CHAPTER - IV

SOME SHAKESPEARIAN THEMES IN COLERIDGE

Coleridge's greatest contribution to criticism was his attempt to adopt a unitive and organicist approach to Shakespearian drama. As we have already seen, the earliest critics of Shakespeare had assumed a formalistic perspective but their conception of form was mechanical and disjunctive. This kind of formalism was replaced, late in the eighteenth century, by character study which, though novel and interesting in its psychological bearings, was yet atomistic and based on false assumptions about the mimetic nature of dramatic art. It is Coleridge's theoretical framework that enabled him, for the first time in the history of Shakespearian criticism, to discover the unifying role of imagination in Shakespeare's plays. In the next two chapters, we propose to study in considerable detail Coleridge's criticism of individual plays and characters. However, such a study must first take into account the general themes that run throughout Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare and that are more or less taken for granted in his criticism of individual works. These general themes recur with unusual insistence in his writings and lectures on Shakespeare. Hence, they must be constantly kept in mind while dealing with the criticism of particular works.

I

It may appear a little surprising to those readers of Coleridge who associate his name only with the origin of organicist formalism to find that he constantly lays emphasis on a historical approach to Shakespearian drama. A kind of "historical" reading of Shakespearian dramas had, of course, been initiated by early eighteenth century. Critics like Rowe, Pope and Dennis clearly stated that Shakespeare's "faults" should be seen in the perspective of his age. Shakespeare was
then believed to have lived in a barbaric age. Critics attributed Shakespeare's error of judgement to the poor taste of the audience (Dennis) or to the vulgarities introduced into Shakespeare's plays by illiterate actors (Pope). Historiography, particularly the historical study of the age of Elizabeth, was still in its infancy. Assumptions could not be questioned due to the paucity of facts. However, the knowledge of the Elizabethan age increased as the century of Gibbon and Hume slowly advanced towards greater objectivity and accumulation of facts. Moreover, a kind of historicism came to flourish on the continent in the middle of the eighteenth century. In view of all this, it should not be surprising to find that one of Coleridge's unfinished projects was to write a book about Shakespeare which would adequately deal with the historical circumstance that might have influenced Shakespearian drama. The project, of course, never saw the light of the day though Shakespeare in relation to his age remained a frequently occurring theme in Coleridge's writings and lectures.¹

The theme of the character of Shakespeare's age is also connected with the question of Shakespeare's judgement. As we said in the preceding paragraph, the eighteenth century critics attributed Shakespeare's lack of judgement and learning to the "uncultivated taste of the age" in which Shakespeare lived. It is noteworthy that from the time of Dryden till as late as the last quarter of the eighteenth century, "barbarity" of the age was taken for granted. Even in 1769 Elizabeth Montague wrote:

Shakespeare wrote at a time when learning was tinctured with pedantry, wit was unpolished and mirth ill-bred... Shakespeare's plays were to be acted in a paltry tavern, to an unlettered audience

just emerging from barbarity....

Our author by following minutely the chronicles of the times had embarrassed his dramas with too great a number of persons and events. The hurley-burley of these plays recommended them to a rude-illiterate audience, who, as he says, loved a noise of targets... Shakespeare and Corneille are equally blamable for having complied with the bad taste of the age; and by doing so they have brought unmerited censures to their country.²

Coleridge was the first English critic who reacted sharply against this accepted opinion. According to him, Shakespeare's audience or at least some part of the audience was intellectually far superior to the audience that went to the theatre in later ages.³ Coleridge said, dealt with a learned public, and he had no idea of the mixed public. It was divided in two groups. On the one hand, there were those who had no taste at all and went to the theatres merely to amuse themselves. On the other hand, there were those who were deeply interested in literature and drama (Raysor, II, 84).⁴

³Coleridge's knowledge of the historical circumstances of Elizabethan times was very meagre and many of his passages dealing with the historical criticism of Shakespearian age were naive and almost conjectural, yet here he hits the nail on the head. This is an excellent observation. If it is conjectural, it is a very valid conjecture. It is also possible that Coleridge was made conscious of the intellectual equipment of Elizabethan audience because of his familiarity with early seventeenth century religious literature. Coleridge, in this sense, anticipates modern critics who have realized the intellectual attainment of Elizabethan audience.
⁴Further references from the text of Coleridge have been taken from the two-volume edition Coleridge's Shakespearian Criticism edited by T.M. Raysor (London, 1930). These are incorporated in text with vol. no. and page no., e.g., Raysor, II, 84.
On the whole, Shakespeare's audience was characterised by "a general energy of thinking". People were intellectually trained by the religious controversies of the day. The audience went not to enjoy the spectacle but to pay attention to the thought content of the plays:

The idea of the poet was always present, not of actors, not of the thing to be represented. It was at that time more a delight and employment, for the intellect, than [an] amusement for the senses.  
(Raysor, II, 85)

Shakespeare, therefore, relied on imagination and did not try to please the senses. Though the age was intellectually far in advance, it was not an age of high moral feelings and lofty principles, "which gives a man of genius the power of thinking of all things in reference to all". Even in such "a morally degrading age" (Raysor, II, 116), Shakespeare could produce lofty art. This is because, though it is natural for a writer to conform to the circumstances of his own age, a true genius like Shakespeare does not live only for the age in which he lives but for "that which is to follow". Shakespeare, Coleridge says, stands "independent" of the circumstances of his age (Raysor, II, 265). He was not of his age but for all ages.5

II

Having briefly discussed some aspects of Coleridge's historical approach, we now come to another important theme in

5Coleridge's insight here is significant. Shakespeare is as much an Elizabethan as a universal poet. He is rooted in his age. This rootedness is as a whole in every aspect of his art. This has been borne out by the historical critics of the twentieth century, for example in Rosalie L. Colie and E.T. Flahiff, eds., Some Facets of 'King Lear' : Essays in Prismatic Criticism (Toronto and Buffalo, 1974).
Coleridge's comments on Shakespeare: the idea that Shakespeare's judgement is commensurate with his genius. The whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth century criticism unanimously declared Shakespeare to have been an irregular genius and a child of nature. Coleridge considers it "humiliating to reflect" that though "heaven has given us the greatest poet", it has "inflicted" upon us the most "incompetent critics". None of them seems to understand his language or, in other words, "the principles upon which he wrote" and his "peculiarities which distinguish him from all rivals" (Raysor, II, 164). Some of Shakespeare's contemporaries appear to have understood him and imitated him in a way that "does the original no small honour" but most of the modern playwrights and commentators with their "contracted intellectual vision" treat him like "a school boy" (Raysor, II, 164).

According to Coleridge, in the opinion of such persons, Shakespeare was an ignorant man, a child of nature, a wild genius, a strange medley (Raysor, II, 106). These "creatures" have informed us that Shakespeare is "a miraculous monster" in whom many "heterogenous elements were thrown together, producing a discordant mass of genius -- an irregular and ill-assorted structure of gigantic proportion" (Raysor, II, 169). Coleridge thinks and rightly so, that "this mode of reconciling a compelled sense of inferiority with a feeling of pride" began with critics when they saw that Shakespeare's dramas like Lear, Hamlet and Othello were neither in imitation of Sophocles, "the great model of tragedy", nor in obedience to Aristotle, "the infallible dictator", yet they pleased their countrymen from generation to generation (Raysor, I, 219). Therefore, it became an easy plea for them to talk of Shakespeare "as a sort of beautiful lusus naturae, a delightful monster, wild indeed, without taste of judgement, but like the
inspired idiot so much venerated in the East, uttering amid the strangest follies, the sublimest truths" (Raysor, I, 219-20).

Coleridge was proud that he was first in time who "publicly demonstrated" to the full extent of the position, that the supposed irregularity and extravagances of Shakespeare were the "mere dreams of pedantry that arraigned the eagle because it had not the dimensions of the swan" (Raysor, I, 126). In his lectures, it was his constant endeavour to prove that in all points, "from the most important to the most minute", the judgement of Shakespeare is commensurate with his genius or, in other words, "his genius reveals itself in his judgement, as in its most exalted form". Contrary to the accepted opinion that Shakespeare wrote for the mob, Coleridge tried to establish that a man of real genius like Shakespeare can never write for the mob. Shakespeare never "consciously" wrote what was below himself: "careless he might be; but I fearlessly say that he never penned a line that he knew would degrade him" (Raysor, I, 164). Coleridge declares that if Shakespeare be the wonder of the ignorant, he is much more the wonder of the learned, not only from his "profundity of thought but also from his astonishing and intuitive knowledge of what men must be at all times, and under all circumstances" (Raysor, II, 211).

As evidence of Shakespeare's learning and judgement, Coleridge emphasizes the literariness of Love's Labour's Lost (Raysor, I, 97; II, 107). It affords the strongest possible proof that Shakespeare was not an ignorant man, and that the former part of his life had been passed in scholastic pursuits. Leaving aside the comment about Shakespeare's "scholastic pursuits", we may note that Coleridge is extraordinarily perceptive with regard to the verbal texture of this early play. There is absolutely no doubt that Shakespeare was pleased to give to his "initiated" audience as much of intellectual
pleasure as they wished for. Coleridge argues from the available fact of the quality of Shakespeare's play to the assumed nature of the audience that might have applauded such a play. Thus he satisfactorily demonstrates the truth of his contention that Shakespeare's plays were not written for a vulgar or "barbaric" audience. Similarly, in Romeo and Juliet too, we have an example of Shakespeare's superb judgement where Coleridge shows that Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline heightens the profundity of his love for Juliet (Raysor, II, 129). A mild degree of infatuation presents a sort of contrast to deep love. Shakespeare intuitively shows this contrast.

Coleridge thus emphasizes the judgement of Shakespeare in a crucial passage:

Are the plays of Shakespeare works of rude uncultivated genius, in which the splendour of parts compensates, if aught can compensate, for the barbarous shapelessness and irregularity of the whole? To which not only the French critics, but even his own English admirers say [yes]. Or is the form equally admirable with the matter, the judgement of the great poet not less deserving of our wonder than his genius? Or to repeat the question in other words, is Shakespeare a great dramatic poet on account only of those beauties and excellencies which he possesses in common with the ancients, but with diminished claims to our love and honour to the full extent of the difference from them? Or are these very differences additional proofs of poetic wisdom, at once results and symbols of living power as contrasted with lifeless mechanism, of free and rival originality as contradistinguished from servile imitation, or more accurately, [from] a blind copying of effects instead of a true imitation of the essential principles?

(Raysor, I, 197)

Coleridge's analysis makes a frontal attack on eighteenth century criticism when he says that he is not about to oppose genius to rules. "The comparative value of these rules is the
very cause to be tried". The rules give shape to a work of art and genius is not crippled by following these rules. These rules, however, must not be imposed from outside but should have their origin in the organic structure of the work of art, where each part is as important as the whole and contributes to the beauty of the whole. This inter-dependence of parts and the whole gives the law of organisation that a living body must follow. Thus Shakespeare follows only the necessary rule by which each part is at once the end as well as the means.

