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Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt and Lamb: An Examination of their Evolving Ideas of the Imagination in Relation to their Dramatic and Shakespearean Criticism.

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AN EXAMINATION OF THEIR EVOLVING IDEAS
OF THE IMAGINATION IN RELATION TO
THEIR DRAMATIC AND SHAKESPEAREAN
CRITICISM

by

PAUL SCOTT WILSON

Submitted to
the Faculty of the University of London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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It has been common to assume that each of the Romantic critics meant the same thing by the word 'imagination' as did his contemporaries. The first part of this thesis traces the evolving ideas of imagination of Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt and Lamb, establishing both the content of what each man thought, and also the historical position of each man's thought with regard to his contemporaries. Concerning Coleridge, it is shown that in 1795, before he met Wordsworth, there occurred a significant change in his ideas on fancy and imagination. His rejection of Hartley in the early 1800s is seen to be accompanied by the adoption of a modified theory of association which supports his first definitions of fancy and informs his thought in Biographia. Chapter XII of Biographia (and the works to 1819) represents the conclusions on imagination which Coleridge arrives at in 1816. An attempt is made here to integrate that chapter with the rest of the work and, on the basis of the evidence, to suggest that in the past Coleridge may have been misunderstood.

Hazlitt, Hunt and Lamb do not show the same extended evolution of thought on imagination as did Coleridge. Hazlitt formulated an important theory of imagination in 1805. Hunt followed in 1807, and was the first of the Romantic critics to publish a two-part distinction of imagination. Lamb is relatively late in emerging with his ideas in 1811.

Each man uses his understanding of 'imagination' to shape his critical remarks; this is the subject matter of the second part of the thesis. Whether considering the effects of Hunt's 'imagination - conception' distinction; or Lamb's idea that 'imagination' is meditative not spontaneous; or Hazlitt's notion of the democratic 'imagination'; or the integral relationship between Coleridge's metaphysics and his criticism, the

concept of 'imagination' is seen to be the most important critical tool used by the Romantic critics. Notwithstanding the differences in the specific theories, it is in their critical application that similarities in the attitudes toward 'imagination' are most apparent.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

- BL Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross. Oxford, 1907
2 vols.
- CL Collected Letters, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs. Oxford, 1956-59. 4 vols.
- CMC Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor. London, 1936.
- CN The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn.
- C on S Coleridge on Shakespeare: The Text of the Lectures of 1811-12, ed. R.A. Foakes. London, 1971.
- CSC Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, ed. T.M. Raysor. London, 1930. 2 vols.
- Everyman Biographia Literaria, ed. George Watson. London (Everyman), 1956.
- Lects (1795) Lectures 1795 On Politics and Religion, ed. Lewis Patton and Peter Mann. London & Princeton, 1971.
- PW The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. Oxford, 1912, 2 vols.

William Hazlitt

- H Works The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P.P. Howe. London, 1930-34. 21 vols.

Leigh Hunt

- CE Critical Essays On the Performing of the London Theatre, Including General Observations on the Practice and Genius of the Stage, London, 1807.
- DC Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism 1808-1831, ed. L.H. & C.W. Houtchens. London, 1950.

Charles Lamb

L Works

The Works of Charles and Mary
Lamb, ed. E.V. Lucas. London,
1903-1905. 7 vols.

Note: Throughout this paper idiosyncratic spelling in quotations is retained without the use of sic except in instances where meaning is impaired.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of imagination is regarded as one of the central concepts of the Romantic movement in English literature. Understanding of the concept has been wide and various, and it is partially the adaptability of the concept to various interpretations which has made it an invaluable general tool for discussing the Romantics. The concept has been of particular use in discussing poetry. It has been used to understand Romantic approaches to the act of poetic creation; to poetic unity and organic form; and to nature and the perception of God through nature. The concept has been used to define the similarities among the Romantic poets and to suggest the differences between them and the poets who went before them, for instance on the subject of poetic diction and the proper uses of language in poetry.

The question might be raised, however, whether we have not strayed too far from the precise meaning with which the Romantics used the term? Can we be sure that the advantages found in using the term 'imagination' as a general critical tool have not encouraged us to use the term too liberally at the expense of critical or historical accuracy? Can we be sure that our own vision is correct when the objects before us seem to blur into one? I would suggest that the modern understanding of the term when applied to the Romantics is in danger of becoming too generalized, saying less about what the Romantics actually thought than what we, for the sake of convenience, would like them to have thought. This is not to argue that modern critical use of the term 'imagination' should be abandoned, nor is it to suggest that generalization can or should be avoided in all cases. Rather, it is to say that we should continually weigh our current understanding against the original text to make sure that it is justified. It is from this position we can be confident that our use of generalizations serves the purpose they are intended to serve: to clarify, not to distort.

In this thesis an attempt is made to explore the understanding of 'imagination' as held by the Romantic critics. Although extensive use of the concept of 'imagination' has been made in studying the Romantic poets and poetry, relatively little attention has been given to what the critics saw as imagination and how they applied that concept in their criticism. The writings of the four main Romantic critics of Shakespeare are considered: Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt and Lamb. Each of these critics uses the word 'imagination' in important passages of criticism. When 'imagination' has been mentioned in relation to Hunt, Hazlitt, and Lamb in the past, it has commonly been assumed that these critics used the word either as Coleridge and Wordsworth used it, or as earlier writers used it.

Common use of the word 'imagination' does not mean common understanding of that word. The Romantic critics were living in a time of political and intellectual upheaval. In the field of criticism, the influence of classical ideas of art had been meeting increased opposition, with the result that various words, commonly used in criticism, were particularly vulnerable to misinterpretation. A word like 'imagination' could be interpreted in a number of ways, some quite close to each other, but some completely opposed. 'Imagination' might suggest to some a wild, unruly and essentially destructive faculty while to others it might mean a highly creative one. When 'imagination' was contrasted with another faculty, usually 'fancy', either one might be seen as superior - the definitions in Wordsworth's 1815 "Preface" were prompted by William Taylor's use of the words in a manner opposite to Wordsworth's understanding.

The Romantic critic could not use a word like 'imagination' and expect necessarily to be understood. It is not surprising then to find that each of the Romantic critics felt the need to define what he meant by 'imagination' very early in his writing career. With Coleridge, the first definition came in 1795 and the concept was developed throughout his career; 'imagination'

was distinguished from 'fancy' in 1802 and the philosophical basis of this distinction was a central theme in Biographia Literaria. Hazlitt felt the concept was so important - probably in part through his contact with Coleridge - that he developed a metaphysical system around his concept of 'imagination' in 1805. Before Hunt had written many theatrical reviews he felt compelled to define what he meant by 'imagination' in 1807, and contrasted imagination with 'conception'. And while Lamb wrote a very little criticism, it was in his first major piece in 1811 that it became necessary to clarify what imagination meant for him.

From the four theories of 'imagination' which emerge from the critics, it is clear that they thought of 'imagination' in quite different ways, and ways which were quite precise. The critics were not in agreement on the concept of 'imagination'; nor were they necessarily interested in or sympathetic to each other's ideas; nor did they indicate that they felt themselves engaged in a systematic debate on the subject of 'imagination'. Nonetheless, each critic saw 'imagination' as the superior faculty of the mind.

The evolution of the ideas of 'imagination' in the context of each man's thought and in relation to the other critics - is the concern of the first part of this thesis. In the past there has been no attempt to trace systematically the evolving ideas of imagination in the Romantic critics. This is partly because accounts of Romantic imagination have tended to ignore Hazlitt, Hunt and Lamb in favour of concentrating on Coleridge and Wordsworth. But even with Coleridge there has been no concentrated attempt to trace his ideas from his school days through to Biographia Literaria and the works to 1819. Coleridge's ideas on imagination in Biographia itself have not been given the attention they might have been because Chapter XII of his argument has tended to be ignored and there has been no attempt in the past to integrate that Chapter with the rest of the work. By tracing the evolving ideas of 'imagination' in the Romantic critics, I have attempted to develop an histor-

ical perspective which is necessary for a consideration of 'imagination' as a theme in Romantic criticism.

The Shakespearean and dramatic criticism of the Romantics is considered in the last part of the thesis, in exploring the relation between imagination theory and critical practice. Leigh Hunt's criticism is given extensive consideration - much of it has never before received critical attention as the greater part of his criticism in The News and The Examiner has never been reprinted. It is shown that his 'imagination-conception' distinction provides for him the basis for a range of critical judgements that shape his entire approach. Lamb's Shakespearean and dramatic criticism is given the detailed attention it has for the most part lacked in the past, with some interesting conclusions. Foremost of these is that whereas the Romantic 'imagination' has so often been thought of as spontaneous, Lamb's idea of it is just the opposite, while his thoughts on the matter show him to be anything but sympathetic to the aims of the theatre. In surveying Hazlitt's extensive criticism, it has been found that far from fluctuating on his ideas of 'imagination' as critics have frequently suggested, he is entirely consistent with what I have labeled as his 'democratic imagination' which formed the heart of his 1805 theory. His ideas lead him into areas more diverse than Hunt or Lamb - for example, into topics in the area of language and what we would call metaphor - but the moral emphasis inherent in his notion of 'democratic' is never completely absent. Finally, with Coleridge an attempt has been made to show the integral relation of his criticism to his metaphysics, two branches of his work that previously have been felt to exist somewhat independently of one another. The complexity and harmony of his criticism is shown in a new light.

In spite of the differences, it is in the critical application of the theories of imagination that important similarities begin to emerge. Each critic uses his concept to concentrate on tragedy, mimesis, and on

the internal workings of the minds of dramatic characters. It will be shown in the concluding chapter that Romantic ideas of 'imagination' have similarities not only among themselves but also in relation to a modern understanding of metaphor. Paul Ricoeur's terms for the composite parts of metaphor - the terms "sense" (i.e. the literal sense of a work) and "reference" (i.e. the implication or deeper meaning of a work) - will be used, and it will be seen that Romantic thoughts on imagination correspond quite closely to the division implied by these terms. The similarities indicate that imagination for the Romantic critics did not imply a distrust of reason and a preference to rely on purely subjective or emotional standards. Rather, the concept of imagination, for all of the critics, seemed to imply a means of rationally extending critical standards beyond the confines of the purely material world.

A word about the methodology of this thesis: heavy use is made of the original sources and generally, when there has been a choice between paraphrasing a critic or using the critic's own words, the latter has been favoured. It is felt by the author of this thesis that much of the distortion of Romantic thought which has appeared in critical studies is a result of insufficient attention to the actual arguments of the critics (Hazlitt, Lamb, and Coleridge being cases in point). On the most basic level, one reason for this is that the critic's actual words in the text have often been regarded as of secondary importance.

PART ONE: EVOLUTION OF THE IDEAS

CHAPTER I

COLERIDGE: THE EARLY YEARS

Coleridge did not systematise his thoughts on imagination until he wrote Biographia Literaria, The Statesman's Manual, The Treatise on Method, and volume three of The Friend, between 1815 and 1819. He was the last of the Romantic critics to settle his ideas on the subject of imagination, but he was also the first to investigate the concept seriously. He had been working at least with the terms 'imagination' and 'fancy' since the early 1790s, first in his poetry, and then later, with more detail, in his prose. By 1802, and again in 1804, he had formulated privately the basic distinction between imagination and fancy he would later develop. Contrastingly, Hazlitt did not publish his thoughts until 1805 (although he had been working on them for some time before that); Hunt developed his definitions in 1807; and Lamb was later still, in 1811.

In the years prior to 1805, Coleridge's theoretical comments on imagination are relatively few. Nevertheless, it would be hard to overestimate the importance of this period in the development of Coleridge's ideas, for during these years Coleridge's poetical career - in other words, his practical exploration of imagination - reached its peak and declined. From modest beginnings in 1787, Coleridge's poetical ability gradually increased and then reached its zenith in a sudden burst of activity in 1797-98, with "The Ancient Mariner", the first part of "Christabel", "Kubla Khan", "Frost at Midnight", and "Fears in Solitude", among others. In 1801, however, Coleridge complained to Godwin that the poet in him was dead and that his imagination lay "like Cold Snuff on the circular Rim of a Brass Candle-stick, without even a stink of Tallow to remind you that it was once cloathed & mitred with Flame."¹ "Dejection:

¹ CL, II, To William Godwin, 25 March, 1801.

An Ode", published in October, 1802, took up the cry again, and certainly by 1804 the poet in him was, in fact, dead.

In writing his best poetry in the late 1790s, Coleridge acquired experience which was to be instrumental in shaping the theories of imagination he developed years later. Studies to the present have treated more than adequately the similarities between Coleridge's poetic practice of the late 1790s and his theories of imagination in the 1800s.¹ Rather surprisingly, almost no work has been done to try to uncover what Coleridge's ideas of imagination were before he reached his creative peak. The present chapter will try to remedy this situation. It will argue that Coleridge's ideas on imagination were not always as they seemed to be in 1797; that sometime between 1795 and 1797 there seemed to be a change in Coleridge's thought on imagination; and, finally, that this intellectual change would have contributed to the sudden flowering of Coleridge's talents. Two approaches will be used to isolate the change in Coleridge's thought: one will involve consideration of Coleridge's early use of the words imagination and fancy. The other will concentrate on a shift in Coleridge's psychological attitude towards poetry.

1 One of the first books to demonstrate the manner in which Coleridge's poetic practice and imagination theory might be used to mutually inform one another was I.A. Richards's Coleridge On Imagination (London, 1934). Other critics have tried to draw more precise links between practice and theory. For example, H.W. Piper, in his The Active Universe (London, 1962), has pointed to specific instances in Coleridge's poetry in which he believes the imagination-fancy distinction is operant - even though the distinction was yet to be formulated (pp.123-146). Thomas McFarland has recently moved away from the more usual interpretation of "Kubla Khan" in terms of the secondary imagination by suggesting that the emphasis should be placed on the primary imagination; ("The Origin and Significance of Coleridge's Theory of Secondary Imagination", New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth [New York and London, 1972, 202-204]).

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, there were three ways in which the terms fancy and imagination were being used. The ancient and mediaeval use, which still had some influence, made 'fancy' ('phantasia') superior to 'imagination' ('imaginatio'). The second manner of usage was the direct inverse of this and was Coleridge's in 1802. John Bullitt and W. Jackson Bate have shown that Coleridge was anticipated by a general shift in the positions of the two faculties in English criticism, starting as early as Dryden and crystallized by William Duff and later Dugald Stewart.¹

The third and most common usage, not discussed by Bullitt and Bate, treats the terms as synonyms. Of ten dictionaries I have consulted from 1719 to 1794, seven, including Johnson's Dictionary, give 'fancy' as a one-word definition of 'imagination.'² Of the other three dictionaries, one merely suggests the terms are synonyms,³ and the other two are not sufficiently precise to allow a conclusion to be drawn.⁴

1 "Distinctions Between Fancy And Imagination In Eighteenth-Century Criticism", MLN (January, 1945), 8-15.

2 Nathaniel Bailey, An Universal Etymological English Dictionary, 24th edition (London, 1782); The Rev. Frederick Barlow, M.A., The Complete English Dictionary (London, 1772); A Dictionary of the English Language, 4th edition (London, 1794); Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language, 2 vols., 6th edition, corrected by the author (London, 1778); Benjamin Martin, Lingua Britannica Reformata (London, 1749); John Walker, A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary (London, 1791); and, An Universal Dictionary of the English Language (Edinburgh, 1763).

3 J. Barrow, A New and Universal Dictionary of Arts and Science (London, 1751).

4 The English Expositor (London, 1719), defines imaginary but not imagination. A Poetical Dictionary or; the Beauties of the English Poets, 4 vols. (London, 1761), quotes various people without mentioning fancy.

Coleridge's earliest uses of the term fancy date from his school days and suggest the common dictionary meaning. There is no differentiation of fancy from imagination, and fancy is recognised as the power of forming images. He connects Fancy with false images in 1787 in perhaps his first recorded use of the term - the lines were written as part of a school exercise:

Why does thy mind with hopes delusive burn?
Vain are thy Schemes by heated Fancy plann'd....¹

The connection of Fancy with poetic images, as opposed to images of delusion, is, however, the sense in which Fancy is most commonly used by Coleridge throughout the early 1790s. Fancy is the force of poetic inspiration, as is made clear in "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" (1790). Chatterton's death suggests to Coleridge the death of his own poetic inspiration and ambitions:

But, Chatterton! methinks I hear thy name,
For cold my Fancy grows, and dead each Hope of Fame.²

He goes on to describe how, in a Poet's meditation, "Fancy in the air/ Paints him many a vision fair," and causes the bosom to glow and the eye to dance with rapture.³ Later in the poem, Fancy is portrayed as the powerful, picture-making faculty; Chatterton's suffering face is seen almost against the poet's wishes:

For powerful Fancy evernigh
The hateful picture forces on my sight.⁴

Numerous poems following the 1790 version of "Chatterton" retain Fancy as the force of poetic creation. The toil of earthly life is contrasted with

1 PW, I, 2: "Dura Navis", ll. 5-6.

2 PW, I, 13: "Monody", ll. 3-4. This suggestion of the loss of the poetic muse has connections to the poetic tradition of invoking the muse; it also provides an interesting comparison with "Dejection: An Ode" (especially stanza VI), in which the loss of the poetic muse is felt as a reality.

3 PW, I, 14: ll. 29-31.

4 PW, I, 14: ll. 45-46.

"Fancy's high career", in the poem "To The Evening Star" (1790).¹ In 1791, there is reference to the streaming of "Fancy's vivid colourings."² In two poems, of 1792 and 1793, the poet seeks Fancy, personified as a maiden, and discovers the haunts of Fancy and Poesy beside a stream. Specific references to "Fancy's eye" and "Fancy's ear" suggest that Fancy is the faculty to which beauty appeals - it is the aesthetic faculty.³ There is a suggestion that it is a reproductive faculty, for it can extend the natural beauties of the stream's warbling song: "Still, Fancy! still that voice, those notes prolong."⁴ In 1794, it is Fancy which becomes ill at the total absence of beauty in man's actions: "Sick Fancy groan'd o'er putrid hills of slain."⁵

Throughout this period it is common to find Fancy pictured as an elf-like form "hovering round on shadowy wing."⁶ Neither the image nor its underlying meaning are original, but the relationship between personified Fancy and the persona of the poet is informative about the way in which Coleridge may have viewed the creative act of fancy. When the poet is feeling sorrow, Fancy is pictured sighing at his side⁷ (1794) or, in another place, is shown drooped and wreathing herself in willow⁸ (1795). When the

1 PW, I, 11: ll. 11-12.

2 PW, I, 30: "Happiness", l. 11.

3 PW, I, 50 & 54: "Effusion at Evening", ll. 59 & 61; "Lines", ll. 97 & 99.

4 PW, I, 52: "Lines", l. 53.

5 PW, II, 500: "The Fall of Robbespierre", l. 174.

6 PW, I, 128: "Monody on the Death of Chatterton", l. 14 (1794 variation). See also the following pages for similar images: PW, I, 40, 49, & 115.

7 PW, I, 71: "The Faded Flower", ll. 10-11.

8 PW, I, 95: "Lines in the Manner of Spenser", ll. 10-13.

poet is feeling rapture, Fancy is pictured as "Hope-born", showering rejuvenating fragrances from her wings (1795);¹ her songs are gayer than they were before (1795).² Whether the poet is distressed or not, however, Fancy is with him. There seems to be no real danger of being cut off from poetic inspiration. Fancy is always near at hand. He calls it "the Guardian power";³ and if it is ever away from him, it is only slumbering and will return as surely as does the morning:

But Fancy now more gaily sings;
Or if awhile she droop her wings,
 As skylarks 'mid the corn,
On summer fields she grounds her breast:
The oblivious poppy o'er her nest
 Nods, till returning morn.

Here, Fancy is not connected with the poppy and dreams of opium, as imagination would be later. In the same year, 1795, Coleridge did come close, however, to defining fancy in terms that later would be reserved for imagination, when he suggested that Fancy was a "shaping" power.⁵

The word imagination does not play a major role in Coleridge's poetry to 1795. Probably his

1 PW, I, 87: "To Robert Southey", ll. 5-9.

2 PW, I, 98: "Lines", l. 61.

3 PW, I, 87: see the variant reading of "Sheridan" (1794).

4 PW, I, 98-99: "Lines", ll. 61-66.

5 PW, I, 87: see the variant reading of "Sheridan", from MS. E.

first recorded use of the word is in a preface to a poem he sends to his brother George from Christ's Hospital, on March 31, 1791. The poem is written to make the truth of mathematics (in this instance a specific Euclidian exercise) more attractive, thereby supplying a deficiency inherent in mathematics:

...viz. that though Reason is feasted,
Imagination is starved; whilst Reason is
luxuriating in its proper Paradise, Imagination
is wearily travelling on a weary desert. To
assist Reason by the stimulus of Imagination
is the design of the following production.¹

The poem, as a poem, has little merit; it seems that "Imagination" merely refers to the attempt to bring some sort of rhyme and poetic interest to geometry. It is another word for fancy.

The second reference to imagination is in August of 1792, and here it is obviously a synonym for fancy. "An Effusion At Evening" begins with the lines

IMAGINATION, Mistress of my Love!
Where shall mine Eye thy elfin haunt explore?²

At the beginning of the third stanza, Fancy is substituted for Imagination:

Propitious Fancy hears the votive sigh -
The absent Maiden flashes on mine Eye!

One year later, when Coleridge rewrote the poem, he dropped the reference to Imagination in the first lines, and used Fancy instead:

O THOU wild Fancy, check thy wing! No more
Those thin white flakes, those purple clouds
explore!³

1 PW, I, 21: "A Mathematical Problem."

2 PW, I, 49.

3 PW, I, 51: "Lines."

There are no poetic references to imagination in 1794, but at the beginning of that year there are three letters which allude to his attempt to escape financial and personal problems by joining the Light Dragoons.¹ Imagination is mentioned in each letter as being responsible for the mad scheme: "It had been better for me, if my Imagination had been less vivid";² "...Wisdom may be gathered from the maddest flights of Imagination";³ and, "I have been, deeply do I feel that I have been, the dupe of my Imagination, the slave of Impulse, the child of Error and Imbecility..."⁴ There is nothing to suggest that the word fancy could not have been used instead.

In 1795, there comes a major change in Coleridge's use of the words imagination and fancy. The change is highlighted in the poem "Religious Musings."⁵ The uses of the terms imagination and fancy in this poem are significant because, for the first time in Coleridge's poetry, a new meaning for the terms becomes evident, although the old meaning is present as well. Fancy is still the force of poetic creation, as is indicated in the lines from Akenside which Coleridge adapted and prefixed to the 1796 edition of the poem:

What tho' first,
In years unseason'd, I attun'd the lay
To idle Passion and unreal Woe?
Yet serious Truth her empire o'er my song
Hath now asserted...

...and my Fancy's careless toil
Drew to the better cause!⁶

1 John Cornwall gives an interesting account of the enlistment in his Coleridge: Poet and Revolutionary 1772-1804 (London, 1973), 31-32.

2 CL, I, To George Coleridge, 23 February, 1794.

3 CL, I, To George Coleridge, 4 March, 1794.

4 CL, I, To George Cornish, 12 March, 1794.

5 This poem was begun on 24 December, 1794 and was not finished until March, 1796. By October, 1795, Coleridge claimed that 300 (as opposed to the final 419) lines were written. As will be seen in this paper, many of the thoughts in the poem belong to 1795, and I will be treating the poem as though it belongs to 1795 on the strength of these. Because the poem will be quoted many times in this paper, line references will be given internally. The poem may be found in PW, I, 108-125.

6 PW, I, 108.

The same meaning is evident in the poem itself, where the Biblical prophecy of the final Destruction of the earth is contemplated:

Heights most strange
Whence Fancy falls, fluttering her idle wing.
For who of woman born may paint the hour,
When seized in his mid course, the Sun shall wane
Making noon ghastly!
(ll. 382-386)

Imagination is not explicitly offered as a synonym for fancy in this context, but with regard to the new way in which fancy is used, imagination does seem to be a synonym. Fancy is cast in a religious role. It is the agent of faith and revelation. It helps to 'diffuse' one's self into the Self of God:

Through courts and cities the smooth savage roams
Feeling himself, his own low self the whole;
When he by sacred sympathy might make
The whole one Self! Self, that no alien knows!
Self, far diffused as Fancy's wing can travel!
Self, spreading still! Oblivious of its own,
Yet all of all possessing! This is Faith!
(ll. 151-158)

This suggestion of Fancy's role in religious experience is reinforced by what is said of Imagination, later in the poem. The "vacant" mind of the Shepherd - Coleridge's archetypal man in the poem - is awoken by the 'conjuring' of Imagination, and a chain reaction is the result. Self-consciousness and personal desires emerge, which in turn give rise to all forms of virtue (including "the inventive arts, that nursed the soul/ To forms of beauty", ll. 208-209) as well as all forms of vice (Disease, Envy, Want, Avarice, Luxury and War). The chain reaction finally produces Science which will free man from his bondage. (See ll. 198-225)

The production of Science ends the abuse of Imagination's powers. The scientists seem to be the direct agents of Imagination (or Fancy). They are "Philosophers and Bards." They conjure "bright visions" which hypnotise the masses and awaken them

to the reality of God. They correct man's chaotic course and inspire him to do good. The earlier aesthetic power of Imagination (and Fancy) in Coleridge's poetry is supplemented by this additional power to perceive God in the unity and harmony of His creation, and to point to him through one's own creation. (See: ll. 225-259.)

The new meaning given to imagination and fancy in "Religious Musings" is present in the lectures on politics and on revealed religion in the first six months of 1795, although there the new meaning is attached only to imagination.¹ The poem and portions of the lectures are closely related, and may have been written simultaneously. The lectures do not interpret the on-going revolution in France along millenarian lines (as does the poem, working on notions already developed by Joseph Priestley, and others),² but many of the themes in the lectures are identical to those in the poem and are given more detailed treatment. The Shepherd as archetypal man is again present; Coleridge speaks of the "uncorrupted Shepherd's Belief of God originat[ing] in the incessant perception of his benevolence." He says that in the pastoral state, "motives to evil were few and the imaginations of men strong and vivid", enabling men to perceive God's design in nature. This design, and God's benevolence, were both obscured by the building of towns and cities (i.e. the growth of civilization).³ In the lectures, the responsibility for the subsequent rise of Vice and

1 The lectures do not seem to use the terms imagination and fancy synonymously. "Fancies", in one place, are associated with absence of fact (Lects [1795], 189); and in another place, "diseased fancy" is connected with "feverish slumber." (328).

2 See: M.H. Abrams, "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age", in Romanticism Reconsidered, (New York and London, 1963), 26-72; esp. 30-37 & 49-50. See also John Cornwall, Coleridge, 77-79.

3 Lects (1795), 350.

Appetites is not laid with imagination, as clearly as it was in "Religious Musings." Coleridge does speak of "imaginary wants" arising to divert "the pains of Vacancy", and of the dangers of misapplication of the powers of imagination,¹ but he places the responsibility with another faculty, the understanding.

The 1795 lectures are the first place in which Coleridge discusses understanding as a faculty, and distinguishes it from both imagination and reason. Vice, he says, "originates not in the man, but in the surrounding circumstances; not in the heart, but in the understanding."² Later he says, "when the heart is vitiated, the understanding will not long remain pure";³ and in another place, "the Depravity of the Heart spread[s] a darkness over the understanding."⁴ Depraved understanding is accompanied by depraved reasoning.⁵

It is in this context of depraved understanding and reasoning that the role of imagination is discussed in the lectures. In several places, Coleridge stresses the need to cultivate benevolence and virtue,⁶ and as in "Religious Musings", it is imagination which makes this possible. It contemplates "splendid Possibilities" that revivify God's purpose for our lives; it stimulates us "to the attainment of real excellence"; it "urges us up the ascent of Being."⁷ It is identified with the creative power

1 Lects (1795), 236.

2 ibid., 12 & 40.

3 ibid., 74. See also: 196-7.

4 ibid., 350. Apparently related to this are Coleridge's references to Robespierre's "dark imagination" (35) and "people of a stupid and earthy imagination" (139).

5 ibid., 111.

6 See: ibid., 12, 39, 40, 46, 48, 105, 114.

7 ibid., 235 & 238. These passages directly anticipate Coleridge's famous description of the normal vale of human life in BL, I, 164-166 (Chapter XII); (Everyman, 137-138).

of God;¹ and is called a "restless faculty",² and "truth-painting."³ But as Coleridge emphasises:

The noblest gift of Imagination is the power of discerning the Cause in the Effect [,] a power which when employed on the works of the Creator elevates and by the variety of its pleasures almost monopolizes the Soul. We see our God everywhere - the Universe in the most literal Sense is his written Language.⁴

Both here and in "Religious Musings", Coleridge is using the word imagination with a meaning that is new for him and is present at no time before 1795. He sees imagination primarily fulfilling a capacity in religious development and connects it with the soul. It is the power which seeks Unity and Cause in the works of nature,⁵ perceiving truth through nature's symbols.

1 Lects (1795), 235.

2 ibid., 236.

3 ibid., 248.

4 ibid., 338-339.

5 This notion and others (see: Lects [1795], 33, 93, 94, 109) may be seen as early preparation for Coleridge's later ideas on imagination and Method.

What was the impact of the new understanding of imagination Coleridge developed in 1795? Broadly speaking, there were three results. First, there was a reappraisal of both the role of the poet and the power of the poet. Second, there was a basis for new insights into the psychological means of perception, and these, in turn, would assist Coleridge in further developing his ideas on imagination. Third, the seeds were planted for the eventual desynonymizing of imagination and fancy.

Reappraisal of the role of the poet resulted in an upwards reevaluation of his function. No longer in Coleridge's poetry was the poet portrayed searching after a personified Fancy; as the lines prefixed to "Religious Musings" indicated, no longer was he tuning his lay "To idle Passion and unreal Woe." The poet had a higher role which involved unveiling the reality of God by piercing the symbolic husk of the universe. In "The Eolian Harp", written in 1795, the poet feels "the one Life within us and abroad" and compares himself to a lute being played by the wind: "the breeze warbles, and the mute still air/ Is Music slumbering on her instrument."¹ In "Religious Musings", the 'one Life' is expressed as Love, and the poet is seen as a warbling stream:

I discipline my young and novice thought
 In ministeries of heart-stirring song,
 And aye on Meditation's heaven-ward wing
 Soaring aloft I breathe the empyreal air
 Of Love, omnific, omnipresent Love,
 Whose day-spring rises glorious in my soul
 As the great Sun, when he his influence
 Sheds on the frost-bound waters - The glad stream
 Flows to the ray and warbles as it flows.
 (411-419)

1 PW, I, 101; 11. 26 & 32-33.

In later poems the idea of poet as a reader of nature's symbols would again emerge, as in the lines,

For all that meets the bodily sense I deem
Symbolical, one mighty alphabet
For infant minds¹

or in the lines addressed to the poet's son,

so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds² intelligible
Of that eternal language....

