CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare has more often been talked about than studied with the thoroughness it deserves, and this notwithstanding the fact that our century has produced the definitive edition of Coleridge's work on Shakespeare apart from a number of selected editions of the most important pieces from his lectures and writings. There was a growing realisation in the 'thirties and 'forties that the most characteristic elements in the then popular poetic and formalistic approaches to Shakespeare came originally from Coleridge. The feeling was and has been widespread though it was rarely translated into a comprehensive study of the link between the two. However, if we look at the innumerable passing references to Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism in surveys and historical accounts, we will get the impression that in the popular mind Coleridge's name was associated with the then discredited psychological approach to Shakespeare's characters. The usual complaint was that Coleridge (along with Morgann and Hazlitt) had excessively "psychologised" Shakespeare in the sense that characters were torn out of their dramatic contexts and treated virtually as historical beings. Coleridge's name was inextricably linked with that of Bradley, and the rejection of the latter was by implication also a partial censure of the former.

There is no doubt that, apart from the particular field of Shakespeare criticism, Coleridge exercised a profound influence on the formulation of the modernist poetics and critical theory. It is now generally realised that formalism and New Criticism trace their origin and their philosophical bearing in Kant via Schlegel and Coleridge. Though I.A. Richards tried to reduce Coleridge's idealistic concept of
imagination to a kind of empirically-founded hedonism, he yet did a lot to draw attention to Coleridge's theories. Coleridge's reputation as a critic generally and as a theorist in particular rose very high in the 'twenties and continued to be so till the replacement of formalism by the current critical theory.

The attention paid to Coleridge's philosophical and critical formulations, however, did not extend to his criticism of Shakespeare. Platitudes about Coleridge's "psychologism" and "character-chasing" continued to be bandied about by critic after critic. The prejudice against, and misunderstanding of, Bradley reflected itself in references to Coleridge also. Very little attempt was made to see that the Shakespearian criticism of Coleridge has its roots in those very assumptions that have led to the growth of the anti-Bradeleian and extra-psychological approaches. It was also not realised that some of the excessive subtleties in the character analysis of both Coleridge and Bradley was due to the fact that there was no strong prejudice in the nineteenth century working against the analysis of motives in fictional characters. Hence, though Coleridge is holistic, organistic and philosophical in his essential approach to Shakespeare (believing in the imaginative unity of Shakespearian plays), he nevertheless does not disdain to take delight in the analysis of hidden motives. This, however, is not justification enough to ignore the crucial facts relating to the character of Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism.

The present work is founded on the conviction that Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare's plays and characters has been grossly misunderstood. In spite of his fondness for, and success in, psychological analysis, Coleridge's approach to Shakespeare cannot be described as essentially and basically psychological. Coleridge throughout seems to be engaged in
working out an alternative to the Aristotelian theory of mimesis or verisimilitude. Even where he stresses the life-likeness of Shakespeare's characters, he makes an effort to the effect that mimesis may be subsumed under a generally expressionistic theory. Coleridge's greatest claim to supremacy in the field of Shakespearian criticism is that in his lectures and notes Shakespeare emerges as a poet of vision par excellence who mediates his profound understanding of life through all the means, including characterisation, to which a great poet has access. It is Coleridge, and not the psychological critics (like Richardson) of the end of the eighteenth century who may be called "New" not only in the sense in which Nichol Smith used the word¹ - but also in the sense in which the term is used to designate the leading formalist critics of the present century. Coleridge approached Shakespeare in the light, sometimes dim though occasionally clear, of an organicist, holistic and unitive understanding of the nature of art. It will be our endeavour in the following pages to present a study of Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism with the above framework in mind.

I

Let us begin the present study with a brief survey of the work already done on Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism. Modern study of Coleridge began with T.M. Raysor in 1930, who for the first time collected the scattered critical insights of Coleridge and gave them a proper shape in his two volume edition of Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism. The work is significant as it made Coleridge's criticism available for systematic study. In his remark in the Introduction, however,

he could not do justice to Coleridge as a critic of Shakespeare. According to Raysor, Coleridge's importance as a critic is best shown in the psychological analysis of characters. For example, the character of Falstaff is analysed by Coleridge as if "he were not merely a character in a play but also a real human being." Similarly, Hamlet's irresolution is interpreted by Coleridge in his own characteristic manner. Raysor has boundless admiration for Coleridge's psychological criticism and his critical insights; he, however, rejects the Coleridgean approach and system completely when he says that Coleridge's best criticism has nothing to do with philosophy:

Coleridge's criticism has often been justly described as philosophical; but the term carries with it implications which must be avoided before it can be properly applied to Coleridge's noblest works, since it assumes a concentration upon ideas of the most complete generalisations.