Thus, according to Coleridge, the critical genius of Shakespeare is as great as his creative genius. In other words, "he possesses the power of acting creatively under the laws of its own organisation" (Raysor, II, 223). Shakespeare is not a pedant who cramped himself with certain established rules but the master who regarded rules as always controllable by, and subservient to, the end. The exquisite judgement of Shakespeare is reflected in all his plays. For example, though Shakespeare seizes hold of popular tales in The Merchant of Venice and King Lear, yet he manages them so beautifully that they become the representation of man in all ages at all times.

Shakespeare was not a talent which gives a sort of "electric surprise" to his audience by a mere turn of phrase, but possesses the higher ability which produces surprise by a permanent medium, "which satisfies the mind as well as tickles the hearing" (Raysor, II, 124). As we will see later in this chapter, Coleridge thinks that there is always gradual progression in Shakespeare's plots, and he does not surprise the audience merely by the turns and twists of plotting. Shakespeare's wonderful judgement appears in his historical plays, in the introduction of some incident or other, "though no way connected, yet serving to give an air of historic fact". Thus the scene of the Queen and the Gardener in Richard II
"realizes the things, makes the occurrence no longer a segment but gives an individuality, a liveliness and presence to the scene (Raysor, II, 284). Shakespeare's genius was coupled with his wonderful judgement. "The gift of imagination, that capability of reducing a multitude into a unity of effect, or by strong passion to modify series of thoughts into one predominant thought or feeling" (Raysor, II, 91) — all these qualities are of a genius which he combined with his learning. He first studied, read and thoroughly understood every part of human nature which he joined with his poetical feeling, "till at length it gave him that wonderful power in which he had no equal -- not even a second in his own class" (Raysor, II, 95). Shakespeare was not something exceptional — "a sort of Tartarian Dalai Lama, adored indeed", but with "no authority, no real influence". The power of his judgement is like a "cataract" that is impossible to be filled in the "three ounce phial" of the critics. His power is not like a "wild heath where islands of fertility look greener from the surrounding waste, where the loveliest plants now shine out among unsightly weeds and now are choked by their parasitic growth so intertwined that we can not disentangle the weed without snapping the flower", (Raysor, I, 221), but like a pruned garden where -- hedges, grass, plants and flowers -- everything bloomed in its place.

In his essay, "Method in Thought", Coleridge insists that Shakespeare is not "eminently immethodical" as he is often considered to be. He was not only endowed with great native genius but his acquired knowledge was not inconsiderable. In character portrayal, in the treatment of passions, in his dealing with moral problems, in his use of language, and in the construction of his plots -- his plays reveal method (Raysor, II, 350). Thus Coleridge finally and forever disposess of the neo-classical conception of Shakespeare as a "wild irregular
This may indeed be regarded as one of Coleridge's greatest contributions to Shakespearian criticism. This insight may also be regarded as the starting point of Coleridge's approach to particular works. In spite of the fragmentary nature of Coleridge's criticism, he was everywhere engaged in demonstrating that Shakespeare observed the highest principles of art. It may indeed be asserted that by discovering a rationale for Shakespeare's practice, he finally dispensed with the neo-classical version of Aristotelianism and set Shakespearian criticism on the course of a search for relevant principles of art.

III

According to Coleridge, "no man can be a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher". The poet and the philosopher in a successful writer struggle with each other till they find a field where they are blended and flow together in sweetest harmony and strength. In Shakespeare, according to Coleridge, there was a perfect fusion of the poet and the philosopher as no one could dominate the other, "the poet and the philosopher embracing, but, as it were in a warm embrace, when if both had not been equal, one or other must have been strangled" (Raysor, II, 87).

Coleridge is the first critic who is conscious of the fact that Shakespeare introduces a moral and ethical dimension in the material which he borrows from his sources or that he projects his own vision of life through his characters. In his dramas, he gave proof of "a most profound, energetic and philosophical mind" (Raysor, I, 214) without which he might have been a very delightful poet but not the great dramatic poet. "Shakespeare", says Coleridge, "calls forth nothing from the mausoleum of history or the catacombs of tradition" without giving or eliciting some permanent and general interest, and
brings forward no subject "which he does not moralize or intellectualize" (Raysor, I, 109). In Shakespeare, we can:

...conceive a profound metaphysician and a great poet, intensely occupied in thinking on all subjects, on the least as well as the greatest -- on all the operations of nature and of man, and feeling the importance of all the subjects presented to him -- conceive this philosophical part of his character combined with the poetic, the two fold energy constantly acting.

(Raysor, II, 86-7)

Thus Coleridge is strong in insisting that Shakespeare was a philosophical poet though he does not envisage any conscious philosophy of life in Shakespeare. The hints of this philosophy, however, are presented through various indirect ways, through themes, situations and characters. His insistence is clear from the fact that the essay, Method in Thought, which is more of an epistemological nature and has nothing to do with literature or drama, is elaborated with examples from Shakespeare. Moreover, he says:

Shakespeare's moral conceptions are not made of miserable clap-traps, and the tag-end of mawkish novels, and endless sermonizing -- but furnishing lessons of profound meditation to frail and fallible human nature.

(Raysor, II, 348)

According to Coleridge, Shakespeare, following the ancient tragedians in whose plays the chorus introduced moral reflections, presents his vision of life through unimportant personages. His great men never moralize "except under the influence of violent passion : for it is nature of passion to moralize". Shakespeare elicits grand and noble truths from passion, "as sparks are forced from heated iron". Similarly, in his comedies, Shakespeare makes even folly the vehicle of profound moral observation:
Each speech is what every man feels to be latent in his nature; what he would have said in that situation if he had had the ability and readiness to do it and these are multiplied and individualised with the most extraordinary minuteness and truth.

(Raysor, II, 283)

One of the important themes that Coleridge discovers in the plays of Shakespeare is that intellectual superiority is not real and this may be what Coleridge calls Shakespeare's vision of life. According to Coleridge, Shakespeare seems to believe that true value of life lies in the moral greatness of a person. "He shows us that crime and want of principle clothed not with a spurious greatness of soul; but with a force of intellect which too often imposes but the more easily on the weak misjudging multitude".

Coleridge says that Shakespeare's "sublime morality" pervades all his characters except Richard III, Iago and Falstaff (Raysor, I, 232). In these three characters, Shakespeare shows the dreadful consequences of placing the moral in subordination to the intellectual faculties. Richard III felt confidence in his intellect. This overprizing of intellect led him to commit the most horrid crimes (Raysor, II, 209). His cruelty, however, is not so important as his pride which emanated from his sense of being superior to others who are intellectually inferior to him and to which his personal deformity gave a "deadly venom". Iago, too, worked on the same principles. He was conscious of his intellectual greatness, "gave scope to his envy and hesitated not to ruin a gallant, open and generous friend in the moment of felicity". He trampled upon Othello because he felt Othello to be inferior in intellect. Likewise, Falstaff is not a "degraded man of genius" but a man of "degraded genius" (Raysor, II, 287) with the same consciousness of superiority of his own "pre-eminent abilities"
to his own companions. Consequently, a sense of contempt for them led him to "fasten" himself on the young prince. To gratify his pride, he wanted to prove how much his influence on the heir-apparent could exceed that of statesmen. Because of this, "he hesitated to practice the most contemptuous of all characters -- an open and professed liar -- even his sensuality was subservient to his character". Thus, unlike some modern critics and in spite of his great love for Falstaff as a comic character, Coleridge finds Prince Hall to be superior as a moral being to Falstaff. He does not sentimentalize Hall in the problem of rejection of Falstaff. Traversi, J.D. Wilson and L.C. Knights, who are Falstaffians, condemn Hall. Knights considers this rejection as a rejection of his own past as well as of certain positive values of life. He thus opts for a very narrow outlook when he abandons the broad sympathies of life. These critics thus glorify Falstaff and discard the prince as narrow-minded. Coleridge, being a conservative, regards the rejection of Falstaff as an example to show the victory of moral forces over immorality. Because Hall possesses superior moral power the audience sympathise with him. Though he is morally reprehensible in his rejection, yet he would not have been a great king if he had supported Falstaff. Thus, according to Coleridge, Falstaff stands for anarchy and evil while other characters like Prince Hall and Lord Chief Justice stand for the nobler values of life. Falstaff's downfall is because of his hubris.

While describing the character of Caliban too, Coleridge presents the same view-point when he says:

For it is in the primacy of the moral being only that man is truly human; in his intellectual powers he is certainly approached by the brutes, and man's whole system duly considered, those powers cannot be considered other than means to an end, that is to morality.

(Raysor, I, 134)
Coleridge's discussion of Hamlet also, though largely psychological, has philosophical implications. He suggests that the entire play deals with the philosophical theme of the value of action in life (Raysor, I, 37). Through his notes and lectures, Coleridge seems to suggest (as we shall later see) that life is action, not thought. That the insight is not of a purely discursive nature but has arisen out of a unitive and imaginative reading of the play will be considered at a later stage. It may, however, be pointed out in passing that Coleridge is much different from the later, particularly German, critics of the nineteenth century in his attempts to isolate philosophical themes in Shakespeare's plays.

Throughout his writings, Coleridge seems to believe that Shakespeare has a philosophy of life and that his attitude towards life is positive. It was because of this view that Coleridge rejects Timon of Athens as a painful production. It gives an unfavourable picture of human life. Because of its cynicism, Coleridge was led to speculate that the subject might have been taken by the dramatist "under some temporary feeling of vexation and disappointment" (Raysor, I, 85 note). Coleridge's insistence on Shakespeare's positive attitude towards life makes him accept the end of King Lear as "a sad yet sweet consolation" (Raysor, I, 66). Unlike the eighteenth century critics who rejected the tragic end of the play and altered its design, Coleridge accepts the death of Lear. According to him, we do not rebel at the death since the final impression is that of reconciliation. Coleridge here seems to anticipate the views of Christian interpreters like Heilman in This Great Stage and John F. Danby in Shakespeare's Doctrine of nature.  

