CHAPTER - III

CHARACTER CRITICISM IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

As stated earlier, the validity of our contention regarding the novelty of Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare's characters cannot truly be appreciated without taking into account the range and variety of the criticism of Shakespeare's characters up to the end of the eighteenth century. It is for this reason that the reader of the present work is urged to appreciate the relevance of what follows in this chapter. It will be seen that though character-criticism passes through a number of phases from the time of its beginning in neo-Aristotelian ideas at the end of the seventeenth century to the purely psychological approach at the end of the eighteenth, it yet never comes close to the Coleridgean attempt to see character not only in purely psychological perspective but as an element in the totality of Shakespeare's vision of which particular plays are embodiments. It is also our view that this holistic approach to character was made possible by the peculiar philosophical stance adopted by Coleridge independently and with help from contemporary German criticism. Such a stance is totally absent from the criticism of the preceding age. Thus, an account of the character criticism of the eighteenth century is absolutely relevant to a study of Coleridge's contribution to Shakespeare criticism.

It may be argued that a similar account of the criticism of Shakespeare's plays in the eighteenth century should also have been included in the present work since it discusses Coleridge's criticism not only of Shakespeare's characters but also of his plays. That we have not done so is mainly due to the fact that the eighteenth century criticism of Shakespeare is almost totally the criticism of characters. There were a few half-hearted attempts made towards formalistic
critiques of a few plays. Such criticism may, however, be ignored since it is negligible, if not vitiated by narrow, neo-classical dogmatism of the Rymer variety. Moreover, in our discussion in the present chapter we have extended the scope of character-criticism slightly to include occasional comments on the plays also.

I

Professor Brian Vickers, the editor of the Critical Heritage volumes on Shakespeare and now the foremost authority on the early criticism of Shakespeare, has rightly pointed out that "an interest in Shakespeare's characters is as old as an interest in Shakespeare himself". Professor Vickers's opinion, of course, derives its strength from his close familiarity with early comments on Shakespeare. We can reinforce the validity of the above statement by a reference to Shakespeare Allusion Book which clearly show how keen was the interest evoked by Shakespeare's characters. Shakespeare's remarkably mimetic art caught the imagination of his contemporaries and immediate successors so much so that Falstaff, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and Lear became living realities, and by the middle of the eighteenth century emerged as an integral part of the national mythos. However, the imaginative appeal of Shakespeare's major characters, something which we can never accurately measure, is one thing and the ability to appraise these characters critically and to account for this aspect of Shakespeare's art adequately is another. While going through the seventeenth and eighteenth century Shakespearian criticism, we find that the critical estimate of Shakespeare's characters differed widely from phase to phase so much so that till the moment immediately before Coleridge's treatment of the subject, the criticism dealing with Shakespeare's characters had not

only reached a higher point of attainment in quantitative terms but had also passed through a number of evolutionary stages.

Our present theme, i.e., the critical treatment of Shakespeare's characters up to the end of the eighteenth century, is an extremely interesting one and deserves extensive considerations. The subject has already received attention from scholars and, before dealing with the theme ourselves with our own requirements in mind, we will first give a brief resume without comment of other scholars' views in what follows. It is necessary to do so because in our modest opinion the subject has not so far received the treatment it deserves. After the account of other scholars' treatment of the subject, we will cast a close and critical look at eighteenth century views of Shakespeare's characters in a changing and evolving perspective.

D. Nichol Smith, in the Introduction to his edition of the *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare* (1903, 1963) states that the third quarter of the eighteenth century, and not the first quarter of the nineteenth, is the true period of transition in Shakespearian criticism. It is during this time that there started a far-reaching change in the literary appreciation of Shakespeare, and this phenomenon in fact announced the advent of the school of Coleridge and Hazlitt. Shakespeare's characters now became the main topic of criticism.

In another of his book, *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* (1928), Nichol Smith presents a brief but illuminating account of the character critics in the last part of the eighteenth century. Here he points out that "a change from the general criticism to examination of characters and motives".

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was heralded by the Notes of Dr. Johnson, though carried over by Warton and others. Critics now started studying "Shakespeare through his characters".  

Nichol Smith may rightly be regarded as a pioneer scholar studying the subject of the history of Shakespearian criticism. There is no doubt that Furness in the nineteenth century was the first among scholars to study earlier criticism of Shakespeare methodically since he gives careful selections from it as appendices in the variorum editions of the plays he edited. Furness, however, does not seem to possess much historical and evolutionary sense. It was Smith and his colleague, Walter Raleigh, who first adopted a truly historical approach. In his Introduction to the Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare, Smith seems to dispel the popular notion that character criticism really began with the Romantic critics of Shakespeare. His extensive study of the eighteenth century Shakespeare criticism led him to believe, as we have noted above, that the real beginning of character criticism was in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The next study of our subject is an article by T.M. Raysor (1927) which is further supplemented by his Introduction to the two-volume edition of Coleridge's Shakespearian Criticism (1930). Contrary to D.N. Smith's opinion, Raysor argues that character criticism which reached a high degree of

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4 Ibid., p.84.
5 Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare (London, 1907).
development in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century was not independent of what had gone before. Raysor's main thesis is that there is no break between neo-classical and romantic periods so far as the criticism of Shakespeare's characters is concerned. He finds a continuity where Smith had found a break. According to Raysor, the idea of character appreciation was latent even in the neo-classical critical tradition for critics like Warton, Dr. Johnson, Richardson and Whately could praise Shakespeare's art of characterization and its "universality and excellence" without the "slightest disloyalty to Aristotle". Raysor believes that the rise of the Romantic movement, however, hastened the process since the Romantic love of personal individuality paved the way for the development of character criticism as an independent form.

In his study of Coleridge's Shakespearian Criticism (1973), M.M. Badawi\(^7\) has some passing remarks to make on the subject of Shakespearian criticism in the eighteenth century. He clearly echoes Raysor when he says that the eighteenth century conception of dramatic character was essentially neo-classical and Aristotelian. According to him, the traditional theory of mimesis or representation played a critical role in character conception and criticism. Since drama was considered to be a copy of life, dramatic personages in a play were visualised as replicas of living human beings. This attitude that regarded Shakespeare's characters as real beings was implicit from the very beginning of the eighteenth century but it came to be pronounced in the later part of the century. Even in the beginning under the influence of Dennis and the newly discovered Longinus, critics had begun to analyse emotions connected with the sublime and, therefore, there was a movement away from formal to psychological criticism. Thus the

\(^7\)M.M. Badawi, Coleridge: Critic of Shakespeare (Cambridge, 1973), pp.16-20.
salience of character approach to Shakespearian drama late in the eighteenth century is an undeniable fact so much so that, as Badawi points out, "unity of character" gradually usurped the place of the old unities in the writings of critics.