According to Raysor, as an aesthete, Coleridge was indeed a philosopher in the above sense but he was "derivative, mediocre and in a subject which requires system, fragmentary". In literature, he remains a philosopher only in the lay sense of the word, in the sense which conceives "sound logic, ethics and psychology as the chief subject-matter of the wise mind".

Raysor, it is obvious, does not see the connection between Coleridge's actual criticism of Shakespeare and the theoretical framework whence the practical criticism really proceeds. Moreover, he also confuses issues. Coleridge is the first critic who says Shakespeare is a philosophical poet. This should not be confused with the claim that Coleridge himself is a philosophical critic.

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2 T.M. Raysor, "Introduction", Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism (London, 1930), p.xxiii. In further references, the work is cited as Raysor, with volume no. and page no.

3 Ibid., p.xlviii.
R.W. Babcock, next, studies the Shakespearian critics of the last quarter of the eighteenth century in *The Genesis of Shakespeare's Idolatory: 1766-1799*. He puts forward the theory that Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism, as criticism in general in the early nineteenth century, was derived from the work of late eighteenth-century critics:

Point for point, from all the different angles, the early nineteenth century merely echoed the late eighteenth. In short, if the question was raised as to whether the nineteenth century produced any new criticism of Shakespeare, the answer would have to be - no.4

Babcock denies that there was anything new and glorious about Coleridge. If there is anything new at all, it is Coleridge's remarks on the first scenes of Shakespeare's plays. Babcock, to our way of thinking, is entirely wrong about Coleridge. What he says may be true of Hazlitt to some extent but is not true of Coleridge. He entirely misses the shades of meaning and nuances in Coleridge that make him radically different from his predecessors and contemporaries. Being confined to the study of minor Shakespearian criticism alone and not being sensitive to deeper aesthetic and epistemological issues, Babcock cannot distinguish between the conventional and the radically new in Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism.

Rene Wellek in *A History of Modern Criticism* (1958) adopts a negative approach as Wellek finds the remarks of Coleridge on the plays and characters of Shakespeare, almost disappointing. They are "either trite or moralizing, or when ingenious, unconvincing".5 Coleridge's "excursions" into Shakespearian scholarship are none too happy. His chronology of

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Shakespeare's plays, his views on the doubtful plays, and his textual emendation are of little value. Wellek further says that Coleridge's "comments on individual passages often suffer from his prudishness and his fanciful etymologies and, curiously enough, from a very eighteenth century commonsense taste". Wellek himself in turn disappoints the students of Coleridge when he says that Coleridge as an aestetician is fragmentary and derivative and that he does not succeed in bridging the gap between his aesthetics and theory of literature.

A discussion of this last point is beyond the scope of the present thesis though we could refer to a number of studies in which Coleridge has been presented as a seminal and coherent thinker. We cannot, however, refrain from saying that Wellek fails to see that Coleridge is derivative only in the sense in which the "myriad minded" Shakespeare himself was derivative. He was fragmentary only in so far as his system was constantly growing and developing during the whole period of his lecturing on Shakespeare. Moreover, the apparent fragmentary nature of his work is compensated by the fact that his comments on Shakespeare do have a certain unity of thought.

In his book, The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism (1962), R.H. Fogle discusses the practical criticism of Coleridge too. His remarks on Coleridge are remarkably illuminating. According to Fogle, Coleridge employs the organic method in his criticism of Shakespeare. In his criticism is manifested "a complex organic unity of opposite qualities" and gifts of intellect and feeling, in general of all active and passive elements of the mind. According to Fogle, Coleridge believed

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6Ibid., pp.181-2.
that a Shakespearian play adopts the "law of bicentrality", in which every part has a centre or principle both within and outside itself "like a system of concentric circles of which the master circle would be the total idea of Shakespeare". Accordingly, Coleridge deals with a play as:

...an organic unity, a totality of variety and unity reconciled, with almost infinitely complex relationships, and with the apparently unpredictable 'physiognomic' individuality of life itself, yet controlled by an idea that explains all individual relationships and reconciles all apparent contradictions.8