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6 R.B. Heilman, This Great Stage: Image and Structure in "King Lear" (Baton Rouge, La., 1918); John F. Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature (London, 1948).
Coleridge attributes to Shakespeare a full-scale and coherent philosophy of love in *Troilus and Cressida* and *Romeo and Juliet*. In *Troilus and Cressida*, the difference between infatuation and sincere love is portrayed through the two characters. The "vehement passion" of Cressida is contrasted with the "deep affection" of Troilus (Raysor, I, 109). Similarly, the love theme in *Romeo and Juliet* too presents Shakespeare's philosophy of love. In this connection, Coleridge finds in Shakespeare parallels with Platonic philosophy. Love in Romeo is borne out of a sense of his own imperfect nature and of a desire to lend his help in completing the moral nature of another person. Romeo's infatuation for Rosaline is only this expression of his need for love. It is on the same ground that Coleridge justifies Romeo's transition from Rosaline to Juliet. Thus Coleridge here seems to suggest that what Plato had said philosophically, Shakespeare said poetically. Though Coleridge in his lectures makes it clear that his delineation of love is not Platonic, yet actually he is using the famous myth in the *Symposium* of Plato that everyone is imperfect but is in search of perfection. Coleridge, however, combines this Platonic philosophy with Christianity. His own definition of love shows this:

> Love is a desire of the whole being to be united to some thing, or some being, felt necessary to its completeness, by the most perfect means that nature permits and reason dictates.  

(Raysor, II, 142)

In modern times too, many critics have suggested that Shakespeare's vision of life was permeated with traditional Christian ideas and some of these ideas were neo-platonic or platonic in their origin. John Vyvyan, for example, has suggested that Shakespeare's plays are allegories of Platonic philosophy.

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Even when it is love at first, as in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare displays it with all dignity and nobility. Between Ferdinand and Miranda, Coleridge says, it is love at first sight and as in all cases of real love, "it is at one moment that it takes place":

The moment may have been prepared by previous esteem, admiration or even affection, -- yet love seems to require a momentary act of volition, by which a tacit bond of devotion is imposed, -- a bond not to be thereafter broken without violating what should be sacred in our nature.

(Raysor, I, 134-35)

As a part of his thesis that Shakespeare was a great philosophical poet, Coleridge vindicates Shakespeare of a very serious charge i.e., of indecency and immorality. Coleridge rejects the charge of Dr. Johnson and other critics who say that Shakespeare sometimes lacks moral sense. He does not agree with some other critics who exculpate Shakespeare by saying that this was the vice of the age since there is nothing in common in Shakespeare and other writers of his age, "not even the language they employed". According to Coleridge, Shakespeare cannot be placed near Beaumont and Fletcher. Coleridge censures Beaumont and Fletcher for licentiousness in their comedies. The situations in their comedies are sometimes so disgusting, and the language so indecent and immoral, that it is impossible to read their plays in "private society" (Raysor, II, 125).

In order to establish Shakespeare as a pure writer, Coleridge proposes to make a distinction between morals and manners. Manners refer to particular customs and manners of the age. "Even in a state of comparative babarity", there may be morality with regard to manners. On looking through Shakespeare's plays, his offences against manners may certainly
be pointed out but not against morals. There are a few gross speeches in Shakespeare's plays but they do not produce any ill-effect on an "unsullied mind". Even these offences are not committed "wantonly" or for the sake of offending but for the sake of merriment. His purpose is to raise a gust of laughter that would "blow away impure ideas if it did not excite abhorrence of them". Even if there is grossness, it is mere "sport of fancy". It "dissipates low feelings by exciting the intellect, only injuring while it offends":

Shakespeare may sometimes be gross but I boldly say that he is always moral and modest. Alas! in this our day decency of manners is preserved at the expense of morality of heart, and delicacies for vice are allowed, whilst grossness against it is hypocritically, or at least morbidly condemned. (Raysor, I, 135)

Shakespeare keeps at all times the high road of life. He never rendered that "amiable" which religion and reason taught us to detest. Virtue is always admirable and vice repugnant. "He never clothed vice in the garb of virtue" as against Beaumont and Fletcher who do the very reverse. They "ridicule virtue and encourage vice". Unlike them, Shakespeare carried on "no warfare against virtue by which wickedness may be made to appear as not wickedness, and where our sympathy was to be entrapped by the misfortune of vice; with him vice never walked as it were in twilight" (Raysor, II, 268). Shakespeare thus never inverts the order of nature and propriety. His fathers may "revolt against ingratitude" while his husbands are "stung by unfaithfulness". He never made his lovers openly gross or profane. He caused "no excitement of passions which he flattered to degrade and never used what was faulty for a faulty purpose". Even in the early poems like Venus and Adonis, the supposed morality of the poem is diffused by using constant devices (Raysor, II, 93). Though the poet is dealing with an
immoral theme, the reader's attention is engrossed so much in
the imagery that we lose sight of immoral aspects. Similarly,
passages of wit and reflection never allow us to think about
immorality.

Thus we see that Coleridge is a proto-Victorian and
somewhat puritanic about morality, and he analyses Shakespeare
in that light. The process of Bowdlerization, which became a
prominent trait in Victorian age, was started in Coleridge.
This, of course, is an unfortunate aspect of the Coleridgean
legacy.

Coleridge is conservative and proto-Victorian in his
defence of Shakespeare's heroines too (Raysor, I, 133). The
female characters in the plays of Shakespeare are always pure,
chaste and moral. In Beaumont and Fletcher, they are either
indecent or "complete viragos" but in Shakespeare, "all the
elements of womanhood are holy and there is the sweet yet
dignified feeling of all that continuates society, as sense of
ancestry and of sex, with a purity unassailable by sophistry".
They are respectful to all the established institutions of
social order, because it rests "not in the analytic processes,
but in the sane equipoise of the faculties, during which the
feelings are representative of all past experience -- not of
the individual only, but of all those by whom she has been
educated, and their predecessors even up to the first mother
that lived". According to Coleridge, Shakespeare's realization
that women are subservient to men, "which Pope notices for
sarcasm", is to show their strength. It is in fact the "blessed
beauty of the women's characters". It is not the result of any
deficiency but from the "more exquisite harmony of all the
parts of the moral being constituting one living total of head
and heart".
Coleridge considers the act of Helena betraying Hermia to Demetrius, "very natural" for he says "the resolve so to act is, I fear, likewise too true a picture of the lax hold that principles have on female heart, when opposed to, or even separated from passion and inclination". However, we shrink from it and cannot harmonize it with the ideal. Coleridge says:

For women are less hypocrites to their own minds than man, because they feel less abhorrence of moral evil in itself and more for its outward consequences, as detection, loss of character etc. their nature being almost wholly extroitive.

(Raysor, I, 100)

Shakespeare, Coleridge says, "entertained a just conception of female character". He is always respectful and never trivial towards them and that is why, Coleridge says, Shakespeare's approach towards the sexual problem is philosophical. The Cavalier style, the light-heartedness of seventeenth century is not there. It is not that his women are always paragon of virtue. They may be "goddesses or monsters" but never trivial.  

On the whole, according to Coleridge, Shakespeare was a conservative not only in his attitude towards morality and women but also in politics. He cherished and venerated the established institutions and established "ranks and usages" of society. Shakespeare respected these hereditary institutions, like kings and priests, which form the permanent elements of the state and which "bind one age to another in that distinction of ranks of which although few may be in possession, all enjoy the advantage" (Raysor, I, 136). He never

8This is to some extent an exaggeration. Perhaps Coleridge has forgotten Shakespeare's later sonnets about the Dark Lady.
introduces a professional character other than as respectable and never cuts any joke at the expense of such characters. Even if they are bad, some "palliations" are thrown in. The reverence which Shakespeare shows towards the priest, Friar Lawrence, in *Romeo and Juliet* makes Coleridge compare Shakespeare with Beaumont and Fletcher. In Beaumont and Fletcher, priests are represented as objects of vulgar mockery "and as in others of their dramatic personages, the error of the few are mistaken for the demeanour of the many", but in Shakespeare, they always carry with them our love and respect. "He made no injurious abstracts: he took no copies from the worst parts of our nature; and like the rest, his characters of priests are truly drawn from the general body" (Raysor, II, 145).

Shakespeare was not a rebel. Coleridge does not present Shakespeare's political philosophy in detail. However, while analysing characters or situations, he makes some passing remarks. Coleridge's comments too on characters or groups of characters are in most cases based on philosophical premises. His comments, however, on Stephano acquiring supremacy over Trinculo and Caliban give him an opportunity to discuss Shakespeare as a political philosopher (Raysor, I, 136). From the observation of these characters, Coleridge goes on to generalise about Shakespeare's politics. In his treatment of the subject, Shakespeare is quite peculiar. He never shows any inclination towards any party or sect, "he never promulgates any party tenets". The wonderful philosophic impartiality of his views on politics is reflected in *Julius Caesar* and other history plays. On the contrary, other writers of his age cater to these sectarian interests. In Massinger, for example, it is "rank republicanism". In Beaumont and Fletcher, "even jurodivine principles" are carried to excess. Shakespeare, however, was basically a moralist and a philosopher. He was well-versed
in "that kind of politics which was inwoven with human nature". In his treatment of Stephano, Caliban and Trinculo in the second scene of the third act, he shows "the springs of the vulgar in politics". He may be styled as a "philosophical aristocrat":

You will observe the good nature with which he seems always to make sport with the passions and follies of a mob, as with an irrational animal. He is never angry with it, but hugely content with holding up its absurdities to its face; and sometimes you may trace a tone of almost affectionate superiority, something like that in which a father speaks of the rogueries of a child.

(Raysor, I, 136)

With a good humoured temperament, he describes Stephano passing from the most licentious freedom to absolute despotism over Trinculo and Caliban in The Tempest. Similarly, his derision of the mob in Coriolanus is "good humoured" (Raysor, I, 89).

According to Coleridge, although Shakespeare was not a rebel, he was against the enslavement of human beings. In this respect, he may be regarded as a champion of liberty. Ariel in The Tempest, though placed under the command of a kindly power and to good ends, was not happy. Ariel's reluctance to be under the command of Prospero is kept up throughout the whole play. Even when Prospero sets him free after the storm, he is not satisfied, for still he is bound to obey the commands of Propsero. Such a cruel confinement is unnatural for a being like Ariel. He is eager for "a simple and eternal liberty" (Raysor, I, 176). Looking from a different angle, Prospero's command of Ariel symbolises man's control of benign powers of nature for selfish purposes.

Thus, in his comments on Shakespeare as a political philosopher, Coleridge anticipates the historical critics of
the forties of the twentieth century, critics like Tillyard (Elizabethan World Picture) and Duthie (Shakespeare). In his comments, he anticipates the Order and Hierarchy school. Since there is order and hierarchy in the universe and nature, there should also be order and hierarchy in the world i.e., in man's creations. The critics of this school envisaged Shakespeare as accepting all the established social institutions and putting his faith in a kind of cosmic royalism. Coleridge's Shakespeare is a philosophical aristocrat i.e., a conservative and a champion of aristocracy and institutionalized orthodoxy. Here it is important to note that Coleridge ignores the subversive and revolutionary elements in Shakespeare. This is clear not only from his remarks on The Tempest but on King Lear and Timon of Athens also.