Significantly, too, the poet's power is reappraised in 1795, in accordance with the new notions of imagination (or fancy). References to the soaring wings of fancy are exchanged for descriptions like that in "The Eolian Harp" which portray the power of the wind:

o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,³
At once the Soul of each, and God of all.³

In "Religious Musings", the philosophers and bards rush,

And tame the outrageous mass, with plastic might
Moulding Confusion to such perfect forms,
As erst were wont, - bright visions of the day!
(246-248)

At the end of the poem the philosophers and bards are related to a "mystic choir" of "Contemplant Spirits":

ye that hover o'er
With untired gaze the immeasurable fount
Ebullient with creative Deity!
And ye of plastic power, that interfused
Roll through the grosser and material mass
In organizing surge!
(402-407)

In these last lines, Coleridge identifies the plastic powers of the poet with the plastic creative power of God, but the lines have another importance which

¹ PW, I, 132; "The Destiny of Nations", ll. 18-20 (1796).

² PW, I, 242; "Frost at Midnight", ll. 58-61 (1798).

³ PW, I, 102; ll. 46-48. Ten years before this, Thomas Reid had spoken of "painting, or other plastic arts"; he said, "We consider this power of the mind [conception] as a plastic power, by which we form ourselves images of the objects of thought." Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man (Edinburgh, 1785), 362-363.

might be mentioned here. Coleridge's ideas of 'interfusion' and 'rolling' were borrowed by Wordsworth in lines which have been traditionally associated with Romantic views of imagination:

and I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.¹

Coleridge's discoveries about imagination in 1795 opened the way for new insights into psychological perception. The reason for this is clear: Coleridge began to see that man's deepest experiences with nature were the legitimate grounds of poetic exploration. Nature as it existed was not as important as nature as it was experienced and perceived by the mind as it struggled to synthesise thought and feeling. As Coleridge was to write in 1802, "every phrase, every metaphor, every personification, should have its justifying cause in some passion, either of the Poet's mind, or of the Characters described by the Poet."²

Coleridge was only beginning to move towards this position when he wrote "Religious Musings." The poem contains frequent examples of God being revealed to individuals through nature's symbols. God is revealed to the Oppressor (ll. 9-14); to the Sceptic (28-45); to the Elect (45-49); to Fear (68-80);

1 Wordsworth: Poetical Works (London, 1967), 164; "Tintern Abbey", ll. 93-102. The image of the setting suns and the ocean may have been suggested by the image of the rising sun and "frost-bound waters" which followed the Coleridge lines. Lines from "The Eolian Harp" may have been in Wordsworth's mind as well: "O! the one Life within us and abroad/ Which meets all motion and becomes its soul," (ll. 26-27).

The above lines from "Religious Musings" come from the section of that poem which Wordsworth liked the best; see M.H. Abrams, "English Romanticism: the Spirit of the Age", 50.

2 CL, II, To William Sotheby, 13 July, 1802, p.812.

to the Shepherd (94-116); to the warring crowd (239-259); to the good man (345-354); and to the poet, in three different places (2-5; 153-158; 395 ff.). Considering that no poem of Coleridge's before 1795 contained any suggestion of revelational experience (i.e. an experience in which the mind of a character or the poet is disclosed through changes in events or in nature around him), it is surprising to find such heavy emphasis on this kind of experience in "Religious Musings."¹

"Religious Musings" presents a contrast to the poetry which went before it because of the focus on mind as well as nature. But although in 1795 Coleridge had recognised the role of imagination in helping the mind to pierce the symbols of nature, he had not yet recognised the process of its actions. He had yet to gain the psychological insight that, in addition to nature acting on the mind, the mind acted on nature through imagination altering the manner in which nature is perceived. Over and over in the poem, the personified passions which grip the minds of the characters, are shown to disappear suddenly - not through any internal workings of the mind, but rather through the external action of nature and God.² Passions affecting the mind are the justifying cause of few of the phrases, metaphors, or personifications in the poem.

Coleridge's practical understanding of the psychological power of the imagination in 1795 may be illustrated by considering the best example of

1 The fact that this type of experience first appears in a religious poem may be of significance, but it is quite possible that this kind of experience would have been related in Coleridge's poetry without the explicitly religious subject.

2 Coleridge's own words are an accurate description of his method in this poem:

Thus from the Elect, regenerate through faith
 Pass the dark Passions and what thirsty cares
 Drink up the spirit, and the dim regards
 Self-centre. Lo they vanish! or acquire
 New names, new features - by supernal grace
 Enrobed with Light, and naturalised in Heaven.
 (88-93)

revelation in "Religious Musings" and comparing it with an example from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", of which it is the prototype.¹ In "Religious Musings" a shepherd is described walking through a thick morning fog. No connection is made between the fog and the shepherd's mind; his mind, and his imagination, seem passive until revelation is thrust at him, in a sense:

a shepherd on a vernal morn
Through some thick fog creeps timorous with slow foot,
Darkling he fixes on the immediate road
His downward eye: all else of fairest kind
Hid or deformed. But lo! the bursting Sun!
Touched by the enchantment of that sudden beam
Straight the black vapour melteth....

And wide around the landscape streams with glory!....

From himself he flies,
Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
Views all creation; and he loves it all,
And blesses it, and calls it very good!
This is indeed to dwell with the Most High!
Cherubs and rapture-trembling Seraphim
Can press no nearer to the Almighty's throne.
(ll.94 ff.)

There is an allusion here to God blessing his creation in Genesis, an allusion which is not obvious in "The Ancient Mariner."

The Ancient Mariner has a similar experience of 'flying from himself' as he watches the water-snakes, and this experience is also one in which God is perceived through symbols:

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

¹ I am not aware of the following comparison having been made before; John Livingston Lowes's The Road to Xanadu (Boston, 1927) might have been expected to draw the relation, but did not.

The self-same moment I could pray;
 And from my neck so free
 The Albatross fell off, and sank
 Like lead into the sea.¹

By the time Coleridge wrote this poem, he had grown in understanding about the psychological powers of the imagination. The Mariner's imagination is shown working before and during the above scene; everything around him he sees as symbolic of his evil deed. His inner mind and nature reflect each other and there is an interpenetration of the two. A change which is purely internal and psychological has physical effects in external nature - the Albatross falls from his neck. The presence in "Religious Musings" of some ten examples of revelational experience in which the mind remains inactive is a factor which, in itself, argues for an early dating of the poem.

Numerous other poems written after 1795 could be cited to give further proof of growth in Coleridge's ideas on imagination. In "Frost at Midnight", the poet's Spirit merges so closely with the flame on which it meditates that it is impossible to tell which is a reflection of which:

Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
 Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
 Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
 Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
 Making it a companionable form,
 Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
 By its own moods interprets, every where
 Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
 And makes a toy of Thought.²

In "The Nightingale", the poet is found actually checking himself in the act of projecting his own feelings onto that which he sees:

And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,
 'Most musical, most melancholy' bird!
 A melancholy bird? Oh! idle thought!
 In Nature there is nothing melancholy.³

¹ PW, I, 198; ll. 282-291. Another 1795 poem, "The Eolian Harp", also anticipates these lines: "Methinks, it should have been impossible/ Not to love all things in a world so fill'd." ll. 30-31.

² PW, I, 240-241; ll. 15-23.

³ PW, I, 264; ll. 12-15.

In some of the early poems, Coleridge portrayed the poet looking for Fancy beside a stream. In "Lewti", the poet is in a similar setting, walking along the banks of a river, but his aim is much different. He is consciously trying to forget the image of his lover. Despite his efforts, all of the objects he sees are subconsciously acted upon by the imagination and he finds himself, again and again, staring at the image of Lewti. He disturbs two swans at one point; his thoughts turn to Lewti and then return to the swans, and both images are fused:

I then might view her bosom white
 Heaving lovely to my sight,
 As these two swans together heave
 On the gently-swelling wave.¹

Compare the psychological means of perception in the above lines with the process in similar lines written by Coleridge in 1790:

Within your soul a voice there lives!
 It bids you hear the tale of Woe.
 When sinking low the sufferer wan
 Beholds no hand outstretch'd to save,
 Fair, as the bosom of the Swan
 That rises graceful o'er the wave,
 I've seen your breast with pity heave,
 And therefore love I you, sweet Genevieve!²

In the latter lines, nature and the swans are merely an ornament to thought, and mind and nature are far apart, neither one really penetrating the other.

Coleridge's reappraisal of the role and powers of the poet in 1795, coupled with his subsequent development as a poet, eventually led to the desynonymizing of fancy and imagination. The seeds for this were already planted by the summer of 1795, by which time he had written his lectures. In consequence of his new ideas on imagination, Coleridge

1 PW, I, 256; ll. 72-75.

2 PW, I, 20; "Genevieve", ll. 7-14.

was using both words a) with the old meaning, concerning poetry, and b) with the new meaning, concerning primarily religion, but including poetry as well.

The attractiveness of differentiating the terms was enhanced, or perhaps for the first time brought to consciousness, in September of 1795, or sometime shortly afterwards. It was in September that Coleridge met Wordsworth. The powerful effect of the poetry Wordsworth recited, led Coleridge to repeated meditations and the suspicion,

that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or, at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power.¹

Although by Coleridge's own admission, his initial suspicions along these lines matured into full conviction only after "a more intimate analysis of the human faculties, their appropriate marks, functions, and effect";² it seems unlikely, from the scanty evidence available, that Coleridge continued to think of imagination and fancy as synonyms after 1795.

The closest Coleridge got to defining fancy in terms of the later imagination, was in 1795 when he called it a "shaping" power. It is probably the last year in which there can be found references to fancy as the faculty of poetic creation. Coleridge does not stop making references to fancy in his poetry at this time, but from 1796 to 1802, there is a considerable drop in the frequency of its usage which seems to correspond to a change in meaning.³ Instead of referring to poetic creation, fancy refers almost

1 BL, I, 60-61; (Everyman, 49-50).

2 BL, I, 60; (Everyman, 50).

3 From 1790 to 1796, Coleridge made about forty poetic references to fancy. In the next six years, the years of his greatest poetic activity, there are only about twelve references to fancy. The essential index for this kind of information is Sister Eugenia Logan's limited edition of A Concordance to the Poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana; 1940). Dates can be determined only in conjunction with PW.

exclusively to daydreams, wishes, and imaginary schemes.¹

The decline in the number of poetic references to fancy does not coincide with an increase in poetic references to imagination, for there are none from 1796 to 1802. References to imagination in Coleridge's prose, however, began to hint that imagination was being considered as the superior of the two powers. In contrast to numerous references to fancy and wishing, Coleridge speaks in 1797 of "those lofty imaginings, that are peculiar to, and definitive of, the poet."² In a review of The Monk, in the same year, he deplures the "little expense of thought or imagination" in attempts to awaken exhausted appetites of readers by powerful stimulants. The character of Matilda he finds "exquisitely imagined", and the whole novel he finds, "distinguished by the variety and impressiveness of its incidents; and the author everywhere discovers an imagination rich, powerful, and fervid."³

Despite these and other references to imagination in the late 1790s; and despite the fact that Coleridge's new poetry seemed of a different kind from his early poetry which had been classified mainly in terms of fancy; Coleridge did not de-synonymize imagination and fancy clearly until 1802. In a letter to William Sotheby he wrote:

[In Greek religious poems] All natural Objects were dead - mere hollow Statues - but there was a Godkin or Goddessling included in each - In the Hebrew Poetry you find nothing of this poor Stuff - as poor in genuine Imagination, as it is mean in Intellect - /At best, it is but Fancy, or the aggregating Faculty of the mind - not Imagination, or the modifying, and co-adunating Faculty. This the Hebrew Poets appear to me to have possessed beyond all others - & next to them the English. In the Hebrew poets each Thing has⁴ a life of it's own, & yet they are all one Life.

¹ For example, see: PW, I, 249; 317; 343; 353. PW, II, 520; 533; 555; 568.

² CL, I, To Joseph Cottle, Early April, 1797, p.184.

³ CMC, 370-371.

⁴ CL, II, 10 September, 1802, pp.459-460.

The reference to 'one Life' owes allegiance to Coleridge's insight in 1795 that imagination is the power of perceiving "the one Life within us and abroad." Coleridge's differentiation of imagination and fancy in 1804 seemed more directly the result of his poetic attempts to link mind and nature through passion:

I dare affirm that he [Wordsworth] will hereafter be admitted as the first & greatest philosophical Poet - the only man who has effected a compleat and constant synthesis of Thought & Feeling and combined them with Poetic Forms, with the music of pleasurable passion and with Imagination or the modifying Power in that highest sense of the word in which I have ventured to oppose it to Fancy, or the aggregating power - in that sense in which it is a dim Analogue of Creation, not all that we can believe but all that we can conceive of creation.¹

¹ CL, II, To Richard Sharp, 15 January, 1804, p.535.

CHAPTER II

1805-1807: WILLIAM HAZLITT

William Hazlitt was twenty-seven when his first book, Essay on the Principles of Human Action, was published in 1805. High hopes that the work would establish him as a metaphysician of some ability were disappointed by very poor sales. It was with some difficulty that he managed to persuade the publisher, J. Johnson, to accept his second work two years later, an abridgement of Abraham Tucker's The Light of Nature Pursued; and in fact it was Charles Lamb, whom Hazlitt had met in 1804, who had to intercede on his behalf.¹ Hazlitt devoted half of what should have been an introduction to Tucker, to a recasting of his argument in the Essay, on the basis that he might "not soon have an opportunity of recurring to the same subject,"² but his attempt to arouse interest in his earlier work did not succeed. In 1828, two years before his death, he was still feeling frustration and bitterness at never having received proper recognition for that work:

...it fell still-born from the press, and none of those who abuse me for a shallow catch-penny writer have so much as heard of it. Yet, let me say that the work contains an important metaphysical discovery, supported by a continuous and severe train of reasoning, nearly as subtle and original as anything in Hume or Berkeley.³

During Hazlitt's lifetime, Coleridge was one of the few critics even to suggest that Hazlitt's work

¹ See P.P. Howe, The Life of William Hazlitt (London, 1922), 88.

² H Works, I, 130-134.

³ H Works, XVII, 312.

had been original.¹ In modern times, much attention has been given to the question of Hazlitt's originality in the Essay. Critics like Herschel Baker,² Leonard M. Trawick III,³ W.P. Albrecht,⁴ Roy E. Cain,⁵ Kathleen Coburn,⁶ Ralph M. Wardle,⁷ and Roy Park,⁸ have each mentioned the subject and stated that Hazlitt was not original in his ideas. Critics have recognised the similarity of his ideas in the Essay to eighteenth century ideas on sympathy. However, full appreciation of Hazlitt's Essay may still be lacking since few critics have given close consideration to his argument or focused on the distinctive features of his particular account of sympathy. It will be argued in the following pages that to see Hazlitt's ideas on imagination strictly in the context of a faculty of sympathy is to limit what he says about imagination in the Essay. When he speaks about the particular functions of imagination, it becomes clear that he understood imagination to be more complex and comprehensive than just a faculty which allowed man to sympathize with others. Also, Hazlitt is less concerned with sympathy per se than he is with describing the psychological factors which lay behind man's feelings of sympathy, or lack of sympathy, for others.

1 In 1817, in a footnote to his 'Second Lay Sermon', Coleridge made the following judgment: "The fallacious sophistry of the grounding principle in this whole system [the philosophy that all actions stem from self-love] has been detected by Des Cartes, and Bishop Butler: and of late years with great ability and originality, by Mr Wm. Hazlitt." Lay Sermons (London and Princeton, 1972), 187.

2 William Hazlitt (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1962), esp. 140-149.

3 "Sources of Hazlitt's 'Metaphysical Discovery'," PQ, 42 (1963), 277-282; esp. 278-9.

4 Hazlitt and the Creative Imagination (Lawrence, Kansas, 1965), esp. 27-28.

5 "David Hume and Adam Smith as sources of the Concept of Sympathy in Hazlitt", PELL, I (1965), 133-140; esp. 140.

6 "Hazlitt on the Disinterested Imagination", in Some British Romantics (Columbus, Ohio, 1966), 167-188; esp. 173.

7 Hazlitt (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1971), 85.

8 Hazlitt and the Spirit of the Age (Oxford, 1971) 45.

Hazlitt's Essay is long (in the volumes edited by P.P. Howe it occupies fifty pages) and in places it is difficult. The argument may be seen to be in two sections. In the first seventeen pages Hazlitt develops the core of his argument, and in the remainder of the work he shifts his focus to prove many of the same points from a different angle. The reason for this 'doubling back', as it were, seems to be Hazlitt's concern that the reader understand his argument.

Because the Essay has not received full appreciation in the past, the argument (at least of the first section) will be followed quite closely. Hazlitt starts by maintaining that the mind can be understood as mechanical only concerning past and present impressions.¹ We have a direct interest in our past through the faculty of memory and in our present through consciousness. Impressions which we have concerning the future must be understood in another manner as we can have no direct interest in the future and what interest we do have is provided by the imagination. (1)

Hazlitt then criticises traditional approaches on the subject of disinterestedness. He points to the proponents of the doctrine of natural selfishness. They would argue that there is no positive reason for painfully exerting oneself to help someone else, since one can only enjoy one's own pleasure and one cannot feel the pleasure or pain of someone else. (2) Hazlitt argues that the fact that we are mechanically affected by our senses neither precludes us from sharing in the feelings of others, nor implies that our feelings are all of the same kind. (3) Further, he sees these philosophers maintaining that one has a "real, substantial interest" (2) in the future, and this he disputes. It is true, he says, that concerning one's own pleasures and pains in the present that one has a

¹ H Works, I, 1. Future references to the Essay are from this edition and will be given internally, where possible.

sense of absolute interest, but there is not the same interest concerning pleasures and pains we have not yet felt. (2) We have no direct sympathy with our future sensations: Further, "We certainly do not know, and we very often care as little what is to happen to ourselves in future. It has no more effect upon us in any way, than if it were never to happen." (3)

Hazlitt predicted that some would object by saying that man "has a real interest in his own welfare, which he cannot have in that of another person". (3) Hazlitt reiterates that one cannot have a real interest in the future self. (4) Some philosophers would say "I shall have a real sensible interest in my own future feelings". Hazlitt responds that to say that I shall have an interest is the same thing as saying "I have a general interest in whatever concerns my future" (4) - a position he could accept. Hazlitt believes we are too ready to attribute what he calls "a real identity of interests to the same person [i.e. past, present and future]". The reason is that we have "an indistinct idea of extended consciousness" and "a community of feelings [believed] as essential to the same thinking being." Continued consciousness, he argues, only serves to connect past and present, and not the future. (4) To those philosophers who would say that just the idea of pleasure or pain concerning the self naturally excites interest, Hazlitt responds that a general sense of self-interest is learned through the particular emotions of pleasure and pain concerning the self, but that self-interest in itself is not identical with these feelings. (5)

There is another "more liberal philosophy" which Hazlitt sees between the two main positions he has outlined.¹

1 Hazlitt refers to this liberal hypothesis as holding "a sort of middle place between the two opposite ones already stated". (5) Just what are the two opposite ones is not self-evident from his paper. The organization of his work suggests the two positions to be (a) man is naturally selfish and (b) man has an inescapable real interest in his own welfare that he cannot have in others. But from what he goes on to say on page five, the poles more appropriately would be (a) natural selfishness and (b) natural benevolence. The ambiguity, unfortunate though it is, has little bearing on the argument as a whole.

This philosophy recognises benevolence in man and tries to reconcile it to man's selfishness; (5) it says that man's generous affections arise from making kind action habitual. Hazlitt responds that the theory claims we should be benevolent for selfish reasons. The advantages of virtue, he says, are to be derived from the immediate satisfaction it produces, not from "a gross calculation of self-interest". (6)

Hazlitt's opposition to the various philosophical positions helps to lay the ground-work for his own alternative method of accounting for the virtue in man. He outlines five points which are central to his argument (p.7):

- 1) man is "originally and essentially disinterested";
- 2) as a voluntary agent man must be disinterested;
- 3) the faculties which provide man with an interest in his own welfare also provide him with an interest in the welfare of others;
- 4) man is cut off from his future self and his actions are always "absolutely independent of ... the feelings of the being for whom he acts, whether this be himself, or another"; and
- 5) moral, rational, and voluntary action can relate only to the future and are dependent upon the imagination, whether in connection with ourselves or another.

These points are elaborated by Hazlitt in the pages which follow. The same emphasis on the division between future self and past and present self as was found in the first pages is continued here. Voluntary action proceeds from a will and relates to the future, but the existence of anything in the future is problematical he says. (8) We can have an idea of something in the future through the assistance of the imagination, but "the thing itself is a non-entity". We can have no real direct impressions of the future on our present selves. Our future desires make no more immediate impression on us than the desires of others. (8) The crux of Hazlitt's argument will rest on the parallel that he is maintaining exists between the future self and the self of others in the manner in which we relate to both.

What about the "real, positive interest" we have in our own feelings as opposed to the feelings of others? Hazlitt says that pleasure and pain are mechanical feelings and have nothing to do with self-love. (9) Furthermore, pleasure and pain may be the object of volition, but are never the cause of it: the cause of any volition
 ○ if the act of willing an object and the enjoyment of that object is consequential. Imagination enables us to "foresee the probable or necessary consequences of things, and [gives us interest] in them" but there is no faculty which can give us directness of impression (like pain and pleasure in the present and past) concerning the future. (9)

Hazlitt claims that in spite of the predominant belief that we have an absolute interest in our own welfare and only an indirect and voluntary interest in the welfare of others, this belief has no foundation - it is "utterly false, and groundless". (9-10) Because all our ideas of the future depend on the imagination and not on direct sensation, we cannot claim that the identity of the self is absolute. One's future interests will not necessarily be one's present ones, just because the same being is involved. Hazlitt suggests that real individuality, or a correct understanding of an identity of interests in the self, consists in "the whole sentient system [—] nothing that passes in any part of it can be indifferent to me". (10) He refers to it as a "conscious principle [which] pervades every part of me". (10)

Hazlitt goes on to comment further about the division between future and present selves:

... so long as there is not this intercommunity of thoughts and feelings, so long as there is an absolute separation, an insurmountable barrier fixed between the present, and the future, so that I neither am, nor can possibly be affected at present by what I am to feel hereafter, I am not to any moral or practical purpose the same being. (11)

Do we not have a direct interest in the future when we say "I know I shall become that being"? Hazlitt says no, we merely have a present interest in that knowledge, not in anything felt at present about the future. When we pursue our wishes and desires, we pursue "the idea of good, not the reality". (11) When we refer to our real

interest in the future, it is not what is commonly understood as a real substantial interest, but one dependent upon reflection and imagination. Hazlitt raises the question of why we are not indifferent, then, to the future and why we pursue our own welfare. The reason he gives is twofold. First, "there is something in the very idea of good, or evil, which naturally excites desire or aversion ... which impels the mind to pursue the one and to avoid the other by a true moral necessity". (12) Second, we pursue our welfare because we have a vivid idea of it:

I naturally desire and pursue my own good (in whatever this consists) simply from my having an idea of it sufficiently warm and vivid to excite in me an emotion of interest, or passion; and I love and pursue the good of others, of a relative, of a friend, of a family, a community, or of mankind for just the same reason. (12)

On page twelve of the Essay, Hazlitt gives an assessment of what he believes is unusual in his approach. It is surprising that none of the critics who have paid attention to the subject of his originality has paid attention to his evaluation. He says that selfishness is the result of habit, and that other actions stem from disinterested love of good:

The scheme of which I have here endeavoured to trace the general outline differs from the common method of accounting for the origin of our affections in this, that it supposes what is personal or selfish in our affections to be the growth of time and habit, and the principle of a disinterested love of good as such, or for it's own sake without any regard to personal distinctions to be the foundation of all the rest. In this sense self-love is in it's origin a perfectly disinterested, or if I may so say impersonal feeling. (12)

Self-love is impersonal, in Hazlitt's sense, because the reasons we love our good are identical to the reasons we love the good of others. Because we have a stronger, more distinct idea of our own good, we may strive for that in preference to the good of others; but this is not because we are innately selfish, says Hazlitt. In the case of a child it is "for want of knowing better". (12) Hazlitt's

position is that we are not born benevolent, but neither are we born with an idea of self or a principle of self-love. All are acquired. Natural benevolence, in his usage of the term, does not equal an innate abstract idea of good but equals a natural link between happiness and the desire of it, independent of personal considerations. (12)

Hazlitt says that the desire of good is not inherent in the mind, but claims that there is inherent a property of the mind which makes us open to this desire. (13) Love of good starts with ourselves and moves outwards. First we love one object because it is good and then we grow to love any known good, gradually acquiring a composite idea of goodness.

Hazlitt objects to both the suppositions that man is either innately benevolent or innately selfish. (14) A feeling of general comprehensive benevolence can only arise from "an habitual cultivation of the natural disposition of the mind to sympathise with the feelings of others by constantly taking an interest in those which we know, and imagining others that we do not know". (14) If benevolence requires expansion of the mind, selfishness requires contraction, or an habitual "narrowing of the mind to our own particular feelings and interests, and a voluntary insensibility to every thing which does not immediately concern ourselves". (14-15) Selfishness is not a natural consequence of the general love of good, in Hazlitt's opinion. We move naturally from an understanding of our own specific good to our own general good, to the good of our families, neighbours and strangers. (15) Hazlitt reiterates his central theme, that "refined self-love and refined benevolence are the same" (16) and concludes the first section of the Essay with two points of summary. The first is that the traditional understanding of self-interest has wrongly supposed a principle of absolute identity of the self. (16) The second is that selfishness is the product of habit and is opposed both to reason and to

the natural disposition of the mind towards good.¹ (17)

By the end of the first section of the Essay we have a fairly clear understanding of what lies behind benevolent action for Hazlitt. Although here we are not specifically concerned with joining the argument concerning Hazlitt's originality (although shortly we will be trying to trace influences on Hazlitt), it would seem from the above that any discussion of the topic should, at the very least, consider the two distinctive features of Hazlitt's approach. Firstly, as we have seen, Hazlitt does not argue for the innate or natural benevolence of man as it had commonly been understood; he argues that both selfishness and benevolent action are the result of habit, but the mind has a natural tendency to move [^]that towards the good.

Secondly, and perhaps most fundamental to his entire approach, Hazlitt makes a radical division between past and present, taken as a unit, and the future. An important aspect of this division which should not be overlooked is its relation to morality. When Hazlitt

1 In discussing the second section of the Essay I will be concentrating on Hazlitt's specific understanding of imagination. However, in that section he makes an important qualification of the above argument which is worth mentioning here. He says that the position of general comprehensive benevolence is an unattainable ideal, just as it would be impossible to sink to a position of total selfishness: "If I had no idea of what passes in the minds of others, or if my ideas of their feelings and perceptions were perfect representations, i.e. mere conscious repetitions of them, all proper personal distinction would be lost either in pure self-love, or in perfect universal sympathy." (38) Moreover, we will always have a more vivid or distinct idea of our own good than we will have concerning others. The imagination, he says, has a great facility in leaping the barrier between present and future which thus "confer[s] on my future interests a reality, and a connection with my present feelings which [the feelings of others] can never have." (41) "[The] facility in passing from the recollection of my past impressions to the imagination of my future ones makes the transition almost imperceptible, and gives to the latter an apparent reality and presentness to the imagination, so that the feelings of others can never be brought home to us to the same degree." (42)

confines question of morality to the future, he is on one level simply saying that only future actions are under the control of the will and can be considered as moral. Morality can only be accorded to a voluntary action.

The division of future from past and present goes much beyond the issue of morality, however. On another level Hazlitt is using the division to make an important distinction about the nature of the self. There is no ground, that Hazlitt sees, for arguing for an absolute identity of the self: the future self is cut off from the past and present self. Leonard Trawick III is one of the few critics to have noticed and explored Hazlitt's division of the self; he has shown that the division was probably made in reaction to Bishop Butler and has suggested a link between Hazlitt's scepticism about personal identity and similar notions in strict Lockean thinkers.¹ More in terms of Hazlitt's own argument, the division allows Hazlitt to maintain that there is a certain alien quality about the future self which is not unlike the alien nature of the self of others. We relate to both in a similar fashion.

By the end of the first section of the Essay we also have the beginning of an understanding of what Hazlitt understood as the imagination. As opposed to the faculties of memory and consciousness which work only with the past and present, imagination gives us our impressions concerning the future. It presents us with ideas about the possible or probable consequences of actions (9) providing us with a variety of ideas. Hazlitt had said that the mind is naturally excited by "the very idea of good, or evil" (12) and that we pursue good by having an idea of it "sufficiently warm and vivid to excite in [us] an emotion of interest" (12). Since moral pursuit is dependent upon the imagination in Hazlitt's thought, it follows that it is the imagination which is excited by good and evil and which provides warmth and vividness to ideas about the future, and it is the mind which naturally selects and moves towards that which is good.

1 See "Sources of Hazlitt's 'Metaphysical Discovery'", 280.

The first section of the Essay represents the more compact formulation of Hazlitt's response to the issue Hobbes raised. In the second section, where he develops the argument from a slightly different position, the role of imagination is again of central importance. He calls it the "faculty of multiplying, varying, extending, combining, and comparing his [man's] original passive impressions." (p.20) There is a similar description of it later in which he specifically attributes to it a creative power:

By the same power of mind [i.e. the power of imagination] which enables him [man] to conceive of a past sensation as about to be re-excited in the same being, namely, himself, he must be capable of transferring the same idea of pain to a different person. He creates the object, he pushes his ideas beyond the bounds of his memory and senses in the first instance, and he does no more in the second. If his mind were merely passive in the operation, he would not be busy in anticipating a new impression, but would still be dreaming, of the old one. It is of the very nature of the imagination to change the order in which things have been impressed on the senses, and to connect the same properties with different objects, and different properties with the same objects; to combine our original impressions in all possible forms, and to modify these impressions themselves to a very great degree.
(pp.26-27. Single underlining my own.)