According to Fogle, the same pattern appears in Coleridge's treatment of Shakespeare's characters. Each character is at once a symbol of universal human nature but also an individual. "The centrality of Shakespeare's plays is the centrality of the passions portrayed in them, individualized in character in inexhaustible different combinations".9

Fogle's approach is highly sophisticated and subtle. The main problem, however, is that he does not attempt to be exhaustive. A number of aspects of Coleridge's work have been lost sight of in the effort to isolate what Fogle considers to be the seminal. Moreover, Fogle discovers in Coleridge a way of approaching Shakespeare which is highly individualistic and may not be generally acceptable. Fogle moves from Coleridge to Shakespeare which, good and legitimate in itself, is not our aim.

J.A. Appleyard in Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature (1965) traces the origin, growth and development of Coleridge's inward "odyssey". He believes that Coleridge's approach to

8Ibid., p.20.
9Ibid., p.21.
Shakespeare is a reflection of his philosophical interest in the self and the adjuncts of a person-centred theory. The emphasis on this resulted in an exclusive concern with either the personality of the poet or the characters of the drama. Coleridge's weakness, as Appleyard points out, which is shown in his criticism of *Hamlet* and throughout, is that he was not able to learn how to express the "relationship with the real that must ideally control the subjectivism implicit in his view". However, the fault was not necessarily Coleridge's since he was following his age only. His interest in both character and hero is a natural result of the growth of "the romantic cult of the hero":

Coleridge was following, as much as contributing to, a critical theory which distrusted genres and unities and subordinated plot to character as the source of dramatic coherence. At its best it was a criticism which sinned by omission -- serious omission, it is true, but of a sort which the age could hardly have been expected to be conscious of.10

Appleyard's assumed thesis of romantic involvement in the psychology of the hero led him to hold the erroneous view that "the formal or structural aspects of dramatic art seem to have concerned him not at all".

Much of what Appleyard has to say about Coleridge's philosophy of literature is highly individualistic, and like Fogle's study, sophisticated in a way that partly excludes objectivity. His concern with Coleridge's romantic involvement in self is a roundabout and sophisticated way of emphasizing the dominance of psychology in Coleridge's thought and approach. As a general theory of romanticism, it may or may not be valid, but as descriptive of Coleridge's concerns in his

Shakespearian criticism it is only partially true. Coleridge's interest in character does not entirely emanate from his concern with self. As a matter of fact, this interest derives from Coleridge's attempt to evolve an expressionistic theory of art. Moreover, Coleridge's lack of interest in genre, the unities and plot does not show that he was entirely uninterested in matters of structure and design. Everywhere, Coleridge stresses design in Shakespeare. However, outward structure and design, for Coleridge, are of secondary interest only since Shakespeare's plays mediate an inner unitive vision.

Alfred Harbage is the only critic who comes close to our thesis in the introduction to Terence Hawkes's edition of Coleridge's criticism (1969) when he says that Coleridge represents the true spirit of Shakespeare:

> When we read Johnson, we think what a wonderful man Johnson is, when we read Schlegel, we think what a wonderful summary this is. When we read Coleridge, we think what a wonderful artist is Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{11}

Harbage says that the criticism of Coleridge is philosophical. It is "in the diagnosis of Hamlet as introvert, in the acute and completely unsentimental analysis of the character of Richard II, and the telling comparisons of the mode of speech of Bolingbroke and Mowbray, of Macbeth and Banquo",\textsuperscript{12} that Coleridge makes good use of his philosophy.


\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p.21.
Harbage, however, is too brief to be of much value. Moreover, though he gives the hint that Coleridge's criticism was philosophical, Harbage does not say anything about the philosophy that he thinks Coleridge presents in his works or in what way it was different from the spurious morality of the eighteenth century critics. Little attempt has been made in his introduction to describe the particular philosophy of different plays which grow out of Shakespeare's general philosophy or vision of life.