J.W. Donohue's book (Dramatic Characters in the English Romantic Age (1979)) on the critical tradition of two of Shakespeare's major characters viz., Macbeth and Richard III, is of considerable interest. The purpose of Donohue's study is to trace the growing critical fascination in the late eighteenth century with Shakespeare's great tragic figures in the context of contemporary intellectual interests. Donohue envisages a process of growth and evolution in critical attitudes during the years between Johnson and Hazlitt. The growth is in terms of increasing psychological interests. Donohue shows how notions of dramatic character evolved alongside the theory of sympathetic imagination. The contemporary study of Macbeth and Richard III, says Donohue, reflects not only development in psychology but also a changed view of nature -- particularly the idea that landscape acts as stimulus to emotions. Macbeth and Richard III emerged as two opposite types of dramatic characters in the criticism of the late eighteenth century. Their minds, however, came to be regarded "as archetypes of the human mind in its varied reactions to the impinging outside world". Richardson, for example, examines character not for its own sake but as illustration of the way in which the human mind changes in different situations according to the nature of the ruling passion.

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9 Ibid., p.190.
Donohue thus finds the Shakespeare character criticism of the late eighteenth century as interesting in terms of developments in the field of psychological thought. This is interesting in itself, and we will come back to the subject when we analyse the eighteenth century character criticism in our next section. However, more interesting from the point of view of our present concern (i.e., what the scholars have so far said about the changing patterns in eighteenth century character criticism of Shakespeare) is the fact that Donohue too finds the criticism of the earlier part of the century to be formalist in its approach. He says that the periodical essays in the early decades devote only intermittent attention to characters (particularly those of Macbeth and Richard III). The interest in the theory of Longinian sublime and in the formalist aesthetics of dramatic design plainly outweighs interest in dramatic character. What Donohue fails to suggest, however, is the fact that, as we shall later see, whatever interest there was in dramatic characters of Shakespeare was in itself a continuation of interest in formalist features of dramatic art. We will try to show that early eighteenth century idea of character was ultimately derived from neo-classical theory and was qualitatively different from character appraisal towards the close of the century which later on paved the way for philosophical analysis of these characters by Coleridge.

The ample introductory essays by Brian Vickers in his edition of exhaustive selections from early Shakespeare criticism up to the Romantic period present useful surveys of trends and tendencies in the period covered by each of the six volumes. These introductory essays, however, are diffuse and occasionally repetitive since each of them deals with the

matter in a particular volume. It would therefore be more useful to turn our attention to one of his articles dealing directly with our present theme. In this paper, Professor Vickers deals with the salient features of the Shakespeare criticism of the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

According to Vickers, Shakespeare critics in the early part of the century treated characters only as part of the formal design of a play i.e., only as one constituent of the traditional neo-classical categories of action, plot, characters, manners, instruction and diction. As opposed to this, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century a change was taking place. Characters began to be analyzed as independent entities, in isolation from plot and language. This new approach, however, was not a result of any conscious or deliberate effort on the part of the critics but a result of a dynamic process of growth within the neo-classical framework, a result of "the chain-reaction" within the neo-classical system. Though most of the critics of the time were still preoccupied with the twin demands of the traditional neo-classical doctrine i.e., consistency of characters and fulfilment of some moral purpose, yet the "development", as Vickers says, was "internal where both parties appeal to the same criteria, yet where the final position breaks the system that produced these criteria".  

Vickers makes this thesis clear by analysing these two contradictory critical approaches of the time. He says that while the orthodox critics "lamented" the lack of consistency in the character of Hamlet, character critics whole-heartedly embraced the "diagnosis" of inconsistency and sought for an explanation of it within the character of Hamlet. They

\[12\] Ibid., p.12.
emphasized that these inconsistencies were not the result of faulty characterization on the part of the dramatist but part of the very spirit in which the character was created. Vickers argues that in their enthusiasm to justify Hamlet's character, these critics took recourse to psychology. A more or less similar explanation bordering on the psychological was given to the problems of Hamlet's delay and his madness. A psychological explanation of these moral problems, however, reduced Hamlet to the position of a coward who was afraid of taking revenge.

Brian Vickers concludes that, not only in their analysis of the character of Hamlet but also in that of Macbeth and Falstaff, these critics chose the same way i.e., the analysis of moral problems in psychological terms. However, we are not concerned here with what Vickers has to say about the late eighteenth century critiques of Hamlet and other Shakespearian characters; we are more interested in the general pattern of growth in critical tendencies. In this connection, it is important to note that, according to Vickers, the general framework remained unchanged even in the closing years of the eighteenth century. He clearly says that the psychological analyses of Shakespearian characters were not derived from a fresh interpretation overtly psychological in character. As we shall soon see, even this version of the pattern of growth in character criticism in the eighteenth century does not agree with what we shall ourselves discover after an objective analysis of relevant material. The framework may not have changed or the interpretation may not have been dogmatically or self-consciously psychological but the very fact of a heightened awareness of Shakespeare's subtle portrayal of motivation behind action or inaction did bring out a shift of emphasis and a qualitative change which resulted in further development in the criticism of Shakespearian characters in the early nineteenth century.
Some advance is registered in John Bligh's article (1984)\textsuperscript{13} published soon after Vickers's volumes. His approach is more comprehensive in the sense that he does not confine himself to the last quarter of the eighteenth century but covers a wider period. First he selects critics like Lady Margaret Cavendish, Alexander Pope, Dr. Johnson, Lord Kames and Maurice Morgann. These critics praised Shakespeare's skill in portraying character in general terms. While doing so, Bligh says, they did not try to judge Shakespeare according to the neo-classical rules. Bligh further points out that the only available method of detailed character criticism was neo-classical. On the pattern of Aristotle and Horace, Dryden and others had a set of four rules. A good character must be apparent, true to type, true to tradition and consistent. These criteria were rigidly employed by some of Dryden's contemporaries like Rymer. Gentleman and Dennis. When intelligently applied, however, to Shakespeare's characters, these caused trouble. Therefore some critics realized the inadequacy of these rules, and pursued a wide variety of independent purposes:

\begin{itemize}
  \item to explain in what way Shakespeare's characters are superior to those of other dramatists (laudatory criticism);
  \item to defend Shakespeare against charges of unskillful dramatization (apolegetic criticism);
  \item to defend reputation of a loved character against moral judgements (vindicatory criticism);
  \item to correct the inadequate character sketches of earlier critics (corrective criticism);
  \item to help actors to discriminate one role from another (comparative criticism);
  \item to help actors to find self-consistency in difficult roles (genetic criticism);
  \item to help actors particularly in minor roles, to see how their parts fit into the unity of the whole (organic criticism);
  \item to help theatre goers to derive moral profits from their visits to the theatre (moralizing criticism);
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{13} John Bligh, "Shakespearian Character Study to 1800" \textit{Shakespeare Survey}, 37 (1984), pp.141-149.
and to extract laws about the workings of the human mind for the advancement of psychology and ethics (philosophical criticism).

The above analysis of the different purposes for which character criticism was employed in the eighteenth century is exhaustive indeed. Its variety, however, overshadows the determined and unified way in which character criticism was moving towards a definite goal. Trends in a historical movement cannot be traced easily if we adopt the point of view of individual participants and confine our attention to particular moments as they succeed one another. We are obliged, on the other hand, to look at the past from the vantage point of a later development where the long historical process seems to have reached a fully realized goal. Now there is little doubt that the process of a concern with Shakespearian characters that began in the rudimentary comments on the subjects in the seventeenth century ultimately reached its fruition and near perfection in Coleridge and his contemporaries so much so that in the nineteenth century it liberated itself from all formalistic considerations. Thus a study of character criticism in the eighteenth century must approach its subject-matter from the point of view of later developments. It is Coleridge indeed who provides us the vantage point from where to look at the past. In our brief consideration of character criticism in the eighteenth century, we will approach the subject within the framework just outlined. We feel that the studies mentioned above, though perceptive in their own way, lack this perspective.