This view of Coleridge's Shakespeare as a great conservative force, can be put against the views of the modern Polish critic of Shakespeare, Jan Kott, who in his book Shakespeare Our Contemporary shows that Shakespeare was a rebel against totalitarian aristocracy. In Peter Brooks' productions also Shakespeare was projected as a Beckettian absurdist when in King Lear and A Mid-Summer Night's Dream, the subversive elements were highlighted.

Thus in Shakespeare is combined the poet and the philosopher. Contrary to other writers who either teach or delight, Shakespeare "elevates and instructs". "In stead of referring to our ordinary situations and common feelings, he emancipates us from them, and when most remote from ordinary life, is most interesting". (Raysor, II, 18).

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It is important to remember here that Coleridge was the first critic to approach Shakespeare as a philosopher. Eighteenth century never approached Shakespeare as a poet with a consistent and coherent philosophy of life. Critics like Dr. Johnson do lay stress on Shakespeare's truth to nature but this truth to nature is not of a philosophical but of an imitative variety. For example, Johnson says that a hermit and a recluse may acquire knowledge of the world from Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare can tell us how men behave under the stress of a particular passion. He can also help us with an understanding of what motivates men. Thus Johnson paints Shakespeare as philosophical only in the sense that he knew the drives and passions that impel mankind. Johnson never suggests that Shakespeare had a philosophy of life, Christian or pagan, which could be abstracted from his plays. Coleridge is the first Shakespearian critic to lay stress on the fact that in Shakespeare the poet and the philosopher are united. We have seen elsewhere how Kantian epistemology and certain neo-platonic ideas had enabled romantic critics like Coleridge to insist that great poetry, qua poetry, is engaged in the pursuit of truth in the manner of the philosopher and of the man of religion. It is this thesis that enables Coleridge to insist that Shakespeare was a philosophical poet. In order to protect Shakespeare from the charge of being romantically trivial, Coleridge insists that Shakespeare was philosophically concerned with social order and its roots in spiritual yearning. Coleridge platonizes Shakespeare, and in this process schematizes him thoroughly. Coleridge makes the general observation that Shakespeare's thought was "consistent, whole and perfect". He says that "he never wrote at random... and the smallest fragment of his mind not unfrequently gives a clue to a most perfect, regular and consistent whole" (Raysor, II, 144-45).
These observations are a radical departure from the eighteenth century approach to Shakespeare. In the paragraph from which we have just quoted, we find the beginning of the nineteenth century concern with the philosophical meaning of Shakespeare's plays. Coleridge may be said to be the progenitor of the Victorian image of Shakespeare as the sage par excellence. This Coleridgean insistence leads us on to the nineteenth century German critic Gervinus whose book Shakespeare Commentaries (1863)\(^{11}\) is based on the thesis that every single Shakespearian play contains a central idea of a moral and philosophical kind. From Gervinus, we move on to Dowden (Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, 1875)\(^{12}\) and then to Bradley (1904) whose book Shakespearean Tragedy contains in its first chapter the philosophical substance of Shakespeare's most important plays.\(^{13}\) Coleridge also anticipates the Christian interpreters of the twentieth century who discover in Shakespeare a coherent and consistent Christian philosophy of life. The same might be said about some of the radical and Marxist interpreters of Shakespeare also. What is important is not the correctness or otherwise of particular philosophies that are discovered in Shakespeare's plays. The significant point is that the whole approach tends to schematize Shakespeare. It is natural for us to feel concerned about this approach since it tends to distort and falsify the realities of Shakespearian drama. "He never wrote at random" is true, but it is equally true that Shakespeare never wrote according to a pre-conceived philosophy. We feel that there is a good amount of improvisation in Shakespeare. As a man of the theatre, Shakespeare was a kind of opportunist who

\(^{11}\) Gervinus, Shakespeare Commentaries (London, 1863).
\(^{13}\) A.C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London, 1904).
never hesitated to make compromises. Coleridge's insistence on Shakespeare's philosophical coherence ignores the fact that Shakespeare's art was circumscribed by the exigencies of the theatre. Thus while paying tribute to Coleridge as the first critic who paid attention to Shakespeare's speculative and philosophical genius, we should also warn ourselves against the dangers inherent in the attempt to schematize or over-interpret Shakespeare.

IV

While arranging Shakespeare's plays in the order of their composition, Coleridge also describes the growth of Shakespeare's mind. In stead of approaching the topic chronologically, he adopts a "pathological and physiological" (Raysor, II, 30) approach to the subject. Coleridge arranges them according to "psychological and not according to historical mode of reasoning" (Raysor, II, 96). He takes them as they seemed naturally to flow from the progress and order of Shakespeare's mind. Moreover, this also suits Coleridge's thesis that Shakespeare was a poet before being a dramatist. As he himself says:

I have endeavoured to prove that he had shown himself a poet, previously to his appearance [as] a dramatic poet -- and that had no Lear, no Othello, no Henry the fourth, no Twelfth Night appeared, we must have admitted that Shakespeare possessed the chief if not all the requisites of a poet....
(Raysor, I, 211-12)

Shakespeare was a poet-turned-dramatist. In the early works of his career, his poetic powers are displayed beautifully while gradually there was a shift from the poet to the dramatist. In order to conform to his thesis, Coleridge must insist that Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece are his earliest works. It is known from the author's "own
dedication" that Venus and Adonis is his first work (Raysor, II, 89). While it must have been produced in the country and country scenes, sights and employments, The Rape of Lucrece which was published a year afterwards had "more the air of a city and of society". However, both the poems show that the poet is gradually developing into a dramatist, and that "the impulse to the drama was secretly working within him" (Raysor, II, 31). The fact that the beginning of the dramatic movement in Shakespeare can be traced to these two poems depends on various elements.

The first among these factors is the impersonal nature of his subject-matter. Coleridge says that in his very first productions, Shakespeare "projected his mind out of his own particular being, and felt and made others feel, on subjects [in] no way connected with himself, except by force of contemplation and that sublime faculty, by which a great mind becomes that which it meditates on" (Raysor, I, 212). The same quality we find in his later productions. In them too, he chose subjects remote from private interests, e.g., in Othello, where "though happy in his conjugal relations, he can paint a noble and generous mind under the pangs of jealousy" (Raysor, II, 91). Moreover, characters in these poems behave as if they were performing on the stage. They have to be inferred from the poem. We are not told about them. This quality we find in his later dramas also (Raysor, II, 93). These poems reveal Shakespeare's power by which one image of feeling is made to modify many others and by a "sort of fusion to force many into one". This is something that later showed itself in such might and energy in King Lear, where "the deep anguish of a father spreads the feeling of ingratitude and cruelty over the very elements of heaven" (Raysor, I, 213). The scene of unbroken images and minute and picturesque details of a very high order, higher than any other poet has produced, "seemed to fit him
admiredly for the line of composition he afterwards pursued". Another important feature of these poems is the revelation in them of a profound, energetic and philosophical mind -- something that was developed more fully in his dramas (Raysor, I, 214).

Thus, Coleridge thought that Shakespeare "early felt" an impulse for a species of poetry different from that he first attempted and "the very imperfections of which seemed to imply a dormancy and yet at the same time a powerful prompting of his powers to the drama" (Raysor, II, 89). Even his dramatic career can be divided into three parts on the basis of "internal evidence:

i) the period of highly poetic plays,
ii) the period of awkwardly dramatic plays and
iii) the period of fully dramatic plays.

This is, according to Coleridge, Shakespeare's line of growth.

In the first period, Coleridge places such works as Romeo and Juliet, Love's Labour's Lost, All's Well that Ends Well, A Mid-Summer Night's Dream, As You Like It, The Tempest, The Winter's Tale, and Twelfth Night. In all these works, the poet blends with the dramatist, though "the dramatist too seems to press forward" (Raysor, II, 96). In Romeo and Juliet, for example, the poet dominates the dramatist. A proof of this is the fact that in this play his characters speak his language. "He never loses his own being in the character he represents to us". Capulet and Montague, for example, sometimes talk a language only belonging to the poet. These speeches are not characteristic of the persons in the situations in which they are placed. As against this, in the mature works of Shakespeare, the language is completely identified with the characters (Raysor, II, 136).
Coleridge judges these early works in the light of his theory of organicism i.e., that a work of art should give pleasure not only in parts but as a whole. Thus Romeo and Juliet, the work as a whole, is not great for all the "parts are more or less present but they are not united with the same harmony". These plays, however, contain the germ of his future greatness: "in it are to be found specimens, in degrees of all the excellences which he afterwards displayed in his more perfect dramas" (Raysor, II, 128).

It is surprising that All's Well that Ends Well is placed by Coleridge with the delightful comedies. Modern scholars place this play in the post-romantic comedy period. It is now characterized as a problem play. It is to be noted, however, that Coleridge too, was aware of the difficulty of classifying the play with romantic comedies like As You Like It and Twelfth Night, when he says that the play does not contain "an agreeable story" though it is "full of love" (Raysor, II, 31). what probably he means by this is that the play lacks the proper atmosphere of a romantic comedy. He probably suggests that the mood of enjoyment, gaiety and celebration that we find in his comedies is not there in All's Well That Ends Well. Similarly, as against the romantic comedies in which the positive and affirmative value of love is an important factor in human experience, we have in All's Well that Ends Well a bitter and cynical mood. We may here recall that modern sensibility finds "outsiders" in all the romantic comedies of Shakespeare. Shylock, Jacques, Malvolio, Don Juan are all treated by modern sensibility as "outsiders". However, they are accepted as part of the whole since comedy is not the only part of life. Other strains are also there. Thus Coleridge's claim to some extent is right though modern criticism does not agree with him.

In the next class, Coleridge would present Shakespeare "as on his journey to the last and most complete forms of his
genius when he was growing towards it with some of the awkwardness of growth" (Raysor, II, 96). Troilus and Cressida, Cymbeline, The Merchant of Venice and Much Ado about Nothing, are the works placed in this category. The categorization is again surprising. Troilus and Cressida has little in common with The Merchant of Venice or with Much Ado About Nothing. The cynicism with which Shakespeare portrays the Greek heroes, and the mood of disillusionment that permeates the entire play, would prompt us to classify Troilus and Cressida with the "problem" plays rather than with the romantic comedies. Cymbeline is now generally classified with the last plays or the romances and not with the romantic comedies, though it is true there are common themes and motifs in the early comedies and the group of late plays.

In the last class, where Shakespeare's powers as a dramatist are shown brightly, are included his mature plays like Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, The Tempest and The Winter's Tale. A fine critical sense is shown when Coleridge says that Timon of Athens continues Lear. It is an "after vibration of Lear" (Raysor, II, 238). Thus:

It is a Lear of the satirical drama, a Lear of domestic or ordinary life -- a local eddy of passion on the high road of society. While all around are the week-day going on of wind and weather -- a Lear, therefore, without its soul scorching flashes, its ear-cleaving thunder-claps, its meteoric splendors without the contagion and fearful sympathies of nature, the Fates, the Furies, the frenzied elements dancing in and out, now breaking thro', and scattering, now hand in hand with, the fierce or fantastic group of human passions, crimes, and anguishes, reeling on the unsteady ground in a wild harmony to swell and sink of the earth quake.