M.M. Badawi's book, *Coleridge: Critic of Shakespeare* (1973) is the only detailed study of Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism. The work is significant as it presents, for the first time, Coleridge's criticism in a sympathetic and comprehensive way. He is the first critic to have realized that the value of Coleridge as a Shakespearian critic lies in the introduction of a new approach to Shakespearian drama. According to Badawi, Coleridge adopts an organic approach towards Shakespeare. Moreover, Badawi is the only critic who seeks to establish a link between Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism and his theory of poetry. However, a glance at his second chapter ("The relation between Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism and his theory of poetry") will show that he has ignored the epistemological basis of Coleridge's view of imagination and his theory of poetry. He has preferred to remain confined within the scope of purely literary and quasi-aesthetic issues (e.g., "the pleasure principle", "the end of poetic drama", etc.) and does not go far enough to consider philosophical problems concerning the relationship between mind and reality, freedom and necessity. It is these latter issues that are involved in Coleridge's poetic theory.

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We may conclude this brief survey of the existing studies of Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism with a passing reference to J.W. Donohue's study, *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age*. It is surprising that Donohue totally ignores the essential feature of Coleridge's criticism of Shakespearian drama and goes back to the older view describing Coleridge as a purely psychological critic. There is, however, a good deal of subtlety and sophistication of approach in Donohue's critique. He suggests, for example, that Coleridge shares with the rest of the nineteenth century the assumption that character is the essence of drama and that the meaning of a play is the meaning of a particular character's experience. Donohue further points out the plight of these critics in dealing with characters that have strains in them which are morally reprehensible. The dilemma was resolved, according to Donohue, by pretending that the critic was impartially interested in the analysis of motives only. Donohue further suggests that Coleridge, dissatisfied with the stage presentations of his age, retreated into his study and probed the depths of motivation and psychological subtleties in Shakespeare's characters.

Donohue, while praising Coleridge for originality in character-analysis, accuses him of not maintaining any distinction between real life people and "the genera intensely individualised" in Shakespeare. Donohue is perceptive in his own way, but his approach, to our way of thinking, is not adequate and does much less than justice to Coleridge's criticism.

II

In the present thesis an attempt will be made to show

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that Coleridge's criticism, as already suggested, is philosophical in which psychological and dramatic insights are perfectly fused. Moreover, it springs from the same source as his thinking about education, psychology, religion and politics. It is, in other words, a part of his total metaphysical and intuitive infrastructure. This becomes clear if we look at the ambitions and grand design of the plan of Coleridge's lecture series. The lectures of 1808, for example, were planned "on the genius and writings of Shakespeare relatively to his predecessors and contemporaries, so as to determine not only his merits and defects, and the proportion that each must bear to the whole but what of his merits and defects belong to his age, as being found in the contemporaries of genius and what belonged to himself". Coleridge thus intends to adopt a historical and comparative mode while lecturing on Shakespeare. This, he says, he would combine with his own genius so as to treat them philosophically:

In the course of these I shall have said all I know, the whole result of many years' continued reflection on the subjects of taste, imagination, fancy, passion, the source of our pleasures in the fine arts, in the antithetical balance-loving nature of man and the connexion of such pleasures with moral excellence.

The two third of his 1811-12 lecture series, as he planned, would be assigned to a "Philosophic Analysis and explanation of All the principal characters of our great dramatist, as Othello, Falstaff, Richard III, Iago, Hamlet and Co.". However, he would not isolate the characters from the plays as the remaining portion will be attributed to "a critical comparison of Shakespeare, in respect of Diction, 

16 Ibid., p.6.
17 Ibid., pp.26-27.
Imagery, Management of the passions, Judgement in the construction of his Dramas, in short all that belongs to him as a poet, and as a dramatic poet".\textsuperscript{18}

All this and his letter to Sir George Beaumont (1804) provide incontrovertible testimony to his awareness of the structural and dramatic aspects of Shakespearian drama. This letter goes against the opinion of those critics who accuse Coleridge of having no aesthetic or historical sense. Coleridge writes:

Each scene of each play I read as if it were the whole of Shakespeare's works -- the sole thing extant. I ask myself what are the characteristics -- the diction, the cadences, and metre, the character, the passion, the moral or metaphysical inherencies, and fitness for theatrical effect, and in what sort of theatres -- all these I write down with great care and precision of thought and language -- and when I have gone through the whole, I then shall collect my papers, and observe how often such and such expressions recur, and thus shall not only know what the characteristics of Shakespeare's plays are, but likewise what proportion they bear to each other. Then, not carelessly though of course with far less care, I shall read through the old plays, just before Shakespeare's time, Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia -- Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger in the same way -- so as to see and to be able to prove what of Shakespeare belonged to his age, and was common to all the first rate men of that true saeculum aureum of English poetry, and what is his own, and his only. Thus I shall both exhibit the characteristics of the plays -- and of the mind -- of Shakespeare...\textsuperscript{19}