The idea of the imagination being a creative force is further reinforced when he refers to it as "a power of willing a given end for itself, and of employing the means immediately necessary to the production of that end." (p.23)

In these quotations, Hazlitt is obviously not speaking about the imagination creating specifically in an aesthetic sense, the way Coleridge might mean creation with regard to the secondary imagination. Hazlitt was talking about the creative act of the imagination in the act of perception (rather like what Coleridge defined as the primary imagination, "the living power and prime agent of all human perception"). But it will be noted that there is a striking parallel between the first two quotations of Hazlitt and Coleridge's descriptions of imagination (when he was not distinguishing primary and secondary) and of secondary imagination, both

written eleven years later.¹ Coleridge called imagination "the shaping and modifying power." Secondary imagination, he said, "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead."

The full impact of the power Hazlitt sees in the imagination becomes apparent when he approaches the subject from a negative point of view - what man would be like without imagination. Hazlitt says man would be devoid of hope, fear, foresight, self-motion, self-interest, wisdom, generosity, resistance and desire. He would be "the passive instrument of undreaded pain and unsought-for pleasure", "unable to avoid or remove the most painful impressions, or to wish for or even think of their removal." In short, he would be "in a state of more than idiot imbecility." (p. 21)

¹ It might be noted here that Hazlitt in turn may have been influenced in the choice of his words by Hume, though as we will see later in this chapter, there is only a superficial similarity between their actual ideas on imagination. Hume described the imagination as having "a great authority over our ideas; and there are no ideas that are different from each other, which it cannot separate, and join, and compose into all varieties of fiction." (My underlining) From "An Abstract of a Book lately published, entitled, A Treatise of Human Nature, Etc." in A Treatise of Human Knowledge: Book One, ed. D.G.C. Macnubb, pp. 352-353.

This adds up to a picture of the imagination as the supreme faculty of the mind. With all of its other functions, imagination is the power which makes man capable of reasoning. As Hazlitt says at one point, "Man without this [i.e. imagination] would not be a rational agent: he would be below the dullest and most stupid brute." (p. 27)

A question which might be asked, then, is what is the relationship between the imagination and the other faculties of the mind? For example, what are the precise characteristics and roles of consciousness and memory in Hazlitt's philosophy? Consciousness, or rather that faculty which gives us a real interest in the present, Hazlitt considers to be synonymous with sensation, or at least to be sufficiently close to it for the same explanation to apply to both.¹ Presumably when Hazlitt speaks of the mind being passive without imagination, he is referring to the passivity of a strictly sense-receiving consciousness.

The memory for Hazlitt is a kind of storehouse of images. The imagination, as we have seen, goes "beyond the bounds" of memory (and of the senses, too) in its operation. Certainly in part, the ideas of the memory are not different in nature from those of the imagination. He says that they are of "one flesh and blood" and that "The same vital spirit animates them both." (p. 23) But the "tablets of memory", working in conjunction with consciousness, are what wrongly convince man of his absolute distinction from others. (p. 41) When Hazlitt speaks of the imagination being "a power... of controuling the blind impulses of associated mechanical feelings, and of making them subservient to the accomplishment of some particular purpose" and of being a "power

¹ See his footnote, p. 38.

over the will" (p.23), I think he is speaking both of the operation of memory and consciousness together and of imagination's superior force over them both. Memory and consciousness exist to serve the imagination in working towards the goal of general comprehensive benevolence.

In the past, insufficient emphasis has been given to the implications behind Hazlitt's division of future from past and present. One of the results has been a failure to appreciate the central importance of imagination in Hazlitt's thought in 1805; and the powers and distinctive characteristics of imagination, as Hazlitt saw them, have all but been missed. It has been common to recognise 'imagination' in the Essay as simply the 'sympathetic imagination' of the 18th century, as discussed for instance by W.J. Bate in his important article.¹ Also, it has been assumed that it was only later in Hazlitt's life that 'imagination' became of central importance to Hazlitt, as this comment indicates: "The older the nineteenth century got, and the more he [Hazlitt] talked with Lamb and Coleridge, the more Hazlitt must have recognized - and did recognize as his lectures on the Elizabethans show - the importance of imagination."²

There are important similarities between 18th century theories of the sympathetic imagination and Hazlitt's theory of imagination, and in fact, Hazlitt invited comparison by his use of the word 'disinterested'. The word appears in the subtitle to his Essay, "An Argument in Defense of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind"; the word appears in the first sentence, "... to shew that the human mind is naturally disinterested, or that it is naturally interested ..."; and the word is again present at the top of page two: "I could not love myself, if I were not capable of loving others.

1 "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century English Criticism", ELH, XIII (1945), 144-164.

2 Kathleen Coburn, "Hazlitt on the Disinterested Imagination", 182.

Self-love used in this sense, is in it's fundamental principle the same with disinterested benevolence." However, use of the same word by Hazlitt and earlier philosophers is to some extent deceptive.

In the 18th century, the notion of disinterestedness was commonly associated with notions of man's innate moral sense; man had to cultivate disinterestedness, in other words distance himself from intellectual processes, in order to allow his natural feelings of sympathy to dominate - hence the concept of a disinterested imagination which removed an individual from himself. The Essay suggests that this was not the sense in which Hazlitt was using the word disinterested, nor was his concept of imagination to be read too closely in that light, although recently it seems to have been. In 1966 J.D. O'Hara spoke of the imagination, for Hazlitt, preserving "disinterested attachment"¹ and of the manner in which sympathy "suppresses the selfish mercenary impulses of our personal identity and thereby permits our imagination to view the world disinterestedly."² In 1968 O'Hara reiterated this thought by defining "sympathy, in Hazlitt's customary usage, as the entering disinterestedly into another person's concern."³ Herschel Baker seemed to share this view when he described Hazlitt's theory as being opposed to subjectivism and as an "escape from self."⁴

These notions are in accord with 18th century philosophy, but are less in agreement with Hazlitt's exact thought. Against the traditional view which saw man as selfish and in need of cultivating detachment and hence disinterestedness, Hazlitt argued that selfishness arose from habit and that the love of good for others was natural and simply needed to be encouraged to become a comprehensive desire for benevolence. Hazlitt did not suggest that disinterest in the self was a necessary, or

1 "Hazlitt on the Functions of Imagination", PMLA, 81 (1966), 554.

2 ibid., 556.

3 W.P. Albrecht and J.D. O'Hara, "More on Hazlitt and the Functions of Imagination", PMLA, 83 (1968), 152.

4 William Hazlitt, 146.

even a desirable, step/becoming sympathetic to others, ⁱⁿ for sympathy for others was closely related to sympathy for the self. Rather, he urged the cultivation of imagination, in order that one might overcome a natural tendency to feel more sympathy for the self than for others.

Considering this it may be recognised that to call Hazlitt's concept of the 'imagination' the 'disinterested imagination' (as Kathleen Coburn labels it in her article, "Hazlitt on the Disinterested Imagination") or the 'sympathetic imagination' tends to confuse, if not distort, Hazlitt's position. John Kinnaird points out the irony that would exist if the main ideas behind Hazlitt were, as Baker suggests, "'benevolence', 'the sympathetic imagination', [and] 'man's essential goodness'" - Hazlitt's own uncompromising positions concerning his idealism in his personal life would then have to be seen in direct conflict with his written ideas.¹ I suggest if a label is to be used for Hazlitt's 'imagination' that it be 'democratic imagination', a label which avoids the contradiction mentioned by Kinnaird and suggests the distinctive aspect of his thought with a minimum amount of distortion. Hazlitt's political and critical writings always held the French Revolution, and perhaps to a lesser extent Napoleon's rise and career, as representative of the democratic ideal: mankind bettering itself by aiming at humanitarian reform. This ideal encouraged mankind to escape from selfish motivation. The purpose of what Hazlitt saw as 'imagination' was precisely this. Individuals had a social responsibility to cultivate imagination. If imagination were cultivated by all members of society, the natural movement of the mind towards good would set reform in motion. Hazlitt's bitterness towards his contemporaries whom he felt had abandoned the ideals of the Revolution was part of a general intolerance towards those who sought their own good before that of others. A cautionary note must be sounded concerning the term 'democratic imagination' however. Strictly speaking, 'imagination' itself is not humanitarian or democratic in Hazlitt's view, but rather

¹ John Kinnaird, "The Forgotten Self", PR XXX (1963), 303-306. p.304.

the whole movement which it commences and of which it has the largest part is democratic. As we have seen already and will see again later in Hazlitt's criticism, imagination magnifies not just the good or humanitarian possibilities, but also the bad.

The faculty of imagination played the major role in Hazlitt's philosophy in 1805, and the powers he attributed to it were extensive. Several critics, including Baker, have pointed to various meanings Hazlitt attached to the word 'imagination'. Baker notes that it is sometimes a molding, creative power; sometimes one of association; sometimes a power of conveying feeling; but Baker sees it mostly as the "sympathetic" faculty.¹ Although various critics have found different meanings, none has found the origin of these different meanings (excluding sympathy) in the Essay, nor have they cited sources as early as 1805. In fact, the Essay establishes that the different meanings are largely present in 1805 and are more closely related than hitherto has been suspected.

The failure of Hazlitt's ideas to find adequate appreciation suggests that possible sources of Hazlitt's ideas in the Essay need further exploration. This is a task of no small undertaking and to a large extent it is one which will have to be put off until sometime in the future. A start on the problem can be made here, however.

When Hazlitt wrote the Essay, he believed that the traditional view of imagination would not credit the faculty with a direct ability to influence human action and with an ability to extend from a feeling in the present to an influential idea about the future. He explained why this had been the case:

This notion could not have gained ground as an article of philosophical faith but from a perverse restriction of the word idea to abstract ideas, or external forms, as if the essential quality in the feelings of pleasure, or pain, must entirely evaporate in passing through the imagination; and, again, from associating the word imagination with merely fictitious situations and events, that is, such as never will have a real existence, and as it is supposed never will, and which consequently do not admit of action. (p.23)

1 William Hazlitt, 147-8.

In the 1800 "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads", Wordsworth made the comment that in "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" he had "wished to draw attention to the truth that the power of the human imagination is sufficient to produce such changes even in our physical nature as might appear miraculous. The truth is an important one" ¹ Hazlitt had read the "Preface" (he refers to it at one point in the Essay) and no doubt believed he was carrying on from Wordsworth by making new inroads to an understanding of imagination.

Hazlitt's reading in speculative thought was largely restricted to the British empiricists and their French counterparts, ² along with ideas of imagination he might have gleaned from his readings in English literature. Some of these possible sources can be eliminated by the process of negation. For instance, Hazlitt's ideas of the imagination, at this stage in his life, were perceptual and not specifically aesthetic; and the latter kind of imagination seems to be the dominant kind with men like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Addison and Akenside. Also, in Hazlitt's own words, he did not associate the word imagination "with merely fictitious situations and events"; and to some extent this was the view of Locke and his followers. Further, in as much as imagination had to span the gap between present and future, and was itself the rational faculty, Hazlitt did not restrict the imagination to conception of abstract ideas; nor did he totally separate imagination from that knowledge gained from the emotions or the senses. This would also counter Locke, but it is a more direct criticism of Hume.

Hume, however, seems to be the man who most influenced Hazlitt's ideas in the Essay. Roy Cain has already given detailed attention to the manner in which Hume may have influenced Hazlitt's notions

1 Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, ed. Paul M. Zall (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1966), 28.

2 H Works, XII, 223-4.

of sympathy, and Cain has also mentioned Hazlitt's early reading of Hume's Treatise.¹ Hume's influence may have been wider than Cain has suggested, for some of the things Hazlitt has said in the Essay may be in response to similar issues raised by Hume. Hume, like Hazlitt, had noted the uncertainty of the future and he, too, developed notions of imagination to deal with it. But whereas Hazlitt had contended that there was a total barrier between present and future, Hume, in A Treatise of Human Knowledge, had maintained that the barrier was less complete. The future was not totally unknown: one could at least use reason and experimentation with cause and effect to determine distinct probabilities about the future. An "imperfect belief" about the future was possible.² Because Hume saw a less complete barrier to the future than Hazlitt, the role Hume gave to imagination was more limited. But there was a major flaw in Hume's treatment of imagination, as he himself admitted. He was forced to use the word imagination in two different ways which were not necessarily compatible. In order to understand how Hazlitt's ideas differ from Hume's, and in order to point out how Hazlitt might have viewed his work as a response to Hume, it is necessary to consider Hume's ideas more closely.

¹ "David Hume and Adam Smith as Source of the Concept of Sympathy in Hazlitt", 133-140. Hazlitt's reading of Hume is discussed on 135.

² David Hume, The Philosophical Works; I & II, A Treatise of Human Knowledge (London, 1886), I, 428-439.

Hume's two uses of the word 'imagination' are suggested in his own words: "When I oppose the imagination to the memory," he said, "I mean the faculty by which we form our fainter ideas. When I oppose it to reason, I mean the same faculty, excluding only our demonstrative and probable reasonings."¹

Hume's first use of 'imagination', that is, in conjunction with memory, establishes that the two faculties are similar. Both faculties "borrow their simple ideas from the impressions";² and both faculties operate by the associative principles upon which the mind generally functions.

The difference between 'imagination', in Hume's first sense, and memory, is that imagination is much more free than memory - it is not so tightly bound by the principles of association, for association, in this case, is to be seen only as "a gentle force, which commonly prevails."³ The imagination has what Hume calls an "original tendency",⁴ in that it can unite impressions in what forms it pleases.

The main difference between imagination, in Hume's first sense, and memory, is that the ideas of the former are fainter and have less "vivacity." Hobbes had identified imagination with memory and 'decaying sense', and to an extent this was true for Hume. But Hume distinguishes between the two faculties by the amount of decay which takes place. Mnemonic impression decays into something "intermediate betwixt an impression and an idea",⁵ and still retains something of the original vivacity. Impressions of the imagination entirely lose their

1 Treatise, I, 416.

2 ibid., I, 386.

3 ibid., I, 319.

4 ibid., I, 500.

5 ibid., I, 317.

vivacity and become "perfect ideas[s]"¹ instead of a mixture of impression and idea. Thus Hume felt that when a painter wished to represent a passion or emotion brought to the fore by the imagination, he would have to "get a sight of a person actuated by a like emotion, in order to enliven his ideas, and give them a force and vivacity superior to what is found in those, which are mere fictions of the imagination."²

Hume's second use of imagination, imagination as opposed to reason, diminishes the power of the faculty. The imagination is simply fictitious with no powers of logical association. When trying to determine cause and effect, the imagination was only a hindrance. Its fictitious impressions had to be separated from the real impressions of memory, and where this was rendered difficult, an act of "belief or assent" was brought to bear.³

Hume was one of the few philosophers to give detailed attention to the imagination and to the manner in which the mind projected into the future. It was concerning projection into the future that the contradiction in his thought concerning imagination became most apparent. Imagination, as opposed to reason, could "never go beyond...original impressions",⁴ and was false concerning fact. It had to be discarded when contemplating the future. On the other hand, imagination, when opposed to memory, had certain rational and creative powers. Although in the past the senses might never have conveyed to the mind a particular shade of colour, the mind has an ability to conceive an idea of that particular colour. That this is possible, Hume sees as proof that "the simple

1 Treatise, I, 317.

2 ibid., I, 387.

3 ibid., I, 387.

4 ibid., I, 386.

ideas [of imagination] are not always derived from the correspondent impression."¹

Hume recognised that he was using 'imagination' in at least two different ways and he was aware of the contradictions which might arise. Hume asserted, however, that this was common in philosophy, and he put off any attempt to resolve the difficulties. He said that "the word imagination, is commonly used in two different senses", and that, "nothing could be more contrary to true philosophy than this inaccuracy", but conceded that he had "often been obliged to fall into it."²

Hazlitt might have been responding to the challenge posed by Hume to resolve the philosophical ambiguity concerning imagination. In contrast to Hume, Hazlitt claimed:

...I wish the reader to be apprized, that I do not use the word imagination as distinguished from or opposed to reason, or the faculty by which we reflect upon and compare our ideas, but as opposed to sensation, or memory.³

Hazlitt also may have been trying to suggest a more satisfactory explanation of how man relates to the future than Hume had been able to provide. In relation to Hume, Hazlitt strengthened the imagination by transferring to the faculty powers that had been formerly associated with other faculties. In particular, imagination subsumed the powers of reason and the ability to relate cause and effect and project into the future. Also, imagination became the moral agent of man, both providing him with a moral alternative by contemplating the future, and enabling him to make a decision towards correct action by making certain ideas more vivid than others.

¹ Treatise, I, 315.

² ibid., I, 416.

³ H Works, I, 19.

The ability of the imagination to will its own end and achieve that end by its controlling influences on the mind, was something Hume would not have agreed with. But Hume would not have been in sympathy, either, with the theory of the imagination as applied to aesthetics which was to be Hazlitt's subject in later years. That later development in Hazlitt's thought was not a new approach to the imagination. Instead it was a direct and logical extension of his theory in the Essay. Before Hazlitt focused on that subject, however, there was to come an important modification in his delineation of the faculties of the mind. He was to add to the faculties of memory, consciousness, and imagination, the faculty of understanding. Although critics have noticed that Hazlitt incorporated notions of a faculty of understanding in his later thought, none have tried to suggest when these notions entered Hazlitt's thought.

There has been no mention to this point of two other possible influences on Hazlitt's ideas of the imagination in his Essay - Coleridge and Kant. Coleridge's precise influence in this field is almost indeterminable, and the delay in considering him has been partly for that reason. Coleridge first visited the Hazlitt family in Wem as a guest of William's father in January, 1798. Prior to the visit, William had been engaged in two years of independent study, after leaving Hackney College and abandoning plans for becoming a Unitarian minister. His private study had been devoted largely to metaphysics and the plan for the Essay had already been formulated in his mind. He spoke to Coleridge of it as he accompanied him on the first six miles of his departure from Wem. They spoke of it again in the spring of that year when Hazlitt visited Coleridge (and met Wordsworth) in Alfoxden and Nether Stowey. Coleridge must have

been impressed with Hazlitt's argument, though he is said to have found it rather dark. When Hazlitt reflects on the period, thirty years later, he makes it clear that it was Coleridge who had first encouraged him to develop his ideas into a book:

"Till I began to paint, or till I became acquainted with the author of The Ancient Mariner, I could neither write nor speak. He encouraged me to write a book, which I did according to the original bent of my mind...."¹

Hazlitt was again with Coleridge and Wordsworth from September to December of 1803, one year before the Essay was completed, when he visited them in the Lake District.² Wordsworth's 1800 "Preface", which Coleridge referred to as "half a child of my own Brain",³ and which had signalled publicly a radical re-appraisal of the powers of the imagination, had been written in the meantime. Conversations with Coleridge again turned to metaphysics. Two subjects that we know they discussed are the sacraments⁴ and the origin of evil. The latter conversation, which took place presumably while Coleridge sat for his portrait by Hazlitt on the 27th of October, had at least some mention of imagination. Coleridge's notebook gives a summary of his argument only, but in it the question arises as to why the "infinite Power" does not create beings which are infinite in their duration. In the course of the argument he uses imagination, with a capital "I",

¹ H Works, XVII, 312.

² This was the occasion when Hazlitt finally had to flee from the local people who were angry at his behaviour. See: C.M. Maclean, Born Under Saturn (London, 1943), 197ff.; H. Baker, William Hazlitt, 140. See also CN 1618 & 1850n.

Close friendship between Coleridge and Hazlitt fell off after this visit, though they later met frequently at Lamb's.

³ CL, II, to Robert Southey, 29 July 1802. (p.830)

⁴ CN, 1516n.

as a synonym for God: "Let him have created this infinity of Infinities - Still there is space in the Imagination for the Creation of Finites...."¹ In the actual conversation, this unusual use of the word may have provoked discussion, we cannot know. It is highly probable, however, that conversations with Coleridge would have at least impressed Hazlitt with the fact that the two greatest poets living in England were seeing the imagination as an underestimated faculty.

In December of 1803 Coleridge was working on Kant's Foundation for the Metaphysic of Ethic (1785)² and it may have been Coleridge who first introduced Hazlitt to Kant. There are some similarities to Kant in the Essay, though they are only vague and are more related to the Critique of Judgement (1790). For instance, Kant gave imagination a key role in his system; and he divided it into three different kinds, the reproductive (which was associative), the productive (which was perceptual), and the aesthetic (which was creative). Hazlitt did not make these divisions, but his theory of imagination did incorporate, or at least allow for, these various functions. Further, Kant had two classifications for ideas, rational and aesthetic, only the first of which concerns us here. As Kant saw it, the understanding formed concepts that were limited by sense data, but rational ideas were something beyond this that he called 'transcendent concepts'.³ In Hazlitt's theory both of these can be seen as distinct acts of the imagination, and there is a slight hint of Kant, though it may only be the result of coincidence. Because Hazlitt made imagination, in a sense, all-powerful, it incorporated the experience-related

¹ CN, 1619.

² CN, 1705 & 1705n.

³ See: R.L. Brett, Fancy and Imagination (London, 1969), 46.

reasoning process, of[~] what Kant called the understanding. The imagination, as Hazlitt saw it, also leapt into the future and generated a sense of reality about it. This latter formation of ideas could be seen as analogous to Kant's notion of
 c 'transcendent concepts.'

Hazlitt may not have known much Kant, except what he learned from various commentators. More work will have to be done on possible filtrations of Kantian ideas to Hazlitt's Essay. For the present, I doubt whether Kant's ideas had much influence on Hazlitt in 1805.

In Hazlitt's "Preface" to An Abridgement of the Light of Nature Pursued (1807), a work which has rarely been considered by critics, there may be greater evidence of Kant's influence. Kant may have played at least a secondary role in influencing the addition to Hazlitt's scheme of a faculty of understanding. The "Preface" is certainly the first place in Hazlitt's writings where Kant is mentioned. He praised "the system of professor Kant, as far as I can understand it", for trying "to explode this mechanical ignorance [of Locke and his followers]... and to admit our own immediate perceptions to be some evidence of what passes in the human mind."¹ A little later he noted that Abraham Tucker "believed with professor Kant in the unity of consciousness, or 'that the mind alone is formative,' that fundamental article of the transcendental soul; in the immateriality of the soul, etc."²

¹ H Works, I, 128-129.

² H Works, I, 130. On the terms of this quotation it would seem that Hazlitt viewed himself as being a member of the 'transcendental' school. For a discussion of Hazlitt's later desertion of Kant on the basis of reading a poor interpretation in Willich's Elements of the Critical Philosophy, see Elizabeth Schneider, The Aesthetics of William Hazlitt (Philadelphia, 1933), p. 29ff. The departure took place between 1812 and 1814.

In the pages of the "Preface" which Hazlitt devotes to his own ideas, he attempts a brief summary of his entire argument, and it is complete with arguments for and against his position. But because of the obvious need for compression and because of the difficulty of his thoughts, his argument is hard to follow - it is no wonder that this attempt to advertise the Essay was a failure. The change that Hazlitt makes in his theory is slipped in unannounced. In the Essay it was only imagination which was the cause of action, and understanding was never mentioned. Contrastingly, in the "Preface" he says that "the imagination and understanding are real efficient causes of action."¹ This is the only mention he makes of the imagination in his summary, but he mentions understanding twice more:

The springs that give birth to our social affections are, by means of the understanding, as much regulated by the feelings of others, as if they had a real communication and sympathy with them, and are swayed by an impulse that is altogether foreign to self-love.

In this last quotation it becomes clear that he is seeing the understanding as an associative faculty:

Without an elastic power to the understanding; a power of collecting and concentrating its forces in any direction that seems necessary; and without supposing that our ideas have a power to act as relative representative things, connected together in a certain regular order, and not as mere simple pleasure and pain; the will would be entirely useless: indeed, there could be no such thing as volition, either with respect to our own affairs or those of others.³

Obviously some of the powers Hazlitt is here

1 H Works, I, 131.

2 H Works, I, 134.

3 H Works, I, 133.

ascribing to the understanding (such as volition) are powers Hazlitt was formerly ascribing to the imagination in his Essay. The question is raised as to how this change in Hazlitt's thinking affects his theory of the imagination in the Essay. Hazlitt was using the "Preface" as an introduction to the Essay for those who had not read it, and the addition of a faculty of understanding undoubtedly was not meant to overthrow his former scheme. Hazlitt does not tell us this in the "Preface" but we can find convincing support for the suggestion by considering the direct source of his change in thinking.

It was said that Kant probably played a secondary role in the process; Hazlitt's new position has definite echoes of Kant. However, Hazlitt's prime source would have been the man whose works he had just abridged, Abraham Tucker, who incidentally wrote before Kant did.

Tucker viewed the understanding as primarily the faculty "by which we discern whatever presents itself to our apprehension":¹ "in every exercise of our understanding, the mind passes either from a state of insensibility to a state of discernment, or from one kind of discernment to another, as from sights to sounds, or tastes or reflections, according to the variety of objects that act upon it."² He did not want it to be taken "in the vulgar sense for the judgement of reason, but for every discernment of the perceptive faculty."³ And he classified it as passive (except in the sense that it might put us in a position to read)⁴ because it did not in itself cause us physically to act.

¹ Abraham Tucker, The Light of Nature Pursued, ed. Mildway, 7 vols. (London, 1805), I, 4. In the following quotations I will be using Tucker's original text and not Hazlitt's abridgement.

² ibid., I, 5.

³ ibid., I, 148.

⁴ ibid., I, 21.

The understanding was, then, a mode of perception, and imagination could be classified as such as well. The understanding Tucker saw as growing out of the imagination¹ for the imagination was the faculty which presented pictures to the understanding for discernment.² It was a wild faculty, however, and the suggestion is that it needed to be controlled: "imagination may be lawfully employed in the services of reason, but ought to be restrained from all sallies which those do not require."³

There is no similarity between Hazlitt's view of the imagination and Tucker's, and no doubt Hazlitt discarded this aspect of Tucker's philosophy; it was a view not different from most of British philosophy. But Hazlitt did not discard Tucker's faculty of the understanding precisely because it was an idea that he could incorporate into his own theory without much altering his former definition of the imagination. The weakness in his earlier view was that it did not provide for a sufficient account of the mind in the present. He had linked the imagination to the future and had gone so far as to say that man in the present could not be a thinking creature without imagination. Clearly, however, it was not necessary at all times for the mind to leap into the future to cope with the past and the present, and by incorporating a faculty of the understanding, Hazlitt was able to acknowledge this.

The three brief quotations from Hazlitt's muddled argument in the "Preface" are not enough in themselves, perhaps, to convince us that Hazlitt actually took this position, either with regard to

1 Tucker, II, 1.

2 Tucker, I, 210.

3 Tucker, II, 320.

the understanding or to the imagination. We do have more than this to go on though. In 1809 Hazlitt was still considering the implications of a faculty of the understanding. In an eight-page pamphlet entitled "Prospectus of a History of English Philosophy" he gives his first (and what was to be his fullest) analysis of the faculty. He says that he is going to prove the following, amongst other things:

That the understanding or intellectual power of the mind is entirely distinct from simple perception or sensation. By the understanding I mean that faculty which perceives the relations of things, which combines, compares, and distinguishes our different impressions, and by which we are enabled, besides being sensible to the successive impulses and fluxional parts of objects, to consider them in reference to one another, or understand their connections, forms, and masses. Without this power we should not only be incapable of judging or reasoning on any subject, that is, of perceiving the relations between a variety of objects, but we could never have so much as a single idea of any object whatever, since there is no object which does not consist of a number of parts arranged in a certain manner. But of this arrangement the parts themselves cannot be conscious. Ideas are the offspring of the understanding, not of the senses.¹

Hazlitt's faculty of understanding accounts for the mind only in the past and present; there is nothing in this that would contradict the central view of the imagination as presented in the Essay. Nor is there in the remarks that follow, from various years:

¹ H Works, II, 116-117. The last idea in this quotation may have been directly influenced by Tucker. Locke and others had maintained that the sensations were ideas. Tucker makes the comment at one point that "in every exercise of the understanding, that which discerns is numerically and substantially distinct from that which is discerned". (Vol. I, 19) At another point he says that sensations "are the immediate causes exhibiting ideas to our perception." (Vol. I, p. 210)

the understanding is "a common principle of thought, a superintending faculty, which alone perceives the relations of things, and enables us to comprehend their connexions, forms, and masses" (1812);¹ "The province of the imagination is principally visionary, the unknown and the undefined: the understanding restores things to their natural boundaries ... " (1818);² and, the understanding "is this superintending or conscious faculty or principle which is aware both of the colour, form, and sound of an object; which connects its present appearance with its past history; which arranges and combines the multifarious impressions of nature into one whole..." (1822).³ Even in Hazlitt's later thought, the connection of present appearance and past history with the future would be the task of imagination.

Hazlitt's basic ideas on the human faculties did not undergo much change after the initial formulation of his imagination theory in 1805, followed by the modification of that theory in 1807. In concluding, it might be noted that just as Hazlitt's early ideas have failed to receive proper recognition so, too, the impact of those ideas on his later thought largely has been missed. It has been common to point to several works in Hazlitt's later life which seem to restate the ideas in his Essay. In particular are mentioned four papers submitted to the Morning Chronicle in 1814; a letter to William Gifford, editor of the

¹ H Works, II, 151. See also pp. 153 and 155.

² H Works, V, p. 9. The end of this quotation reads, "and strips them of their fanciful pretensions." I have left it out for clarity, as Hazlitt is referring to a more specifically aesthetic imagination which we will encounter later.

³ H Works, XII, p. 150.

Quarterly Review, in 1819; and an 1828 article entitled "Self-Love and Benevolence." However, the impact of his ideas is much wider than these works suggest, for they simply focus on the question of imagination as the faculty of sympathy. An essay entitled "On Reason and Imagination", written some-time between 1820 and 1825, has a broader focus. It makes several points which originate in 1805, and can be found in much of Hazlitt's later criticism, including his attacks on Coleridge and Wordsworth: imagination must be cultivated to enrich thought;¹ imagination is the force which governs our actions and must be seen and used as a moral force;² and imagination must be used to perceive the truths common to all men and must take man beyond simple concern with the self.³ In spite of the large powers given to understanding, imagination still performs many of the essential functions of rational thought: "The imagination is an associating principle; and has an instinctive perception when a thing belongs to a system, or is only an exception to it."⁴ The latter remark will help to indicate why Hazlitt, in his later years, was to be unsympathetic to Coleridge's efforts in Biographia Literaria; there, Coleridge was equally emphatic that imagination had nothing to do with association.