Moreover, the scholars who have written about the subject have ignored one important aspect of the eighteenth century character criticism of Shakespeare. They have not highlighted the fact that when character criticism begins in the late seventeenth century, it is dominated by considerations
of decorum. We find Rymer and, to some extent, Dennis and Gildon writing about Shakespeare's characters purely from the point of view of dogmatic neo-classical theory especially as developed in seventeenth century France. With the coming of the eighteenth century, however, character criticism undergoes a change. It becomes more appreciative of Shakespeare because it discovers an ally in the science of psychology. We are not suggesting that the entire corpus of the eighteenth century Shakespearian character criticism is dominated by psychological considerations. We are only suggesting that, as the century advances, character criticism becomes more autonomous and acquires a patently psychological interest till it gains a philosophical and aesthetically more coherent, character in the hands of Coleridge. The importance of Coleridge as a critic of Shakespeare lies in the fact that he supplied a new theoretical framework to study Shakespeare's plays.

II

From 1500 up to the end of the eighteenth century, critical theories and ideas about literature remained more or less unchanged and may be described as neo-classical. During this period, the idea of the dramatic character was developed in the light of the theory of decorum as propounded by Aristotle and Horace and presented with modification by Renissance commentators like Scaliger and Castelvetro in their works on Aristotle. The Aristotelian conception of dramatic character in tragedy is well-known and need not be discussed here. Since, however, it played such a crucial role in the Renissance and eighteenth century criticism and since the Aristotelian framework came to be ignored and then rejected by later criticism, we will briefly remind ourselves of its essentials.

Aristotle thought of dramatic character (in tragedy) as possessing four important characteristics. The primary
requisite is that he should be "good". This Aristotelian injunction has raised innumerable problems since the Renaissance but we are not concerned with critical issues provoked by this difficult Aristotelian proposition in general or its interpretation by modern scholars and critics. We would only suggest that the neo-classical commentators seized upon this feature and related it to the doctrine of poetic justice and to the moral impact of drama.

The next Aristotelian dictum, i.e., that character should be "appropriate", too, has been variously interpreted. In the neo-classical period, being "appropriate" was closely approached in the light of the idea of "decorum" in its social sense. "Appropriateness" was rather crudely and narrowly interpreted in the dogmatic criticism of the Restoration and Augustan periods, leading critics like Rymer and Voltaire to grossly undervalue, and even ridicule, plays like Othello and Hamlet.

The next idea, that characters should be made "like", was interpreted in the neo-classical age more or less in the same way as in much modern interpretation. It was approached in the light of the doctrine of verisimilitude or vraisemblance. The interpretation of "like" as "like the original", i.e., "like the original in history or legend" (as in Bywater) was available in the neo-classical period but was not made much use of in the Shakespearian criticism of the period. The reason probably was that, unlike in ancient Greece, the legendary or historical prototypes of characters like Hamlet, Macbeth and King Lear were not at all widely known to the public for which Shakespeare wrote his plays and so they could not be used as points of departure for critiques of Shakespearian characters.

The final Aristotelian dictum about dramatic character laid stress on "consistency". As modern interpretations suggest,
Aristotle did not thereby recommend a dead and uninteresting uniformity. He was probably hinting at a living coherence which, however, did not exclude the possibility of "consistent inconsistency". This Aristotelian principle was interpreted by neo-classical critics rather narrowly ignoring the qualification that Aristotle himself had made. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, inconsistency in character itself (not overall consistency of which it was a part) became an object of interest, and thus the Aristotelian principle became irrelevant.

The above was a brief attempt to define the Aristotelian conception of character in the form in which it was available to the neo-classical age. This framework provided the parameters within which Shakespearian characters were approached by the earliest of the neo-classical critics. In what follows, it shall be our endeavour to see in what subtle ways this framework came to be overshadowed by newer and unforeseen influences so much so that by the end of the eighteenth century, criticism of Shakespearian characters, though nominally still owing allegiance to Aristotle, was yet a thing of a very different order.

Let us once again clearly and emphatically point out at this stage that we are not trying to present in this chapter a brief history of the character criticism of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century. For, to attempt to do so would be rather irrelevant in an account of Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare's characters. Our approach, on the other hand, is entirely focussed on Coleridge, and what we are doing here is to provide a kind of perspective on his character criticism. The present discussion is directly related to what played a crucial role in Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare -- the inter-textual tensions that shaped the course and extent of Coleridge's encounter with Shakespeare. Our approach is
thematic and selective rather than chronological and exhaustive. In part of what follows, an attempt will be made to present a total contrast to Coleridge in a brief account of a few dogmatic neo-classical critics of Shakespeare. Thereafter, with a side glance at the factors responsible for the rise of the individual-oriented psychological approach, we shall try to give some idea of pre-romantic criticism that finally led to the aesthetically more satisfying Coleridgean approach to Shakespeare's characters and plays. In occasional cross-references, it is hoped, the pattern of contrasts and similarities will emerge to justify the relevance of the present chapter.

Since "characters are no other than inclinations, as they appear in the several persons of the Poem" (Vickers, I, 257). Dryden defines character as that which "distinguishes one man from another". Moreover, it is "a composition of qualities which are not contrary to one another in the same person". Thus a person may be liberal and valiant, but not liberal and covetous. Having thus defined character, he prescribes a set of four rules (Vickers, I, 257), more or less similar to that prescribed by Aristotle, which ought to be followed by a dramatist.

Dryden applies these rules to Shakespeare's characters and comes to the conclusion that Shakespeare's characters are better than those of Fletcher but inferior to Ben Jonson's. Dryden lays down another criterion when he says that one particular attribute - virtue, vice or passion - ought to be shown as predominant over others. However, the dramatist must take care not to exaggerate such a predominant attribute since the excess of a particular vice or virtue would destroy the credibility of the character.
It is on the ground of credibility that Dryden analyses the character of Caliban. At first sight, it appears that such a creature does not exist in nature for [Shakespeare] makes him a Species of himself begotten by Incubus on a witch. But even such a creature is traceable in separate popular notions of spirit and witch. Dryden thus tries to justify Shakespeare's practice in the light of the neo-classical dogma:

Whether or no his Generation can be defended, I leave to philosophy; but of this I am certain, that the poet has most judiciously furnished him with a person, a Language, and a character, which will suit him, both by Fathers and Mothers side; he has all the discontents and malice of a Witch, and of a Devil; besides a convenient proportion of the deadly sins; Gluttony, Sloth, and Lust, are manifest; the dejectedness of a slave is likewise given him, and the ignorance of one bred up in a Desert Island. His person is monstrous, as he is the product of unnatural Lust; and his language is as hobgoblin as his person: in all things he is distinguished from other mortals.