This would remove the confusion caused by the critics who think that Coleridge did not understand the importance of

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., pp.26-27.
\textsuperscript{19} Quoted in "Introduction", Coleridge on Shakespeare, op. cit., p.13.
structure in Shakespearian drama despite his thought of organic
unity. It will become clear from the following pages of our
thesis that Coleridge's view of form or structure was different
from that of the eighteenth century critics. According to
Coleridge, Shakespeare's plays contain his philosophic vision of
life. Their meaning, however, cannot be elicited from
deliberately formulated utterances. It can only be revealed
through the dramatic unfolding of the plot and the
relationships among different characters. It is difficult to
agree with those critics who say that Coleridge reduces
Shakespeare's plays to the portrayal of character. On the
contrary, as our thesis will show, his critical insights range
from characterisation to metaphysical insights and include
language, thematic development and plot in Shakespearian drama.

It is unfair, we insist, to consider Coleridge as a
psychological critic of Shakespeare. His psychological
insights, no doubt, are acute and interesting but they are
inseparable from his sense of the poetic and dramatic whole.
His psychology is organically one with his metaphysics. His
criticism of characters does not merely consist in a
psychologically coherent and meaningful account of their
behaviour nor is he unduly interested in the psychologically
abnormal aspects of Shakespeare's characters -- something that
fascinates the typical psychological critic. Shakespeare's
dramatic characters revealed to him a larger vision of human
life. Moreover, as we shall see later, he does not divorce
character from its dramatic context. For him to have done so
would have been to ignore the play's unitive vision.

Thus, Coleridge's criticism is based on a new
theoretical framework which he developed after discrediting the
traditional method of Shakespearian criticism. It is based on
his own theory of imagination which he considers as a faculty
to bring about unity of thought and feeling. He analysed Shakespeare by exactly the same principles which he used to analyze poetry in general. Within the total volume of Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism, recur certain features, ideas and principles which strike us unmistakably as Shakespearian and which serve as clues to what we may call the Coleridgean world-view of Shakespeare.

Thus, Coleridge's defence of judgement over genius, his idea of poetic vs. dramatic nature of Shakespeare, his analysis of characters as products of meditation joined with observation, and his analysis of the plays as unfolding Shakespeare's unitive vision coupled with his dramatic sense -- all tend toward an analysis of Shakespeare as a philosopher inseparably combined with the artist in him.

III

Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare was not a systematic exposition in the manner of his critique of Wordsworth in the Biographia Literaria, and was not available in a complete form until 1930 when T.M. Raysor published his two volumes of Coleridge's Shakespearian Criticism. Since it is fragmentary, tentative, unplanned and ill-organised, it is necessary to study the various sources in which Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism was scattered before its publication in Raysor's definitive edition.  

Only two brief essays were published in Coleridge's own life-time. The first was the "Specific Symptoms of Poetic Power" in The Biographia Literaria, and the second essay "Method in Thought" was published in the Encyclopaedia Metropolitana in 1818. This essay was also revised for

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publication in the same year in *The Friend*. Coleridge was granted permission for this publication on his complaint that the text of his essay in the *Metropolitana* was "garbled beyond recognition". There is a great deal of difference between the texts of these two versions. However, Raysor points out, the difference is largely "due to Coleridge's own re-writing" of the essay rather than a result of editorial alteration in the publication.\(^{21}\)

Coleridge died in 1834 without publishing the major portion of his literary criticism. Most of it was in the form of fragmentary lecture notes and marginalia. The fragments of lecture notes consisted of two volumes of manuscripts while the marginalia come from an eight-volume edition of Shakespeare's plays (ed. by Leavis Theobald, London, 1773) which was formerly the property of Coleridge's friend Morgan. It also comes from Coleridge's own copy of the two-volume edition of the plays (Stockdale edition) which contains "blank interleavings for longer notes". Some fragmentary lecture-notes on Shakespeare's poetry and other subjects also come from Coleridge's note-books 18 and 24. The Marginalia and these lecture notes are important since they give an account of Coleridge's criticism in his own words. All these, however, remained in a shapeless form until they were arranged and revised for publication by Coleridge's nephew H.N. Coleridge. These were given by him the form of a book 'Literary Remains' published in 1836-39.