1 H Works, XII, 45.

2 H Works, XII, 50-51.

3 H Works, XII, 55.

4 H Works, XII, 51.

CHAPTER III

IDEAS OF IMAGINATION: 1807-1815

It is the aim of this chapter to follow the main developments on the subject of imagination from 1807 up to the time of Wordsworth's 1815 "Preface" and Coleridge's Biographia Literaria. One of the chief interests in this chapter will be in witnessing the emergence of Leigh Hunt's and Charles Lamb's definitions of imagination; further consideration will be given also to Coleridge and Hazlitt, and the possibility of mutual influence among the four men. But though the title of this chapter suggests a tracing of ideas on a general theme, it could equally have been called "The Contra-distinguishing of Imagination to 1815", or some such title, for the story of imagination in these years is the story of two-part distinctions. These arose primarily out of the necessity for critical precision that each of the authors encountered, and have not been recognised, except in the case of Coleridge. One would expect Coleridge to be the leading figure in this chapter, and in a sense he is. The influence of his ideas of imagination and fancy, an influence enhanced by his close contact with Lamb and Hazlitt, cannot be underestimated. Ultimately, however, it is an ambiguous background influence, and the most dramatic position in the chapter is taken by Hunt - not because he was most influential, but because he has been most overlooked.

Hunt and Lamb present a contrast to Coleridge and Hazlitt, for the factors which caused them to define imagination were quite different. Hunt and

Lamb had neither the background nor the inclination for metaphysical explorations. Neither were they concerned with defining their own poetic processes. Lamb arrived at his definition in the context of an essay in which he was trying to establish the superiority of art in Hogarth's prints. Hunt's definition similarly arose for pragmatic reasons. He was trying to make distinctions about the theatrical experience that was at once the cause and chief focus of his treatment of imagination.

Lamb's definition of imagination has enjoyed some measure of publicity ever since its publication (largely because Wordsworth repeated it in his 1815 "Preface") but Hunt's definition has not been so fortunate. The fault was partly his own - he tucked it away in a footnote well into the main body of his Critical Essays on the Performers of the London Stage.

The Critical Essays were probably begun early in 1806 and, as Hunt tells us in his "Preface", they were written "by starts and snatches in the midst of better subjects of meditation."¹ Whether these other subjects of meditation were better or not, they certainly placed more immediate demands on Hunt's time. He was acting as a full-time clerk in the War Office (a position he held until the end of 1808); and for his brother, John Hunt, who was a publisher, Leigh was writing the weekly theatrical column for The News, miscellaneous pieces in The Statesman, and some essays for the five volume Classic Tales, of which he was also the general editor. Hunt was encouraged to continue with his Critical Essays, however, "partly by the originality of an enlarged criticism on the theatre, and principally by the hope of exciting an honourable ambition in the actors."²

1 CE, ix.

2 CE, ix.

By June of 1807 he was able to announce to his readers that his long-promised work was "on the eve of publication."¹ By September it was being printed at the offices of The News² and only the difficulties encountered by John Hunt prevented the book from appearing before January 1808, although 1807 is the date on the title page. In any case Hunt's ideas, and particularly his definition of imagination, were formulated before his twenty-fourth birthday on October 19, 1807. It was a young age to have come up with a workable basic theory of imagination.

To my knowledge, Hunt's 1807 definition of imagination is almost completely unknown. Although modern students of Hunt owe a considerable debt to Lawrence and Carolyn Houtchens,³ neither they, nor any of Hunt's numerous previous editors, have reprinted any material from Critical Essays, nor have they mentioned the fact that he had a theory of imagination in 1807. The same is true of those who have done full-length studies on Hunt, most notably Edmund Blunden⁴ and Louis Landré;⁵ and also of those who have written articles on Hunt. C.D. Thorpe

1 The News, 28 June, 1807.

2 The News, 20 September, 1807.

3 They have collected and edited some of Hunt's writings in the following volumes: Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism (London, 1950); Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism (New York and London, 1956); and Leigh Hunt's Political and Occasional Essays (London, 1962).

4 See his Leigh Hunt (London, 1930); and his Leigh Hunt's "Examiner" Examined (London, 1928).

5 Leigh Hunt (1784-1859): Contribution à l'histoire du Romantisme anglais, 2 vols. (Paris, 1935 & 1936).

devoted several pages of a long essay on Hunt to a discussion of Hunt's ideas of imagination,¹ but like most critics both before and after him, Thorpe generally made reference to Hunt's ideas in 1844, in Hunt's volume entitled Imagination and Fancy. Stephen F. Fogle similarly has looked to Hunt's 1844 ideas; he has concluded that Hunt's position on the subject of imagination is merely a summary of Coleridge and Wordsworth and, more than this, that the summary is almost a misrepresentation of the other men's ideas:

Hunt's was an imitative rather than a truly creative mind, and, in criticism at least, his imitation was occasionally nearly a misrepresentation of the original.²

Had Fogle and others considered the Critical Essays, they would have found that in spite of the influence of Coleridge and Wordsworth, the ideas of 1844 were not misrepresentations of their ideas, but were the logical and direct outgrowth of Hunt's own early thought.

There is another reason for surprise concerning the general oversight. When Hunt formulated his early definition of imagination, he did so in part by distinguishing it from another faculty of the mind, a fact which in itself would have seemed to invite attention. Hunt's definition, as it appears in the footnote on page fifty of the Critical Essays, reads as follows:

I would not be understood in the following argument as using the words conception and imagination indiscriminately. Conception is a dependant and passive capacity, that receives ideas suggested by others, and therefore belongs principally to the actor, who displays the ideas of the poet. Imagination is an original and active power, that forms it's own images and impresses them upon the minds of others: it belongs therefore more to the poet.

1 "Leigh Hunt as Man of Letters", Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism, 1-73; esp. 25 & 51-56.

2 "Leigh Hunt and the End of Romantic Criticism", Some British Romantics, 119-139; esp. 139.

Before I consider Hunt's application of conception and imagination to actors and poets, respectively, and the modifications he went on to make of that position, it is necessary to comment on Hunt's selection of conception to contradistinguish imagination. From an historical point of view it was an unusual selection. When imagination was differentiated from a similar faculty, or at least a faculty which might easily be confused with it, that faculty was usually fancy. In earlier chapters it was seen that Wordsworth attempted to distinguish fancy from imagination in his note to "The Thorn" and that Coleridge also made an attempt, though more successfully, in two of his letters. But modern scholarship has proven, contrary to Coleridge's belief, that there were numerous attempts in England to do the same thing from the late 1600s onwards, some of them directly anticipating Coleridge.¹

Imagination and fancy often changed positions, with imagination being used sometimes to denote the superior faculty and sometimes to denote the inferior. Hunt's definition of the imagination has affinities with former definitions of the superior faculty, whether it was called imagination or not. Hunt's definition of conception, however, as it is stated, bears little resemblance to the inferior faculty and it seems that he is pointing to something different from the usual differentiation between imagination and fancy as faculties.

Hunt's use of conception is somewhat closer to the usual 18th century definitions of conception or to conceive, than to the usual definitions of the 'inferior faculty', but at best the resemblance is

¹ See: Bullitt and Bate, "Distinctions Between Fancy and Imagination in Eighteenth-Century English Criticism", *MLN* (January, 1945), 8-15; Earl Wasserman, "Another Eighteenth Century Distinction Between Fancy and Imagination", *MLN* (January, 1949), 23-25; and R.L. Brett, "Imagination and the Association of Ideas", in his Fancy and Imagination, 7-30.

imperfect. Both words stem from the Latin concipere, meaning to take to one's self, to receive, and Hunt's description of conception as a 'dependent' capacity that 'receives' may have been influenced by that. I have consulted all the major English dictionaries of the century and found that none differs significantly from Dr. Johnson's treatment of the words in question; and Hunt does refer to Johnson's Dictionary in the Critical Essays. In Johnson's Dictionary conception is used, like fancy, as a synonym for imagination, for Johnson's first and second entries under imagination read:

1. Fancy; the power of forming ideal pictures; the power of representing things absent to one's self or others.
Dennis
2. Conception; image in the mind; idea.
Sidney¹

Eighteenth-century usage linked conception with images or ideas and Hunt did as well.

The usual synonymizing of conception and imagination, as opposed to the opposition of the terms with Hunt, suggests even further that Hunt was using conception in an unusual manner. Synonymous usage of conception and imagination appears in the philosophical writings of Dugald Stewart in 1792 and of Robert E. Scott in 1805, as Bullitt and Bates have shown.² I have discovered that Thomas Reid did the same thing before Stewart and Scott and that Reid might have influenced them when they did distinguish between the two. Reid thought that if a separation of terms was to be made, it was imagination that had the lesser power:

¹ A Dictionary of the English Language (London, 1785). See also his entries under conception and imaginary.

² "Distinctions Between Fancy and Imagination", 13n. & 14n.

Imagination, when it is distinguished from conception, seems to me to signify one species of conception; to wit, the conception of visible objects. Thus, in a mathematical proposition, I imagine the figure, and I conceive the demonstration; it would not I think be improper to say, I conceive both; but it would not be so proper to say, I imagine the demonstration.¹

What Stewart and Scott did, however, was to invert Reid's interpretation, making conception just one of the powers of imagination and thus, in making conception inferior and in seeing it as simple apprehension, they were moving closer to Hunt's stance. But that said, it was a position they held only infrequently.

It is doubtful that Hunt would have read any of these philosophers and it is just as unlikely that Hunt was primarily, not coincidentally, engaging himself in a delineation of the mental faculties. Hunt was responding to two different kinds of art in the theatre and it is in this context that we come to a more plausible precedent for Hunt's use of conception. I have found it in a little-known two-volume work by John Trusler, published in London in 1766. Titled The Difference Between Words Esteemed Synonymous in the English Language, it in fact makes no mention of a distinction between imagination and fancy, presumably because Trusler felt they were genuine synonyms. Trusler uses the word imagination in two instances. In the first he clarifies the difference between imagination and the words idea, thought, and notion. The latter words refer to the representation, consideration, and opinion of an object, and are said to be appropriately described by the words just, fine and respectable. Imagination is the 'forming' power which enables opinions and is described as brilliant.²

¹ Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man, 371.

² Trusler, Vol. I, 118.

Further on in the book Trusler compares understand, comprehend and conceive:

...conceive, relates, more especially, to the order and design, of what, we propose.... [It] appears with greater elegance, when, it relates to forms, arrangement, projects, and plans; in short, all that depends on the imagination.

We understand languages. We comprehend sciences. We conceive, whatever has relation to the arts.

It is difficult to understand that, which is enigmatical; to comprehend that, which is abstruse; and, to conceive that, which is confused.... [Readiness] of conception, denotes, a clear head.

A lover, understands the language of the passions. A learned man, comprehends the metaphysical questions of the schools. An architect, conceives the plan and economy of buildings.¹

There are a couple of points to be made here, and the first is that Trusler explicitly links conceiving or conception to the arts in a manner unusual in the 18th century, and very similar to what is suggested by Hunt. Further, Trusler casts conception in a role that is dependent upon imagination, and in that Hunt is identical to him. It is possible that Hunt used Trusler's definition of conception as a basis for his own and that Hunt saw actors conceiving the plan and economy of their roles in a similar way to Trusler's seeing the architect conceive the plan and economy of his buildings.

Hunt and Trusler differed on the subject of imagination. Trusler's imagination had an ambiguous 'forming' role in relation to ideas, thoughts and notions in his first definition and in relation to conception in his second. Hunt is emphatic about a clear division between conception and imagination. He lays more stress than Trusler (or even Hazlitt in the previous chapter) on imagination being a creative act: "[It] is an original and active power that forms it's own images...." For Hunt, conception was not

¹ Trusler, I, 152-153.

creative. Hunt's conception and imagination are both rooted in the arts, but they are completely different powers. When he speaks of the one being passive and the other being active, he is stressing that conception can only receive already-formed ideas.

It was the clear distinction between conception and imagination that allowed Hunt to ascribe the former to actors and the latter to poets. Like all generalizations, it was too broad a categorization to hold up to intensive analysis, but as is the case in some generalizations, it expressed the desired point very succinctly: the conception of a role must be the primary and constant focus of the actor - it is not the actor's business to create a new character on stage. Hunt modified his definition in this direction immediately after he made it, still in the footnote. He suggested that there were times in a play where the poet's directives were inadequate for the dramatic sense and it was in instances like this that the actor's imagination, in addition to his conception, was needed. Hunt's own words illustrate the kind of thing he was meaning - he was watching Mrs. Siddons in the "insipid" tragedy of The Grecian Daughter:

This heroine has obtained for her aged and imprisoned father some unexpected assistance from the guard Philotas: transported with gratitude, but having nothing from the poet to give expression to her feelings, she starts with extended arms and casts herself in mute prostration at his feet. I shall never forget the glow, which, rushed to my cheeks at this sublime action.¹

From Hunt's description we might wonder that the glow on his cheeks was not embarrassment. But I think it safe to assume that in this instance it was his description that was not up to the occasion, not his judgement, for he assures us that this demonstration

¹ CE, 20-21.

of Mrs. Siddon's imagination was both natural and spirited.

The argument to which Hunt's footnote is appended is centered around the definitions of imagination and conception he proposes and in the course of the argument it is clear that he is making several other modifications of the manner in which the terms are to be applied. The original definitions implied that Hunt's system for classifying art was straight-forward; but that simplicity vanishes when he applies his theories beyond the histrionic realm in which they originated. The recognition that imagination was superior to conception and characterized 'poetical genius' as opposed to the lower genius of 'humour and wit',¹ led Hunt to make a series of distinctions about various artists. Homer and Sophocles were superior to Terence and Plautus; as Benjamin West was to Smirk; Michael Angelo to Hogarth; Shakespeare to Congreve; and as were Milton or Shakespeare to Swift.²

Hunt felt that a great painter displayed more imagination than a great musician (and on the same basis, a great poet was superior to them both).³ Still, within the field of music, Handel displayed a more poetical genius than did Reeve, whose pieces for the theatre failed to rise to the sublime. And even the lowest musician, because he required "some degree of imagination", had a more poetical genius than a maker of musical instruments, who was "a mere manufacturer."⁴

1 William Duff in his Essay on Original Genius (1767) makes a similar connection between imagination and genius on one hand, and fancy and wit and humour on the other, though he does not use the concept of a poetical genius as opposed to other kinds. See: Bullitt and Bates, p. 11.

2 These points, and the ones that follow in the next paragraph, I have drawn from Critical Essays, pp. 52-55.

3 The merit of the actor in conjunction with the musician, painter and poet was indicated in the Examiner, 31 January, 1808: "the histrionic profession... [has] a merit inferior to the other polite arts except music."

4 CE, 54.

Imagination was also the determining factor in distinguishing good taste from poor in the arts. The imagination of poetical genius is occupied with "the intellectual properties of human nature", "the contemplation of heroism, of wisdom, and of virtue; it is occupied with the soul only": it is not occupied with "the vulgarities of common life."¹ And here Milton was superior to Butler, Corneille, and Rabelais; Dante was to Tassoni; and Raphael and Guido demonstrated more noble taste than "the grotesque postures and monstrosities of Callot, or the historical attempts of Hogarth."²

A note of qualification must be voiced: Hunt was explicit in identifying good taste with imagination, but he was careful to avoid suggesting that conception was necessarily the mark of poor taste. Where imagination was lacking, conception, too, was often lacking, and limited to portraying the vulgarities Hunt spoke of, but he did not suggest that this was always so.

The terms conception and imagination were used frequently throughout the Critical Essays, both before and after he defined them in his footnote. He began using the terms more than two years before the Critical Essays, however. The earliest use of conception I have found is in his "Theatricals" column in The News, 29 September, 1805. He speaks of Kemble lacking "an immediate vivacity of conception and unstudied expression", and of Mrs. Siddons, as Juliet, being dignified "in her conception and delivery." Both uses suggest he is using conception in the same manner as he later defined it. Hunt's first critical use of the word imagination was in the same column a month later when he spoke of Macbeth being possessed by "the phantoms of a diseased imagination."³

¹ CE, 54. The discussion of taste and imagination occurs on pp. 54-57.

² CE, 55.

³ The News, 20 October, 1805.

By January, 1808, when the Critical Essays went on sale, the first issue of The Examiner had appeared. Hunt was the editor, writing the political leaders for the weekly publication, as well as being the theatre reviewer and a contributor of poems and various articles. The paper was a success: by 1809 he was making sufficient money from it to enable him to plan marriage and to give up his job in the War Office (a position which was causing him increasing embarrassment because of his criticisms of the government). The Critical Essays also appears to have been a success, at least in London, if we can judge by the reviews it received. Of the six reviews I have looked at from 1808-1809, only one was unfavourable.¹ The longest and most laudatory was by Richard Cumberland and was given the first twenty-one pages of an issue of his The London Review.² Cumberland, incidentally, was the only modern comic dramatist, apart from Sheridan, who had received high praise from Hunt. None of the reviews mentioned imagination and conception, and Hunt himself did not come back to his specific theory, although he applied it in the pages of The Examiner.

Of the men in this study, only Coleridge was active on the subject of imagination between the years 1808 and 1811. Hazlitt had followed his work on Tucker with the Reply to Malthus and a book on the British Senate.³ During 1808 he was at his wife's place in Winterslow, preparing a grammar of the English language and a prospectus for lectures

1 The Satirist, 1 March, 1808 (Vol. II), pp. 75-84.

2 The London Review, Vol. II, No. III, 1 August, 1809. See also: The Monthly Mirror, n.s. Vol. III, 1808, pp. 105-109; Lady's Monthly Museum, n.s. Vol. V, 1808, pp. 42-43; Critical Review, Third Series, Vol. XIV, August, 1808, pp. 374-379; and The AntiJacobin Review and Magazine, June, 1809, p. 191.

3 There is no extant copy of the latter, although several sources refer to his authorship of it.

on English philosophy, both of which were published in the following year. At the end of 1809 he joined Henry Crabb Robinson in London in working for Cumberland on The London Review, but the paper collapsed shortly afterwards and Hazlitt spent most of 1810 and 1811 on his painting career.

Lamb, too, was occupied in areas distant from theorising on the imagination. He followed his work on Tales From Shakespeare (1807) with another children's book in 1808, a version of Chapman's Ulysses. In the same year he established his name as a critic with Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Contemporary with Shakespeare. Most of his energies during the years in question were devoted to his tasks at India House, however, and to the demands placed on him by Mary Lamb.

From January to June, 1808, Coleridge was in London delivering a series of lectures (which probably numbered eighteen) at the Royal Institution. We are unfortunate in having only poor records of the material which might have been in these lectures, and even some of the material which has been thought to be from 1808 has recently been cast into doubt.¹ In the summer prior to the lectures Coleridge wrote to Sir Humphrey Davy outlining the plan for his lectures, and it is clear that imagination and fancy were to be the major themes. His topic was going to be his general and philosophical principles of poetry, and he announced to Davy that he had recently decided to confine himself to discussing literature. Nonetheless, he maintained:

¹ Much of the material on imagination suggested by T.M. Raysor to belong to 1808 (see CSC, I & II) has been determined impossible to date any more precisely than 1808-1811 in Volume 3 of the Coleridge Notebooks. In the latter see particularly 3246, 3246n, 3247 and 3247n for significant entries on imagination and the problems of dating.

In the course of these I shall have said, all I know, the whole result of many years' continued reflection on the subjects of Taste, Imagination, Fancy, Passion, the source of our pleasures in the fine Arts, in the antithetical balance-loving nature of man, & the connection of such pleasures with moral excellence.¹

Naturally this is an enthusiastic statement of intent, not achievement, but from the material we have, it seems that his intent was at least partially realised. The themes he mentions were discussed, but it is not possible to determine how Coleridge related taste, passion, pleasure, anti-thesis and morality to his other themes of imagination and fancy in 1808. However they were linked, there is no evidence that the relationship was closely drawn. This is a significant point, for when we arrive at Biographia Literaria the relationship in most cases is not only explicit, but the various themes are also defining elements of imagination. The story of imagination and Coleridge, particularly in the eight years prior to Biographia Literaria, is the story of imagination spreading her wings to become a comprehensive philosophy, and as it involves far more than imagination and fancy, the telling of much of it is best left until the next chapter.

The difficulties with dating can be overcome if we look at 1808-1811 as a unit, instead of concentrating on the lectures separately, a convenient step for us because of the silence of the other men during this period. This takes in the period of The Friend (1809-10), Coleridge's periodical which ran to twenty-seven numbers. It is surprising that despite the volume of material in that, there is nothing by way of theoretical treatment of the imagination.

¹ CL, III, To Humphry Davy, 9 September, 1807, 30. Cited also in CSC, II, 5-6, where Raysor gives the date as 11 September.

Coleridge's treatment of imagination between 1808 and 1811 is an expansion from former years and demonstrates an evolution, not a revolution, in thought. Imagination is still largely the modifying power of Coleridge's early letters, but it is for the first time called the unifying and fusing power in the two quotations below. In the second we find echoes of the earlier thought that poetic endeavour is "a dim Analogue of Creation":¹

[Above Fancy is] Imagination, or the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others, & by a sort of fusion to force many into one - that which after shewed itself in such might & energy in Lear, where the deep anguish of a Father spreads the feeling of Ingratitude & Cruelty over the Elements of Heaven - . Various are the workings of this greatest faculty of the human mind - both passionate & tranquil....² (1808)

Imagination/power of modifying one image or feeling by the precedent or following ones - .
- So often afterwards to be illustrated that at present I shall speak only of - one of its effects - namely, that of combining many circumstances by into one moment of thought to produce that ultimate end of human Thought, and human Feeling, Unity and thereby the - reduction of the Spirit to its Principle & Fountain, who alone is truly one.³

Imagination was linked to the manner in which our perception is altered by our emotions in Wordsworth's 1800 "Preface". The thought may have been partly Coleridge's then, but in this period we have Coleridge clearly stating it: "[there is a] different manner, in which inanimate objects, or objects unimpassioned in themselves, are seen by the mind in moments of strong excitement and according to the kind of excitement...."⁴ He includes "poetic feeling", along with jealousy, rage, and love, as illustrations of the kind of excitement he means.

¹ CL, II, To Sharp, 15 January, 1804, p. 1034.

² CN, 3290.

³ CN, 3247.

⁴ CN, 3246. The same theme may have been suggested in a notebook entry for December, 1804; he refers to fancy and imagination in conjunction with psychology and "the modification of the same feeling by difference of form". See CN, 2357.

-Coleridge's ideas of fancy in 1808-11 are in line with his former ideas. He calls it the "faculty of bringing together".¹ It is "the aggregative power" which brings together "Images dissimilar in the main by some one point of or more Likeness - distinguished -".² Coleridge is also probably referring to fancy when he speaks of "the poetic Power of making every thing present to the Imagination/both the forms, & the passions that modify these forms".³

In this period Coleridge, unlike Hunt, seems increasingly aware that a distinction between mental faculties can serve as a means of simplifying, if not answering, a whole range of questions about poetry and psychological perception. The basic distinction is one he returns to frequently. Shortly after Coleridge moved back to London after finishing The Friend, Robinson records a conversation at Charles Lamb's. Coleridge was speaking of

an elaborate and somewhat obscure distinction between fancy and imagination. The excess of fancy is delirium; of imagination, mania. Fancy is the arbitrary bringing together of things that lie remote, and forming them into a unity. The materials lie ready formed for the mind, and the fancy acts only by a sort of juxtaposition. In imagination, on the contrary, the mind from the excitement of some slight impression generates and produces a form of its own. As an instance of fanciful delirium may be cited the well-known "seas of milk and ships of amber".⁴

As a point of interest, Robinson used the word obscure to describe Wordsworth's 1815 distinction between imagination and fancy, as well as this one of Coleridge's in late 1810.⁵ The Robinson account

1 CN, 3290 (March, 1808).

2 CN, 3247. Fancy is also described as aggregative in 3827 (May, 1810).

3 CN, 3246.

4 CMC, 387-8, 15 November, 1810.

5 CMC, 396.

is important, however, in suggesting the type of conversation when Coleridge attended Lamb's regular meetings and in confirming that Charles Lamb was fully conversant with Coleridge's ideas.

Lamb had as yet written nothing about the imagination. At the beginning of 1811, in what was probably their first meeting,¹ Hunt approached Lamb to see if he would be interested in contributing to his Reflector. The first number had already appeared but in the remaining three numbers (27 July and 25 October, 1811, and 23 March, 1812) Lamb managed to have fourteen pieces published. Two of these were long critical essays, one on Hogarth, the other on Shakespeare, appearing in the third and fourth numbers respectively. It was in these that Lamb voiced most of his thoughts on the subject of imagination.

The Hogarth essay was completed in the spring of 1811 and was applauded at that time by Coleridge and Lamb's other friends.² Lamb's definition of imagination appears in the essay:

...imagination... - that power which draws all things to one, - which makes things animate and inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects and their accessories, take one colour, and serve to one effect. Every thing...to use a vulgar expression, tells.³

The definition itself may have been influenced by Coleridge. There is the suggestion of Coleridge's

¹ Kenneth Kendall is the first to deal adequately with the question in his Leigh Hunt's Reflector (The Hague & Paris, 1971), 61-65.

² Robinson records Coleridge warmly praising the essay on 28 July, 1811. Cited in Kendall, Leigh Hunt's Reflector, 68.

³ L Works, I, 73. The text given by Lucas is that of 1818, but in checking this against the 1811 text I have found it the same, with the exception of a paragraph division. Because of availability, I quote the Lucas text.

earlier thought about poetic feeling altering the perception of inanimate objects. There is also the suggestion of Coleridge's thought in praise of "Venus and Adonis": "How many Images & feelings are here brought together without effort & without discord".¹ There may be a variation on Coleridge's theme of imagination and unity. The similarities between Lamb and Coleridge are present, but to do anything more than acknowledge them is perhaps of limited value. They exist on a surface level. Lamb's extended definition of imagination, derived from an analysis of the essay itself, affirms that Lamb's concept is his own, and is used for his own purposes.

It is possible that Leigh Hunt was an influence on the essay at large. It is a matter of interesting coincidence that Lamb addresses points Hunt made about Hogarth in the Critical Essays. For instance, Hunt says at one point:

Hogarth ridiculed with infinite happiness the want of taste in painters; but he could not correct them by example. His serious pictures, so far from being models of grace, are scarcely any thing better than unintended caricatures; his Moses brought before Pharaoh looks like a school-boy approaching his master in all the fear of a whipping.²

Lamb takes up the same subject:

Hogarth's excursions into Holy Land were not very numerous, but what he has left us in this kind have at least this merit, that they have expression of some sort or other in them, - the Child Moses before Pharaoh's Daughter, for instance: which is more than can be said of Sir Joshua Reynolds's Repose in Egypt...³

¹ CN, 3290 (March, 1808).

² CE, 55.

³ L Works, I, 76.

Hunt attacks Hogarth's taste, finds in him an artist of merely the humorous, and suggests that the genius in Hogarth is an inferior genius - a genius of conception rather than imagination.¹ Lamb argues for the sophistication of Hogarth's taste, argues that Hogarth has been misinterpreted if he is seen as merely humorous, and posits his own definition of imagination to define the character of Hogarth's genius. In Lamb's essay - fully titled "On the Genius of Hogarth; With Some Remarks of a Passage in the Writings of the late Mr. Barry" - Hunt is not mentioned. It is the opinions of Barry (Works and Life, 1809) and Sir Joshua Reynolds which are explicitly under attack.

Lamb's definition of imagination has been noted by critics² but his particular thoughts on imagination, beyond the definition itself, have never been explored. The most distinctive feature of what Lamb says about the imagination is the emphasis he places on reflection or depth of thought. Coleridge, Hazlitt and Hunt all suggest that imagination is primarily a spontaneous or intuitive faculty which has a means of directly arriving at the truth. Not so for Lamb. Lamb sees imagination in Hogarth and in Shakespeare as something continually informed by or involved in a meditative action of the human mind.

1 See CE, 52 & 55.

2 See, for instance, W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York, 1957), 387. R.A. Foakes does not treat Lamb in his Romantic Criticism 1800-1850 (London, 1968). René Wellek, in A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1790; Vol. II, The Romantic Age (New Haven, 1955), mentions Lamb's definition (147) but makes no attempt to find any system in Lamb's thought (see 191-195).

It is probable that this view of imagination stems from Lamb's orientation as a reader in his approach to the subject. The suggestion is Lamb's own: "[Hogarth's] graphic representations are indeed books: they have the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of words. Other pictures we look at, - his prints we read."¹ Lamb's main point is that readers have failed to use imagination in their approach to Hogarth. The use of imagination implies abstracting one's thoughts, going beyond one's initial, superficial reaction, and discovering the reflective quality of the poet's mind, as it is evidenced by the unity of his creation.

In Lamb's approach to Hogarth and the subject of imagination, he does not try to dismiss charges of poor taste and low morality. Rather, he admits them. Then, as if to underline the power of the poet's (and the reader's) imagination, he points to the manner in which Hogarth's art can be vindicated from those charges if sufficient sensitivity and imagination are employed. Thus the initial laughter provoked by a superficial inspection of the characters in the Harlot's Funeral can become sacrificed to sympathy for the pathetic state of the people in a longer examination.² Thus in Gin Lane, where Lamb admits there is "plenty of poverty and low stuff to disgust upon a superficial view",³

¹ L Works, I, 71. Coleridge expresses an identical thought sometime between May and August, 1811: "...every thing in Hogarth is to be translated into Language - words - & to act as words, not as Images, <that in nature would> actually expressing the fact, or co-exist as in the picture..." (CN, 4096) It is not possible to establish who made the remark first, though I suspect it was Lamb as Coleridge prefaces this remark with an example he sees as "one proof of a hundred" of the truth of the remark. He does not claim the thought is his, and maintains Lamb's originality as late as 1816. (See, Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, p. 397).

² L Works, I, 73.