(Vickers, I, 260)

The main concern of the neo-classical critics was with the theory of Decorum and they approached character in the light of this theory. The most representative exemplar of the application of the neo-classical theory to Shakespeare's character is Rymer who writes in perfect consistency with the prevalent critical framework. He examines Othello according to the strict neo-Aristotelian categories of Fable, Characters, thoughts. Instruction and Language and attacks Shakespeare for not following the rules. His most bitter attack is on Shakespeare's characterisation as it violates all norms of decorum. For Rymer, Shakespeare's characters do not conform to history or tradition. Shakespeare alters the design of Cinthio's novel and "bestows a name to his Moor and styles him the Moor of Venice: a Note of pre-eminence which neither History nor Heraldry can allow him, ...But we see no such Cause
for the Moor's preferment to that dignity" (Vickers, II, 27). Similarly there is the Moor's wife raised from the status of a simple citizen in Cinthio's novel to be Desdemona. "All this" says Rymer, "is very strange and therefore pleases such as reflect not on the improbability".

Rymer dismisses Shakespeare's characters also as unnatural and improper. They are not true to their type. Othello, for example, does not have the character of a General. When motivated by his jealousy, he decides to take revenge. He asks Iago to kill Cassio "the fighting part" and chooses for himself a woman who can never make any resistance. "His Love and Jealousie are no part of a souldier's Character unless for comedy" (Vickers, II, 29). Similarly Iago does not conform to the character of a soldier. "Yet never in Tragedy, nor in Comedy, nor in Nature was a souldier with his character". In order to prove his view, Rymer quotes Horace who, in his Ars Poetica, describes the characteristics of a soldier: "impatient, passionate, ruthless, fierce". Contrary to this, Shakespeare has given the character of a thorough villain to Iago. Desdemona, too, is "far too naive for a Venetian lady". Thus, there is nothing in the character "either for the profit or to delight the Audience" (Vickers, I, 30). Rymer attacks Shakespeare for violating the principle of "selective mimesis" (Vickers, Intro. III, 2).

Rymer is of the view that Shakespeare was well aware of the fact that his characterization was not consistent, and was contrary to the accepted norms. However, he drew them in order to please "Carpenters and Coblers". Rymer puts into a dilemma those neo-classical critics who could not remain unaffected by the genius of Shakespeare. He carried out his evaluation of Shakespeare's characters strictly according to the accepted doctrines yet the results were bewildering. Shakespeare did not
conform to the tenets of neo-Aristotelianism and Rymer denounced him and found him worthless in every category. The appeal of Shakespeare, however, was so strong that other critics tried to defend him though still working within the neo-classical system. Such critics discovered what Brian Vickers has called some "escape clauses". Shakespeare's sins were excused as they were the result of the crude taste of the time in which Shakespeare wrote. The other strategy was to concede Shakespeare's faults but "assert that he was great notwithstanding them" (Vickers, Intro. II, 9).

Gildon was one of the important traditional critics who protested against Rymer's peculiar application of neo-classical rules to Shakespeare's characters (Vickers, II, 63-85). Gildon seeks to answer the objections raised by Rymer though, of course, he has no desire to move out of the conventional framework. Gildon justifies the characters of Othello and Desdemona by giving examples from history. He cites the example of Dido marrying Aeneas, a total stranger. About Desdemona's social status, Gildon says that the example of Juno being presented in a heroic poem is justification enough for the introduction of Desdemona in a tragedy. Even Iago's character can be defended against the charge of improbability. He attributes whatever incongruity there is in Iago to the historical situation obtaining in Shakespeare's theatre.

In another of his essays (Vickers, II, 216-62), Gildon argues that since manners are the cause of action and we discover in them "inclinations" of the speaker, they ought to be clearly and fully marked so as to distinguish the principal person from all other men. In this respect, Shakespeare excelled all other poets. Gildon then goes on to give examples from Shakespeare's plays to show his ability to make his characters distinct. The characters of Don John in Much Ado, the Jew in The Merchant of Venice and of Mercutio in Romeo and
Juliet are very well distinguished and agreeable. Similarly, Richard II is drawn according to the best accounts of history while the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are too monstrous for the stage. Gildon finds no reason why in Richard II, Shakespeare has made the choice of the "most despicable character of all our kings". Richard III too is not a fit character for the stage. He is "shocking" in all he does, and "we think that providence is too slow and too mild in his punishment". Shakespeare, however, can be "excused" in his falsifying the character of Achilles in Troilus and Cressida, making him and Ajax perfect idiots and making the manners "unequal and unlike".

John Dennis, another neo-classical critic, tried to evaluate Shakespeare's characters on the same neo-classical touchstone of decorum and propriety as his predecessors had done. Like many of his contemporaries, he too accepted Shakespeare's genius and his power of creating characters and employed the same neo-classical theoretical framework to defend Shakespeare as his contemporary Gildon had done. Shakespeare, however, according to Dennis, suffers from two drawbacks. On the one hand, Shakespeare's characters suffer from lack of fidelity to historical truth. Owing to his lack of familiarity with ancient authors, his portrayal of historical characters borders on absurdity. In this respect, his characterisation of Menenius is faulty since here he has violated historical truth by presenting him as a fool. Dennis also castigates Shakespeare for having belittled Caesar. "Enough justice has not been done to the greatest man of history", and so the emotional impact of his assassination lacks profundity.

The second drawback of Shakespeare's characterisation for Dennis was his want of "Poetical Art" i.e., in relation to the "Equality and Conveniency of Manners of his Dramatical
Persons". He quotes again the character of Menenius whom Shakespeare has made an "errant buffon" (Vickers, II, 285). "For he might as well have imagined a grave majestic Jack-Pudding as a Buffon in a Roman Senator". Aufidius, the General of the Volscians, is shown as a base and a profligate villain. Shakespeare had offended against the "Equality of the Manners" even in the hero, for Coriolanus "who in the first part of the tragedy is shown so open, so frank, so violent and so magnanimous is represented in the latter part by Aufidius - which is contradicted by none -- a flattering, fawning, cringing, insinuating Traytor".

Thus, Dennis concludes that for want of the poetical art, Shakespeare lay under very great disadvantage. He could have wonderfully surpassed the very best and strongest of the ancients if only Art had been joined to Nature.

III

We have just completed a brief account of what may be called the dogmatic phase of the neo-classical approach to Shakespeare's characters. It is a little unfortunate that Dryden, one of the greatest of Shakespearian critics, did not comment on Shakespeare's characters at length. There is, however, little doubt that he was perceptive enough to be able to rise above the prejudices of his age and recognize the undisputed supremacy of Shakespeare in the field of characterisation. On the whole, however, Dryden is the exception rather than the rule so far as the Restoration response to Shakespeare is concerned. The field was generally left open to the narrow-minded dogmatists such as Rymer. With the turn of the century, however, there was a more liberal approach in evidence, and it is this phase that we now propose briefly to survey. Rules are still supreme but new ways are constantly discovered of defending and justifying Shakespeare's practice.
Nicholas Rowe, Shakespeare's first biographer (1709), realized that it was not reasonable to judge Shakespeare according to the rules since "Shakespeare liv'd under a kind of mere Light of Nature, and had never been made acquainted with the Regularity of... written precepts" (Vickers, II, p.198). Inspite of the fact that Shakespeare did not follow these rules, there is a "pleasing and well-distinguished variety" in some of his characters. Though Rowe's criterion is still neo-classical -- the consistency of characters and their trueness of type -- he is more liberal in his attitude:

The character is always well-sustain'd, tho' drawn out into the length of three Plays.... If there be any fault in the Draught he has made of this lewd old Fellow, it is that tho' he has made him a Thief, Lying, Cowardly, Vainglorious, and in short every way Vicious, yet he has given him so much Wit as to make him almost too agreeable...