(Raysor, I, 109)

History plays constitute a separate class of their own. Coleridge is absolutely right when he says that it is that
species of composition in which Shakespeare alone succeeded. "It was his -- and his only -- neither imitated with success by followers nor anticipated by his predecessors" (Raysor, II, 96-7). Troilus and Cressida cannot be classed with his Greek and Roman history dramas, but it forms an immediate link between the fictitious Greek and Roman histories, which we may call legendary dramas, and the proper ancient histories; for example, Pericles, Titus Andronicus, Coriolanus, Julius Caesar etc. (Raysor, I, 108).

Coleridge does not agree with some German critics that The Two Noble Kinsmen is a doubtful or apocryphal work. "There is the clearest internal evidence that Shakespeare importantly aided Fletcher in the composition of it" (Raysor, II, 32). Some parts are most unlike Fletcher, yet most like Shakespeare, while other parts are most like Fletcher, and most unlike Shakespeare. In fact, there is no finer, or more characteristic dramatic writing than some scenes in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

Coleridge thus outlines the spiritual biography of Shakespeare based on "internal evidence" deriving from his own idea of Shakespeare, i.e., Shakespeare as a poet and dramatist. It is to be noted here that the idea of a chronological study of Shakespeare's plays began with the famous Shakespearian scholar of late eighteenth century, Edmund Malone. His was the pioneer study of the subject though, being the sound scholar that he was, he remained as objective as external evidence allowed him to be. Coleridge, on the other hand, tries to link the chronology of the plays to the "growth" of Shakespeare's mind. In the debate over the question whether Shakespeare's plays are a reflection, howsoever indirect, of his personality, Coleridge has been thought to belong to the "objectivist" and "non-biographical" school. The evidence, however, points to the contrary. The brief mention of the subject of Shakespeare's
chronology in his lectures would point in the opposite direction. Though Coleridge praises Shakespeare for his impersonality (specially in the poems), he would still regard the works of Shakespeare as indicative of the "growth" of his mind, i.e., of his changing and maturing vision of life. We should not forget that Coleridge was the friend and collaborator of the poet who gave us the first auto-biographical poem in English, The Prelude or the Growth of a Poet's Mind. In view of this, it would not be difficult to believe that, though not a "personalist", Coleridge was not yet unaware of the link that binds a work of art to the subjective consciousness of the artist that brings it into being.

V

Coleridge also seeks to answer the age-old controversial question: What is the nature of dramatic art? Is it a copy or an imitation of nature? Does mimesis mean a photographic version of reality or is it selective? These basic questions are raised in the context of Shakespearian drama. It is in this Shakespearian perspective that Coleridge attacks the neo-classical version of mimesis as a servile or mechanical copying of nature. Throughout the eighteenth century, critics considered Shakespeare as a poet of nature, "the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirrour of manners and of life". Dr. Johnson, the most representative critic adopting this approach said that Shakespeare's characters are not modified by the customs and peculiarities of particular places or by the accidents of temporary opinions; they are the "genuine progeny of common humanity", such as the world will always supply and observation will always find. "His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole
system of life is continued in motion".  

According to Coleridge, the end of the dramatic poetry and of Shakespeare's art is not to present a copy but an imitation of reality (Raysor, I, 204). Coleridge makes a distinction between imitation and copy. An imitation is not a copy "precisely as likeness is not sameness", in the sense of the word "likeness" which implies "difference conjoined with sameness" (Raysor, II, 160). In other words, imitation is different from copy in the sense that a certain amount of difference is essential to the former and an "indispensable condition and the cause of the pleasure we derive from it". On the contrary, in a copy this difference is a defect "contravening its name and purpose" (Raysor, I, 128). Though in the real sense of the word, Coleridge says that we are no more deceived by "copy than by imitation of an object of nature", yet in both cases our feelings are affected very differently and "the pleasure derived from the one is not the same as that afforded by the other". In the former, it is the condition of "all genuine delight that we would not be deluded". In the latter, on the other hand, its very purpose is to produce as much illusion as its nature permits since its "end is not in or for itself" as in the case of a picture but "to be an assistance and means of end of itself" (Raysor, I, 200). 

Drama, Coleridge says, imitates reality under a semblance of reality. It should be judged only under this impression since no other proof is required than the "impassive slumber of our sense of improbability" (Raysor, I, 128). The end of the stage productions is to provide pleasure by producing "a sort of temporary half-faith" which the spectator "encourages" in

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himself and "supports by a voluntary contribution to its own part because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is" (Raysor, I, 200). The mind of the spectator, or the reader, therefore, is not to be deceived into any idea of reality, as the French critics absurdly suppose, nor, on the other hand, is it to retain a perfect consciousness of the falsehood of the presentation. This is a state of mind between the two, which may be properly called illusion, in which "the comparative powers of the mind are completely suspended as in a dream, the judgement is neither beguiled, nor conscious of the fraud, but remains passive, whatever disturbs this repose of judgement by its harshness, abruptness and improbability, offends against dramatic propriety" (Raysor, II, 322).

Moreover, in poetry, as in drama, the difference between reality and imitation is of a higher character.

For in poetry we take the purest parts and combine them with our own minds, with our own hopes, with our own inward yearning after perfection, and being frail and imperfect, we wish to have a shadow, of a sort of prophetic existence present to us, which tells us what we are not, but yet, blending in us as much that we are, promises great things of what we may be. It is this truth and poetry results from that instinct - the effort of perfecting ourselves, the conceiving that which is imperfect to be perfect and blending the nobler mind with the meaner object.

(Raysor, II, 80-81)

Shakespeare is often praised as a close copier of nature but he was not a copier of nature in the sense of the word in which it is often used. For such a transcript of nature, Coleridge says, instead of being a beauty would be a blemish. Shakespeare's business was not to copy but to imitate. His plays are to be distinguished from a blind copying of effects
to a true imitation of the essential principles. He represented manners not by a cold formal copy but by an imitation, that is to say, "by an admixture of circumstances, not absolutely true in themselves but true to the character and to the time represented" (Raysor, II, 160). Shakespeare was certainly a child of nature, but of human nature - not like a Dutch painter copying exactly the objects before him (Raysor, II, 81). As we shall see in the latter part of our chapter, Coleridge considers Shakespearian characters not mere copies from nature but a product of his own meditation. Meditation does not mean the total absence of observation of external circumstances. Mere observation, however, may be able to produce an exact copy "and even to furnish to other men's minds more than the copyist professed; but what is produced can consist of fragments and parts according to the means and extent of observation". Meditation helps the dramatist look at every character with interest, "only as it contains something generally true and such as might be expressed in a philosophical problem". His characters are ideal, not the mere copy of things; they are a product of the contemplation of mind upon things. For example, the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet and Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing are the products of Shakespeare's meditation. It is not the Nurse or Dogberry that we admire "but the poet himself assuming shapes and exhibiting all the force and magnitude of his powers" (Raysor, II, 81).

Coleridge's distinction between copy and imitation is an important achievement on his part. This insight was made possible by his close study of, and reflection on, Shakespeare's plays. It was made with the aim of liberating Shakespeare from the narrow confines of the neo-classical theory, and may be regarded as a radical step forward. Dr. Johnson had gone as far as he could in the appreciation of Shakespeare's characters by broadening the neo-classical
framework through the assimilation into it of the idea of experiential relevance of dramatic art. However, Johnson achieved this through an unconscious amplification of the neo-classical framework. Coleridge, on the other hand, attempts to modify in a radical manner the Aristotelian theory of mimesis through a quasi-Kantian application of the idea of artistic creativity to the traditional view of art as reflection of reality. It is this theoretical modification that enables Coleridge to revise the popular conception of characters like the Nurse or Dogberry as "copies".

VI

Since the neo-classical critics asserted that probability and truth to nature depend on the use of the three unities, Coleridge would like to discuss the role of the unities in dramatic art. Coleridge's discussion of unities resolves the entire controversy that began with Farquhar. Prior to Farquhar, unities were considered necessary on the ground of dramatic probability by the French as well as English neo-classical critics, and Shakespeare was criticized accordingly for not following them. Farquhar (1702) was the first critic who rejected the unities. After him, Stubbs, Upton and Kames had defended the playwright's rejection of the "literalist conceptions," of time and place by his appeal to dramatic illusion. With Johnson (1765), however, the discussion of the unities reached the other extreme when he disposed of the whole issue in his Preface. Johnson rejected the concept of illusion altogether when he said that the audience know that a play is a play. "It is false that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatick fable in its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment was ever credited." In

16 Ibid., p.70.
Shakespeare, therefore, the need for observing the unities of time and place does not arise because no attempt is made to make the plays credible.

Coleridge starts the discussion of the unities by describing the historical circumstances of the ancient stage which necessitated the unities of time and place. As against the neo-classical critics who thought that the historical peculiarities of Greek drama were ideal and universal, Coleridge believed that the rules of classical Greek drama were not universal but applied only to historical situation of Greek plays. Coleridge analyses in detail how the structure of Greek plays was a matter of pure accident, and of these accidents the Greek dramatists "made the best possible use" (Raysor, II, 82).

The unities grew mainly out of the size and structure of ancient theatres. The plays represented were made to include within a short space of time events which could not have occurred in that short space of time. It was because of this that all dramatic performances were then looked upon "merely as ideal". "Nobody supposes that a tragedian suffers real pain when he is stabbed or tortured; or that a comedian is in fact transported with delight when successful in pretended love" (Raysor, II, 72).

Coleridge develops his argument on unities in a historical perspective. It may be said, however, that this historical point of view came to Coleridge through the teachings of Heyne or through Herder. In his total rejection of the unities Coleridge seems to be influenced by the historical approach of Herder.
As the chorus was always on the stage, there was no dropping of curtains. Since the same man could not be at the same time at Thebes and at Rome, it became necessary that the same scene should be presented to the eye, constituting the unity of place, and that the piece should be acted nearly within the time that the events would have occurred in (Raysor, II, 73; II, 83). The gap between acts or between scene and scene was not considered an offence for there were no acts or scenes. To overcome the difficulty, the ancients supplied music and with the charm of their poetry filled up the vacuity. In the story of Agamemnon of Aeschylus, the taking of Troy was supposed to be announced by "the lighting of beacons on the Asiatic shore" (Raysor, II, 264). The mind was beguiled by the narrative ode of chorus during the whole incident and no improbability was felt at the return of Agamemnon. If examined carefully and rigidly, we will notice that he must have passed over from Troy in less than fifteen minutes. Another fact with the ancients was that with them three plays were performed in one day. These were called trilogies. In Shakespeare, we may imagine these trilogies connected into one representation. If Lear were divided into three parts, each would be a play with the ancients. If we take three plays of Agamemnon and divide them into acts, they would form one play (Raysor, II, 264).