³ L Works, I, 73.

an imaginative study reveals an almost prophetic "diabolical spirit of phrenzy"¹ infusing the entire composition. So, too, in prints like Boys Under Demoniacal Possession, the comical expressions might initially be felt unsuitable for the tragedy of the situation. Yet if one stops to reflect, one will see evidence of the poet's imagination which initially perceived that naturally comic expressions are in fact the expressions of real madness.²

When Lamb is talking about the manner in which initial impressions may be inverted, he is essentially talking about the manner in which a studied approach to art may discover an inherent unity which, in turn, identifies the presence of imagination. It is the meditative imagination of the poet which distils unity in creation, and it is the meditative imagination of the reader which will perceive it.

The Hogarth essay ostensibly does not contain a division between imagination and fancy, but it can be argued that the groundwork is there - and it is Lamb's own groundwork, not that borrowed from others. In the 1812 essay on Shakespeare, the detailed discussion of which belongs to other chapters, the terms fancy and imagination are used almost without explanation. It is clear, however, that fancy is linked to sensory perception or rather, the superficial, intuitive reactions. Imagination, as in the Hogarth essay, is connected with intellectual abstraction. While Lamb undoubtedly knew Coleridge's distinctions between imagination and fancy, and he may have adopted the terms from him for critical purposes. Nonetheless, his definition of both terms is his own.

¹ L Works, I, 74.

² See L. Works, I, 76-7. There is a hint of the autobiographical in Lamb's comment that the faces of madness in Hogarth are "so unforced and natural, that those who never were witness to madness in real life, think they see nothing but what is familiar to them."
(76)

It must be remembered that for all Coleridge had written on imagination and fancy, he had as yet published nothing on the subject. His first published remarks appeared in Robert Southey's miscellany, Omniana, in November, 1812, the year before Southey received the laureateship. The relevant entry by Coleridge contains short definitions of other faculties besides imagination and fancy (the imitative power, understanding, speculative reason, will, choice and volition) and is quoted in its entirety by Coleridge at the end of Chapter XII of Biographia Literaria.¹ Imagination is the by now familiar "shaping and modifying power" and fancy is described as "the aggregative and associative power". It is the description of fancy that was to become famous for in 1815 Wordsworth took issue with Coleridge's denying the powers of fancy to imagination. The definition has become so well-known that it now seems generally assumed that this was always Coleridge's definition of fancy. I do not believe that commentators on Coleridge have ever pointed out that this is the first time that Coleridge calls fancy associative.

This matter may have some significance with regard to Coleridge's critical application of his theories, but it has more bearing on Coleridge scholarship. If it could be proved that Coleridge's ideas on fancy (in his prose) underwent considerable change before they were finalized, it would cast doubt on the theories that Coleridge merely lifted his distinctions from earlier writers. Moreover, it would reinforce the notion, in this case at least, that when Coleridge used a term that had been frequently used before, he (like Lamb) did not import it to his vocabulary complete with the meaning it had previously been given, but rather evolved around it his own meaning.²

¹ BL, I, 193-4 (Everyman, 160).

² This may have an indirect bearing on Coleridge's ideas of primary and secondary imagination and whether or not Coleridge is using them in an identical fashion to Tetens. See: McFarland "The Origin and Significance of Coleridge's Theory of Secondary Imagination."

I would like to suggest an argument for seeing the 1812 definition as a major change in thought. Coleridge's earliest description of fancy posed it as the aggregating faculty, not the associative; this was more than a year after he claimed to have refuted the doctrine of association:

If I do not greatly delude myself, I have not only completely extricated the notions of Time and Space; but have overthrown the doctrine of Association, as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern Infidels - especially, the doctrine of Necessity. - This I have done....¹

A letter to Southey in 1803 elaborates this position: "I almost think that Ideas never recall Ideas, as far as they are Ideas - any more than Leaves in a forest create each other's motion.... If I had said, no one Idea ever recalls another, I am confident that I could support the assertion."² Instead, he proposed another theory:

... I hold, that association depends in a much larger degree on the recurrence of resembling states of Feeling, than on Trains of Idea/ that the recollection of early childhood in latest old age depends on, & is explicable by this - & if this be true, Hartley's System totters.³

I suggest that it is this new theory Coleridge is alluding to when, a week later, he again writes to Southey:

¹ CL, II, To Thomas Poole, 16 March, 1801.

² CL, II, To Robert Southey, 7 August, 1803. Coleridge was possibly hinting towards a similar thought nine years earlier: "I go further than Hartley and believe the corporeality of thought, namely, that it is motion." CL, I, To Robert Southey, 11 December, 1794.

³ CL, II, To Robert Southey, 7 August, 1803.

...there is a state of mind, wholly unnoticed, as far as I know, by any Physical or Metaphysical Writer hitherto, & which yet is necessary to the explanation of some of the most important phaenomena of Sleep & Disease/ it is a transmutation of the succession of Time into the juxtaposition of Space, by which the smallest Impulses, if quickly & regularly recurrent, aggregate themselves - & attain a kind of visual magnitude with a correspondent Intensity of general Feeling. - The simplest Illustration would be the circle of Fire made by whirling round a live Coal - only here the mind is passive.¹

If I am correct in linking the two letters to Southey, it would appear that Coleridge supplanted Hartley's theory of association with his own theory of aggregation: in the one the mind was passive and depended on trains of ideas and in the other the mind was active and depended on trains of feeling.² This would have been an attractive alternative for Coleridge as he had earlier rejected the passivity of mind which the materialist philosophy implied.³ In any case, Coleridge's first definition of fancy as opposed to imagination had described fancy as aggregating, not associating (1802); and this continued to be the case in 1804 and in 1808.

There is one more point which may be of relevance here. In one of the Notebook entries which we have already mentioned, dating between 1808 and 1811, Coleridge defines imagination and fancy but places between them another faculty, or rather, another requirement for the poet. He describes it as:

¹ CL, II, To Robert Southey, 14 August, 1803. Coleridge did not attribute the above to fancy in the letter. The significance of the passage is the manner in which the mind aggregates material.

² Strong support for this argument, and further support (that Coleridge had been thinking along these lines, may be found in CL, I, To Thomas Poole, 19 May, 1799: "I could half suspect that what are deemed fine descriptions, produce their effects almost purely by a charm of words, with which & with those combinations, we associate feelings indeed, but no distinct Images." A of the fact

³ See CL, II, To Thomas Poole, 23 March, 1801.

- That power of & energy of what a late living peemoet has grandly & appropriately. To flash upon that inward Eye Which is the Bliss of Solitude - & to make every thing present by the a Series of Images - This an absolute Essential of Poetry, & of itself would form a poet, tho' not of the highest Class - It is however a most hopeful Symptom & the V.&A. is one continued Specimen/ ¹

The mention of the series of images is the first explicit suggestion in Coleridge's writing that association, in a Hartleyean sense of the word, is required for poetry. Placed after the aggregative fancy in the note, yet before imagination (which represents the highest class of poetry), it is possible that this power was amalgamated with the earlier fancy to form the 1812 definition. The note may in fact herald that change in thought.

Coleridge's Omniana definition appeared at the end of an eventful year. Coleridge had finished his lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, and Hazlitt had given his lectures on English Philosophy. The Reflector reached its last number and its demise marked the end of a period of literary activity for Charles Lamb - in the next years he published little until his 1818 Works. In the spring of 1812 Lamb and Robinson helped to patch the ailing Coleridge- Wordsworth relationship and at Lamb's place, Hunt and Hazlitt met for the first time. At the end of the year, when Hunt and Hazlitt were meeting regularly at Haydon's studio, the government was successful in its third attempt to convict Hunt and his brother for libel in The Examiner, and both Hunts were facing two-year prison sentences which were to begin in February of the next year. Coleridge had reissued The Friend, was lecturing on Shakespeare at the Surrey Institution, and was preparing for the January re-opening of Drury Lane and the production of his Remorse.

¹ CN, 3247. See also 3246, probably from the same date, for further suggestions of fancy as associative.

During the next two years (1813 and 1814) it was Hazlitt, of the four men in our study, who displayed the most literary activity. This is largely because he was just beginning his career as a journalist and critic and the others were temporarily retiring from their journalistic connections. But Hunt was busy as well, despite poor health and imprisonment; he continued to write the leader articles for The Examiner and had time to devote to writing poetry. Both of these men made additional contributions to the contradistinguishing of imagination.

The clearest evidence of this for Hunt comes out in his 1814 and 1815 editions of The Feast of the Poets, a poem first published in the last number of The Reflector. The later separate editions of the work carried lengthy notes which mention imagination and particularly fancy several times and include a short critical essay on Wordsworth.¹ The timing was unfortunate: Hunt was dealing with the 1802 "Preface" and poems (which, incidentally, along with Wordsworth's other work, Hunt had not read until 1812 or possibly later), not the 1815 "Preface" which was already in preparation. Thus while we have Hunt's specific responses to many of Wordsworth's ideas about poetry, we do not have his reaction to Wordsworth's differentiation between imagination and fancy.² It is a matter of interest, however, that Hunt was using the earlier "Preface"; Hunt's use of fancy in his notes could not have come from what Wordsworth had written to that date.

¹ Feast of the Poets (London, 1814), see 92-107.

² The 1815 edition came out after Wordsworth's 1815 Poems, as Hunt acknowledges in mentioning that his admiration for Wordsworth has risen after reading the volumes (See Feast in Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt [London, 1819], Vol. II, 109). Hunt's poem is slightly altered concerning Wordsworth, but the body of his notes remained unchanged.

In the early "Preface", Wordsworth explicitly linked the poetry of feeling and passion with imagination. In Hunt's comments on the "Preface", Hunt seems to do the same. But unlike Wordsworth, Hunt points to a "secondary species of poetry" which is classified by fancy. Its characteristics, for instance in the case of the Gray poem Wordsworth cites, are classical and metaphorical allusions which refer to natural emotions rather than create them.¹ Hunt suggests that fancy involves very particular, detailed associations that are oriented towards the factual world of knowledge. /+a

It is interesting that Hunt's response to Wordsworth's early "Preface" was a division of poetry into two classifications which correspond with those Wordsworth himself employed in the year after Hunt's comments. I have not been able to prove whether or not these thoughts about fancy were a new line of thinking for Hunt. Hunt had used the word fancy as part of his critical vocabulary from early in his career, and often in a manner that suggests it is a synonym for imagination (using both terms loosely). For example, he spoke of the "verge of fancy beyond which it is a pain even for poetry to venture",² of the "wild fancy of Hamlet",³ and of the manner in which Tate turned Shakespeare's feeling "into scanty sprinklings over his own barren fancy."⁴ If Hunt were using the words synonymously, the first evidence I have found which suggests they are not synonymized is in a review of Julius Caesar at the end of March, 1812; there he comments that

¹ Feast of the Poets (1814), 102-103.

² CE, 110.

³ The News, 28 June, 1807.

⁴ Examiner, 18 May, 1808.

the play is one of Shakespeare's least poetical, lacking both colour and ornament, but contends that "fancy and imagination did not stir the business of the scene".¹ This is paltry evidence to go on, but it is the best we have. The date might be significant, for it was one week after the last number of the Reflector in which Lamb spoke of fancy and imagination. Significantly too, it comes only shortly after Coleridge's lectures, of which Hunt attended at least one and at which he might have heard Coleridge's distinction.

There is, however, another possibility - it is that Hunt used fancy as a term closely related to conception. This certainly seems to be the case in 1814, when fancy, like conception, defines the lower species of art, deals mainly with sorting out and clarifying factual material, and has little to do with passions. But in 1807 it might have been the case as well, for in the Critical Essays on at least one occasion Hunt spoke of an actor's conception of character lacking "boldness of fancy",² a usage which suggests that fancy is not a synonym for imagination (since conception and imagination were opposed) and may hint at a slight difference between fancy and conception.

The point was made in the former chapter that Hazlitt's extensive 1805 theory of the imagination was not aesthetic so much as it was metaphysical and perceptual. In the course of working as a critic, however, he adapted the theory to his critical purposes, and it was a change that he made easily. One of the results was the emergence of

1 Examiner, 29 March, 1812.

2 CE, 46.

fancy in his theory, although Elizabeth Schneider has maintained otherwise.¹ Hazlitt would have been very familiar with the thoughts of Coleridge and Lamb, and possibly even Hunt, on the matter, but it was not until February of 1815, one month before Wordsworth's "Preface" appeared, that Hazlitt gave his own definitions. The influence of the others may be seen, but once again the emphasis is particularly the author's own. The thought surfaces while Hazlitt is making typically Romantic generalities about women: women lack powers of concentration and are best suited for gossip where the subject is continually changing. Imagination is what they lack; fancy is what they possess. Hazlitt calls imagination that which

depends on intensity of passion, on the accumulation of ideas and feelings round one object, on bringing all nature and all art to bear on a particular purpose, on continuity and comprehension of the mind.

Fancy has "greater flexibility of mind, and can more readily vary and separate...ideas at pleasure."² It was a distinction Hazlitt was to retain. For instance, in 1822 he was suggesting that fancy was the volatile or lively quality of the mind.³ In 1823, fancy is used to refer to light poetry, cosmetic effects, and the picturesque, as opposed to imagination and poetry of passion.⁴ Again in 1825 fancy was the mind's strength of versatility.⁵ In the latter instance it is clear that fancy is not connected to facts and knowledge as it was for

¹ Elizabeth Schneider claimed that Hazlitt used fancy and imagination interchangeably; see The Aesthetics of William Hazlitt, 103. I have found no evidence of this after 1815, however.

² H Works, XX, 42.

³ H Works, XII, 144-5.

⁴ H Works, XVI, 411-414.

⁵ H Works, XI, 134.

Hunt - facts and knowledge belong more to Hazlitt's faculty of understanding. Fancy for Hazlitt is the flexing activity of the mind that can be seen, like the focusing activity of the imagination, quite separate from its product, though it may be intrinsically involved with it.

We arrive, then, at the end of a long and possibly mind-boggling series of distinctions concerning imagination and what we may call her adjacent faculty. Though not yet pointed out, it can be seen that it is difficult to draw close comparisons among the views of the four men of our study. Clearly they are all working in the same general area of thought, but each has his own particular angle, his own mode of expression. If one compares them too closely, the usefulness of the enterprise can be lost in excessive subtlety of thought; yet at the same time failure to see them alongside each other can result in distortion of another kind. It can result in giving undue importance to the remarks of one man or to the remarks of that man at one particular time as opposed to another. Moreover, it can result in failing to recognise the influences which do exist.

In the general comparison of the four men and their evolving theories, Leigh Hunt fares remarkably well, even though it is impossible to determine his influence on the other men. Hunt was the youngest of them and was the first to publish his two-part distinction in what was a book well-read by actors and the more intellectual theatregoers of the time. His theories of imagination and conception were workable theories, and could have been seen by others as such if their criticisms led them along similar lines of thought. What is perhaps even more remarkable

is that Hunt, alone, was working in isolation from the others at the time of his initial theorising, yet the theory of conception which he came up with was not incompatible with the theories of fancy which the others (and later he) produced. Hunt's ideas were a means of classifying art and artists that recognised a difference in kind, not degree, between the faculties. In 1807, 1814 and again in 1844, Hunt's conception (or fancy) can be seen as fact-oriented, and imagination can be recognised as passion-oriented and image-forming.

Lamb's theory of imagination is by far the simplest of the ones in this study, but its simplicity may be said to be a virtue. Imagination is explicitly connected with the unified effect of the entire work of art. His contradistinction of imagination with fancy I believe has not been noticed before, nor has Hazlitt's, and both of them give us very clear pictures of the possibilities of contradistinguishing imagination. For Lamb, fancy is the initial sensory response to art and imagination is the studied response which recognises unity. For Hazlitt, fancy is the versatility of the mind to move from subject to subject, while imagination is the focusing power connected closely to depth of feeling.

Coleridge, of course, remains of great importance in the period we have been studying. He has retained, though sharpened, his imagination-fancy distinction. This is just one of the areas in which he has influenced both Lamb and Hazlitt. We have seen him calling imagination the highest faculty and calling it, for the first time, the unifying and fusing power. We have also seen that he was relatively late in coming out with published remarks on imagination and fancy, the

former being "shaping and modifying", the latter being "associative and aggregative." But despite the amount that Coleridge had written to this point, it is a matter of speculation as to whether he would still be regarded as foremost of the theoreticians of imagination if he had not gone on to write Biographia Literaria.

CHAPTER IV

1815-1818: BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA AND BEYOND

It is now one hundred and fifty years since Biographia Literaria was written and it remains one of the most problematic and misunderstood texts in English Literature. It is a tribute to the depth of Coleridge's thought that the book has become a classic for Romantic criticism and literary criticism as a whole. The numerous problems Coleridge encountered in writing the work - problems of drug addiction, finance, distance from a decent library (he was living with the Morgans in Calne), along with problems with the printers who misled him about the length of the work - kept Biographia from presenting as clear a statement of his ideas as he might have liked.

In Biographia Literaria, Coleridge tries to trace his "literary" life. Although he starts with his childhood and ends up with a broad statement of his ideas at the time of writing, he includes much material, irrespective of chronological order. His school days are discussed in Chapter I, but his other relatively early experiences, for instance his connections with Wordsworth and with journalism, are mentioned in a number of chapters well into the work.¹ He traces consistent themes in his intellectual thought, but interrupts with criticisms of various philosophers, and miscellaneous thoughts on subjects ranging from talent and genius (Chapters II & XI) to modern literary criticism and his intellectual debts (III & X).

¹ The Wordsworth connections are discussed in Chapters IV, XIV and others. Journalism is discussed in X.

Coleridge recognised that his book was an "immethodical...miscellany"¹ but he did feel he was building towards an intelligible statement of his poetic creed. The central aim of Biographia he defines as follows:

...it was Mr. Wordsworth's purpose to consider the influences of fancy and imagination as they are manifested in poetry, and from the different effects to conclude their diversity in kind; while it is my object to investigate the seminal principle, and then from the kind to deduce the degree. My friend has drawn a masterly sketch of the branches with their poetic fruitage. I wish to add the trunk, and even the roots as far as they lift themselves above the ground, and are visible to the naked eye of our common consciousness.²

This clear statement of intention in Chapter IV has not seemed to correspond with what was actually achieved in the chapters which followed. Imagination and fancy are mentioned several times, though never in a very clear context until Chapter XIII, when Coleridge comes out with his definitions of primary imagination, secondary imagination, and fancy. These seem to be entirely unsupported, lacking both the trunk and the roots Coleridge promised. Some critics have seized on Coleridge's performance as evidence of a vacillating, indecisive, opium-tortured personality, which was trying to avoid commitment. Others have left his personality out of it, but have seen him making false starts towards defining imagination, and on each occasion, ultimately deciding that the time was not ripe. All critics agree that Coleridge wrote too little in Biographia on imagination and its divisions, that the disjointed approach to imagination mirrors the disjointed nature of the entire work, and that, despite these facts, Coleridge has been one of the most stimulating commentators on the subject.

1 BL, I, 64; (Everyman, 52-53).

2 BL, I, 64; (Everyman, 52).

Critics have used various methods to treat Coleridge's thoughts on imagination in Biographia. Most frequently, comparative studies have been made with writers Coleridge knew.¹ Stephen Prickett has pointed to the irony that philosophical critics are unanimous in believing that Coleridge's thought was plagiarized, but are unable to agree "on what was plagiarized, or from whom."² Perhaps there is a further irony concerning comparative studies. They have been undertaken repeatedly while the integrity of Biographia has never been explored or debated. In other words, Coleridge's own argument has been given insufficient attention in the search to discover his meaning with regard to imagination.

In 1953, George Whalley felt the need to defend the integrity of the work, but two decades later his introductory comment (with himself excepted) still rings true: "A few have shown respect in handling extracts from the text, but

¹ Some examples might be sighted here of the different kinds of comparisons which have been made. Coleridge's ideas of imagination have been approached through the psychology of emotions (I.A. Richards, Coleridge on Imagination [London, 1934]); through Kant (see especially D.G. James, Scepticism and Poetry: An Essay on the Poetic Imagination [London, 1937]); through Schelling (Rene Wellek, Immanuel Kant in England [Princeton, 1931], 114ff.); through English philosophers like Shaftesbury (R.L. Brett, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury [London, 1951]); through the notions of polarity in Plotinus, Boehme, and Schelling (J.V. Baker, The Sacred River [Baton Rouge, La.], 130ff.); through Wordsworth (Stephen Prickett, Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth [Cambridge, 1970], 37-41 & 71-94); and through Tetens (Thomas McFarland, "The Origin and Significance of Coleridge's Theory of Secondary Imagination", New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth [New York and London, 1972], 195-246).

McFarland almost certainly has discovered the true source of Coleridge's three-part distinction in Tetens.

nobody seems ever to have sought the integrity of the book itself. The general impression is that the book is incorrigibly diffuse, fragmentary, and obscure."¹ Whalley himself did not argue the unity of the text or argue any logical progression through the text. Instead, he focused on defending Coleridge's early remarks which heralded Biographia, on Coleridge's personal difficulties, and Coleridge's usual manner of writing. Since then the issue has lain dormant. J.A. Appleyard, in 1965, suggested that the only way to make sense of Coleridge's definitions was to place them "in the context of his total argument"², but he was more interested in Coleridge's thought outside of Biographia Literaria. His approach considers why Coleridge's line of thought in Biographia failed, and pre-supposes that the thought was disjointed.

Most of the present chapter will concentrate on Coleridge's argument in Biographia Literaria in an attempt to establish the integrity of the work. Particular emphasis will be given to Chapter XII, to show its integration into the rest of Biographia. Also, an effort will be made to demonstrate, contrary to current opinion, that imagination is the main focus of Coleridge's philosophical argument (in accordance with his claim at the end of Chapter IV) and that the "seminal principle" of the imagination-fancy distinction is present in his thought. The conclusions cannot help but go against much of the criticism which has been written on Coleridge to date and in particular, I will be challenging the interpretations which have been given to the concept of reconciliation of opposites in Coleridge's thought.

¹ "The Integrity of Biographia Literaria", in Essays and Studies, n.s. VI, (1953), 87.

² Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature, 204-5.

The structure of Biographia Literaria must be the initial concern. The first thirteen chapters give a broken account of the history of philosophy and end with Coleridge's definitions of primary imagination, secondary imagination, and fancy. The remainder of the work (Chapters XIV-XXIV) traces the history of English poetry, but is more accurately a long, occasionally rambling essay on all facets of poetry, concentrating on Coleridge's differences with Wordsworth on poetic theory.

If the book is considered in the light of its title, it is only the first thirteen chapters which can be said to trace Coleridge's development - as he traces the history of philosophy he is in effect tracing the course he plied through philosophy. Even at this, only Chapters I to XI, inclusive, deal with Coleridge's thoughts prior to the time of writing, and Coleridge continually alternates between his former thoughts and his present ones, without at times indicating which is which. The long and difficult Chapter XII, along with Chapter XIII and most of the remainder are statements of Coleridge's ideas at the time of writing. Coleridge seems to have written Biographia on the assumption that his 1815-16 conclusions tell more about the evolution of his ideas than anything else.

The first thirteen chapters create most problems. The most important thing to recognise initially about the first chapters, which has been missed in the past, is that Coleridge defines in separate places three specific problems with philosophy which he encountered over the years.

The first of Coleridge's problems centers around Hartley's theory of association. It occupies the entirety of Chapters V to VII and is unusual because it represents a well-organized unit and is presented with firm control: Chapter V treats the basic tenets of Hartley, Chapter VI discusses the basic errors of Hartley, and VII deals with the logical implications of Hartley's theory. Coleridge's problem with association, as he presents it in Biographia, corresponds with what the present thesis has already studied with regard to the years 1801-1803. Hartley's theory, Coleridge felt, restricted the mind to a purely mechanical role and did not allow it the active functions Coleridge believed it to have.

However much Coleridge deviates from strict chronological order in Volume One, Chapters I to VII do take the reader from Coleridge's childhood to 1803. Coleridge's second and third problems are the abiding philosophical concerns of the years which followed. Coleridge's early concern with revelation in "Religious Musing" is still an issue for him and it lies at the heart of his two remaining problems.

One of the problems may be called the materialist-dualist dilemma. The materialist and dualist positions are outlined in the first part of Chapter VIII, and Coleridge's problems with both are discussed in the last part of VIII and in Chapter IX. Materialism, of course, involved notions of association, but it concerned much more than that. It tried to account for everything in terms of matter, starting with the object and moving inwards (Locke and his followers). The dualists split the world into spirit and matter: Descartes started with the subject, saw the soul as intelligence, and moved out from there; Leibniz developed a theory that soul and body existed in a state of pre-

established harmony. Materialism failed on one count, that of association, but both materialism and dualism failed on another count, that of rationally dismissing or accounting for revelation:

The most consistent proceeding of the dogmatic materialist is to fall back into the common rank of soul-and-bodyists; to affect the mysterious, and declare the whole process a revelation given, and not to be understood, which it would be profane to examine too closely.¹

In addition to the associationist problem, and the materialist-dualist dilemma, Coleridge discusses a third problem. This problem is specifically religious and is touched upon in Chapter IX,² but is given concentrated emphasis in the middle of Chapter X.³ The problem is best identified as a pantheist dilemma. McFarland's work, Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition, devotes a long chapter to discussing "Coleridge and the Dilemmas of Pantheism." Coleridge is seen on a kind of tight-rope strung between the poles of subject and object and he is continually trying to reconcile the two without falling into the abyss of Spinoza's pantheism.⁴ Although McFarland sees the poles in terms of subject and object, there is evidence that the poles could be seen as reason, on one hand, and on the other, Coleridge's inability to reconcile reason with his belief in a Christian self-revealing God. Only in Spinoza could he find a rational proof for the existence of God, but even there he was denied the ability to attribute personhood to God. Still, as Coleridge says regarding

¹ BL, I, 91; (Everyman, 76).

² See: BL, I, 93-99; (Everyman, 79-84).

³ See: BL, I, 132-7; (Everyman, 111-115).

The clear definition of the problem as late as Chapter X may indicate a chronological importance Coleridge felt about the issue with regard to the problem which preceded it. As we will see, the solution to the other two problems certainly had to be found before the solution to the religious problem could be discovered.

⁴ Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition, 107-190.

Spinoza's pantheist system, "at no time could I believe, that in itself and essentially it is incompatible with religion, natural or revealed."¹ Coleridge's pantheist dilemma is best summed up in his own words: "For a very long time, indeed, I could not reconcile personality with infinity; and my head was with Spinoza, though my whole heart remained with Paul and John."²

In the past perhaps insufficient emphasis has been given to the fact that Coleridge is outlining three related but quite separate problems in the first thirteen chapters of Biographia. Associationism, materialism versus dualism, and pantheism are the main issues of those chapters (and perhaps also of Coleridge's philosophical growth to 1816). It is important to recognise further, that those chapters also contain the solutions to each of the problems.

The solution to the associationist problem is given first. It is given at the end of Chapter VII, concluding the lengthy discussion of the problem and all its ramifications begun in Chapter V. Coleridge concludes that the law of contemporaneity, "being the common condition of all the laws of association",³ is inadequate to explain all methods of thought. As Coleridge says, "if we appeal to our consciousness, we shall find that even time itself, as the cause of a particular act of association, is distinct from contemporaneity, as the condition of all association."⁴ Because of this major exception to the theory of association as Coleridge understood it, Coleridge concluded that Hartley's

¹ BL, I, 99; (Everyman, 83-84).

² BL, I, 134; (Everyman, 112).

³ BL, I, 86; (Everyman, 72).

⁴ BL, I, 86; (Everyman, 72).

suggestion that the mind was merely passive was wrong. Coleridge decided that the mind was both active and passive, and the only way in which this was possible was in conceiving that there was "an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive". This faculty, which provided the solution to the associationist problem, was what Coleridge denominated "the IMAGINATION".¹

Coleridge's formulation of a faculty of imagination provided the solution for one of his problems. This paper will argue that theoretical developments of the faculty of imagination provided Coleridge with the solutions to the other problems as well, and that Coleridge intended Chapters XII and XIII to be read as a statement of his conclusions.

With regard to the materialist-dualist problem and the pantheist dilemma, it is not self-evident that solutions are given in Biographia, much less that the solution is found in the chapters mentioned. Coleridge's hints must be followed, however. In Chapter IX, directly after the materialist-dualist problem is clarified, Coleridge gives a catalogue of the philosophers to whom he feels indebted.² The list does not include either materialists or dualists but instead points to those philosophers who aided Coleridge towards a solution. He lists the mystics, George Fox, Jacob Behmen, and William Law, and also the German philosophers, Spinoza, Kant, Fichte and Schelling. Coleridge does not describe what the solution is, except by identifying it as a Philosophy of Nature

¹ BL, I, 86; (Everyman, 72).

² See BL, I, 98-105;; (Everyman, 83-89).

incorporating a Dynamic System; and he gives most of the credit to the German transcendentalists, especially Schelling:

God forbid! that I should be suspected of a wish to enter into a rivalry with Schelling for the honours so unequivocally his right, not only as a great and original genius, but as the founder of the PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE, and as the most successful improver of the Dynamic System which, begun by Bruno, was re-introduced (in a more philosophical form, and freed from all its impurities and visionary accompaniments) by KANT; in whom it was the native and necessary growth of his own system. Kant's followers, however...had adopted his dynamic ideas, only as a more refined species of mechanics. With the exception of one or two fundamental ideas, which cannot be with-held from FICHTE, to SCHELLING we owe the completion, and the most important victories, of this revolution in philosophy.¹

Coleridge claims that the solution to the materialist-dualist problem was found in the philosophical revolution brought about by Schelling and others, although in Chapter IX he does not go on to say what the solution is.

The pantheist or religious problem is clarified in Chapter X, and there again Coleridge gives a hint about the solution without actually discussing it. He simply states: "A more thorough revolution in my philosophic principles, and a deeper insight into my own heart, were yet wanting."² The reference to a philosophical revolution once more points to German transcendental philosophy and particularly Schelling.

Chapter XII is the only chapter which has material which has been identified with Schelling. The philosophical system Coleridge develops in that chapter is the only system which goes unchallenged in Biographia Literaria. What Coleridge describes is the Philosophy of Nature, the revolutionary Dynamic System, for which he has been preparing.

From these facts it would be reasonable to suspect that Chapter XII contains the substantial part of Coleridge's solutions to the materialist-

¹ BL, I, 103-4; (Everyman, 87-88).

² BL, I, 137; (Everyman, 115).

dualist problem, and to the pantheist dilemma. This is, in fact, the case, and Chapter XII is probably the most important chapter in the book. The chapter provides the solution to Coleridge's two remaining problems and establishes the basis for claiming that the solution to both lies in Coleridge's theory of imagination.