(Vickers, II, 195)

Like Dryden, Rowe could praise Shakespeare's imagination in creating a fanciful character like Caliban which shows a "wonderful Invention in the Author". Rowe, in his comments on Shakespeare's characters, shows that conformity to history was not always an abiding rule for Shakespeare. In the portrait of Henry VI, for example, we have a faithful account of the protagonist's historical counterpart: "let any men compare 'em and he will find the character as exact in the Poet as the Historian.... His manners are everywhere exactly the same with the story; one finds him still describ'd with Simplicity, passive Sanctity, want of Courage, weakness of Mind..." (Vickers, II, 199). Similarly, the prince in Henry VIII is drawn with that "greatness of mind and all those good qualities" which are attributed to him in historical accounts. In the above quoted comments on Shakespeare's historical characters, we find Rowe faithfully adhering to the norms of neo-classical criticism of characters.
Lewis Theobald admits that the general absurdities of Shakespeare in *King Lear* and all other tragedies were due to "his Ignorance of Mechanical Rules and the constitution of his story" (Vickers, II, 306) so that they cannot come under the lash of criticism. He admires the "Artful preservation of Lear's Character". His fondness of flattery, his impatience at being contradicted, the artful breaking of his temper and his struggles with his testy humour -- all are remarkably shown throughout the play. He even claims: "Had Shakespeare read all that Aristotle, Horace and the critics have wrote on this score he could not have wrought more happily". Though Shakespeare was not benefitted by "Aids of Learning", the "Strength and Vigour of his Fancy" is to be admired in the "extravagant and supernatural characters of his own Creation, such as his CALIBAN and witches & Co." (Vickers, II, 353).

Thus, we see that with Rowe and Theobald, criticism of Shakespeare's characters began to be more flexible. As Brian Vickers says, "a climate of feeling was developing in which the rules or even the denigration of Shakespeare which their application would result in, could be played down or even ignored". Critics tried to be free from the shackles of rules more "by avoiding them than by confronting them, but occasional confrontations did occur" (Vickers, Intro. II, 11). Though the judgement of characters was still within the limitations of neo-classical system, there was some unconscious assimilation of the newer aspects too.

Corbyn Morris in his Essay on Falstaff makes an interesting comparison between Shakespeare's and Jonson's art of characterisation. We quote the following passage to show how room is found within the strict neo-classical predilections of the author for Shakespeare's unrestrained creativity and ineffable charm:
Jonson conveys some Lesson in every Character, 
Shakespeare some new Species of Foible and Oddity ...

...Jonson excellently concerts his Plots, and all 
his Characters unite in one Design, Shakespeare is 
superior to such Aid or Restraint, his characters 
continually sallying from one independent Scene to 
another, and charming you in each with fresh Wit 
and Humour.

(Vickers, III, 127-8)

William Guthrie emphasizes the fact that Shakespeare's 
characters are the product of his own genius and of his fertile 
imagination. Shakespeare is not so much the imitator of nature 
as "her master, her director, her moulder". Sometimes 
Shakespeare creates such characters as are strangers to nature. 
Nowhere in nature do we find such a character as Caliban yet 
Shakespeare has made him natural. Moreover, nature never meant 
that a "rough blustering and awkward Moor" should fall in love 
with "the fairest, the gentlest, and the most virtuous of her 
sex", yet "we take such characters as nature's composition" 
(Vickers, III, 195).

Shakespeare possesses a remarkable power of making two 
characters different. For example, Hamlet's "father-in-law", 
Macbeth, King John and King Richard all rise to royalty by 
murdering their kings yet "what a character has Shakespeare 
affixed to every instance of the same species". Moreover:

Observe the remorse of the Dane, how varied it is 
from the distraction of the Scot : mark the 
confusion of John, how different from both; while 
the close, the vigilant, the jealous guilt of 
Richard is peculiar to himself.

(Vickers, III, 195)

For this distinction, Shakespeare does not need those devices, 
those "strong markings" which are often used by modern poets. 
Unlike them, Shakespeare does not attribute any "super-eminent" 
quality to his heroes, "his heroes are all men". In the
character of Hamlet, there is nothing but what is common with the rest of mankind, "supported only by the force of his sentiment". Similar is the character of Macbeth, where he has taken the basic hint from history - that of a man who was "spurred on by the almost daily reproaches of his wife". However, Shakespeare improved the hint and "artfully has he conducted and described the human heart through every stage of guilt, rising and reluctant in the man, ready and remorseless in the woman" (Vickers, III, 199). Shakespeare's dramatic personages thus speak his language that is the language of poetry without passions.

In this striking passage of perceptive criticism, we have faint stirrings of the psychological imagination. The critic has not abandoned or even ignored the traditional framework, and yet allows his mind to dwell at length on aspects of Shakespeare's art that were soon going to occupy the centre-stage.

John Upton, an important critic, whose work on Shakespeare's language is remarkable, prescribes four rules for character analysis in the manner of a traditional theoretical critic. He designates character as "manners and sentiments" and regards them superior to action (Vickers, III, 296). Since "dramatic poetry is the imitation of an action and there can be no action but what proceeds from the manners and the sentiments", it is the manners through which the inclinations of various persons are marked and distinguished. He then reiterates the neo-Aristotelian rules (Vickers, III, 296) regarding character-portrayal and applies them to Shakespeare. He finds that Shakespeare does not observe the first two rules viz., his characters are sometimes not good in a moral sense and their manners are not agreeable to their age and sex. The characters of Richard III and the Jew are not proper to be represented on stage since they do not present the picture of
human nature and are beheld with "horror and detestation". Similarly, Shakespeare does not recognize the dignity of his lady characters. "His tragic ladies are rather seen, than heard" (Vickers, III, 297).

The rules formulated by Upton are no more than variations on neo-classical themes. The suggestion that the characters of Richard III and Shylock are unfit for the stage since the evil they embody is monstrous, reminds us of Upton's moorings in mid-eighteenth century philosophical and moral ethos. It also anticipates Johnson's horrified shrinking away from the fact of Cordelia's death. We may recall that the benevolent Deity of the eighteenth century cosmic Toryism could not be accused of having brought to life such unnatural manifestations of evil, manifestations that questioned His divine benevolence.

