The amalgamation is particularly obvious in the theory of universals — modifying Platonism with the notion of organic or shaping form. According to Coleridge, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, there is a certain


46 Coleridge writes: "There are two essentially different schools of Philosophy, the Platonic and Aristotelian. To the latter but with a somewhat nearer approach to the Platonic, Immanuel Kant belonged; to the former, Bacon and Leibnitz; and in his riper and better years, Berkeley. And to this I profess myself adherent," Unpublished letters cited in Baker, The Sacred River, op. cit., p. 73.
unique quality in every work and this may be called its individuality. It is governed by its own laws and yet it is amenable to classification. The critic's first task is to fix the genre to which the given work of art belongs. Having determined the kind, he must distinguish it from the other works falling within the same kind. Thus the swan and the dove are both beautiful, but it is absurd to compare "their separate claims to beauty from any abstract role common to both without reference to the life and being of the animals themselves..." 47 Not less absurd is it "to pass judgement on the works of a poet on the mere ground that they have been called by the same class-name with the works of the other poets of other times and circumstances." 48 To this may be added Coleridge's belief in the mimetic theory as expressed in Biographia Literaria when he refers to: "the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature." 49 In the same chapter he refers also to his contribution to Lyrical Ballads: "the

48 Ibid.
49 Biographia literaria vol.II, p. 5.
excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real." Coleridge significantly expresses his agreement with Aristotle:

I adopt with full faith the principle 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 attributes of the class; not with such as one gifted individual might possibly possess, but such as from his situation it is most probable beforehand that he would possess.

The relation of Coleridge to Aristotle can further be appreciated by looking at Aristotle, according to whom all art is concerned

With contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being and whose origin is in the maker, not in the thing made; for art is concerned neither with things that are or come into being by necessity nor with things that do so in accordance with nature, since these latter have their origin in themselves.

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50 Biographia Literaria vol. II, p. 5.
51 Ibid. vol. II, pp. 33-34.
Aristotle is here arguing that art has its source in the inner life of the artist, and that the work of art has its unique being, tertium a liquid as Coleridge points out. The artist takes up the materials, dissolves and diffuses them, and then constructs something new and original. The theory of imitation requires the poet to borrow his preliminary superficial forms from nature, but, since they come to him divorced from their natural material in life, what counts is the way he recreates them in response to the demands of the materials and the formal principles of his art. Still, what makes art imitative is the fact that the artist does take these initial forms from the outside world. According to Richard McKeon, what makes art imitative is the fact that the artist imposes his own matter upon these forms in a way that gives them "another responsiveness", "another inevitability" and a new "necessity or probability."\(^53\)

Having looked at the similarities it is essential also to indicate that there is a crucial difference between

Coleridge and Aristotle. Aristotle argued for organic form, but everything he said about the imposition of human structures that convert the apparent materials of history into poetic necessity refers to creation of plot rather than to creation in language. Indeed, so much does the plot come first for Aristotle (as "the first principle" and "the soul of a tragedy")\(^{54}\) that it appears to have a disembodied form (almost Platonic) prior to and independent of words. In its essential nature, then, a plot should be freely translatable. In chapter VI of the *Poetics* Aristotle makes it clear that all matters of diction are subsidiary, as the material cause is subsidiary to the formal cause.\(^{55}\) Coleridge, on the other hand, believed that the organic form will ultimately be realized in a symbol and in the language of the poem itself which has "the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant."\(^{56}\)

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\(^{55}\) Ibid., pp. 121-23.

\(^{56}\) *Biographia Literaria* vol. II, p. 16.
The fact that from 'language' point of view the Genre critics are closer to Coleridge than Aristotle can be indicated from the following definition of tragedy by Crane:

A complete tragedy is an organic whole in which everything... is contained in the words as its indispensable artistic matter, so that the formal parts of plot, character, and thought are, from this point of view, inseparable from material part or diction. 57

Again while discussing the main aim of the Genre critics Crane states that they have "come to see more clearly perhaps than before that language is not only a means of communication and artistic creation but also ... an instrument of discovery and understanding." 58 Similarly

57 The Languages of Criticism, op. cit., p. 68.

58 Ibid., p. 11.
Olson acknowledges the prominence of verbal pattern and language, even though in a footnote. According to him: [words] in one sense [are] the least important part of poetics, for the words are determined by everything else in the poem; in another sense, it is the most important, because the words are all we have to go by, they alone disclose the poem to us.

Since the Genre critics have proclaimed that they are at the opposite pole from the American New Criticism (but as argued above, both schools are markedly Coleridgean) we may specify the points of difference between the two. Generally speaking, New Criticism looks upon a poem or a

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59 In Critics and Criticism (1957) p. 21, Olson writes - "I willingly concede what I have never debated: that diction is very important to poetry; that, as Tate suggests, distinction of language is an important index of poetic power ...; that criticism ought to pay the utmost attention to diction; that, as T.S. Eliot has said, the poet is likely to be extraordinarily interested in, and skilful with, language; that we are not "moved by the things that the words stand for" in any sense that would allow us to dispense with the particular words by which the "things" are constituted for us; and all similar propositions."