The thematic and structural integration of Chapter XII with the rest of the work has been missed by even the most astute of critics. This is partially because much of the material in the chapter (something less than half) has been identified with Schelling. W.J. Bate recently was able to conclude: "Chapter XII is far from necessary to the Biographia. It is in fact something of an excrescence, and it is rather dull reading, far from Schelling at his best."¹ Other critics have considered Coleridge's use of Schelling in the light of his claimed rejection of Schelling in 1818.² Fruman has suggested that Coleridge's use of Schelling in Biographia was makeshift, and that his use prevented him from disclaiming Schelling sooner than he did.³

Schelling's influence on Coleridge is complicated and various, and it continues at least until the mid 1820s. Two brief points may be made here concerning Chapter XII. The first is that, if Chapter XII is seen in the context of Coleridge's larger argument, in particular in the context of the problems he has outlined, the reading is not so dull. It must be questioned whether, in attempting to render the Dynamic System "intelligible to his countrymen",⁴ Coleridge did not present them with a system more his own

¹ Coleridge, 136.

² See CL: To Green, 30 September, 1818; To Tulk, 24 November, 1818.

³ Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel, 88.

⁴ BL, I, 105; (Everyman, 88).

than Schelling's. The second point is that Coleridge had cautioned in Biographia that "an identity of thought, or even similarity of phrase, will not be at all times a certain proof that the passage has been borrowed from Schelling";¹ and Coleridge had added that possible coincidence of Schelling's thought with his own did not mean that the work was not "the offspring of a man's own spirit and the product of original thinking."² It would seem a mistake to conclude either that Chapter XII is Schelling's thought or that Coleridge's later rejection of Schelling included a rejection of the argument in Chapter XII. It would be more reasonable to conclude that at the time Coleridge wrote Biographia, he believed there were deep-seated similarities between his thought and Schelling's, but further study led him to believe that this was not so.

The solution Coleridge found for his materialist-dualist problem and his pantheist dilemma is involved and complex. It has to do with the rejection of traditional avenues of philosophical exploration and the adoption of what Coleridge saw as the entirely new method of transcendental philosophy. Prior to Chapter XII, Coleridge had made it clear that he had been looking for a philosophy which would provide an adequate theory of knowledge. In taking each philosophical system to its logical conclusion he found that it either a) contradicted itself (as in the case of some materialists admitting but not being able to account for revelation), b) contradicted observable or provable reality (Leibniz's dualism), or c) contradicted what Coleridge knew to be true from his own experience (such as concerning the activity of

the case

¹ BL, I, 102; (Everyman, 87).

² BL, I, 104-5; (Everyman, 88).

the mind and the personhood of God). Vast fields of intellectual analysis which were originally intended to explain the contradictions of man's existence, themselves broke down into irresoluble contradictions and ultimately failed Coleridge as adequate epistemological systems.

Coleridge renewed his attack on traditional philosophy in his prefatory remarks in Chapter XII. Traditional philosophers had failed to go back far enough in their enquiries:

[Their] criterion is this: [that] a man receives as fundamental facts, and therefore of course indemonstrable and incapable of further analysis, the general notions of matter, spirit, soul, body, action, passiveness, time, space, cause, and effect, consciousness, perception, memory and habit....¹

Their method, Coleridge went on to explain, was to take all of these terms "in mass, and unexamined, [and required] only a decent apprenticeship in logic, to draw forth their contents in all forms and colours".² This type of analysis can succeed "in rendering our knowledge more distinct, [but] does not really add to it. It does not increase, though it gives a greater mastery over, the wealth which we before possessed."³

In the initial pages of Chapter XII, Coleridge actually dismisses non-transcendental philosophy:

For forensic purposes, for all the established professions of society, this [rendering our knowledge more distinct] is sufficient. But for philosophy in its highest sense as the science of ultimate truths, and therefore scientia scientiarum, this mere analysis of terms is preparative only, though as a preparative discipline indispensable.⁴

¹ BL, I, 162-3; (Everyman, 136).

² BL, I, 163; (Everyman, 136).

³ BL, I, 163; (Everyman, 136).

⁴ BL, I, 163; (Everyman, 136).

Coleridge goes on specifically to attack the dualists:

...that compendious philosophy, which talking of mind but thinking of brick and mortar, or other images equally abstracted from body, contrives a theory of spirit by nicknaming matter, and in a few hours can qualify its dullest disciples to explain the omne scibile by reducing all things to impressions, ideas, and sensations.¹

Coleridge's long lyrical passage in Chapter XII about the range of hills encircling the vale of common habitation beyond which few travellers have ventured is partly an attack on traditional philosophers. It is not stating the difference between philosophers and other men, as it is sometimes read, but rather between transcendental philosophers and all other men.

The approach which Coleridge was going to take to find a solution to the inadequacy of traditional philosophy (with special regard to the materialist-dualist and pantheist issues) was the approach of "true philosophy". It would aim at ultimate reality and would go beyond the mere analysis of terms. Coleridge would question the philosophical basis of such notions as time, space, cause, effect, matter, spirit, active, passive, and the like, and would not use them as terms which had self-evident references. The approach would "at once explain and collect the fragments of truth scattered through systems apparently the most incongruous."² It was a new kind of "philosophic consciousness"³ that Coleridge was pointing towards: materialist and dualist philosophers did not have it, for it was "the exclusive domain of pure philosophy which is therefore properly entitled transcendental."⁴

1 BL, I, 163; (Everyman, 136).

2 BL, I, 169; (Everyman, 141).

3 BL, I, 164; (Everyman, 136).

4 BL, I, 164; (Everyman, 137). Coleridge calls the consciousness demonstrated in other philosophies "spontaneous", lacking "an effort of freedom."

The intention of Coleridge's prefatory comments was to warn away all readers who were content with the mere analysis of terms and were not prepared to seek ultimate reality. It is time, Coleridge said, "to tell the truth...."¹ Despite an apparent air of arrogance, self-aggrandisement was not Coleridge's purpose, and his remarks were bound to be read in the wrong light. As will be shown, he was pointing to something radically new, and his remarks should be read with that in mind. He is saying, in effect, that the ideas which he is about to express as the solution to his former problems are so important that he would rather have his argument in Chapter XII discarded than have it misunderstood and obscured. Some critics, of course, did discard the chapter, but even with those who took it more seriously, Coleridge possibly has suffered the misinterpretation he feared most.

Coleridge's fear that his philosophical solution would be misunderstood arose from his study of Kant and the mechanical way in which his ideas had been handled by his followers. What Coleridge says about Kant, several chapters earlier, should be read alongside what Coleridge says in Chapter XII, for Coleridge warns readers who lack understanding to stay away from Kant as well. The terms Coleridge was going to use in his argument could not be taken as flat "technical terms or scientific symbols"² to be trotted out, analysed, and made to take any form, and neither could Kant's:

¹ BL, I, 163; (Everyman, 136).

² BL, I, 164; (Everyman, 137).

An IDEA, in the highest sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a symbol; and, except in geometry, all symbols of necessity involve an apparent contradiction. Φώνησε συνετοῖσιν : and for those who could not pierce through this symbolic husk, his writings were not intended. ¹

Coleridge's transcendental philosophy, which was going to provide his solution to the materialist-dualist problem and the pantheist dilemma, was going to use symbols as Kant had used them. Unlike the symbols of geometry, they would involve apparent contradiction. In Chapter XII Coleridge spends some time talking about geometry, and one of the points he makes is that mathematical symbols are completely self-referential. An initial postulate is conceived and defined, and a symbol is ascribed to that postulate which presumes the definition.² Technical terms in traditional philosophy also tend to operate on this level, and their use is justified "whenever they tend to preclude confusion of thought, and when they assist the memory by the exclusive singleness of their meaning."³ But what traditional philosophers failed to recognise is that their symbols differ from those of mathematics because they do not refer to distinct, unanalyzable entities. This approach ultimately can be detrimental to the argument of a non-transcendental philosopher, but if the same approach is applied to a transcendental philosopher's argument, the effect can be devastating.

¹ BL, I, 100; (Everyman, 85).

² BL, I, 170-1; (Everyman, 142-3).

³ BL, I, 188; (Everyman, 156).

Coleridge maintained that transcendental philosophers, himself included, used an approach to language which was different from that used by traditional philosophers. Coleridge also maintained that the reader of transcendental philosophy had to be alert to the different way in which language was intended if the arguments were to be understood. Transcendental philosophers are appealing to a source of knowledge far higher and more inward than their symbols can hope immediately to convey.¹ The primary means by which this "ulterior consciousness" can be conveyed is "through words which are but the shadows of notions; even as the notional understanding itself is but the shadowy abstraction of living and actual truth."² The symbols of the transcendental philosopher must be recognised, then, to participate only inadequately in the reality for which they stand, and herein lies the contradiction Coleridge was talking about. Transcendental symbols, like mathematical symbols, imply a certain unity between symbol and thought, but with transcendental symbols, this unity does not exist. Symbol and thought have their own distinct identities and cannot be confused, one with the other.³

Coleridge's thoughts on symbol become most significant when they re-emerge in his writings between 1816 and 1818, but in Chapter XII of Biographia, they are important in establishing the starting point of Coleridge's new approach

1 BL, I, 166; (Everyman, 138).

2 BL, I, 168; (Everyman, 140).

3 Shawcross touches on this point: "Finally, the symbol, while remaining distinct from the thing symbolized, is yet in some mysterious way interpenetrated by its being, and partakes of its reality." (BL, I, xl).

to philosophy. The principle which is operating in his discussion of symbol is an abstract principle of radical or absolute individuation, and logically it is not entirely separate from notions of contrariety. In other words symbols and thoughts exist, of necessity, apart from each other with separate identities. On an absolute or ultimate level, each identity, whether it is symbol or thought, is in a sense contrary to every other identity; no two things can be the same and all are alike in being different.

It is this highly abstract recognition of individuation and contrariety which Coleridge seems to suggest is the main prerequisite for understanding transcendental philosophy:

The first lesson of philosophic discipline is to wean the student's attention from the DEGREES of things, which alone form the vocabulary of common life, and to direct it to the KIND abstracted from degree.¹

This point was made in Chapter X, and in Chapter XIII a similar point is made. This time, again, the language is symbolic in the transcendental sense:

Now the transcendental philosophy demands; first, that two forces should be conceived which counteract each other by their essential nature; not only not in consequence of the accidental direction of each, but as prior to all direction, nay, as the primary forces from which the conditions of all possible directions are derivative and deducible: secondly, that these forces should be assumed to be both alike infinite, both alike indestructible.²

¹ BL, I, 108; (Everyman, 92). For a significant forerunner of this comment and one which elucidates many of the ideas involved, see: CSC, I, 182-3; (Everyman, 163). There are other comments on kind and degree throughout Coleridge's writing, including BL, I, 64; (Everyman, 52) and "On the Principles of Genial Criticism", in BL, II, 229-230.

² BL, I, 197; (Everyman, 163).

Perhaps there is no passage in Biographia as basic to Coleridge's argument as this one. Few passages are more difficult than this one to understand and it has never been given an adequate explanation.

The language of the above passage must be read symbolically. Coleridge is using, as the starting point of his philosophy, an intellectual construct upon which all the rest of his ideas will be built. He is starting from "an intuition, a practical idea"¹ to which nothing corresponds in empirical reality. The "two forces" Coleridge is describing are abstract, multi-directional forces which have neither source nor end. Coleridge has mentioned these forces elsewhere. On the previous page he describes them as "two contrary forces, the one of which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or find itself in this infinity." Earlier he calls them "centripetal" and "centrifugal",² and before that, "active and passive".³ Each time these "forces" appear in Coleridge's argument, they are ambiguous in meaning. But while on an empirical level these forces find nothing with which to correspond, on a logical level - on a level of abstract thought - they correspond to one notion and one notion only. Coleridge's words are precise in describing a realm of which the essence is absolute individuation and infinite opposition. Coleridge's words must be read as symbolic of contradiction itself.

1 BL, I, 171; (Everyman, 143).

2 BL, I, 188; (Everyman, 156).

3 BL, I, 86; (Everyman, 72). Coleridge is using these terms symbolically here, as a transcendental philosopher would use them. This is not the same sense in which active and passive were used on page 95 of this thesis.

The first principle of transcendental philosophy may be put more strongly, and less symbolically, than Coleridge originally put it. The starting point is the recognition of opposition and contradiction. Coleridge broached the subject through the abstract concept of individuation, but on another level what he is saying is that transcendental philosophy starts with a consideration of the nature of contradiction, and it is this which makes transcendental philosophy revolutionary. Coleridge is establishing the foundations of a system which will spring from "a truth self-grounded",¹ and its basic principle will at once "preclude the possibility of requiring an antecedent"² and avoid the necessity of starting with either subject or object. Philosophies which had started from those positions had ended in contradictions. The only way to circumvent their difficulties and for Coleridge to solve his own problems concerning the issues of materialism-dualism, and pantheism, was to begin by recognising that contradiction lay at the root of all thought and that it could not be excluded from or ignored in an account of knowledge. In Chapter XII, Coleridge moves from this recognition to establish what will be an adequate theory of knowledge.

Coleridge's use of the concept of contradiction at the heart of his philosophy could be compared with a similar use of contradiction in the existential philosophy of Kierkegaard or others, which in some ways Coleridge anticipates. Like Coleridge's idea of transcendentalism, existentialism recognises contradiction underlying all thought. But for existentialism, this seems to be more of a

1 BL, I, 181; (Everyman, 180).

2 BL, I, 181; (Everyman, 180).

conclusion than a starting point, and it is accompanied by a statement that ultimately there can be no truth, or if truth exists it is illusory and perhaps irrelevant. Coleridge's course is different. Having arrived at the frontiers of logic and discovered contradiction, Coleridge does not cross the border into the realm of the absurd, but instead turns around and asks himself this question: How is it then that I am conscious, have thoughts which are communicable, and discover meaning in life? It was in answering this question Coleridge developed his complex theory of imagination.

For Coleridge, meaning existed in spite of contradiction and he recognised that his two abstract forces of infinite opposition were insufficient in themselves to explain meaning. If the two forces existed by themselves, the result would be neutralization, not meaning. Although it seemed most obvious to think of two forces, there had to be something else which kept the two forces apart and mediated between them distilling meaning. Furthermore, this something had to be finite, for were it infinite in its reconciling action, neutralization would again be the result. Coleridge records his thought-pattern on these issues:

The counteraction...of the two assumed forces does not depend on their meeting from opposite directions; the power which acts in them is indestructible; it is therefore inexhaustibly re-ebullient; and as something must be the result of these two forces, both alike infinite, and both alike indestructible; and as rest or neutralization cannot be this result; no other conception is possible, but that the product must be a tertium aliquid, or finite generation. Consequently this conception is necessary. Now this tertium aliquid can be no other than an inter-penetration of the counteracting powers, partaking of both.¹

¹ BL, I, 198; (Everyman, 164). This quotation is from Chapter XIII.

The act of interpenetration is generative because it produces meaning and the nature of that act will be considered in a moment.

Two ideas logically follow from what Coleridge has said. One is that this finite act cannot happen just once, otherwise the spark of finite meaning would immediately be overcome as though nothing had happened. Reconciliation must occur continually between the forces, and the only means by which this is possible is in what Coleridge describes as "a perpetual self-duplication."¹ This elevates the act to infinite proportion, while it remains finite in itself.

The other point is that the power of reconciliation or interpenetration is not something added after the other two forces already exist, otherwise a state of rest would already reign. Just as one force presupposes and defines its opposite, so, too, the existence of both forces presupposes the existence of the third force which prevents neutralization. When it is said that the tertium aliquid participates in each force, it must be recognised that in actual fact, it cannot be separated from them.

In Chapter IX, Coleridge referred to the transcendental system of thought as Dynamic. It is dynamic because it has (as Coleridge felt Fichte had first shown a system of thought could have) an act instead of a thing as its starting point:

1. BL, I, 183; (Everyman, 152).

...by commencing with an act, instead of a thing or substance, Fichte assuredly gave the first mortal blow to Spinozism, as taught by Spinoza himself; and supplied the idea of a system truly metaphysical, and of a metaphysique truly systematic: (i.e. having its spring and principle within itself).¹

The act which Coleridge is talking about is the act of reconciliation of opposites. The theorizing of the existence of an act of reconciliation of opposites is the true commencing point and basic principle of transcendental philosophy. Coleridge gives another name to reconciliation of opposites - it is the name, Imagination, as Coleridge suggested early in Biographia:

There are evidently two powers at work, which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is once both active and passive. (In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the IMAGINATION....)²

The concept of imagination for Coleridge is identical to the concept of reconciliation of opposites (embodying the complex notions of individuation and opposition) and centers around the essence of meaning. It lies at the core of all Coleridge's philosophical thought in Biographia Literaria.

Some general comments can be made already about the nature of imagination and the manner in which reconciliation of opposites may be understood. While before it was said that meaning exists in spite of contradiction, the theorising of a third something now makes it more accurate to say that meaning exists because of contradiction. Imagination sets up and retains a dynamic relationship between the two symbolic opposing forces and, as in the case

¹ BL, I, 101; (Everyman, 85).

² BL, I, 86; (Everyman, 72).

of the transcendental symbol (which is in fact an example of an act of imagination), the original identities are retained while being interpenetrated. The phrase "reconciliation of opposites" is paradoxical - opposites by definition are irreconcilable - and because of this paradox, the phrase is particularly appropriate for describing imagination. Imagination is an act which at once both reconciles and does not reconcile. Further, from what was said above, imagination may be said to involve an additional paradox, for it is a finite act with infinite proportions.

A more precise understanding of reconciliation of opposites can be gained by examining Coleridge's specific remarks on imagination in Biographia Literaria. These are to be found primarily at the end of Chapter VII,¹ previously noted as part of the solution to Coleridge's problem with association, and in Chapters XII to XIV, where they represent the solutions to the materialist-dualist conflict and the pantheist dilemma.

The issue is complicated, however, by the fact that in Chapter XIII, where Coleridge's most precise definitions occur, Coleridge defines two kinds of imagination, not one, in addition to his definition of fancy. The appearance of primary and secondary imagination is problematical, for in Chapter IV, when Coleridge announced his intention to seek out the seminal principle of Wordsworth's imagination-fancy distinction, no mention was made of a further division.

Numerous critics have chewed the meat of the Chapter XIII definitions and felt cheated by the lack of bone matter they have discovered. In 1950,

1. The last quotation above, about the active and the passive, is from this location.

W.J. Bate felt that the primary-secondary distinction was artificial and unsupported.¹

In 1972, Thomas McFarland took Bate's point one step further, though in doing so he did no more than rephrase the assumption common among Coleridge scholars:

Not only is there no preparation for the threefold distinction of Chapter Thirteen in Coleridge's previous writing, there is none even in the Biographia.... Nowhere is there any mention of, or preparation for, any additional differentiation [other than that of imagination and fancy].²

Critics have felt the main problem of the unsubstantiated definitions lies in Chapter XIII itself. A few pages into the chapter, Coleridge breaks his argument with his famous letter from a "friend" and announces that most of the intended argument about imagination is too obscure to be included. He gives only the conclusion to that argument, in other words, the definitions themselves, and refers the readers to an unpublished prospectus - a double disappointment for the modern reader since the prospectus never appeared.

To a certain extent, feelings of the suddenness of Coleridge's primary-secondary division are justified - the division is not clearly announced beforehand, and this is both the case and the problem with a number of issues in the text. However, it has not been suggested, as it might have been, that in what Coleridge says at the end of Chapter VII, are the seeds of his later division. Part of the passage has been quoted already:

¹ "Coleridge on the Function of Art", in Perspectives of Criticism, ed. H. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.), 144-6. Also cited by McFarland, below.

² "The Origin and Significance of Coleridge's Theory of Secondary Imagination", 196-7.

In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the IMAGINATION. But in common language, and especially on the subject of poetry, we appropriate the name [imagination] to a superior degree of the faculty, joined to a superior voluntary controul over it.¹

When Coleridge speaks of imagination in philosophical terms, and then contrasts that with imagination as applied to poetry, he is making precisely the same division as he later made in Chapter XIII, between primary and secondary imagination. As will be shown, what he says here about the poetic faculty helps to provide a very satisfactory explanation of what he intended the later distinction to be.

The end of Chapter VII is important, but its importance is overshadowed by a fact of larger significance which explains why the primary-secondary division is made explicit in Chapter XIII and not before. The primary imagination of Chapter XIII is the philosophic imagination of Coleridge's earlier chapters. It is symbolically expressed as the third something, the "tertium aliquid" both finite and infinite which keeps separate yet interpenetrates the two forces of infinite opposition; it is that which makes all meaning possible and is in fact the essence of meaning. Somewhat less symbolically expressed, primary imagination is the absolute self-consciousness which is God, the self-consciousness in man received from God, and the principle upon which all knowledge and meaning is founded. The argument which follows will show that when Coleridge defines primary imagination at the end of Chapter XIII, he has already completed his discussion of it.

¹ BL, I, 86; (Everyman, 72).

The chapters which follow Chapter XIII deal mainly with poetry. The secondary imagination is introduced at the end of Chapter XIII because it is mainly the poetic imagination. It is a new subject the understanding of which is dependent upon an understanding of the primary or philosophic imagination which preceded it, and just as important, the secondary imagination is the grounding principle for the chapters on poetry which follow it.

The definition of primary imagination in Chapter XIII is this:

The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.¹

Taken by itself, the definition is cryptic and open to almost any interpretation, but if it is related to the argument of Chapter XII, particularly Theses VI to X,¹ it can be seen that Coleridge is talking about the same thing in both places and his meaning becomes clear. The primary imagination represents the most basic kind of reconciliation of opposites and must precede all others. An hypothesis of the existence of primary imagination is necessary for Coleridge as soon as he finds contradiction at the frontiers of logic and yet affirms there is meaning. Meaning, at its most basic level, is given by the presence of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is the first example, the primary example, of reconciliation of opposites of which the mind can be aware, and it is this act of self-consciousness which constitutes primary imagination.

¹ BL, I, 202; (Everyman, 167).

² The following pages may be consulted for reference: BL, I, 183-188; (Everyman, 151-156). These theses will be discussed in more detail in the pages of this argument which follow. Theses I to V have generally been covered in the preceding argument.

In Chapter XII, Coleridge does not use the term primary imagination, nor the phrase 'reconciliation of opposites.' Use of the former term would have presupposed the existence of a secondary imagination and would have compelled Coleridge to discuss it before he was ready. The terms Coleridge does use are varied. He speaks of the "philosophic imagination", as he did in Chapter VII, and calls it "the sacred power of self-intuition."¹ In Thesis VI he introduces several other terms:

This principle, and so characterised [as the foundation stone of transcendental philosophy], manifests itself in the SUM or I AM; which I shall hereafter indiscriminately express by the words spirit, self, and self-consciousness.²

Each of these terms says something about the primary imagination and all are synonyms for it.

Many attempts have been made to explain primary imagination by looking at Kant's ideas of the productive imagination and connecting them with associationist explanations of how sensations are formed into thoughts: thus primary imagination is something which receives sensations and develops them into ideas which, in turn, will be presented to the understanding or faculty of discursive reasoning.³ This is possibly a misinterpretation of Kant, but it does seem a misinterpretation of what Coleridge says in Biographia. The primary

¹ BL, I, 167; (Everyman, 139). The "philosophic imagination" should not be confused with "philosophic consciousness"; the latter, taken as a seeking for ultimate truth, is only a prerequisite for a recognition of the former.

² BL, I, 183; (Everyman, 151).

³ Several references could be given here. Notable examples of this interpretation are in R.L. Brett, Fancy and Imagination, (London, 1973), 45-46; Wimsatt and Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History, Vol. 3, 392-3; D.J. James, Scepticism and Poetry: An Essay on the Poetic Imagination, 18-24; McFarland, "The Origin and Significance of Coleridge's Theory of the Secondary Imagination", 214; and Prickett, Coleridge and Wordsworth, 67-8 & 71-72.

imagination has nothing to do with associationist thought; nor has it anything to do with anything except the act of self-consciousness itself. It is a spiritual concept, concerned with clarifying the essential nature of individual self-consciousness and identifying the individual spirit with the essence of meaning, the absolute self-consciousness, or rather, God himself.

Coleridge's discussion of the primary imagination in Theses VI to X is extremely difficult to follow, largely because he avoids using the terminology of reconciliation of opposites (for the reason already suggested). His thought can be understood, however, if the reader has this concept in mind, for Coleridge's discussion hinges on the reader drawing analogies; first, between the individual spirit and a specific act of reconciliation of opposites, and second, between God and the eternal act of reconciliation of opposites taking place throughout infinity. God, then, is seen as the essence of reconciliation of opposites, as meaning itself. Thus Coleridge is able to say that God is "the principle of being, and of knowledge, of idea, and of reality, the ground of existence, and the ground of the knowledge of existence". (Thesis VI) The analogies also help to explain the nature of the individual spirit. The spirit is seen as something akin to a specific act of meaning, thus it has some finite qualities, yet at the same time it participates in the infinite meaning of God which is its essence, hence it has some infinite qualities as well. Coleridge says that the individual spirit should be conceived "neither as infinite nor finite exclusively, but as the most original union of both." (Thesis VIII)

A further translation should be made. The word "self-consciousness" should be substituted for the words (mine, not Coleridge's) "meaning" and "essence of meaning", which is a valid substitution since self-consciousness is both the prerequisite for all knowledge and the limit of man's knowledge about knowledge. Coleridge's meaning might have been expressed in the sentence, 'The essence of meaning which resides in the individual spirit participates in the infinite meaning of God.' But it is much closer to Coleridge's meaning to say instead, 'The self-consciousness which resides in the individual spirit participates in the infinite self-consciousness of God.'

One last point must be made before Coleridge's specific comments on primary imagination can be understood. The analogy between God and the 'third force' of eternal reconciliation is only an analogy. Coleridge does not see God as a being who exists between two forces of opposition. Instead, he sees God as a being whose nature embodies contradiction or opposition, as well as the reconciliation of opposition. The same thing could be said for the individual spirit also.

With these factors in mind, the main points about primary imagination may be sketched briefly. The primary imagination provides an account of the origin of self-consciousness, God's and man's (- whether it is ultimately relevant for God, whose self-consciousness has neither beginning nor end, may be inconsequential). Originally the spirit is unconscious; it merely exists. It fails to recognise opposites; it fails to see itself either as its own subject or object. (Theses VI & VII) In order for the spirit to become self-conscious it must recognise itself as both, for subject and object logically presuppose each other. Thus in

the move from unconsciousness to self-consciousness, there is a movement from identity of subject and object to a recognition of antithesis. (Thesis VII) Self-consciousness for Coleridge is by its nature antithetical.

There is no logical accounting for this movement to self-consciousness except by an assumption of an act of free will. By this act of free will, the spirit "dissolve[s]" the identity of subject and object which formerly reigned, becomes conscious of both subject and object within itself, and finally (or simultaneously), reconciles them in self-consciousness. (Theses VII & VIII)

The primary imagination, then, is the act of free will which dissolves identity, recognises opposites, and reconciles them as a necessary precondition for all perception and knowledge. The primary imagination is the nature of God and the essential nature of man. It is a self-duplicating power (Thesis VI), and man is the product of God's self-duplication. The finite and infinite aspect of man seem contradictory, but as Coleridge says, "In the existence, in the reconciling, and the recurrence of this contradiction consists the process and mystery of production and life." (Thesis VIII)

The "I AM", used in Coleridge's Chapter XIII definition of primary imagination and also in Theses VI and IX, is a perfect statement of primary imagination because it is, of course, the most basic statement of self-consciousness. But there is another reason for Coleridge's use of it which critics recently have overlooked somehow. While Coleridge arrives at this statement of the nature of God through reason, his argument receives an almost poetic reinforcement in the coincidence of his words with God's self-revelation in Exodus 3:14:

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM:
and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the
children of Israel, I AM hath sent me
unto you.¹

The I AM in Exodus and in Coleridge points to God's self-revealing nature, or rather, a nature which reveals self. Here we are at the heart of Coleridge's solution to the pantheist dilemma. For if it follows from individual self-consciousness; that individual knowledge and character is built up, so, too, it follows that God himself has personhood. The distinction Coleridge makes, in effect between himself and Spinoza, is that Spinoza would agree in calling God "the Nature in Intelligences" but would not subscribe to calling him "Himself Intelligence and intelligent."² Coleridge has found substantiation in reason for his belief in a Christian God; he has reconciled head and heart with Paul and John.

It might be asked why Coleridge does not conclude that the higher consciousness of which he is a part, has not a higher consciousness above it, and a higher one above that, and so on. In Thesis X, Coleridge does not rule out the possibility, but he does rule out the possibility of Man's ever knowing, since man's knowledge of self-consciousness is the limit of his knowledge. To use his own words, "we yet can never pass beyond the principle of self-consciousness. Should we attempt it, we must be whirl'd down the gulf of an infinite series. But this would make our reason baffle the end and purpose of all reason, namely unity and system."³

¹ Authorized Version. Coleridge no doubt expected the reader to make this connection, for he does not explicitly make it himself. However, he obliquely refers to Exodus in a footnote to Thesis VI, when he objects to the translation (of the authorized version), preferring "in that" or "because" to the equivocal "that". BL, I, 183-4; (Everyman, 152).

² BL, I, 170; (Everyman, 141).

³ BL, I, 187; (Everyman, 155).

The primary imagination of God duplicates itself in the self-consciousness of the individual. How, then, does the individual self-consciousness duplicate itself, as it must if it partially shares the creative power of God? To account for this, Coleridge develops his theory of the secondary imagination:

The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.¹

Once the primary imagination is understood, the secondary is almost straightforward, but several points need to be emphasised. The primary imagination is the first act of reconciliation of opposites in the individual. All other reconciliations which follow as part of the self-duplicating process are of a secondary nature, hence they are the property of the secondary imagination. These acts are different in "degree" from those of the primary imagination: they do not produce self-consciousness but they do produce individual acts of meaning similar in "kind" to the essence of meaning residing in the I AM. The secondary imagination brings together apparently discordant elements and fuses them into meaningful thoughts, symbols, and images. It lies at the core of the entire language process. Like the primary imagination, the secondary is an act of will and also, like the primary, it "dissolves" identity in order to recognise and reconcile opposition.