The reference above to Dr. Johnson is a place good enough for us to turn to him in our attempt to trace the contours of the eighteenth century, pre-Coleridgean approach to Shakespeare's characters. There is little doubt that Johnson represents the culmination of the neo-classical assessment of Shakespeare. Moreover, in the limited context of the commentary on characters, Johnson reveals the utmost possibilities of the theory as seasoned and amplified by a knowledge of the common experience of life. Neo-classicism could go no further without losing some of its theoretical moorings. It would be our contention a little later that the so-called "New Critics" of the seventies -- Whately, Richardson, Mackenzie and Morgann -- transcend the bounds of neo-classicism, perhaps unconsciously in their preoccupation with Shakespeare's characters as historical beings. They lose sight of decorum altogether, and their psychology-oriented approach cannot be said to emanate, as in Dr. Johnson, from the views of Shakespeare as the poet of
"Nature". (It would be an altogether different proposition to say that "Nature" too underwent a radical change in the transition from neo-classic to pre-romantic and romantic).

In our brief consideration of Johnson's approach to Shakespeare's characters, we may begin with his Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of "Macbeth" (1745) though his general view of Shakespeare's ability to create characters as the poet of Nature per se is no doubt contained in the great Preface to his edition of Shakespeare (1765) and his best "analytical" criticism of Shakespearian characters is to be found in the Notes to the same work. In his Miscellaneous Observations Johnson analyses the exhortings of Lady Macbeth thus:

The argument by which Lady Macbeth persuades her Husband to commit the Murder affords a Proof of Shakespeare's Knowledge of Human Nature. She urges the Excellence and Dignity of Courage, a glittering Idea which has dazzled Mankind from Age to Age, and animated sometimes the Housebreaker and sometimes the conqueror...

(Vickers, III, 172-3)

It may be noted here that the emphasis is on Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature, an idea and an item of praise derived from humanistic and neo-classical concept of decorum. Moreover, there is a stress on universality and a tendency to generalize from the particular example.

Let us now turn for a moment to Johnson's theoretical formulations about Shakespeare's art of characterisation. In the Preface, Dr. Johnson describes Shakespeare as "the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life". His characters are not only individuals but species since they are not motivated by temporal passions nor are they products of transient fashions or temporary opinions. They act
and speak under the influence of those general passions and principles by which "all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion". Shakespeare, Johnson says, overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition. If he has to depict a Roman, he will not treat him only as a Roman but as a man. He makes nature predominate over accident even if he preserves the essential characteristics of his personages. Johnson himself criticizes critics like Dennis and Rymer who think that his "Romans are not sufficiently Romans and kings not sufficiently Royal" (Vickers, V, 60). Johnson further says that Shakespeare has no heroes but his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak like ordinary persons. His characters show his "vigilance of observation" and "accuracy of distinction".

It is in the light of Johnson's general observations on Shakespeare's characterisation that his remarks on particular characters (in the Notes to his edition) should be viewed. Any one familiar with Johnson's work and the growth of his mind would testify to the fact that he was not particularly interested in the growing body of psychological thought in his age. If at all, he would have been attracted towards the nascent science of psychology only as a part of his wider interest in human conduct and in moral problems. His concern with ethical issues in turn was derived from his wide and general humanistic interests -- as evidenced by his Rambler essays, his tragedy Irene, his novel Rassalas and his poems "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes". We also know that Johnson always tried to reconcile his neo-classicism with his general experiential approach to literature. It is not to be forgotten that, for Johnson, truth to Nature (mimesis or imitation) was not just a dogma inherited from the ancients but an insight deriving from the lived experience of life and literature. It is this humanistic orientation of his
neo-classicism that separates him from his immediate predecessors in the field of Shakespearian criticism.

In this context, it would be relevant to refer to scholars who think that Johnson's character criticism should be viewed as part of what D.N. Smith has called the new school of Shakespeare criticism as different from the earlier neo-classical concern with Shakespeare's plots and beauties-defects approach. G.W. Stone Jr., for example, shows that character criticism developed mainly because of the influence of the realistic and emotive acting of Garrick. He would include in the work of the new school that of Johnson also. There is no doubt that Garrick's excellent and naturalistic acting (as contrasted with the early "stylised" acting of his predecessors) did play an important role in the development of character but, as we shall see a little later, the influence of "psychology" as also of prose fiction cannot be minimized in any consideration of the Shakespearian criticism of the post-Johnsonian phase. Johnson himself -- as the consensus of critical opinion puts it -- should rather be approached in terms of the refinement and amplification of the neo-classical evaluation of Shakespeare. Johnson brings to perfection what had originated with Ben Jonson and Dryden. The new beginning, on the other hand, was to come in the seventies of the eighteenth century.

The refinement and amplification within the neo-classical tradition, however, is an undeniable fact. We see that increasingly critics had begun to invoke the concept of "genius", "nature", and "imagination". Brian Vickers shows how critics agreed that Shakespeare excels in presenting manners, that is, in vivid, realistic characterisation. Vickers may

further be quoted:

These more liberal attitudes served to weaken the asperities of neo-classic criticism but can hardly be said to have created a detailed and viable alternative.

(Vickers, III, Intro., 5-6)

We may add that these frequent voices raised by critics also paved the way for psychological criticism which started in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. An illustration of this can be seen in the comments of Mrs. Montagu which, to some extent, border on a psychological appraisal of Shakespearian characters.

Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu begins in the usual neo-classical manner by blaming Shakespeare to have allowed the "bad taste" of his age to impair his art (Vickers, V, 329). Mrs. Montagu, however, is less formal and more psychological in her approach. For example, she acutely observes that mirth is the source of Falstaff's wit (Vickers, V, 333). In her comments on Macbeth and Richard III, she anticipates Whately's essay in 1771. Richard, according to her, does not need the promptings of the witches and suggestions of his wife. Only "a ready instrument" like Buckingham is sufficient to "adopt his projects and execute his orders" (Vickers, V, 336). Contrary to this, Macbeth is given by the poet "a temper to be wrought upon such suggestion". With a great psychological insight, Mrs. Montagu points out that the difference between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is that of "a mind naturally prone to evil, and a frail one warped by force of temptations" (Vickers, V, 345). It is in a comment such as this that we realize how character criticism of Shakespeare was moving away from purely formalistic considerations towards one that encouraged interest in character for its own sake.
IV

It may be worthwhile here to reiterate that our aim in this chapter is not to trace, howsoever briefly, the history of Shakespearian character criticism in the eighteenth century. As we have already pointed out, the real intention is to provide a relevant perspective for Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare's characters. The modern reader is often told that preoccupation with character, so frequently associated with the name of A.C. Bradley and his *Shakespearian Tragedy*, began with Coleridge and was the most important feature of Shakespearian criticism in the nineteenth century. The general impression is that the major eighteenth century critics wrote only celebrative essays in which, however, they also mentioned a few of Shakespeare's "defects". There is also the general impression that criticism in the romantic period suddenly woke up to the remarkable reality of Shakespeare's characters concerned as it was with individuality. The moment, however, we turn to Shakespeare's criticism in the eighteenth century, particularly to the Essays that appeared after Johnson's great Preface, we find that critic after critic was seized with the remarkable psychological complexities that a study of Shakespeare's characters brings to the fore. It is also to be noted that although they were interested in the psychology of Shakespearian characters, yet they could not go beyond them. Even the most representative of the critics, like Richardson, failed to cross the limits of psychology. His emphasis on the analysis of the dominant passion of the character and his analysis of characters in moral terms show his occasional going back to neo-classical theory of poetic justice. He failed to provide any unitive vision in the characters and the task was left to Coleridge.