60 Ibid., p. 51.
work of art as an organization of words, images and rhythms which, taken together, constitute the meaning of that work. It is this intrinsic meaning which a close analysis and scrutiny of various components serve to reveal and illuminate. No other meaning or consideration can have any claim to the attention of the critic. In other words, the New Critics seek to find an illustration of a priori conception in the artistic work as is demonstrated by such terms as 'irony', 'paradox', 'tension', 'structure', 'texture' etc. For them there can be only one norm of poetry, all differences between various works and styles appearing merely as deviations from that norm, and the norm itself is determined a priori deriving its authority not from particular poems but from general philosophy. Against this a Genre critic knows in advance only the method or the way to approach a work and his findings in the discussion of a particular work are determined by the frame of reference evolved for the exposition of the work. In short, while a New Critic begins with 'paradox' or 'irony' or 'tension', a Genre critic begins with the form, the form in relation to which everything in a work, including language, is explicable.

Viewed from this perspective, it will appear that Richards, at his best, is more akin to the methods of the
Genre critics. While commenting on "Jacobson's analysis of Shakespeare's Sonnet" he criticizes the American New critics who "pick on something as a merit: say a metaphor or sensory imagery. Then any poem not crowded with tropes or vivid with presentations they look down on." In order to refute this a priori method of the New Critics, Richards goes on to add: "we have to recall Coleridge: 'let us not pass any act of Uniformity against poets'. The business of any good poem is to be itself, not anything else."

Similarly Richards not only equates Coleridge's definition of Imagination with Aristotle's definition of tragedy — both viewed in the light of Richards' own psychological theory of value — but also shows a relation between their conceptions of a poet. While talking of the poet, Richards states:

62 Ibid.
63 Principles of literary criticism p. 245.
He makes through shaping and moulding, through giving form. But if we ask what he shapes and moulds or gives form to, we must answer with Aristotle that we can say nothing about that which has no form. There are always prior forms upon which the poet works, and how he takes these forms is part of his making. He apprehends them by taking them into forms of more comprehensive order. To the poet as poet, his world is the world, and the world is his world.  

That this approach of Richards is similar to the 'pluralistic' approach of the Genre critics may be attested to by the fact that the Genre critics have attacked only a few New critics but not Richards or Empson. Crane's unsympathetic attitude to Brooks and his brilliant analysis of Richards, Olson's hostile criticism of Robert Penn Warren, and his affective and convincing disposal of Empson are the main examples.

64 "The Interinanimation of Words" in Poetries: Their Media and Ends p. 74.

65 "Pluralism, taking both doctrine and method into account, holds the possibility of plurality of formulations of truth and of philosophical procedures —— in short, of a plurality of valid philosophies." Critics and Criticism (1957) p. 4.

The next point of distinction between the New critics and Genre critics is that whereas the former consider the analysis of poetic language — because it is what according to them differentiates poetic from non-poetic discourse — as an end in itself, the latter consider analysis as the means to an end. Olson holds with Crane that language is only the material of thought or what is to be expressed with respect to form. The words are in a poem like the bricks in a house and the New Critics by inferring "the design of a house from the shape and weight of the bricks" elicit a wrong conclusion. The bricks do not determine the design of a house, nor does the metal the design of a saw or the wood the design of a chair. Take the example of a saw. It exists because it has a certain function, namely, sawing and not because of the metal of which it is made. The shaping of the metal into a saw is directed by the function that the saw has to serve. Once applied to poetry or verbal 'artifact', the sawing becomes the emotional form (the final cause) which governs the handling of words (the formal cause) and also other constituents (efficient or material cause).

Olson, "William Empson, Contemporary Criticism and Poetic diction" in Critics and Criticism (1957) p. 41.
that compose the matter of a work. Drawing upon Aristotle, Crane says that "we may ... speak of the words of a poem as the material basis of the thought they express, although the words also have form as being ordered in sentences and rhythms; and similarly we may speak of thought as the matter of character" but the words, Crane continues to add, do not include "the overall form which synthesises all those subordinate elements, formally effective in themselves, into a continuous poetic whole." So in relation to form action, character, thought and diction constitute matter; and in relation to action character, thought and diction form matter; and same is the case with other elements like character, thought and diction. All the elements work in a hierarchial manner and still function together as to form a composite whole. It is this hierarchy, that is, form, action, character, thought, and diction — that accounts for the order of discussion in Olson's "The Poetry of Dylan Thomas", Norman Maclean's, "Episode, Scene, Speech, and Word: The Madness of Lear", and in the other essays of the Genre critics.