¹ BL, I, 202; (Everyman, 167).

The secondary imagination, for all its similarity with the primary, differs "in the mode of its operation." It differs on three points. First, it operates by "conscious will" rather than by the mysterious free will of the primary. As Coleridge says at the end of Chapter VII, the poetic imagination is distinct from the philosophic imagination in that it involves "superior voluntary controul."¹ Second, it not only dissolves the apparent identity of opposites, it also "diffuses" and "dissipates" the elements with which it is involved; in other words, it employs extensive rearrangement of elements, something which the primary imagination did not do, especially since it was only concerned with the elements of subject and object within the self. Third, and possibly because of the number of elements involved, the secondary imagination struggles to idealize and unify, to bring order to contradiction. In Chapter VII, Coleridge calls the poetic imagination superior, and it is because of the above differences between it and the primary imagination that he is able to say this.¹

The usual interpretation of the secondary imagination, from Shawcross onwards, has been that it is the exclusive power of the poet who alone can perceive form in the disparate elements of man's experience and can bring these elements into one united and harmonious whole.² The result of this interpretation has been twofold: it has elevated the poet to the role of high priest in society (much in line with the main theme in Kermode's Romantic Image³); and it has confined the secondary imagination to a select few. The evidence in

1. BL, I, 86; (Everyman, 72).

2 See: BL, I, lxv; lxvii; lxviii.

3 Frank Kermode, Romantic Image (London, 1972).

Biographia suggests that the interpretation needs modification. Granted that poets will always be a select few in society, but the secondary imagination is by no means the exclusive possession of the poet - it belongs to all those who employ symbolic language in a manner such that the symbol is not taken for the meaning itself.¹

Nonetheless, as Coleridge makes clear in Chapter XIV of Biographia, it is in the poet that one finds the highest use of the secondary imagination:

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though as gentle and unnoticed, controul (laxis effertur habenis) reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgement ever-awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.²

¹ Even in the early "Religious Musings", the poet was not so glorified: it was the philosophers and the poets who came to the rescue of a decadent society. Still, the secondary imagination cannot be confined to just these two categories of men.

² BL, II, 12; (Everyman, 174). In the sentence which follows this quotation, Coleridge clarifies that he is speaking of the "poetic" imagination.

Before the topic is closed, there are some further parallels between primary and secondary imagination which the above passage makes clear. The list which Coleridge gives is symbolic of contradiction in the same way as were his various descriptions of the two forces which opposed each other. Also, the secondary imagination fuses elements into one another in the same way that the tertium aliquid (primary imagination) interpenetrated the two forces of opposition; the identity of each force is retained yet they are brought together.

The reference in the above passage to the poet bringing the whole soul of man into activity is striking, particularly since it is Coleridge's continual theme in Volume Two that the immediate object of poetry should be pleasure and not truth,¹ and he attacks Wordsworth on this basis. Just how pleasure relates to the whole soul of man is not made clear, but it will be argued in a future chapter that the relation is quite specific. It will be suggested that Coleridge links pleasure with self-harmony of a kind similar to that mentioned above, "the subordination of...faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity." If this is true, it would draw one last parallel between primary and secondary imagination, just as primary imagination brings about the most basic form of self-consciousness, secondary strives towards the broadest form of self-awareness.

When Coleridge began Biographia Literaria he was simply intending to give philosophical support to the definitions of imagination and fancy Wordsworth had given in his 1815 "Preface". But by the time Coleridge is drawing to a close the philosophical

¹ See: BL, II, 10; (Everyman, 172).

volume of Biographia and is preparing his own definitions for Chapter XIII, he realises that his "conclusions are not so consentient with [Wordsworth's] as, I confess, I had taken for granted."¹

The main problem arose with imagination. Wordsworth, responding to Coleridge's 1812 Omniana definition of fancy as "the aggregative and associative power", complained that imagination, too, had the ability to associate, in addition to her power of shaping and modifying.² Not so, says Coleridge. Imagination has no connection with aggregation and association except through the fancy, and to see things as otherwise is simply the result of fancy being co-present with imagination.

For Coleridge, the imagination - primary and secondary - operates solely by reconciliation of opposites. It works with elements that counter one another and is at all times vital and dynamic. Fancy, on the other hand,

has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.³

The distinction Coleridge makes between ordinary memory and "memory emancipated from the order of time and space" (i.e. fancy), is essentially the distinction between the Hartleyian theory of association, which Coleridge rejected in 1801,

¹ BL, I, 193; (Everyman, 159).

² See: Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, 152. See also BL, I, 193; (Everyman, 159).

³ BL, I, 202; (Everyman, 167).

and the revised theory of association Coleridge developed. The preceding chapter in this thesis suggested that at that early time Coleridge substituted a theory of aggregation for association. It was a theory which argued that similarity of feelings about things determined which things were brought to the forefront of consciousness, not associations according to time and place. That theory was later modified to include associations of the latter type, and it is largely this revised version which is supporting fancy in Biographia.

The end of Chapter VII has been shown already to be of importance in anticipating the primary-secondary distinction in XIII. It should be noted also that the end of VII also anticipates what Coleridge says of fancy in XIII. After criticising associationist theories for their portrayal of the mind as passive, and after formulating ideas of the philosophic imagination, Coleridge goes on to give what he believes is the true law of association:

...the true practical general law of association is this; that whatever makes certain parts of a total impression more vivid or distinct than the rest, will determine the mind to recall these in preference to others equally linked together by the common condition of contemporaneity, or (what I deem a more appropriate and philosophical term) of continuity.¹

As in Coleridge's earlier thought, before Biographia, Coleridge is pointing to two levels of association. One is the common kind of association traditionally understood as the association of ideas on the basis of contemporaneity or continuity. The other kind is one which is open to whatever process will make some ideas more vivid than others, and is suggestive of Coleridge's earlier notions of aggregation and association by similarity of feeling.

¹ BL, I, 87; (Everyman, 73).

There is one major difference between what Coleridge says in Biographia Literaria about fancy and what he says elsewhere, however; that is, in the appropriation of choice or will to fancy, which both refines and clarifies the theory. Will is the common element in all three of Coleridge's definitions. If the presence of will in fancy is not recognised, Coleridge goes on to say in Chapter VII, fancy can be debased by being made vulnerable to comparisons with an "artificial memory." By the presence of will, fancy "may arbitrarily give vividness or distinctness to any object whatsoever" by "confining and intensifying the attention."¹

Coleridge did not, finally, reject in its entirety the theory of association. He recognised that it could account for some mental phenomena, but it needed considerable alteration to account for the non-passive actions of the mind. Coleridge's final, 1815-16 solution to the association problem involved the retention of traditional association processes on a basic level of the mind's operation, and also the retention of ordinary memory as a 'storehouse of images'. It also involved an addition of the emancipated memory of fancy, and the addition of the primary and secondary imagination.

In terms of the evolution of Coleridge's ideas of imagination, a central question remains to be

¹ It might be pointed out that while Coleridge and Wordsworth had considerable differences on the subject of imagination and fancy, they roughly agreed on the materials used by each, as the following quotation illustrates: "Fancy does not require that the materials which she makes use of should be susceptible of change in their constitution, from her touch; and, where they admit of modification, it is enough for her purpose if it be slight, limited, and evanescent. Directly the reverse of these, are the desires and demands of the Imagination. She recoils from every thing but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite." Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, 152.

answered: when did Coleridge first develop the idea of reconciliation of opposites and when did he recognise it as the seminal principle of imagination? As with most of Coleridge's ideas, the roots of his thought are to be found in his earlier writing, where the same basic concept is expressed, though not necessarily with the same words. There are numerous suggestions of similar ideas in Coleridge's poetry, but some of the first references in his prose are in the notebook written in Malta, in 1805. In January, while briefly meditating on the embers of his dying fire, Coleridge was arrested by his restless desire to renew the perishing flames by adding fresh wood, even though he was going to bed and the act would be useless. He recognised in his contrary impulses a possible grounding principle for many actions;

Hence I seem (for I write, not having yet gone to bed) to suspect, that this desire of totalizing, of perfecting, may be the bottom-impulse of many, many actions, in which it never is brought forward as an avowed, or even agnized <anerkennt> as a conscious motive/ - thence I proceed to think of restlessness in general, its fragmentary nature, and its connection if not identification, with the <pains correlative to the> pleasures derived from Wholeness - i.e. plurality in unity - & the yearning left behind by those pleasures ~~enee~~ often experienced.¹

This passage was not written about poetry - it was late-night philosophical speculation - but the vocabulary and the nature of the thought particularly suited it to poetic theory. Thus in April of the same year one finds a similar passage suggesting reconciliation of opposites, this time in the context of poetry:

¹ CN, 2414.

...two ~~several~~ kinds of pleasure are procured, in the two master-movements & impulses of man, the gratification of the Love of Variety with the grat. of the Love of Uniformity - and that by a recurrence, delightful as a painless and yet exciting act of memory, tiny breezelets of surprize, the each one destroying the ripples which the former had made, yet all together keeping the surface of the mind in a bright dimple-smile - Hatred of Vacancy reconciled to with the love of Rest - These and other causes often make Poetry an overpowering Delight to a Lad of Feeling...¹

Coleridge's next references are somewhat later. In 1807 he is planning to speak on a number of themes including fancy, imagination, and the "antithetical balance-loving nature of man" in connection with art.² He writes of composition being either by aggregation (i.e. fancy) or by "balance of opposition" in 1808.³ Over the next years there are several references to imagination as the power of forcing "many into one",⁴ but it is not until 1811 that imagination is explicitly connected to reconciliation of opposites:

...the Poet's own mind, by with the continued and spontaneous Activity of his own intellectual powers, more especially of the Imagination, the Fancy, and whatever else with these ~~impels~~ and reveals itself in the balancing & reconciling of opposite or discordant qualities, sameness with difference...⁵

The passage continues, and it is apparent that it is the direct antecedent of the Chapter XIV

¹ CN, 2517.. The mind's abhorrence of vacancy was a theme in Hazlitt's 1805 Essay. Ar

² CL, To Davy, 9 September, 1807.

³ CN, 3312, f.15. See also CN, 3286 & 3288.

⁴ See, for example, CN, 3290.

⁵ CN, 4112.

quotation about the poet and reconciliation of opposites, with one important difference: fancy, and apparently other powers as well, have the ability to reconcile opposites. Even in 1814, reconciliation of opposites does not necessarily refer to imagination. Beauty is explicitly defined as "THE REDUCTION OF MANY TO ONE... the simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts, each to each, and of all to a whole...."¹

At present, very little work has been done by critics on the evolution of Coleridge's ideas; indeed, it is almost a new concept with regard to Coleridge's studies, largely because for the first time his complete letters, works and notebooks have appeared, or are appearing, before the public. A vast amount of work still must be done, but until it is, it must be concluded that Coleridge clarified reconciliation of opposites as the seminal principle of imagination only when he set about the task of answering Wordsworth's "Preface".

The present chapter has a claim to newness in the argument that reconciliation of opposites underlies both primary and secondary imagination, and in suggesting reconciliation of opposites as the 'seminal principle' of Coleridge's imagination-fancy distinction. The topic of reconciliation of opposites, however, is not new; Coleridge used the

¹ "Principles of Genial Criticism", in BL, II, 238-9.

term to discuss the secondary imagination in Chapter XIV, and critics in this century have given considerable attention to the subject, though generally confining it to Coleridge's context of poetry. The first book to bring the subject to the fore was Alice D. Snyder's The Critical Principle of Reconciliation of Opposites as Employed by Coleridge (Ann Arbor, 1918). She found many examples of reconciliation of opposites in Coleridge's thought, but it was her feeling that Coleridge's recurrence to the notion represented "a constitutional malady."¹ But because even recent criticism has not explored the integrity of Coleridge's argument in Biographia Literaria, there have been fundamental errors made in interpreting the concept.

The paradox in the phrase reconciliation of opposites has often been too easily dismissed and it has been assumed that Coleridge means actual and total reconciliation. Coleridge's coined word "Esemplastic", meaning "[shaping] into one"² and used both at the beginning of Chapter X and in the title of Chapter XIII, has been seen to support this idea. But the beginning of Chapter X is one instance where Coleridge may have been insensitively

¹ Snyder, 20ff. This citation was also made by Wimsatt and Brooks in Literary Criticism, III, 396; and they seem to give assent to Snyder.

² BL, I, 107; (Everyman, 91).

handled and his remarks taken out of context. If the reader continues through the first paragraph and into the second, it is discovered that what Coleridge is actually saying is this: until the student of transcendental philosophy begins to perceive the divisions between things (i.e. until he dissolves identity and recognises opposites) he cannot expect to understand the manner in which the imagination may be said to shape into one. Coleridge's entire philosophy in Biographia emphasises that imagination can only reconcile to the degree to which it participates in each opposite, or said another way, to the degree to which symbol and thought have something in common. The imagination is vital, and it is only if a tension exists between symbol and thought that this vitality can be retained.

One example of misunderstanding of Coleridge's thought on this point is R.H. Fogle's The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism. The book focuses on organicism in Coleridge's criticism, for which the concept of reconciliation of opposites is central. Early in the book it is stated that one of the basic requirements for reconciliation of opposites "is that the opposing forces themselves be such as can be reconciled",¹ and the emphasis there and elsewhere on straight unity has repercussions throughout the book. But numerous other critics also have turned Coleridge's feeling for the 'organic' into something more static than it was; the fault seems particularly endemic to approaches to imagination through Coleridge's poetry, from I.A. Richards onwards,² in which formalist emphasis on unity has tended at times to obscure tensions.

¹ R.H. Fogle, The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), 5.

² See Richards's discussion of imagination as an "Act of Uniformity" in Coleridge on Imagination, 94ff.

A second possible error concerning Coleridge's thought has resulted out of the failure to recognise reconciliation of opposites as the 'seminal principle' of the imagination-fancy distinction. The usual distinction made is the one used by James Volant Baker; imagination is distinguished from fancy by being active as opposed to passive - fancy is seen as passive in the 'mechanical' sense of associationist philosophy.¹ While it is true that fancy must receive "its materials ready made from the law of association", it seems a mistake to see fancy as passive. Fancy does not operate strictly by traditional notions of association of ideas. Fancy is, after all, "memory emancipated from the order of time and place", in other words from what Coleridge calls contemporaneity, "the common condition of all laws of association" (Chapter VII). Also, fancy is modified by will, and will is the common factor in both imagination and fancy, giving them both freedom and giving them both activity. The real distinction between imagination and fancy is not that one is active and the other passive, but rather that one operates by reconciliation of opposites and the other does not.

A third possible error has arisen concerning reconciliation of opposites, specifically with regard to the primary imagination. The ramifications of this problem extend beyond mistaking primary imagination as associative. Coleridge's statement of I AM was a statement of self-consciousness based on a recognition of subject and object within the self and brought about a reconciliation of the two; it was an internal act of spiritual significance. Ever since Shawcross's essay at the beginning of this

¹ The Sacred River, 126ff.

century, the primary imagination has been discussed along lines which are in accordance with materialist and dualist philosophy, but which do not seem in accordance with Coleridge's transcendental philosophy. The primary imagination is seen as something taking place between the internal and the external, between the subject (self) and the object.¹ This is the approach around which McFarland has built the main theme of his Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition. He interprets Coleridge's I AM as a statement of subject, and opposes it to "it is", as a statement of object;² and he defines the "consuming goal of Coleridge's philosophical activity" in Biographia as being "an attempt to reconcile the subjective and the objective."³ This may not have been Coleridge's conscious aim although it might be argued that indirectly it was his achievement.

Coleridge regarded himself as a theologian first and a philosopher and poet afterwards. The theological aspect of Coleridge's thought has been given least attention, not only by literary critics, but by theologians as well.⁴ For instance, Emil Bruner, the German theologian, traces the origin of modern theology to Kierkegaard, although the particular assessment of Kierkegaard corresponds almost exactly with Coleridge's achievement in Biographia Literaria:

1 See: Shawcross, BL, I, lix-lxi.

2 See: Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition, 138-160.

3 "The Origin and Significance of Coleridge's Theory of the Secondary Imagination", 198-9. Also: Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition, 191.

4 One recent book does consider Coleridge's religious thought, though without giving emphasis to imagination. See: J.D. Boulger, Coleridge as Religious Thinker (New Haven, 1961).

The antithesis or the correlation of object and subject has dominated all Western philosophy since its very beginning....The ultimate validity of this way of stating the problem has not been questioned until very recently. One did not ask if the truth could be found by means of these methods of reasoning, but merely which of the two great categories, the Objective or the Subjective, should be considered primary and what sort of relation obtained between the two. On this issue the great systematic trends of thought separated, Realism with its primary emphasis upon the object, Idealism with its primary emphasis upon the subject, Pantheism or the Doctrine of Identity with its tendency to make antithesis a matter of indifference. It was left for the newest form of philosophy, the existential, to question the validity of the antithesis itself. It is no accident that the source of this new thinking is to be found in the greatest Christian thinker of modern times, Søren Kierkegaard.¹

Coleridge's ideas of the primary imagination, and hence his ideas of secondary imagination and fancy, spring from the same questioning of the validity of commencing an ontological system from the position of either subject or object.

Coleridge's theological interests, particularly with regard to imagination, were given further development in three works written before 1819, and these works mark the completion of his thought in many areas. The Statesman's Manual develops the hierarchical arrangement of the human faculties in the context of an argument about the Scriptures. The Treatise on Method and the revised treatment of Method in Volume Three of The Friend cover much of the same ground, but they also establish the system (or method) by which knowledge is acquired.

¹ Emil Bruner, The Divine and Human Encounter, (London, 1944), 56-57. See also 73.

The hierarchical system which Coleridge develops is indicated in one of Coleridge's notes written between July 1818 and March 1819, and may be cited here as a useful skeletal summary of his ideas. The quotation is already well-known among Coleridge scholars for the treatment it was given by J.R. de J. Jackson in his Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism.

his

The simplest yet practically sufficient order of the mental Powers is, beginning from the

lowest
Sense
Fancy
Understanding

highest
Reason
Imagination
Understanding

Understanding
Imagination
Reason

Understanding
Fancy
Sense

Fancy and Imagination are Oscillations, this connecting R and U; that connecting Sense and Understanding.¹

As it stands, it is a fairly accurate reconstruction of Coleridge's position in Statesman's Manual, and Jackson's discussion has removed the necessity of giving a detailed analysis to the entire system.² However, Jackson has seen the progression from lowest to highest (Sense, Fancy, Understanding; Understanding, Imagination, Reason) as a progression from conscious to unconscious. I would like to suggest an alternative reading, arguing that the line Coleridge draws mid-way is not to separate conscious from unconscious, - (or that which is known from that which is beyond the possibility of knowledge) but rather is to separate that which is materially orientated from that which is spiritually orientated. Also, Jackson's valuable study of Coleridge's Methods of Theory and Law³ may be

¹ Quoted by Jackson from an unpublished manuscript in Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism (London, 1969), 113 and note.

² See Method and Imagination, 113-121.

³ See Method and Imagination, esp. 48-74.

carried one step further by indicating the manner in which Coleridge's arguments concerning Method overlap his arguments in Biographia and Statesman's Manual, and by demonstrating that the line Coleridge draws separates the Methods of Theory and Law, as well as the realms of material and spiritual.

In Biographia, the primary imagination was defined as the self-consciousness of God and the initial act of self-consciousness in the individual. Other words were connected to the concept of primary imagination; words like meaning, origin of knowledge, mind of God, absolute, universal, self, and I AM. In the works written between 1816 and 1818, the concept of primary imagination is retained under the name of Reason, at the top of the hierarchy. In these works, Reason may be identified with the initial act of self-consciousness, the mind of God and with absolute knowledge.

In Statesman's Manual the origin of all knowledge is the Copula, and what Coleridge says about the Copula supports the interpretation given to primary imagination in this paper. The origin of all knowledge, Coleridge says,

...contains the possibility - of every position, to which there exists any correspondence in reality. It is itself, therefore, the realizing principle, the spiritual substratum of the whole complex body of truths.¹

He connects the Copula, not with experience, but with its "ground and source", which is "scarcely less than identical with its own being;" it is "enunciated in the word GOD."² As in Biographia, Coleridge is talking about self-consciousness as the origin of all knowledge and is connecting

¹ The Statesman's Manual, ed. R.J. White, in The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, VI: Lay Sermons (Princeton and London, 1972), 18. All quotations are from this edition.

² ibid., 18.

that not only with truth, but with the mind of God. He says that without the Copula, everything would be "the fleeting chaos of facts",¹ and later in Statesman's Manual he picks up the same idea and specifically links it to the I AM of the primary imagination:

Without this latent presence of the "I am," all modes of existence in the external world would flit before us as colored shadows, with no greater depth, root, or fixture, than the image of a rock hath in a gliding stream or the rainbow on a fast-sailing rain-storm.²

Similarly, in The Friend Coleridge maintains that knowledge must be grounded on the act of self-consciousness which can admit no predicate because it is founded in the self-consciousness of God. The reality of every faculty, he says, is owed "to an existence incomprehensible and groundless, because the ground of all comprehension;"³ it is "that existence which admits of no question out of itself, acknowledges no predicate but the I AM IN THAT I AM."³

Reason is to be identified with the act of self-consciousness, the Copula, and the primary imagination because Reason is, in Coleridge's words, "the integral spirit of the regenerated man",⁴ He calls it "the science of the universal", concerned with "the laws of the WHOLE considered as ONE":⁵ it is the

1 The Statesman's Manual, 18.

2 ibid., 78.

3 The Friend, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, in The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, IV (Princeton and London, 1969), I, 519. All quotations are from this edition.

4 ibid., I, 519.

5 The Statesman's Manual, 69.

6 ibid., 59.

highest property of man and is one in kind with the mind of God. Since Coleridge is maintaining that all knowledge and meaning originates in God, it is not surprising that he says that Reason is the realm of IDEAS, using the latter term in a specific (and 'ideal') sense. In the 1812 edition of The Friend, Coleridge used the word Idea, "in its highest and primitive sense, and as nearly synonymous with the modern word ideal."¹ In Biographia, he equated the word with essence, "the inmost principle of the possibility of any thing, as that particular thing."² In Statesman's Manual he clarifies that it is neither sensation nor perception, neither intuition nor conception, but it is that "to which there neither is or can be an adequate correspondent in the world of the senses - this and only this is = AN IDEA."³

In addition to being identified with self-consciousness, Reason is to be identified with a method of thought based on principles that can have no antecedents. This method of thought is what Coleridge calls Law. It is continually seeking absolute rules, ultimate causes, or the discovery of IDEAS in Coleridge's sense. In Treatise on Method, Law is said to be the

¹ The Friend, II, 105. Retained in Friend, I (1818), 178.

² BL, II, 47 (Everyman, 204).

³ The Statesman's Manual, 113-114.

"laying down [of] a rule":¹ "so the rule laid down we call...an Idea."² Elsewhere it is suggested that Law is "the final object and distinctive character of philosophy":

for all that exists conditionally (i.e. the existence of which is inconceivable except under the condition of its dependency on some other as its antecedent) to find a ground that is unconditional and absolute, and thereby to reduce the aggregate of human knowledge to a system.³

Law is defined as "the absolute kind which comprehending in itself the substance of every possible degree precludes from its conception all degree, not by generalization but by its own plenitude."⁴ Furthermore, because Law is "the sufficient cause of the reality correspondent thereto", Coleridge claims that Law is an attribute of God and "inseparable from the idea of God."⁵

Part of the difficulty with Coleridge's system is establishing the relationship between the mind of God and the individual mind of man since Reason (or self-consciousness, or Law) clearly is related to both. The relationship is the same as that concerning the individual I am and the Divine I AM. Individual self-consciousness and individual Reason are identical in the grounds of their being with the self-consciousness and Reason of God. God is Absolute

1 Treatise on Method as Published in the Encyclopaedia Metropolitana, ed. Alice D. Snyder (London, 1934), 4. All quotations are from this edition.

2 Treatise on Method, 6.

3 The Friend, I, 461.

4 ibid., I, 459.

5 ibid., I, 459.

knowledge and the principles of that Absolute knowledge (i.e. Laws) are residing in the individual consciousness. As Coleridge had said in the 1809 and 1812 editions of The Friend, "God created man in his own image", and by that is meant intellectual and spiritual image, not physical image:

to be the Image of his own Eternity and Infinity created he Man. He gave us Reason and with Reason Ideas of its own formation and underived from material Nature, self-consciousness, Principles,¹ and above all, the Law of Conscience....¹

Individual Reason perceives that it operates on principles outside of the material world but which nonetheless are the governing principles of its operation. Reason is identified by Coleridge as the 'impartial' and 'far-sighted' "LEGISLATIVE of our nature",²

J.R. de J. Jackson's suggestion that Reason or Primary Imagination is the "literary term for the unconscious",³ when considered from the viewpoint of individual man, is understandable. Man's consciousness is governed by the Laws of Reason which are highly abstract, and can be communicated only by symbols. There is an implication that these principles lie beyond the possibility of knowledge, hence the suggestion of the unconscious. However, it may be an error to favour this suggestion at the expense of clearer statements of Coleridge's thought. Coleridge's transcendental philosophy was not interested in what lay beyond the possibility of certain knowledge. As he said in Biographia:

¹ The Friend, II, 78.

² The Statesman's Manual, 63.

³ Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism, 116. Jackson's approach is quite different from the one which has been used in this paper. He was led to the conclusion that Reason in Coleridge's diagram was to be equated with Primary Imagination on the basis of Coleridge's different uses of the word Reason.

The transcendental philosopher does not inquire, what ultimate ground of our knowledge there may lie out of our knowing, but what is the last in our knowing itself, beyond which we cannot pass. The principle of our knowing is sought within the sphere of our knowing. It must be something therefore, which can itself be known. It is asserted only, that the act of self-consciousness is for us the source and principle of all our possible knowledge.¹

In other words, Coleridge does not go beyond the principle of self-consciousness itself with his philosophy, and the unconscious is not his concern.

A further point to be considered is that Reason is not 'the unknowable' for Coleridge. Reason's Ideas and Laws may be known through symbols, as is the case, for example, with the Scriptures,² and as the object of transcendental philosophy testifies concerning the pursuit of absolute knowledge. Coleridge's Reason should be understood as the most abstracted kind of knowledge - knowledge abstracted from the limits of both time and space and into the purely spiritual. The principles of Coleridge's Reason cannot find adequate correspondents in the material world, and cannot be readily articulated. Nonetheless they are knowable on the deepest level of spiritual awareness and consciousness.

Having established the nature of Reason for Coleridge, it is now possible to return to a discussion of Coleridge's diagram and his discussion of Method. Both the diagram and Coleridge's thoughts on Method are designed to establish the means whereby transcendental philosophy relates all knowledge back to the source from which it springs; in other words, they are designed to trace the manner in which one moves, after the initial act of self-consciousness,

¹ BL, I, 186 (Everyman, 154).

² See: The Statesman's Manual, 28-29, 30 & 79.

from mere sensory perception to realization of the Unity which is God. This is reflected in Coleridge's use of the word Method. The word refers to methodical thinking, to contemplating "not things only, or for their own sake, but... [for] the relations of things."¹ Method seeks "A PRINCIPLE OF UNITY WITH PROGRESSION."² The concept is orientated towards absolute knowledge. Method moves from one kind of relation of things to another kind, continually seeking the most basic cause that can be determined.

There are two kinds of relations of things: Law and Theory. Theory is orientated to the material world. The faculties which contribute to Theory (from lowest to highest) are Sense, Fancy, and Understanding. Fancy and Understanding, Coleridge says, "abstract the outward relations of matter and...arrange these phenomena in time and space, under the form of causes and effects."³ The operation of Theory is identical:

[in Theory] the existing forms and qualities of objects, discovered by observation or experiment, suggest a given arrangement of many under one point of view: and this not merely or principally in order to facilitate the remembrance, recollection, or communication of the same; but for the purposes of understanding, and in most instances of controlling, them. In other words, all THEORY supposes the idea of cause and effect.⁴

Fancy and Understanding, by the Method of Theory, discover certain laws of physical nature. By carrying the notion of cause and effect one step

¹ The Friend, I, 451; Treatise on Method, 2-3.

² The Friend, I, 476; Treatise on Method, 2.

³ The Friend, I, 517-518.

⁴ The Friend, I, 464; Treatise on Method, 4-5 & 11.

further, the Understanding can recognise the necessity for an antecedent principle beyond the material world. Understanding, by itself, cannot move beyond the material world to discover the antecedent principle. The Understanding, by itself, is limited to the Method of Theory.

The antecedent principle beyond physical nature can be discovered only when the Understanding is aided by the higher faculties and the Method of Law, which looks for absolutes. The faculties which assist Understanding in determining the antecedent principle are Imagination and Reason. Imagination, as Coleridge defines it in Statesman's Manual, is the

completing power which unites clearness with depth, the plenitude of the sense with the comprehensibility of the understanding...impregnated with which the understanding itself becomes intuitive, and a living power.¹

Understanding "impregnated" with Imagination struggles for Unity and illuminates, through symbols, "the WHOLE considered as ONE" which is Reason.

In Coleridge's chart, the Imagination which is mentioned is the Secondary Imagination of Biographia. It is the symbol-forming agent. Imagination, he says, "gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the conductors."² As in Biographia, the imagination in this sense is not limited to the poet.

In the past, the division line on Coleridge's chart between Sense, Fancy, and Understanding and Understanding, Imagination, and Reason, has not

¹ The Statesman's Manual, 69.

² ibid., 29.

been seen as the division between the materially orientated and the spiritually orientated. Also, the line has not been seen to separate the Method of Theory from Law.¹ To conclude this chapter, then, it might be useful to make some additions to Coleridge's chart in order that it may serve as a fairly accurate summary, not just of Statesman's Manual (which it represents quite well), but also the two works on Method. Only one column will be given, from lowest to highest:

towards THEORY:

Sense

Fancy

Understanding

primarily material

primarily spiritual

towards LAW:

Understanding

Imagination (Secondary Imagination)

Reason (Primary Imagination)

The hierarchical arrangement of the faculties, the interrelation of the faculties by Methods of Theory and Law, and the clarification of Primary Imagination as Reason related to Law and Ideas, were useful additions to Coleridge's thought in Biographia Literaria and helped to reinforce and systematise the transcendental philosophy Coleridge had developed.

¹ Jackson connects Theory with Fancy, Law with Understanding, and Imagination with a reconciliation of Theory and Law. See: Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism, 118-121.