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Moreover, the fact that character study in the mind of the ordinary Shakespeare student even today is associated with the Romantics may have been due to the difficulty of access to the eighteenth century essays. Professor Brian Vickers's volumes in the Critical Heritage series have now made minor Shakespeare criticism easily available to the average reader. There is little justification for associating character study specifically with the Romantics. In what follows, we are going to give a brief account of the character criticism of Shakespeare during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. Such an account, however, should be preceded by a discussion, though brief, of the factors responsible for the salience given to psychological study of character in this period.

The most important factor directly or indirectly responsible for the rise of psychological criticism of character in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was probably the salience that came to be given to psychological analysis in the philosophical thought of the preceding century. It is a commonplace in the history of the modern philosophical thought in the West that right at the time of the birth of modern philosophy (sometime in the middle of the seventeenth century), the focus of attention shifted from metaphysics to psychology. The pioneers of modern thought, Descartes and Hobbes, for example, came somehow to be concerned with the perceiving mind as much as with the objects of perception. The famous Cartesian axiom, cogito ergo sum, was revolutionary in this respect since in a way it diverted attention to the subject of the philosophical pursuit away from the object of contemplation, the material universe. Without going into the details, one can say that the Cartesian insight made philosophy more inward-looking and introspective. The growth of the
empirical tradition from Hobbes to Hume and Hartley, even the sceptical thought of Hume, focussed attention on to the nature of psychological problems. The nature of perception, the role of memory, the interaction between mind and matter, the value of education and environmental influences, the role of passion, the nature of human understanding -- all were basically psychological issues. They drove philosophers and thinkers and other thinking individuals to concentrate on the inner world of human mind and on how it operates in society and how it interacts with physical nature. In this connection, it may be interesting to point out that great contemporary thinkers were aware of the fact that modern sensibility was different from the ways of thought in other more ancient epochs. We may mention, though the context is slightly different, the distinction made by Fredrick Schlegel between "naive" and "sentimental". Schlegel of course was talking about poetry. But the very fact that he thought "modern poetry" (and hence "modern" sensibility) was "sentimental" suggests that he was conscious of the introspective and inward-looking nature of contemporary and recent thought. All similar distinctions made by the late eighteenth-century German romantic critics (the distinctions between "classic" and "romantic", "naive" and "sentimental", and "objective" and "subjective") throw light on the fact that, at that moment in the history of Western sensibility, people were conscious of the fact that somehow the "contemporary" age was more self-conscious, more inward-looking and introspective, more concerned with the perceiving subject than with the objects of perception. We may also refer to the fact that the culmination of this process in the Western sensibility was to be reached, so far as English literature is concerned, in Wordsworth's greatest poem The Prelude.

Going back to the thinkers and philosophers from Hobbes to Hartley, we find that the pattern of growth of philosophical
thought in the century preceding the Romantic age was from self-aware empiricism to self-doubting scepticism. Hartley's well known essay Observations on Man (1749), which was so influential in its impact on young Wordsworth and Coleridge, was the acme of introspective philosophizing. That Hartley's associationism played such an important role in the development of Coleridge's mind is well-known. It is well-accepted because Coleridge being a great poet and thinker, it has been well-documented by biographers and scholars. The case of minor figures like Whately, Richardson, Morgann and Mackenzie is different, and it is different only because they are minor figures and so the development of their minds is not so well documented. However, when we read, for example, an essay like Morgann's on Falstaff, the introduction as well as many digressions suggest that at the back of his mind there is an awareness of the eighteenth century philosophical tradition. The acute interest in the psychological analysis of Falstaff's cowardice is a sure proof that the essay could have been written in the age of introspective philosophical thought. It would, therefore, be only relevant and appropriate to suggest that one of the factors responsible for the growth of psychological criticism after 1770's was the salience given to psychology in the main philosophical tradition of the age.

There is no denying the fact that the growing tendency in the last quarter of the eighteenth century to study and analyse Shakespeare's characters in psychological terms may also have owed to the declining fortunes of neo-classical dogma. Aristotle and Horace, in varying formations and in combination with related dogmas pertaining to Authority, Reason and Taste, had dominated the critical scene from 1550 to 1750. Rene Wellek, in the Introduction to his valuable History of Modern Criticism, has pointed out that critical theory had

been frequently and sometimes totally contradicted by the actual literary practice during the two centuries referred to above. This, no doubt, is absolutely correct. However, what Wellek does not care to point out is the fact that the very reality of the gap between practice and precept gradually began to have its effect and, notwithstanding the prestige of the neo-classical dogma, dissident voices came to be heard even in the heyday of Restoration neo-classicism. The earliest of such protests against the hegemony of the neo-classical dogma was made by Sir Robert Howard in the Preface to *The Great Favourite or The Duke of Lerma* (1668). A similar dissenting note was struck by Sir William Temple in *Of Poetry* towards the close of the seventeenth century (1692). However, the most unmistakable dissident was George Farquhar who in his *Discourse Upon Comedy* (1702) made a bold attack on the unities. Lord Kames in his *Elements of Criticism* (1762), an influential book, used a powerful historical argument against the unities in drama. All this combined with the greatest practical argument against neo-classical theory, i.e., the success of Shakespeare's plays on the stage, led to the gradual weakening of the hold of the neo-classical dogma and to a search for alternative modes of Shakespeare appreciation. To say, as Raysor does, that the new psychological critics still adhered to the older theories in their relatively more formal pronouncements, is of little account since, as we shall soon see, these critics at their best seem engaged with matters other than those highlighted by neo-classicism.

Apart from this, we may also mention the rise of the novel as an important contributing factor in the growth of the psychological analysis of characters. There was a tendency right from the beginning of the eighteenth century for creative writers to be concerned with immediate and day-to-day reality. It is at the same time that we also notice the tendency of
creative writers looking to the city-dwelling middle classes as the patron of letters. The Restoration aristocracy was giving place to the bourgeoisie as the target audience of literature. All this was reflected in the rise of the novel as the dominant form of fiction. The galaxy of British novelists from Richardson to Sterne and Smollette testifies to the fact that realistic portrayal of ordinary human beings had become the main concern of fiction writers. Here we are not concerned with realism that expressed itself through the depiction of social reality but only with the realistic and, what is more important, psychological portrayal of character. Since the novel was a new form of literature, it was almost free from Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian dogmas about decorum and propriety. These dogmas were in total abeyance so far as portraiture of character in the novel was concerned. Their place was taken by an inborn, radically new, psychological realism. This is not the place to go into the details. However, every one familiar with eighteenth century literature knows how intensely psychological Richardson's portrayal of character is. Reference may also be made to the fact that Sterne in his great work *Tristram Shandy* transcended even ordinary realism in order to concern himself with the portrayal of the sub-conscious mind. There is no doubt that the psychological focussing in the novels of Richardson and Sterne was sufficient enough to encourage an interest in the psychological study of Shakespeare's great characters.