Thus Coleridge says that unity is the subject of ideal law. "The dramatist who circumscribes himself within that unity of time which is regulated by stop watch, may be exact, but is

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18 Lord Kames in *Elements of Criticism* stressed the role of chorus in necessitating unities (Vickers, op. cit., Vol.IV, p. 495-7). Schlegel, however, stressed the fact that the real function of chorus was to represent ideal audience. It expresses the point of view of audience and explains it to them. Coleridge borrows from both of them.
not methodical; or his method is of the least and lowest class" (Raysor, II, 349). Unities which were considered essential for Greek plays may not be necessary for the condition of Shakespeare's time. We, therefore, cannot judge Shakespeare according to standards established for a bygone age. According to Coleridge, it is an absurd mistake to compare the beauties of the swan and the dove. Equally absurd it would be to pass judgement on the works of a poet according to the rules derived from the works of other poets of other times and circumstances (Raysor, I, 196). Moreover, the rules of Greek plays cannot be applied to Shakespeare's because they can be distinguished from the works of Sophocles and Aeschylus. Shakespeare's plays are not tragedies or comedies in the strict sense of the word. They are a new genre in itself, "diverse in kind, not merely different in degree" -- they can be called Romantic drama or dramatic romances (Raysor, I, 197). They appeal to the imagination rather than to the senses and to the reason as contemplating our inward nature. Since reason is independent of time and place it has nothing to do with them. The imagination, on the contrary, has an arbitrary control over both.

Shakespeare therefore ought not to be tried by ancient and classic rules but by the standards of his own age. Moreover, these unities were not an end in themselves but means to an end i.e., to produce great dramas (Raysor, I, 50). Shakespeare, too, arrived at the same conclusion by adopting a different process. If King Lear was to be tried by the laws which Aristotle established and Sophocles obeyed, it must be at once admitted to be outrageously irregular. On the other hand, "Lear's language was the language of nature, and such language while we wept, it mingle[d] with our tears. It might give pain, but not such pain as was inconsistent with pleasure" (Raysor, II, 84). Coleridge objects to Dr. Johnson's remark that little or nothing is wanting to render Othello a regular tragedy but
to have opened the play with the arrival of Othello in Cyprus and to have thrown the preceding act into the form of narration (Raysor, I, 49).

The unity found in Shakespeare's plays is the unity of a higher order. For

Who can transpose the scenes of Macbeth, and make the seated heart knock at the ribs with the same force as now it does, when the mysterious tale is conducted from the open heath, on which the weird sisters are ushered in with thunder and lightning, to the fated fight of Dunsinane, in which their victim expiates with life, his credulity and his ambition?

(Raysor, II, 349-50)

As we have already seen, Coleridge believes that a Shakespearian play does not contain photographic reality of nature but is an imitation. In Athenian drama, the observation of the unities sometimes "narrows the period of action and impoverishes the sources of pleasure". Events are sometimes brought into a space in which it is impossible for them to have occurred, and in this way the "grandest effort of the dramatist that of making his play the mirror of life is defeated" (Raysor, II, 161). Even in a few best Grecian plays, the preservation of the unities involved the authors in absurdities. Only a few subjects could be successfully represented with the preservation of unities so it frequently happened that seventy or eighty plays were written on the same subject and with the same characters.

The fact that during Shakespeare's times stage had nothing but curtains for its scenes, compelled the actor as well as the author to appeal to the imagination and not to the senses of the audience. "Thus was obtained a power over space and time which in an ancient theatre would have been absurd
because it would have been contradictory. Thus while the ancient dramatist "binds us down to the meanest part of our nature", Shakespeare appeals to that "which we most want to be when we are most worthy of being..." He "shakes off the iron bondage of space and time" (Raysor, I, 160).

In stead of the unities of time and place, we have in Shakespearian drama a unity of feeling. This unity of feeling or character pervades the whole of his dramas (Raysor, II, 265). Coleridge thus attempted to show that the unities of time and place were not essential to Shakespearian drama and that to suppose them as necessary was to suppose "as evident a falsehood as that the drama impresses with pleasure only as it is supposed to be reality" (Raysor, II, 83). The truth is that it is never supposed to be real -- the height of delusion, the utmost point to which it can arrive is that we do not question about its being real or false, but are "impressed only by the vividness of impression, which is independent of the thought of reality" (Raysor, II, 83).

Thus Coleridge occupies a middle position with regard to the question of dramatic credibility. On the one hand, there were French critics who evidently presuppose that a perfect delusion is to be aimed at. On the other, there was Dr. Johnson who supposed the auditors throughout as in full knowledge of the contrary. This is probably Coleridge's final answer to the criticism of the unities that began in the eighteenth century with Farquhar, and this is probably the modern position also. Only additions have been made to this. One of the modern theories derived from anthropology considers a dramatic performance akin to religious ritual. Like rituals, drama exercises a sort of magical effect over the participants and transforms them from inside. Francis Fergusson, for example,

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in The Idea of a Theatre studied Hamlet as a kind of ritual. Similarly, in The Story of the Night, the four Bradleian tragedies were studied by John Holloway\(^\text{20}\) from an anthropological point of view. This school is called the "Energies of Drama School", i.e., drama as a source of power. This view, however, would not have been possible without Coleridge's middle position.

VII

While comparing Greek drama with English drama, Coleridge likens them to sculpture and painting respectively. The basic difference between them is that of selectiveness and inclusiveness. Greek drama achieves holistic effect through selectiveness, and Shakespearian drama does so by inclusiveness. Apart from this, Greek drama follows the concept of decorum, according to which only one variety of characters is presented at one time. As in the paintings of Niobe, "so also in Greek drama, it would appear very disgusting, if an old nurse were introduced in a heroic subject" (Raysor, II, 159). Care must be taken to prevent the "undignified" from appearing in the company of the dignified. Not only that, care should also be taken regarding the number of figures. Too many persons must not appear at the same time. As against this, in a small group of a picture by Raphael or Titian, which Coleridge compares with Shakespearian drama, an "immense number of figures may be introduced" as, for example, a beggar, a cripple, a dog or a cat, all can be placed together. No rule need be followed regarding the decorum, and aesthetic sense is not impaired by putting such discordant objects together. This concept of decorum, as Coleridge says, does not apply to Shakespeare's plays. For example, this effect is produced in the first scene of The Tempest, where with remarkable skill the highest and the lowest characters are brought together.

"Much of the genius of Shakespeare is displayed in these happy combinations -- the highest and the lowest, the gayest and the saddest; he is not droll in one scene and melancholy in another, but often both the one and the other in the same scene. Laughter is made to swell the tears of sorrow, and to throw, as it were, a poetic light upon it, while the tear mingles tenderness with the laughter" (Raysor, II, 169-70).

Thus as against his eighteenth century counterparts, Coleridge does not regard mixing of comic with tragic as something absurd and ludicrous. Shakespeare, according to Coleridge, always manages the interfusion of the tragic with the comic with "transcendent skill". The fool in King Lear, for example, contributes "in a very sensible manner to the tragic wildness of the whole drama". Lear's wandering amidst the tempest, had all his feelings of distress increased by the overflowing of the wild wit of the fool, as "vinegar poured upon wounds exacerbate[s] their pain" (Raysor, II, 357). Thus his comic characters constantly react on the tragic ones and "comic humour tends to the development of tragic passion" (Raysor, II, 266). In other words, his comic is so interfused with the tragic as to produce a unity of the tragic on the whole.

It is very surprising that in spite of rejecting the concept of decorum, Coleridge adopts an eighteenth century approach to the Porter Scene in Macbeth. All the eighteenth century critics regarded the Porter as "an incongruous character" since they could not find any place for comedy in tragedy. This scene was "commendably omitted" in theatrical productions of Macbeth in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.21 Very much in the manner of his predecessors, Coleridge says:

This low Porter soliloquy I believe written for the mob by some other hand, perhaps with Shakespeare's consent -- and that finding it take, he with the remaining ink of a pen otherwise employed just interpolated it with the sentence; 'I'll devil Porter it no further' and what follows to 'bonfire'. Of the rest not one syllable has the ever present being of Shakespeare.

(Raysor, I, 75)

Coleridge's failure to appreciate the psychological impact of the Porter scene, which was realized for the first time by De Quincy, is striking.

VIII

Coleridge has interesting and perceptive comments to make on tragi-comedy and the historical plays of Shakespeare. About tragi-comedy, Coleridge says that though Shakespeare has produced comedy in tragedy, he never produced tragi-comedy as a form which we find in Italian literature and which found its way in English drama also. The tragedy as well as comedy of the Greek and the English dramatist was much above the real life, "the arena common to both was ideal". He says:

If tragedy was poetry in deepest earnest, comedy was mirth in the highest zest, exulting in the removal of all the bounds; an intellectual wealth squandered in sport; it had nothing to do with morality; its lessons were prudential; it taught to avoid vice, but if it aimed at admonition, it became a middle thing, neither tragedy nor comedy.

(Raysor, I, 169)

Coleridge makes a distinction between comedy and farce. "A proper farce", he says, "is mainly distinguished from comedy by the license allowed, and even required, in the fable, in order to produce strange and laughable situations" (Raysor, I, 99). The story need not be probable, it is enough that it is
possible. A comedy would scarcely allow even the two "Antipholuses", but farce "dares add two Dromios" and is justified in so doing by the laws of its end and constitution. In a word "farce commences in a postulate, which must be granted". In The Comedy of Errors, Shakespeare has presented us with a "legitimate" farce in "exactest consonance with the philosophical principles and character of farce", as distinguished from comedy and from entertainments.

Coleridge also makes interesting comments about historical drama. In a historical drama, Shakespeare blends the epic with the tragic. In order that a drama be purely historical, it is necessary that it be the history of the people to whom it is addressed. Since reality is taken for granted, there should be no such dramatic improbability (Raysor, I, 138). Moreover, it must be poetical, concerned with what is permanent in our nature and therefore deeply interesting to all ages. The events in themselves are immaterial because they are the "clothing and manifestation" of the spirit that is working within. A historic drama is not just a chronology of events, not merely an account of events, but has a deeper, organic unity:

In this mode, the unity resulting from succession is destroyed but is supplied by a unity of higher order, which connects the events by reference to the workers, gives a reason for them in their motives, and presents men in their causative character. It takes, therefore, that part of real history which is the least known, and infuses a principle of life and organisation into the naked facts, and makes them all the framework of an animated whole.