Apart from these, the bulk of Coleridge's criticism on Shakespeare is available to us in the form of short-hand reports of J.P. Collier, newspaper reports and records of Coleridge's conversations. J.P. Collier's reports of Coleridge's lectures, published in *Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton*, are also important. In spite of the

controversy about their authenticity, we cannot question the usefulness of these reports since it is a well-accepted fact that Collier attended Coleridge's lectures and took notes. Moreover, these correspond closely with the brief records of H.C. Robinson published thirteen years after Collier's book. These reports, though full of omissions and rather late, are valuable in "preserving many criticisms, observations and opinions, well worthy of attention from their truth, their eloquence, and their originality". Collier thus writes about the value of these reports in the Preface to the reports of 1811-1812 lectures:

I am fully aware that my memoranda of forty five years standing are more or less imperfect: of some of the lectures I appear to have made only abridged sketches; of others my notes are much fuller and more extended; but I am certain, even at this distance of time, that I did not knowingly register a sentence, that did not come from Coleridge's lips, although doubtless I missed, omitted, and mistook points and passages, which now I should have been most rejoiced to have preserved. In completing my manuscripts, however, I added no word or syllable of my own....

These reports are no doubt important but the superiority of Marginalia over them is an acknowledged fact, not only due to fact that they were transcribed after a long period of time but also because writers often found difficulty in following Coleridge because of the "complication and extreme unexpectedness of his style". These are, however, important as they make Coleridge's meaning clear which can not be done by means of Marginalia alone.

Collier's reports along with the records of Coleridge's conversations, a few brief records in London newspapers (like

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23 Ibid., pp. 25-26.
Morning Chronicle, Courier and Bristol Newspaper) and a few records from the diary of H.C. Robinson were published by Thomas Ashe in his edition of Coleridge's Lectures and Notes in 1885.

Robinson's records, although brief and limited only to 1811 lecture series, are "nearly always full of a good sense". They have the advantage of representing the contemporary criticism of a man who admired Coleridge heartily yet with a "detachment of mind which permitted adverse criticism". These include his correspondence, diary, manuscripts of a book "Reminiscences" which cover a period of 1834-43, and a few memoranda of Coleridge's conversations.

It was only in 1930 that Professor T.M. Raysor gave these fragments of Coleridge's criticism a coherent shape. The importance of this edition lies in the fact that all the reports, notes and lecture notes are published from the original, without any alteration or modification in the text. Raysor also discovered three unpublished reports of third, fourth and fifth lectures of 1811-12 series by some Mr. Tomalin, transcripts of Coleridge's lectures, one of the notebooks and two fragments of lectures printed in Morrison catalogue.

As the records show, the greater part of Coleridge's criticism on Shakespeare consists of the reports of his lectures which Coleridge delivered in public in eight series at different places. In these lecture-reports, we find a lot of repetition and digression which was certainly the result of lack of preparation and extemporaneous delivery. Though at one time Coleridge solemnly determined not to deliver his lectures without full preparation, soon he realized that auditors were "most delighted in the extemporaneous passages". He realized

that a manuscript killed his sense of communication with the result that he often deviated from his planned course.

The works which he dealt with in detail in these lectures are *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II* and *The Tempest* with a little attention given to *Love's Labour's Lost* and his narrative poems. *Antony and Cleopatra* did not figure prominently although Coleridge considered it near in greatness to *Othello* and *Hamlet*. Shakespearian sonnets were neglected completely. In the second course, he promised a treatment of comedies like *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. No record of them except that of *The Tempest* exists.

**IV**

Coleridge's attitude towards Shakespeare is "reverential" and his criticism is sympathetic and appreciative. Shakespeare, for him, is the "myriad-minded man" and there is "a divinity doth hedge Shakespeare round". Shakespeare is one "Proteus of the fire and flood", symbolically a God, for him. Passages after passages may be quoted to show the reverence that Coleridge has for Shakespeare. For example he says:

> Self sustained, deriving his genius immediately from heaven, independent of all earthly or national influence. That such a mind involved itself in a human form is a problem indeed which my feeble powers may witness with admiration but cannot explain. My words are indeed feeble when I speak of that myriad-minded man, whom all artists feel above all praise. Least of all poets, ancient or modern, does Shakespeare appear to be coloured or affected by the age in which he lives -- he was of all times and countries.27

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Coleridge was proud of being the first English critic to have appreciated Shakespeare and presented him in a changed perspective. He himself says in the notes on The Tempest: "I am proud that I was the first in time who publicly demonstrated to the full extent of the position" that the judgement of Shakespeare was commensurate with his genius.