Along with the analysis of the factors responsible for the rise of interest in psychology and the appearance of this interest in Shakespeare criticism, let us also point out the fact that the growing focus on psychology in Shakespearian character criticism of the end of the eighteenth century was not accompanied by any related theory of dramatic or poetic art. It was the greatest contribution of Coleridge in the early
years of the nineteenth century to fuse psychological analysis in a coherent poetics that would do full justice to Shakespeare's unitive vision. In the remaining part of this chapter, we will see that the so-called "New" critics of the end of the eighteenth century, though acutely psychological in their approach, are yet lacking in the ability to fuse it with an integrated view of a work of art. By underlining the absence of the unifying approach in pre-Coleridgean criticism, we will be putting Coleridge's criticism in a correct perspective. Let us, however, turn for the moment to the "New" critics of the end of the eighteenth century.

William Richardson may be regarded as one of the most representative character critics of the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In his book *A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters* (1774), he gave a psychological interpretation of Shakespeare's characters and analysed them as if they were living human beings. His primary concern was with the analysis of the dominant passions of individual characters. Shakespeare, according to him, possesses in a more eminent degree than other poets the "power of imitating passions". By considering "the rise and progress" of the ruling passion and "the fatal consequences of its indulgence", we can analyse a Shakespearian character (Vickers, VI, 121).

Thus the ruling passion of Macbeth is his ambition. Initially Macbeth is shown as mild and gentle. Gradually his ambition overpowers his conscience and brings about a total transformation in him. Consequently, he becomes false, pernicious, barbarous and vindictive. The study of Macbeth's ruling passion shows "how a beneficent mind may become inhuman". Richardson's analysis of Hamlet too is truly psychological one. Constant revelations of the ghost make
Hamlet bewildered and his "sense of virtue" which is also his ruling passion gets hurt (Vickers, VI, 123). His sense of irresolution arises from the inherent principles of his constitution and is therefore natural to him. Richardson sums up the character of Lear in a word i.e., in his impetuosity and impulsiveness (Vickers, VI, 358).

Thus Richardson analyses these characters as persons in real life. His enthusiasm for psychological delineations and his insistence to find out the motives of these characters led him to isolate these characters from their dramatic context and analyse them independently of the theme and the whole meaning of the play. An important point which is to be noted here is that even in Richardson there is an implicit acceptance of the neo-classical framework. While analysing these characters, he tries to see if the cause of poetic justice has been upheld or not. Though he declares that he will analyse some of the Shakespearian characters with the intention of making "poetry subservient to philosophy, and to employ it in tracing the principles of human conduct" (Vickers, VI, 119), he fails to provide any systematic coherent "philosophy" in Shakespeare, something that was accomplished by Coleridge. The "philosophy" that Richardson speaks of remains a description of abstract passions.

Maurice Morgann is the greatest of the "new critics and is famous for his analysis of Falstaff. His interpretation in An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff (1777) is remarkable for its psychological subtlety. He emphasizes the fact that Shakespeare never meant to make cowardice essential part of Falstaff's constitution (Vickers, VI, 165). Morgann regards wit and humour accompanied with "great vigour and alacrity of mind", as the leading quality in Falstaff's character. He seems by nature to have had a mind free of malice
or any evil principle. All these qualities combined with the profession of a soldier secured him an honourable place (Vickers, VI, 167).

Morgann analyses Falstaff's behaviour in different situations: in his escaping from Douglas, in counterfeiting death and deserting his very existence, and in his supposed cowardice during the robbery at Gadshill. He comes to the conclusion that there is no cowardice in Falstaff but buffoonery only. In his effort to vindicate Falstaff from the charge of cowardice, Morgann, however, completely schematizes the play. He ignores and overlooks those incidents and scenes that do not agree with his thesis. He does not take into account "the sequence of impressions" which Shakespeare so carefully builds up. He does not consider the dramatic function of the character since his purpose is to make Falstaff free from the charge of cowardice. Most of his time is spent in creating an imaginary part for Falstaff granting him birth, fashion, learning, courage and the tone, deportment and manners of a gentleman" (Vickers, Intro., VI, 21).

Mackenzie is another important psychological critic of the last quarter of the eighteenth century and is often regarded by scholars as one of the most powerful critics whose interpretation of Hamlet, in his article in the Mirror (1780), influenced the romantic interpretation of Hamlet. According to him, Shakespeare's delineation of manners characterizes his knowledge of mankind, and presents the "abstract of life" in all its modes. This can be found in Shakespeare's portrayal of the character of Hamlet. Mackenzie says that at the root of Hamlet's temperament lies an extreme sensibility of mind. He is "apt to be strongly impressed by its situation, and overpowered by the feelings which that situation excites" (Vickers, VI, 272-3). His melancholy too, which is the most "genuine" as well
as the "most available of any", neither arises from "the
natural sourness of his temper" nor is prompted by accidents.
It is a result of his delicate sensibility "impressed with a
sense of sorrow or a feeling of its own weakness".

Whately's essay, "Remarks on Some of the Characters of
Shakespeare" (1785) contains many acute observations. According
to him, no writer could ever "pretend to so deep and so
extensive a knowledge of the human heart". His characters are
masterly copies from nature, "differing each from the other,
and animated as the originals though correct to a scrupulous
precision" (Vickers, VI, 409). His excellence can be seen by
comparing two opposite Shakespearian characters placed in
similar situations. Whately does this by comparing Macbeth and
Richard III. Both are soldiers and both usurp the throne
adopting similar means of treason and murder. Both lose their
throne in the same manner i.e., in battle against the person
claiming it as a lawful heir. Yet Shakespeare has distinguished
them in a masterly manner. Macbeth's feeling of humanity can be
compared with Richard's cold egotism. Ambition, though common
to both, emanates from vanity in Macbeth while it is founded
upon pride in Richard. Macbeth has an acquired courage while
Richard's courage is natural. Whately's essay is remarkable for
its acute psychological analysis but the neo-classical
framework still remains at the back of his mind when he says
that the characters of Macbeth and Richard are entirely and
distinctly preserved (Vickers, VI, 408).

Robertson carried the argument of Mackenzie still further in An
Essay on the Character of Hamlet (1788). He describes Hamlet as
the "most splendid character of dramatic poetry",
"comprehending the whole of what is beautiful and grand".
Gentleness was the predominant trait of his character which was
coupled with a vivid imagination, intuition and gaiety of
spirits. After his father's death, "new colours" came out of the old. These were "an indignation and sensibility irritated to extreme, the deepest anguish, at times a mortal melancholy, a counterfeiting madness, in order to wait for opportunities of revenge and a degree of real phrenzy" (Vickers, VI, 482). Such "an assemblage of qualities of qualities combines to form the broad character" of Hamlet, and Shakespeare arranges them in such a manner that "one class of them should counteract, and render inefficient the other". It is this that constantly impeded the action and rendered him unable to act (Vickers, VI, 483).

Thus throughout the eighteenth century, the neo-classical framework provided the theoretical background to the critics, though towards the close, the concept of decorum was replaced by psychological realism. It was Coleridge who provided a new theoretical framework based on his own theories of imagination and organicism so as to analyse Shakespeare's characters in a new light. He did not isolate character from the plot, nor did he ignore the psychological aspects. However, there was a shift of emphasis in his approach i.e., from the psychological to the poetic and the philosophical, and this shift itself was a result of the one in the theoretical framework, i.e. from the Aristotelian to the Kantian.