An analysis of Coleridge's Imagination and Method — as explicated in the first chapter — would indicate that

68 The Languages of Criticism p. 154.
his conception of 'form' and 'language' is closer to that of the Genre critics. The concept of form in Coleridge is closely related to his theories concerning universal idea, and symbol. The true form is not mechanical because it "arises out of the properties of the material." It is the medium that renders possible the organic progression which alone can transform multeity into a unity. The form that proceeds directly and intrinsically from this multeity is the organic form. As it "develops from within" this organic form shapes its material as well. Then the exterior of the form becomes the physiognomy of the being within, its true image reflected and thrown out from the concave mirror. This is the self-exposition of the imaginative activity. As identical with the creative process, imagination is truly beyond time and space; and when it appears with a determined character, its form is organic to what is revealed.

A similar idea can be found in Northrop Frye whose criticism is a combination of Genre criticism and archetypal criticism. For Frye the archetypes are above
all the basic plots of literature or "universal forms" not make-believe merely, which explains why Frye may be called, on substantive grounds, both a Genre critic and an Archetypal critic. In an essay "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myth", he announces that the aim of his work is "to give a rational account of some of the structural principles of western literature in the context of its classical and Christian heritage." These structural principles are to be derived "from archetypal and anagogic criticism, the only kinds that assume a larger context of literature as a whole." Using Biblical symbolism and classical mythology as a "grammar of literature of archetypes", Frye ingeniously classifies western literature from the medieval period to the twentieth


71 Ibid., pp. 131-239.

72 Ibid., p. 133.

73 Ibid., p. 134
century. Most of the essay is given over to a discussion of four narrative categories of plot-structure, or mythoi, broader than, or prior to, the ordinary genres. Of these comedy is identified with the mythos of spring, romance with summer, tragedy with autumn, and irony and satire with winter. Illustrations of these types are drawn from a wide range of major works, among which Shakespeare's plays figure prominently in the discussion of comedy and tragedy.

The archetypes also supply the analogies of form on which a study of genre is based. In his fourth essay, "Rhetorical Criticism: Theory of Genres" Frye analyses the undeveloped theory of 'genre' criticism. To complement the Greek drama, epic, and lyric, distinguished by contrasting modes of presentation, he introduces fiction
to embrace the kinds of literature that reach their audience through the printed page. Within this most recent and now most important genre are found the novel, the romance, the confession (or autobiography), and their autonomy is distinguished by four intermingling formal standards. Joyce's Ulysses, on the other hand, is described as "a complete prose epic with all four forms employed in it, all of practically equal importance, and all essential to one another, so that the book is a unity and not an aggregate." In the concluding pages of Anatomy of Criticism Frye states that "In literary criticism myths mean ultimately mythos, a structural organizing principle of literary forms." At the same time, he concludes, "it would be silly to use a reductive rhetoric to try to prove that theology, metaphysics, law, the social sciences, or whichever one or group of these we happen to dislike, are based on nothing but metaphors or

81 Frye, Anatomy of Criticism p. 248 and pp. 303-15; See also Frye's "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement" in Twentieth Century Criticism: Major Statements, op.cit, pp. 156-69.

82 Anatomy of Criticism p. 314.

83 Ibid., p. 341.
myths." In other words, although the verbal structures of psychology, anthropology, theology, history, law and everything else are constructed by the same kind of mythoi, and although, myth — the imaginative projection — is the "organizing principle of all literary forms", the various forms of literature are to be studied differently. That is to say, one should read something differently if one is projecting into the mythos of winter or into the mythos of spring. One reads details differently if one thinks one is reading a comedy or tragedy, and these notions of genres have as their correlates basic plots which Frye defines as archetypes.

In a way, then, the most interesting aspect of Frye is the aspect which moves away from a purely archetypal criticism towards a kind of poetics which, in the manner of Coleridge, is trying to discover some fundamental conventions and categories on which a literary reading or interpretation is based. Myths are "the mathematical equations of all possible verbal structures", says Frye and thereby fully
articulates the ultimate aim of Coleridge's notable effort to write an essay "concerning poetry and the pleasures derived from it" which would "supersede all the books of metaphysics and morals too." In short, Frye is a Genre critic in as much as he advocates the doctrine of 'inherent forms' and the scientific method associated with it, but more than that — like Coleridge — the forms he finds inherent are the 'universal' form of structure of archetypes.

From the above discussion it should be clear that there is "a greater possibility of disagreement" between the American New Critics and Genre critics because (in the words of Elder Olson) "they were attempting to deal with the same subject", differently — one school using the


87 Introduction to Aristotle's Poetics and English Literature (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1965) p. xxv.
a priori method and the other the inductive method. It was Aristotle who first used the inductive method and looked upon the artifact as a finished product, complete, whole and of a certain magnitude, with its parts distinct but mutually combined according to the "law of probability or necessity", so that each is at once significant in itself and an integral part of the whole which it subserves. The best clarification of the point — as is clear from the writings of the Genre critics — is provided by Coleridge's definition of a poem, and his view of the relations of the parts in an organic whole. The Genre critics are truly Coleridgean because it was Coleridge who reformulated the Aristotlian conception of "inherent forms" in such a way as to make it applicable not only to the existent forms of literature but also for literary forms of future.