He felt offended with Wordsworth's remark in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads where Wordsworth says "In some respects [the Germans] have acquired a superiority over the fellow countrymen of the Poet". In his ninth lecture of the series 1811-12, Coleridge chided those countrymen including Wordsworth who thought that the Germans were the first "to feel truly and appreciate justly" Shakespeare's "mighty genius". It is perhaps because of this attitude that Coleridge has been charged with bardolatory. According to Alfred Harbage, the fault of Coleridge is that he created a "myth of perfection" and that he failed to see that Shakespeare was sometimes improvising and that great works may have great defects. Thus, Harbage says, we can reverence Shakespeare without idolizing him.

It is true that as a poet and dramatist, Coleridge hesitates in attributing faults to Shakespeare. At times when he is unable to understand the design of a Shakespearian play, he tries to find out the justification for it with such a remark as this in Julius Caesar: "... this I mean is what I say to myself, in my present quantum of insight, only modified by my experience in how many instances I have ripened into a perception of beauties where I had before described

28 Ibid., vol.1, p.126.
30 Harbage, op. cit., p.29.
faults...." However, this attitude of Coleridge is due to the realization of the fact that the study of Shakespeare is a gradual process of enlightenment and revelation. The significance of a piece may remain unperceived for the time being but its meaning may become clear as the play unfolds itself. Moreover, we should also keep in mind the important fact that the discovery of a radically new approach to the study and appreciation of Shakespeare was an extraordinarily exciting affair for Coleridge as well as other Romantic critics. Coleridge, probably, has greater justification for the note of excitement in his voice because unlike Hazlitt his appreciation of Shakespeare was linked with the growth and development of his theory of poetry. Under such conditions, exaggeration is bound to occur and may legitimately be excused.

V

It is not necessary for our purpose here to understand in detail just how much and exactly what Coleridge borrowed from his English predecessors and German contemporaries. However, a discussion is worthwhile since it helps us in determining the nature and position of Coleridge's contribution in the history of Shakespearian criticism.

Writers from De Quincey to Thomas Middleton Raysor have exercised their skill in studying the problem of Coleridge's supposed plagiarism. Rene Wellek, for example, in A History of Modern Criticism, charges Coleridge with absolute plagiarism from the Germans. He traces the influence of German critics particularly that of Schelling on Coleridge and comes to the conclusion that he combines them with elements of eighteenth century tradition of neo-classicism and British empiricism.  

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32 Wellek, op. cit., p.158.
Professor Raysor traces German influence upon Coleridge and says that the influence had been unduly and enormously exaggerated. According to Raysor, Schlegel and other German critics powerfully influenced Coleridge but he was influenced only as a philosopher, not as a critic of Shakespeare. It was the liberal critics of the eighteenth century, according to Raysor, that influenced him in his studies of Shakespeare's characters, in his emphasis upon Shakespeare's art and in the sympathetic mood of his criticism.\\(^{33}\)

These views, however, are unjustified and can be accepted only with modifications. Alfred Harbage comes to our help when he comments "... a scion of stock so mixed, empirical English and empyreal German, must have had an identity of his own".\\(^{34}\) Thus, as Harbage says, Coleridge learned everything he knew from others as all of us do but he learned only selectively as only the "creatives" do. In what follows it will be our contention to show that as a critic of Shakespeare Coleridge was anticipated neither by his English predecessors nor (in important ways) by his German contemporaries since he introduces a new philosophical dimension in his criticism. In this respect, it is a product of Coleridge's own theoretical framework which consisted in a revolt against the neo-classical framework in the eighteenth century. His views on imagination and organicism enabled him to display the unity of Shakespeare's creations. His criticism is, thus, inextricably linked with his philosophical thinking and it is not possible to understand Coleridge's practical criticism without a knowledge of this philosophical base. Let us now, therefore, turn briefly to a consideration of the Coleridgean framework.

\\(^{33}\)Raysor, vol.I, Intro. XXIV-XXV.
\\(^{34}\)Harbage, op. cit., p.23.