(Raysor, I, 139)

History plays can further be divided into three parts. The distinction does not depend on the quantity of historical events compared with the fiction for there is as much history
in Macbeth as in Richard II, but in relation of the history to the plot. In the pure history plays, history is the moving spirit, "history informs the plot" (Raysor, I, 143). In quasi-historical plays, the main direction is given by the history but there are other things too. History thus "directs" the plot. The two parts of Henry IV form a species of themselves and may be quoted as an example of "mixt" drama. In fictitious drama, history is guided by plot, "it subserves it". Macbeth, Hamlet, Cymbeline, King Lear etc. may be quoted as exemplifying this type.

Shakespeare, Coleridge says, in blending the epic with the tragic, has given the impression of the drama to the history of his country. "By this means he has bequeathed the pure spirit of history". It is not that his facts are to be relied on implicitly for he is not a historian and, therefore, combines his imagination with them:

as the difference is destroyed by a telescope, and by the force of imagination we see in the constellations, brought close to the eye, a multitude of words, so by the law of impressiveness, when we read his plays, we seem to live in the era he portrays.

(Raysor, II, 278)

Thus in his modification and sometimes even rejection of neo-classical doctrine, Coleridge displays enough modern sense. Occasionally, however, he betrays himself to be a champion of the eighteenth century legacy. For example, he suggests that Shakespeare's greatness can be realized if he is compared with other writers following a method used by neo-classical critics. In the neo-classical age, there was a critical convention of comparing passages on particular topics e.g., a passage describing the night from Homer or Virgil would be put side by side a similar passage from Milton. Surprisingly, Coleridge
also asks us to follow the same method -- the method of comparing isolated passages (Raysor, I, 229). This is in spite of the fact that in his great Preface, Dr. Johnson, the most representative neo-classical critic had condemned this method. Coleridge, however, advocates it. A similar illustration of Coleridge's adherence to the eighteenth century method is to be found in his occasional adoption of the beauties-faults method. Thus we see that in spite of Coleridge's novelty, he does not altogether reject the eighteenth century critical tradition.

IX

Coleridge is very critical of the neo-classical taste in the second half of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century. Coleridge believes that this was not genuine taste because the pseudo-wits and the pseudo-intellectuals of that age looked only for verbal decorum and not to originality of thought and expression. Thus the beautiful expression "hanging woods" (Raysor, I, 208) would be unacceptable to these pseudo-wits because the depravity of their minds would remind them of the gallows rather than of trees over-hanging a river or a valley. This debasement of taste is caused by an excessive sense of the ludicrous. This criticism of the eighteenth century taste is not surprising since Coleridge had little liking for the eighteenth century poetic diction.

Coleridge revolted against the neo-classical principle of judging Shakespeare's language at the touchstone of reason, good sense and correctness. Shakespeare, according to Coleridge, is not merely a poet but a "dramatic poet" and his style accordingly is poetic and the words he employs to convey the meaning are used imaginatively. If there can be any mode of judging the appropriateness of diction in Shakespeare plays, it is imagination and not reason. Coleridge does not approve the
practice of seventeenth and eighteenth century editors who made several alterations in the diction of Shakespeare's plays. In Timon of Athens, for example, he criticizes the alteration of "denude" for "deny't" (IV, III, 9, "Raise me this beggar and deny't that lord"), when he says, "I cannot see the necessity of this alteration. Shakespeare is not merely a poet but a "dramatic poet" and as a dramatic poet, when "his head and heart are swelling with fullness", nobody can ask "whether he was grammatically arranged, but only whether he has conveyed his meaning" (Raysor, I, 84-5). Since Shakespeare has his own peculiar way of writing, it is unjustified to test his abilities according to the standard meant for a different style suited to a different age.

He criticizes those eighteenth century critics who believe that the line -- The rugged Phyrrhus he whose sable arms" (Hamlet, II, ii, 446-512) -- is an interpolation. This actor's recitation, according to Coleridge, is dramatically appropriate because Shakespeare wanted to distinguish this passage from the style of his own play. This is an "admirable substitution of the epic for the dramatic" (Raysor, I, 27). Similarly, the dialogue of Hamlet with the players is "one and among the happiest instances" of Shakespeare's power of diversifying the scene while he is carrying on the plot (Raysor, I, 30). In the Sergent's speech too (second scene in Macbeth), the style is deliberately stylized as epic in order to distinguish it from his own play; "epic is substituted for the tragic in order to make the latter felt as the real-life diction" (Raysor, I, 67).

According to Coleridge, it is much easier to find fault with a writer "by reference to former notions and experience than to sit down and read him, recollecting his purpose, connecting one feeling with another and judging of his words
and phrases, in proportion as they convey the sentiments of the person represented" (Raysor, II, 180). Shakespeare, working under his own vivid and vigorous imagination writes a language that invariably, and intuitively becomes the condition and position of each character. As the song of Deborah in *Romeo and Juliet* though "as simple a dithyrambic production as exist in any language yet it is the proper and characteristic effusion of a woman highly elevated by triumph, by the natural hatred of oppressors, and resulting from a bitter sense of wrong; it is a song of exultation on deliverance from these evils, a deliverance accomplished by herself" (Raysor, II, 136).

Shakespeare's language is the language of characters according to their own passions and situations. However, sometimes particularly in the early plays like in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare too forgets for a moment the particular character and "utters his own words in his own person" (Raysor, II, 137). Capulet and Montague often talk a language belonging to their creator and not so characteristic of their own passions in the situations in which they are placed. In lines (I, ii) when Capulet talks to Paris, he speaks a language, though poetic but not descriptive of his passions and shows "a high and active fancy" (II, 136). This is also true in *Love's Labour's Lost*. This fault is there in his early plays because the dramatist is not entirely "blended" with the poet (Raysor, II, 128).

Shakespeare's language in his later works is mature, and collocation of his words is so well placed that no word can be removed or altered from its place. An attempt to remove a word out of its place is as futile an attempt as that of "pushing a brick out of the wall with the forefinger". There, the language of man and that of nature are blended. It is not purely arbitrary mode of recalling the object as the sound sun "or the
figure S, U, N, are", nor is it the language of nature, "a subordinate logos"; it is something intermediate or rather it is the former blended with the latter. For example, in King Lear, it is not "merely recalling the cold notion of the thing, but expressing the reality of it, and, as arbitrary language is an heirloom of the human race, being itself a part of that which it manifests" (Raysor, I, 209). The objects described are fully realized in words. According to Coleridge, the words which Shakespeare has used are transparent and not opaque as in Milton, i.e., they do not draw any attention to themselves but to the thing they describe. The picturesque power displayed by these words is excellent and in this respect Shakespeare may be compared with Dante. By the use of a simple but the most apt word, Shakespeare "instils that energy into the mind" which compels the imagination to produce the picture. For example, Prospero tells Miranda:

One midnight
Fated to that purpose, did Antonio open
The gates of Milan; and, the deed of darkness,
The ministers for the purpose hurried thence
Me, and thy crying self:

Here, Coleridge says, by a single "happy epithet" "crying" in the last line, a complete picture is presented to the mind and in the production of such pictures the power of a genius consists (Raysor, II, 174).

Coleridge quotes the lines which have fallen under the "very severe but inconsiderate censure" of Pope and Arbuthnot as piece of the grossest bombast. Coleridge quotes the lines when Prospero addresses his daughter, directing her attention to Ferdinand (Raysor, II, 179):

The fringed curtain of thine eye advance
And say what thou seest yond.

(I, ii)
Coleridge puts forward the plea here that different modes of expression arise from difference of situation and education. A blackguard would use words according to his own nature and profession while a gentleman would employ different words to express the same thing. Thus to judge the appropriateness of a word, it is necessary to see in which context and by whom it is used. Here these words are spoken by Prospero when his daughter awakens from the charmed sleep and sees Ferdinand. "The solemnity of phraseology assigned to Prospero is completely in character, recollecting her preternatural capacity in which the most familiar objects in nature present themselves a familiar point of view (Raysor, II, 180).

Similarly, in Richard II, Bolingbroke's intentions are revealed to us by the use of a personal pronoun which is used by Shakespeare deliberately and purposely:

Noble Lord,
Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle;
Through brazen trumpet send the breath of pearle
Into his ruined ears, and thus deliver.

Here, the phrase, "into his ruined ears" was used by Bolingbroke for the castle, but his thoughts largely dwelt on the king (Raysor, II, 190). Similarly, in Hamlet, it is from the "strange and forced manner" of Ophelia that "penetrating" Hamlet perceived that the "sweet girl is not acting a part of her own and thus saw into the stratagem" (Raysor, I, 29).

In spite of his rejection of false poetic diction, it is surprising that sometimes in his own criticism of Shakespeare, Coleridge too commits the same fault for which he censures the neo-classical critics. The phrase "the blanket of the dark" in Macbeth is, according to Coleridge, un-Shakespearian. It should be -- "Nor heaven peep thro' the blank height of the dark". "Height", according to Coleridge, is often spelled as "het" "in
our older manuscripts". Modern scholarship, however, proves that no such variant form existed (Raysor, I, 73). Sometimes, Coleridge's lack of historical knowledge makes him criticize Shakespearian epithets. Since he was not familiar with Elizabethan slang, he could not understand the word "fishmonger" which, in Elizabethan slang, meant a "brothel keeper" (Raysor, I, 26).

X

Coleridge's defence of Shakespeare's puns and conceits is another important aspect of his Shakespearian criticism. In fact, Coleridge was the first critic to have analysed Shakespearian puns and conceits in relation to the organic structure of the plays. Throughout the eighteenth century, the relative importance of puns was undermined as they were included among the faults of Shakespeare's style. The same line of criticism which started with Dryden continued till Dr. Johnson who too denounced the "quibbles" of Shakespeare. He says that "the fascination" of quibble was so "irresistible" to Shakespeare that "he would be content to purchase it by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth" but it was sure to lead him out of his way and sure to engulf him in the "rire" just like "luminous vapours are to the traveller". "A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it".\footnote{Vickers, op. cit., Vol. V, p.68.}

Undoubtedly, in Whiter and Morgann, we find an attempt to defend Shakespeare's puns, though in both the cases the attempt is only incidental and no adequate justification about the use of pun is given. Morgann in a footnote refuses to accept all the puns as Shakespearian. Those which are really Shakespearian, show his power of transforming "base things into
excellence". His approach on the whole is still neo-classical since he looks down upon puns as something base and vile. One of the many functions of puns is, however, brilliantly analysed:

For if the jew cut but deep enough,
   I'll pay [the forfeiture] with all my heart.
(The Merchant of Venice, 4.1.230 ff)

Here a play upon words, Morgann says, is fully functional as it is natural for one "who affects gaiety under the pressure of severe misfortune". However, "so broken a gleam can only serve more plainly to disclose the gloom and darkness of the mind" because it is an "effort of fortitude" which fails in its operation and becomes "the most effective pathos". Like Morgann's, Whiter's defence of pun is very brief but unlike Morgann, he regards pun as an unconscious effort on the part of the dramatist. According to his theory, the "propensity in the mind to associate subjects so remote in their meaning and so heterogeneous in their nature, must of necessity deceive the ardour of the writer into whimsical or ridiculous combinations". However, as the reader is not under this effect, he charges the writer for a foolish quibble even when he intends no quibble. In an effort to exculpate Shakespeare from the charge of conscious punning, Whiter too, adopts an eighteenth century approach. He thus destroys the beauty and effect of one of the most characteristic quality of Shakespeare's plays.

Coleridge for the first time analysed Shakespearian puns in their dramatic context and gave us a theory which is akin to the twentieth century approach. It is to be noted here that Coleridge's approach is completely original and he cannot be charged with plagiarism. He starts by saying that punning in

23 Ibid., Vol. VI, p.175.
itself is not a weakness of style but "an additional grace" (Raysor, II, 185). It becomes ridiculous only if not used properly or used at a wrong place. In a philosophical sense, punning is a natural expression of a natural emotion. It arises from the fact that language is not the mere vehicle of representing external objects or simple information. "Words are the living products of the living mind and could not be a due medium between the thing and the mind unless they partook of both" (Raysor, II, 104). The words should not be used to convey merely what a certain thing is, but the very passion and all the circumstances which were conceived as constituting the perception of the thing by the person who used the word. Providing us with this philosophical origin of the puns, Coleridge goes on to analyse the proper functioning of puns in Shakespearian drama.

Coleridge has a perfectly modern sense of the associative power of language. He anticipates Empson and Mahood when he says that Shakespeare enriches meaning through ambiguity. Punning can be one of the means of communication, not just a play on words as in Macbeth (I, iii, 120-121):

Banquo - That trusted home  
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown

Coleridge realized that only denotative meaning is not sufficient but connotative meaning is also required. He doubts that the word "enkindle" has not yet another sense than that of "stimulating" whether that of the "kind" and "kin" as in the phrase, "rabbits kindle" (Raysor, I, 69). Coleridge here analyses punning linguistically.

Apart from this philosophic and linguistic meaning, punning has a dramatic significance too. In Shakespeare's plays, the play upon words is perfectly natural and quite in
character. In Richard II, for example, Bolingbroke approaches the castle in which the unfortunate king has taken shelter. Bolingbroke intends to kill the king. York who is also with him tries to check his advance. Bolingbroke observes:

Mistake not uncle, farther than you should.
and York answers with a play upon words "take"
and "mistake":
Take not, good cousin, farther than you should
Lest you mistake. The heavens are o'er our heads.

Here the play upon words is according to the state of mind and degree of passion of the character (Raysor, II, 190). Gaunt's punning on his death bed (II, i) is also defended by Coleridge on the ground that it is the natural state of human mind in deep passion. "It is a tendency of the human mind, when suffering under some great affliction, to associate everything around it with the obstrusive feeling, to connect and absorb all into the predominant sensation". The peevishness of the old Gaunt is clearly reflected in his answer (Raysor, II, 280).

In Shakespeare's plays, puns often arise out of a mingled sense of injury and contempt of the person inflicting it, for it is the most natural way of expressing that mixed feeling. Hamlet's fondness for pun is an expression of the exuberant activity of his mind. Here puns are the language of his suppressed passion and an expression of his resentment with life (Raysor, I, 22):

Ham: [aside] A little more than kin, and less than kind.
King: How is it that clouds still hang on you?
Ham: Not so, my Lord: I am too much in the sun.

Sometimes a pun can be used as one of the most effectual intensives of passion.
Thus Coleridge has enough modern sense to show that punning is a source of richness in Shakespeare's language though the traces of eighteenth century approach in Coleridge's method can also be found. He adopts an eighteenth century approach when he defends the use of puns as the common fault of Shakespearian age (Raysor, I, 149). Coleridge's inability to accept a vast number of puns as unShakespearian shows that punning was looked down upon not merely in the eighteenth century but in the nineteenth century also. Coleridge does not pretend to justify every conceit as Shakespearian since, as he says, most of them have been most unfairly imputed to him (Raysor, II, 121). There are many portions of the scenes, as Coleridge says, attributed to Shakespeare which were never written by him. He, for example, does not regard the following lines of _Julius Caesar_ as Shakespearian.

Antony speaks to the body of Caesar:

_O world, thou wast the forest to this hart_
_And this, indeed, o world, the heart of thee._

(III, i, 205-7)

These lines are unShakespearian not only on account of the rhythm but also of conceit since it does not arise out of the context (Raysor, I, 17). Here this conceit is alien. Antony forgets an image, "when he is even touching it; and then recollects it when the thought lasts in his mind must have led him away from it".

Coleridge's failure to accept the punning in Porter scene as unShakespearian shows his failure to consider the importance of puns for the intensification of tragedy. This is never shown more clearly than in this remark:

Excepting the disgusting passage of the Porter which I dare pledge myself to demonstrate an interpolation of actors, I do not remember in _Macbeth_ a single pun or play on words..._

(Raysor, I, 77)
These lines, according to Coleridge, show the "vulgarism" (Raysor, I, 149) of Shakespeare's age.

In connection with Shakespeare's "much used" puns and conceits, Coleridge proceeds to defend Shakespeare's wit also (Raysor, II, 123). For this purpose, Coleridge compares the wit of Shakespeare with that of his contemporaries and aptly remarks that "while Shakespeare gave wit as salt to our meat", Ben Jonson gave us wit "as salt instead of meat". He further says that all the other excellencies of Shakespeare were possessed by his contemporaries in greater or less degree; the point in which none of them had approached Shakespeare, was his wit. Shakespeare's wit is different from that of other "witty" writers. It is subtle, and concrete, not just verbal but always accompanied by a visual image. Wit in other writers is purely verbal and therefore, non-visual. Hence its effect is soon lost. Shakespeare wit lingers on in the mind, while in other writers it is soon forgotten. Coleridge quotes the example of the flea on Bardolph's nose, which Falstaff compares with "a soul suffering in purgatory (Raysor, II, 124). Thus, the image itself affords a great part of the pleasure.

Sometimes, by connecting "disparate thought purely by means of resemblances" in the words expressing them, Shakespeare doubles "the natural connection or order of logical consequence in the thoughts by the introduction of an artificial and sought for resemblance in the words", as, for instance, in the third line of Love's Labour's Lost (Raysor, I, 95) : "And then grace us in the disgrace of death". This derives "its force and propriety", as justified" by the law of passion, induces in the mind an unusual activity" and seeks "for means to waste its superfluity".

The analysis of wit and puns in Shakespeare's style shows how acute Coleridge's analysis of poetic elements could be.
Coleridge's concept of metre is an organic one related to the whole scheme of the play. According to Coleridge, all the elements in a work of art should be so combined as to give a sense of totality.

In Shakespearian drama, metre is one of the many parts which help the poet in producing and conveying this sense precisely. Metre is an important tool in order to discover what is "legitimate" in Shakespeare as also "what does not belong to him" (Raysor, II, 67). Meaning in his dramas never closes at the end of a line but impetuosity of thought makes it "flow from one verse to another seldom closing with the tenth syllable of the line". This impetuosity of thought so strongly influences his metre that it furnishes a criterion of what is and what is not Shakespeare's (Raysor, I, 232). In Pericles, for example, "varied images symbolical of moral truth, thrusting by and seeming to trip up each other" make the sense continue from one line to another. According to Coleridge, the play was written "a century before but which Shakespeare altered and where his alteration may be recognized" because of the metre "even to half a line" (Raysor, II, 268). This can be found not only in his later plays but in his early dramas too, such as Love's Labour's Lost, where the "same perfection in the flowing continuity of inter-changeable metrical pauses is constantly perceptible" (Raysor, II, 268) in Love's Labour's Lost, the "sweetness and smoothness" of metre is remarkable and displays Shakespeare's powers even in the very beginning of his career (Raysor, I, 92).

Sometimes, the metre is used to convey the mood, thought or passion of a particular character. In Julius Caesar, the metre of the following lines was meant to express "that sort of
mild philosophic contempt characterizing Brutus even in his first casual speech (Raysor, I, 14).

**Br.** - A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.  
(I, ii, 19)

Shakespeare always makes the metre conform to the thought of the speaker as, for example, in *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare writes:

She dreamt last night, she saw my statue.  
(II, ii, 76)

A modern tragic poet would have written:

Last night she dreamt, that she my statue saw.

Shakespeare never avails himself of the "supposed licence of transposition" merely for the sake of metre (Raysor, I, 16). There is always some logic either of thought or passion to justify it. In Lady Macbeth's speech of welcome to Duncan, Coleridge notes "a laboured rhythm revealing insincerity and affectation". In her speech, we cannot detect "a ray of personal feeling but all is thrown upon the 'dignities', the general duty. The very rhythm expresses the insincere over much in Lady Macbeth's answer to the king" (Raysor, I, 73).

Even a line of irregular length and metre may be dramatically important in Shakespeare, as in *Richard II*, the name of Henry Bolingbroke occupies the whole one line and this, according to Coleridge, is to convey "Bolingbroke's opinion of his own importance" (Raysor, II, 190).

Metre can be used to find out the social status to which a particular character belongs. Characters of high social status use verse while others use prose. For this reason, Coleridge tries to cast Marullus' words in *Julius Caesar*
(I, i, 20) into blank verse, so that the "tribune may be distinguished from the rabble". It does not mean that this is always employed by Shakespeare as a rule, as Coleridge says that Shakespeare preserves the same social distinction even when they both "speak their minds" in the same form. There is a great variety in Shakespeare's prose. It is used by cobbler in the opening scene of Julius Caesar and it is also used by a noble character like Hamlet. Both speak a "rhythm so felicitous and so severally appropriate as to be a virtual metre". In its poetic quality, prose becomes "a virtual metre" (Raysor, I, 13). It acquires the characteristics of poetry because of the presence of unifying imagination.

It is not perhaps by chance that in the last paragraph, our discussion of Coleridge's view of Shakespeare's metre ended on the words "unifying imagination". It should be possible to show that Coleridge's criticism of the plays, in his treatment of general themes, is unified by, and emanates from, his discovery of an appropriate theoretical framework for the study of Shakespeare. There is a radical difference between the ordinary eighteenth century discussion of general topics relating to Shakespeare and that of Coleridge. While in most cases the former remains isolated, unintegrated and disjointed, in Coleridge, the discussion of general topics proceeds from a unified approach to Shakespearian drama. Imagination is the cornerstone of this unified approach, and it is Coleridge's tacit belief that individual elements of Shakespeare's art are all integrated into a whole because his works have that rarest of all poetic qualities which may be designated as imaginative unity. And it is here that Coleridge makes us bid farewell to the eighteenth century forever.