PART TWO: IMAGINATION AND CRITICAL PRACTICE

CHAPTER V

LEIGH HUNT AND THE THEME OF
IMAGINATION

Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt and Lamb all had vital interest in theories of imagination. By 1816, most of the major formulations had been made. There were three periods in which cross-pollination of ideas seems apparent: a) around the turn of the century when Coleridge, Wordsworth, and to some extent Hazlitt, were conversing on the subject; b) from 1811 to 1813, when Lamb's house-meetings seemed to have a catalytic effect on imagination theory; and c) from 1815-1816, when Lamb and Coleridge were quoted in Wordsworth's "Preface", followed by Coleridge's complex response in Biographia Literaria.

However, it is unlikely that the Romantic critics felt themselves engaged in a systematic debate on the subject of imagination. Theoretical treatment of imagination occupied only a small portion of the total writings of any of the critics. The only works in which imagination was the central topic were Hazlitt's 1805 Essay and Coleridge's Biographia. Most of the other ideas emerged in the context of arguments on other subjects and were contained in a large number of works scattered over nearly two decades. Many important comments, like the letters and notebooks of Coleridge, would have been unknown to the other Romantics.

Also, it should be recognised that in a great number of cases, the Romantic critics showed themselves unreceptive to new theoretical treatment

of imagination and unsympathetic towards what might be interpreted as practical attempts to explore the faculty through poetry. Perhaps most obvious in this regard is the lack of response Hazlitt's 1805 Essay received (even though he sent a copy to Coleridge who had encouraged Hazlitt to write the work) or the failure of Hunt's contemporaries even to acknowledge his theories in the 1807 Critical Essays.

There are other examples which merit consideration as well; in particular the responses to Wordsworth and Coleridge on the parts of both Hunt and Hazlitt, with Hunt often setting the stage for Hazlitt's later remarks. In apparent response to Wordsworth's early claim that "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" demonstrated the truth that the human imagination could change even physical nature,¹ Hunt singled out the poem as being dissatisfying and mortifying.² Hunt complained that Wordsworth (and Coleridge) accosted the reader "with tales that make one's faculties topple over."³ Hunt spoke of Wordsworth's "dangerous art": "the giving importance to actions and situations by our feelings, instead of adapting our feelings to the importance they possess."⁴ And while Hunt acknowledged that Wordsworth was the best contemporary poet, he found Wordsworth's poetry often lacking in morality, turning "our thoughts away from society and men altogether."⁵ When the 1815 "Preface" and Collected Poems appeared, one year after Hunt initially made these remarks, he did not change his opinions or comment on Wordsworth's new ideas on imagination and fancy.⁶

1 Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, 28, 58-59.

2 Feast of the Poets (1814), 106-7.

3 ibid., 94.

4 ibid., 98.

5 ibid., 97.

6 Feast of the Poets (1815), in Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt (1819), II, 109.

Hazlitt let Wordsworth's 1815 "Preface" go by without comment as well. He was as unsympathetic as Hunt concerning what Wordsworth was trying to do with imagination, as Hazlitt had made clear in the review he gave to "The Excursion" in 1814. The review appeared in two numbers of "The Round Table" in Hunt's Examiner, and the theme of Wordsworth's egotism and some of the specific comments as well, seem to be taken directly from Hunt:

[Wordsworth's] imagination holds immediately from nature, and 'owes no allegiance' but 'to the elements'.... He hardly ever avails himself of remarkable objects or situations, but, in general, rejects them as interfering with the workings of his own mind, as disturbing the smooth, deep, majestic current of his own feelings.... every object is seen through the medium of innumerable recollections, is clothed with the haze of imagination like a glittering vapour, is obscured with the excess of glory, has the shadowy brightness of a waking dream. The image is lost in the sentiment, as sound in the multiplication of echoes.... The power of his mind preys upon itself. It is as if there were nothing but himself and the universe. He lives in the busy solitude of his own heart; in the deep silence of thought. His imagination lends life and feeling only to 'the bare trees and mountains bare'; peoples the viewless tracts of air, and converses with the silent clouds.¹

Later, Hazlitt was to comment that the source of Wordsworth's imagination was "a stagnant, gilded puddle. Mr. Wordsworth has measured it from side to side. 'Tis three feet long and two feet wide."²

Hazlitt was similarly scornful of Coleridge and what Coleridge had to say about imagination. He saw Biographia as a two-hundred page preface to an essay which never materialised on the

1 H Works, IV, 112-113.

2 H Works, XVIII, 309. (1820)

difference between imagination and fancy.¹ He felt that Coleridge's metaphysics "have been a dead weight on the wings of his imagination - while his imagination has run away with his reason and common sense."² The closest Hazlitt came to making any specific comments on Coleridge's ideas of imagination is in the following:

We shall dismiss the whole of this metaphysical exploration, therefore, into the law of association and the nature of fancy, by shortly observing, that we can by no means agree with Mr. C. in refusing to Hobbes the merit of originality in promulgating that law, with its consequences - that we agree with him, generally, in his refutation of Hartley - and that we totally dissent from his encomium on Kant and his followers.³

Elsewhere Hazlitt had called Coleridge "the Dog in the Manger of literature, an intellectual Mar-Plot who will neither let any body come to a conclusion, nor come to one himself."⁴ While Hunt generally may have encouraged the tone of many of Hazlitt's remarks, in this case he was the direct source of the comment. Hunt had said that Wordsworth nourishes "vagueness of sensation, - that making a business of reverie, - that despair of getting to any conclusion";⁵ and in the same work, Hunt had portrayed Coleridge at Apollo's "Feast of the Poets" as a "lazy dog", who stood "yawning askew" and needed his ear twitched.⁶

Charles Lamb was probably less guilty than either Hunt or Hazlitt concerning openness to new ideas of imagination, although in 1801

¹ H Works, XVI, 115. Hazlitt's review of Biographia is one of four scathing reviews he gave to Coleridge in 1816. For other contemporary reviews of Biographia, including Hazlitt's, see: J.R. de J. Jackson, Coleridge: The Critical Heritage (London, 1970), 295-387.

² H Works, XVI, 137.

³ H Works, XVI, 122-3.

⁴ H Works, VII, 115.

⁵ Feast of the Poets (1814), 97. Retained in 1815.

⁶ Feast of the Poets (1815), 18ff.

Wordsworth and Coleridge had censured him for insensitivity to "a certain Union of Tenderness and Imagination" in his response to Lyrical Ballads.¹ Lamb left no written response to Biographia, but he was favourably impressed with Wordsworth's ideas of 'imagination' in the 1815 "Preface":

You ask me about your preface. I like both that and the Supplement without an exception. The account of what you mean by Imagination is very valuable to me. It will help me to like some things in poetry better, which is a little humiliating in me to confess.²

For Wordsworth's part, it might be noted that he did not give the sympathetic reaction Coleridge was expecting to his treatment of imagination and fancy in Biographia.³

The Romantic critics, then, did not see themselves engaged in a systematic exploration of the faculty of 'imagination.' Each critic had his own theory of what imagination was and how it worked; and each man's theory was adequate to describe a certain aspect of his own experience, whether literary, theatrical, or metaphysical. Moreover, each critic probably recognised, as Lamb did when he wrote to Wordsworth, that other men had their own meanings for the word 'imagination.' They did not see themselves necessarily talking about the same thing when the word 'imagination' was used. The word 'imagination' was a metaphor for the Romantics and it had a wide variety of meanings.

¹ L Works, VI, 212-214; esp. 213.

² The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb, ed. E.V. Lucas, 3 vols. (London, 1935), II, 159. Written to Wordsworth, 15 April, 1815.

³ See E.K. Chambers, Coleridge (Oxford, 1938), 300.

Up to now the present thesis has been considering the evolution of the various theories of imagination, and in doing so, it has been concentrating on the processes or functions of imagination, as each man saw them. That concentration on the processes of imagination will be exchanged for a concentration on the use of imagination as a theme, in this second part of the thesis. The dramatic and Shakespearean criticism of each writer will be considered in order to determine the relation between specific theories and their critical application. It will be shown how each man used his theory as a theme in his criticism. It will be shown how this thematic integration of imagination theory allowed each man to use his theory as a critical tool, and enabled him to say things which otherwise would have been difficult. The remainder of the present chapter will make a step in this direction by discussing the critical application of Leigh Hunt's theory of imagination.

Leigh Hunt's theory of imagination lies at the heart of much of his Shakespearean and dramatic criticism. The theory occupies this position of importance, first, because it was developed to distinguish art which was original, from art which was less so. Imagination, it will be remembered, he defined as "an original and active power, that forms it's own images and impresses them upon the minds of others", and it belonged more to the poet than to the

actor. Less original art, like that of actors, was characterized generally by conception, "a dependant and passive capacity, that receives ideas suggested by others."

A second, and possibly more significant, indication of the importance of Hunt's theory of imagination to his criticism, lies in the fact that it is on this theory that he builds his understanding of tragedy, comedy, and dramatic mimesis. Partly in this manner, imagination becomes a theme in his criticism and forms the basis of many of his judgements. Hunt's comments on tragedy, comedy, and mimesis mainly arise, like his theory of imagination, in the course of his discussion of acting in the Critical Essays. Also, like Hunt's theory of imagination, his ideas on tragedy, comedy, and mimesis have suffered complete neglect by Hunt's editors and critics.

Hunt uses the distinction between conception and imagination to distinguish between comedy and tragedy. Conception, he suggests, dominates the art of comedy. His theory of conception is used to support and illuminate his approach to comedy - an approach which incorporates classical and Renaissance ideas about comedy, particularly with regard to manners. Just as conception is dependent on ideas suggested by others, so, too, says Hunt, comedy is dependent on ideas suggested by the actions of people in everyday life. It imitates "real and simple manners";¹ it focuses on habits and those "emotions and inclinations" which are not associated with the strongest kinds of passion.²

¹ CE, 1.

² CE, 49.

As Hunt says at one point, "in comic characters we generally recognize the manners or peculiarities of some person with whom we are acquainted, or who is at least known in the world."¹ The world must be able to find an accurate reflection of itself in comedy.²

When Hunt speaks of the comic artist, there is the same emphasis on dependency on real life. The comic artist is almost totally dependent on his ability to imitate what he has seen around him. His genius consists in having "no common observation of life."³ He must be able to look at life and have "an instantaneous perception of every thing that varies from the general seriousness of human nature, or from that behaviour which is contemplated with a serious indifference."⁴ He must also be able to look at his own performance and ascertain that the source of the variations is in real life, and thus prevent comedy from degenerating into caricature and farce.⁵ Caricature and farce are fine in their place, says Hunt, but they only produce merriment and fall short of the business of comedy, which is to instruct:

Caricature...is very justly confined by good authors to farce, which professes nothing but to raise merriment, and though some writers of huge farces may call their productions comedy, yet the world invariably recognizes them for what they are, and would as soon look for it's own image in their kind of satire, as a beauty would search for her likeness at the back of her looking-glass.⁶

Hunt made it clear that there were only rare occasions on which the comic artist could go beyond

1 CE, 51.

2 See: CE, 143.

3 CE, 58.

4 CE, 58.

5 CE, 58.

6 CE, 143.

conception and the strict imitation of the manners and lighter passions of common life.

He noted that,

There are tricks and shadows of character, which are so rarely exhibited in the world, that they are to be deduced from the probable effects of general character rather than from known peculiarities, and must therefore be left to the imagination.¹

However, just as conception was the main art of comedy, imagination was the main art of tragedy, and was generally confined to that genre, as Hunt saw it.

Hunt's comments on comedy reflect the dependent nature of conception. His comments on tragedy reflect the independent and original nature of imagination. The tragic stage, he says, "is always a step above nature."² Rather than being occupied with the manners and habits of daily life, "tragedy is wholly occupied with passions";³ and "the loftier passions are rarely exhibited in the common intercourse of mankind."⁴ Thus, the tragic artist had to rely on his imagination for much of his material:

of the deeper tragic passions we have only read, or heard; we never see in society an impassioned character like Macbeth, or King Lear, or Hamlet; such characters exhibit themselves on great occasions only, their very nature prevents their appearance in common life; but habits appear no where else....⁵

Accordingly, the tragic artist was to be estimated,

1 CE, 58.

2 CE, 142.

3 CE, 49.

4 CE, 3.

5 CE, 51.

not for his representation of the common occurrences of the world, not for his discernment of the familiarities of life, but for his idea of images never submitted to the observation of the senses.¹

The task of the tragic artist, then, was more difficult than that of his counterpart in comedy, for as Hunt said, "that which is done by imagination is more difficult than that which is performed by discernment or experience."² The tragic artist is not copying nature so much as he is trying to imitate an idea about nature, an ideal quality in nature, or what Hunt suggests is a "general opinion of life and manners."³ He must contemplate "heroism", "wisdom", and "virtue", and must turn away from "the familiar vanities and vulgarities of common life"; in other words, he must become "occupied with the soul only."⁴

As was the case with conception and comedy, Hunt's ideas of imagination are used to give support to some of the ideas concerning tragedy which Hunt would have gained from his classical education at Christ's Hospital. In particular, much of what he says about the elevation needed for imagination on stage sounds much like traditional ideas of decorum.

This is apparent when Hunt discusses the actor's difficulty in trying to address "the soul only", and in trying to convey an ideal quality in nature which is not seen normally. In order to give the proper elevation to tragedy, the language and manners of the main characters must be such as "they never use in real life."⁵ Hunt gives the following example:

1 CE, 51.

2 CE, 51.

3 CE, 3.

4 CE, 54.

5 CE, 2.

A tragic hero, who called for his follower or his horse, would in real life call for him as easily and carelessly as any other man, but in tragedy such a carelessness would become ludicrous: the loftiness of his character must be universal....¹

Once this appropriate elevation is achieved by the actor, he must keep it separate from either the natural behaviour of daily life or the swollen emotions of burlesque; he must neither "debase his dignity by too natural a simplicity of manner, nor...give it a ridiculous elevation by pompousness and bombast."² Moreover, while he must use his imagination to give him the correct elevation, he must still "imitate nature as closely as possible in passages of emotion and passion";³ "he should not indulge himself in novelties of invention, because the hearts of his audience will be able to judge where their experience has no power."⁴ All of the time while on stage, the tragic actor must be trying to match the common idea of a great man. He must be trying to create an image of that which exists only as an idea or feeling in the audience.

Hunt uses his notions of imagination and conception to analyze the audience's reaction to dramatic illusion or mimesis. From the beginning of Critical Essays he had maintained the fallacy of "the general idea, that tragedy and comedy are equally direct imitations of human life."⁵ They were not. As has been shown, tragedy "is an imitation of life in passions",⁶ and is elevated from real life; comedy "imitates both passions

1 CE, 2-3.

2 CE, 3.

3 CE, 142-3.

4 CE, 3.

5 CE, 2.

6 CE, 3.

and habits",¹ and is dependent on real life. Hunt had concluded that different kinds of imitation were involved possibly because of the different feeling he was left with finally after watching tragedy as opposed to comedy. Just as the art of comedy was conception, so, too, it appealed to conception in the spectators and left them still bound to real life. Comedy's effect was humour, or conception at its best:

Humour surprises and wins, but it never elevates: it meets with too great familiarity our common ideas, and while it amuses us with it's powers leaves us sufficient contentment with our own.²

The effect of tragedy was the effect of 'imagination;' it lifted the audience into meditation on the soul:

...imagination surprises, wins, and elevates too; it carries us off from our level with earthly objects and ordinary cares, it bears the mind to it's highest pitch of ascent, transports us through every region of thought and of feeling, and teaches us that we have something within us more than mortal.³

Tragedy appealed to the imagination of the audience, more than to the conception.

There seems to have been no meeting of 'conception' and 'imagination' in Hunt's thinking, for throughout Hunt's discussion in Critical Essays, the two seem thematically opposed. Hunt's thinking along these lines is most evident when he is explaining the effect on the audience if either tragedy or comedy strayed from its proper object of imitation. Two things would happen, Hunt says, if a tragic actor started to imitate real life and reduced the proper elevation of the play. First, the cathartic effect would be

1 CE, 3.

2 CE, 53.

3 CE, 53.

lost: "the spectators would lose sight of the emotion, considered in it's imitative powers, from which some critics have deduced all the pleasure arising from tragedy."¹ Second, the tragic play would become too painful to bear: "in proportion as [the spectators] lost sight of this imitation [i.e. of ideal passion], they would be awake to a sorrow too apparently real to be softened into a pleasing effect." Contrastingly, if the comic actor tried to elevate comedy beyond the imitation of real life, the effect would be ludicrous, not painful, and the play would be doomed to failure because comedy excites too little passion to enable it successfully to move into the ideal. Comedy is unable "to carry our enthusiasm beyond a sense of it's imitation [of real life]."³

Hunt's ideas of imagination and conception support a clear division in his thought between tragedy and comedy. The one point imagination and conception (or tragedy and comedy) may be said to have in common in Hunt's thought, concerns the necessity for both to instruct. Hunt adopted this idea from Horace, whom he quotes on the title page of Critical Essays; and certainly with regard to comedy, Hunt's ideas were along the classical lines. Comedy instructed through satirizing the follies and vices of man. As will be shown later, Hunt's ideas concerning the instruction of tragedy have less similarity with Horace (or even Aristotle). Tragedy instructed, Hunt said, by "teach[ing] others to feel".⁴ At least concerning the more popular tragedies of Shakespeare, Hunt seems to have meant

¹ CE, 142.

² CE, 142.

³ CE, 143.

⁴ CE, 4.

that the passions which the audience experienced were the purpose of tragedy, as distinct from the moral lessons arising out of the actions. Most of Hunt's critical comments were geared to maximizing the instructive ability of the theatre, whether concerning the didactic purposes of comedy or the emotional purposes of tragedy.

Sufficient attention has been paid to the Critical Essays to demonstrate the thematic integration of Hunt's ideas of imagination concerning his general approach to the theatre in that work. The theme of imagination operates in a similar manner in much of Hunt's more detailed criticism of Shakespeare and drama. Many of Hunt's specific comments may be traced to his understanding of conception and imagination and their particular effects in comedy, tragedy and the mimetic process.

Hunt's Shakespearean and dramatic criticism is to be found mainly in three places, The News, the Critical Essays, and The Examiner. The News was a weekly paper, and Hunt was its theatre critic from its first issue, on 19 May, 1805, until he and his brother left the paper after the issue of 13 December, 1807. There are two problems with the criticisms in The News, however. The first is that, until the last issue, Hunt did not sign the articles he had written. In the last issue there is an article titled, "The Critic's Farewell to His Readers", signed with the index hand Hunt used from then on to identify his weekly work in The Examiner. In the "Farewell" Hunt claims that, "With six or eight exceptions I have written every theatrical article in this paper from its commencement."

The second problem is that numbers 34 to 85 of The News, in other words, the bound edition of

1806, no longer appears to exist;¹ hence it is impossible to examine all of the articles to determine which ones were not Hunt's. It may have been that the review of 8 March, 1807 (signed "B.F." [probably Barron Field]), was not the only review to have a signature, and that the reviews which were not Hunt's were identified, and mainly occurred in 1806.

There is only one precedent for quoting any of Hunt's material in The News, and that is an article by Jeffrey Fleece in which three News criticisms are cited.² Fleece ignored the problem of authorship. There are seventy-five theatrical reviews in the 1805 and 1807 issues of The News, and eleven of these are centered on Shakespearean productions and plays. In the remainder of this thesis I will be quoting only those reviews which show strong internal evidence for the material being Hunt's, based often on the similarity of specific comments with his later ones.

¹ The British Museum does not have a copy, nor does it have record of any other library holding one. Louis Landré was unable to obtain a copy when he prepared his work in 1936: see Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), II, 485.

² See "Leigh Hunt's Shakespearean Criticism", Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry (Nashville, 1954), 181-195.

³ Positive proof is available concerning some reviews: in the 28 June and 20 September, 1807, reviews (the former concerns Hamlet), Hunt refers to his forthcoming Critical Essays. "An Essay on the Appearance, Causes, and Consequences of the Decline of British Comedy", an important essay in three sections in the issues of 23 August, 30 August, and 6 September, 1807, is definitely by Hunt. The Critical Essays contains an appendix of some former reviews by Hunt, which not only contains the above essay, and two other articles from 1805 (25 August and 27 October), but it also contains some articles which must have been from the 1806 News.

Fortunately authorship is not a problem with Hunt's Examiner material. He helped to set up the paper at the beginning of 1808 and made regular reviews of the theatre until a few months before his imprisonment in 1813. Although he was released in February, 1815, after serving his full sentence, he made only scattered criticisms over the next two years. Then, in June, 1817, Hunt began regular reviewing which continued almost until his last "Theatrical Examiner" in March of 1821, immediately prior to his departure for Italy to join Byron and Shelley.¹

By that time, Hunt had written a total of two-hundred and forty-five "Theatrical Examiners" (the Houtchenses have reprinted forty-six²). Of these thirty-two explicitly dealt with Shakespeare (the Houtchenses have given twelve) and a large number of others contained significant comment on Shakespeare.

¹ Four-hundred-and-twenty-six "Theatrical Examiners" had been written to this date. Hunt also wrote reviews for the Tatler in 1830-31 (see Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism, 232-288). These reviews will not be considered in this thesis partially because they were written well after the other men in this study had finished writing on Shakespeare, and partially because they more properly belong to a new era of Hunt's career, and a new era of Shakespeare and the stage.

² Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism. Cross-references to this text will be given where possible.

Hunt's theme of imagination in Critical Essays is present in his extensive Shakespearean and dramatic criticisms in The News and The Examiner. On the basis of the foregoing discussion of imagination in Critical Essays, it is possible to indicate some of the features that will be found in Hunt's general approach to Shakespeare in the theatre. First, from Hunt's clear division of conception and imagination, and from his belief in the superiority of the art of imagination, it is reasonable to assume that Hunt's criticism will show a preference for Shakespearean tragedy.

Secondly, Hunt's treatment of Shakespearean comedy can be expected to rely on his understanding of conception. While some forms of comedy might benefit from a critical approach which demands the imitation of real life and manners, Shakespearean comedy is not ideally suited to such an approach. Hunt's critical use of conception, therefore, may be seen to have contributed to Hunt's lack of appreciation of some of Shakespeare's comedies.

A third point may be made concerning a) Hunt's insistence on the didactic purpose of comedy and b) the close parallel between some aspects of his thoughts on tragic elevation and traditional ideas of decorum. Since the notions of didacticism and decorum had classical origins and were critically employed throughout the eighteenth century, it is to be expected that many of Hunt's comments on these issues are in line with the criticism of the previous century.

Lastly, it is to be expected that if Hunt excels in any area of criticism, it must be concerning imagination and tragedy. His preference for tragedy, his vision of tragedy

as "an imitation of life in passions", his feeling that tragedy addresses the soul, and his interest in the mind of the tragic character (often as opposed to the morality of his actions), all suggest positive contributions of Hunt's theme of 'imagination.'

Hunt was involved more extensively with the theatre than any of the other Romantic critics. Hunt's interest in Shakespeare in the theatre was that Shakespeare "cannot only elevate our imagination, but can familiarize us with the business of life."¹ The remark seemed in particular to imply praise of Shakespeare's tragedy, but concerning comedy he added that Shakespeare "can make us laugh heartily and has an inexhaustible fund of gay wit and humour."² The contrast between the comments may serve generally to characterise the difference between Hunt's approaches to Shakespeare's comedy and tragedy. Hunt never suggests that Shakespeare's comedies elevate, or that they teach through opening the audience to new feelings, in the manner of imagination. Instead, he concentrates on the manner in which Shakespeare's comedies 'surprise and win' through relative degrees of humour. In 1809 he says that The Merry Wives of Windsor, as an example of pure comedy, is surpassed by Much Ado About Nothing in wit, and Henry IV Part One in wit and humour.³ Along a similar line, in 1811, Hunt noted that Twelfth Night possessed passages of poetic delicacy and two scenes of irresistible humour, but it was "inferior to the Falstaff pieces in invention, to Much Ado About Nothing in wit and interest, and to the Taming of the Shrew in effect and completeness of design."⁴

1 CE, 203.

2 CE, 203.

3 Examiner, 10 December, 1809.

4 Examiner, 3 March, 1811; (DC, 41).

In Critical Essays Hunt expressed a belief that runs throughout his criticism in The News and The Examiner, and that is that "All art acquires it's greatest effect from contrast."¹ The contrasts he points to in Shakespearean comedy are quite different from those which he finds in Shakespearean tragedy. The contrasts of comedy are the kinds derived from conception and found in daily life; they are contrasts which serve to keep the imitation on the plane of real life by furthering wit and humour, not passion and imagination. The contrasts that he points to in comedy are not found in the internal thoughts and feelings of any one character, but are found rather in the structures of the plays, often centering on the characters and their opposing functions.

For example, concerning Twelfth Night, Hunt points to the advantage of contrasting Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek: Sir Toby, Hunt says, "is a mere knavish sot; and is only preserved from our contempt by contrast with his tool Ague-cheek, whose excessive stupidity gives the other an air of sense and even of a taste for irony." Hunt points to the midnight scene (II,iii) in which the contrast between Malvolio and the others "is sure to convulse the spectators with laughter." Also, Hunt points to the "very lively and refreshing" contrast between the "scenes and characters of low vice" and "the delicate mind and elegant language of Viola."²

Hunt's main focus in his comments about Much Ado About Nothing is again the humour arising from the contrast of characters:

¹ CE, 197.

² All of these quotations are from Examiner, 3 March, 1811; (DC, 42).

The two principal men and women are excellently contrasted: Claudio, instant in his feelings and incapable of concealing them, but altogether rational and resolute, is opposed to the careless, the mirthful, the apparently thoughtless Benedick; while the satirical and talkative though good-hearted Beatrice presents a fine relief to the retiring sensibility of Hero. The merry warfare of raillery between Benedick and Beatrice is a masterpiece of familiar wit; it is poetry applied to common feelings and common occasions....

The final reference to poetry and "common feelings and common occasions" seems to offer direct proof that Hunt's remarks are being shaped by his understanding of conception, and the imitation of real life and manners.

Because of conception's dependency on real life, and because of the need for comedy to confine itself to an accurate reflection of everyday occurrences, Shakespeare's comedies often fare less well with Hunt than his tragedies. In particular, Hunt criticised The Winter's Tale, Cymbeline, As You Like It, and Comedy of Errors for their inability to convince the audience that real life was being addressed and hence for their failure to instruct. Hunt criticised Kemble for his revival of The Winter's Tale in 1807:

[The play] exhibits so much feebleness of writing as well as violation of probability and possibility, that nothing but an imposing scene, in which Hermione stands as a statue, could render it tolerable to any audience.... Can anything be more ridiculous than a shipwreck in Bohemia, than a King of Bohemia at the Sicilian court during the times of ancient heathenism, than a daughter of an Emperor of Russia married to an ancient King of Sicily, or lastly, than a statue made by Julio Romano in the age of the Delphic Oracle?²

¹ Examiner, 3 January, 1808; (DC, 4).

² The News, 15 November, 1807.

Hunt also found it difficult to believe that the character of Antigonus had any counterpart in real life: "...Antigonus is a most unnatural mixture of courage and weakness, of frankness and court-servility; he trembles and kneels before the enraged King, and then jokes at his indignation to his face."¹ In another edition of The News Hunt already had complained that inconsistencies in plot had spoiled the occasional beauties of Cymbeline, and he had lamented Kemble's revival of that play as well.² Interestingly, Hunt's later theatre experience did seem to modify his views. In 1820 he called Cymbeline a "beautiful play",³ much in line with the viewpoint expressed by Hazlitt in his 1817 Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.

When Hunt reviewed As You Like It in 1810, he came close to condemning the play, even though he admired much of the characterization and found Shakespeare's "wit and wisdom" demonstrated "to great advantage in occasional passages." But as Hunt went on to say:

the plot is unnatural, and probability and nature are offended at once, when the two young ladies, one in man's cloathes and the other with a crook, go a shepherdizing, and in a Flemish forest too. Arcadian tales were much in fashion in Shakespeare's time, and when laid in a southern climate, had some little claim to toleration; but they never were natural, - at least not in that elegance with which the poets invest them, - and should have been avoided, as pictures of false life,⁴ by the great master of men and manners.

1 The News, 15 November, 1807.

2 The News, 27 September, 1807.

3 Examiner, 22 October, 1820.

4 Examiner, 7 January, 1810.

Hunt modified his comments about the play ten years later when he praised the casting at Covent Garden and referred to the play as "this delightful pastoral." However, Hunt does not seem to be totally without some of his former misgivings concerning the play's ability to convince the audience:

[Shakespeare] even seems, after having finished his work, to have waked up as from a dream, and to have doubted how far the audience would go with him; though his age was a much more sylvan one than ours, He calls his play As You Like It, as if he felt that its success would depend upon the greater or less tendency of the spectators to be pleased with nature in general, - upon their identification of a natural pleasure with a good-natured critical taste.¹

Hunt expressed considerable reservation about Comedy of Errors, along the same lines as concerning Winter's Tale, Cymbeline and As You Like It.² He continued to criticise the play strongly in 1819:

It is impossible for the spectators' imagination, however willing, to get over the utter improbability of two masters quite alike, who cross and confound each other at every step, without coming to an explanation.³

Hunt goes as far as to question whether Shakespeare had any satisfaction in writing the play and says, "the classical stories that it was his [Shakespeare's] fortune to chuse, or to have chosen for him, are the things in which he gives us the least pleasure, whether in comedy or tragedy. We allude in

¹ Examiner, 16 January, 1820.

² See, for instance, Examiner, 3 March, 1811; (DC, 43).

³ Examiner, 26 December, 1819.

the latter to Coriolanus."¹

Hunt's theory of 'conception' would have supported the harsh criticisms he made of some of Shakespeare's comedies, particularly in his earlier criticism. But Hunt would have drawn support also from Johnson. Hunt's criticism contains numerous references to Dryden, Thomas Rymer, Addison, Steele, Warburton, William Richardson, Thomas Warton, and George Steevens, but Hunt most frequently quotes Johnson. Although Johnson favoured Shakespeare's comedy, and although he was not insistent upon the need for the dramatic unities, he lacked sympathy for the pastoral convention. In some of his criticism he was even more harsh than Hunt. Consider, for example, his closing comment on Cymbeline:

To remark on the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecillity, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.²

Hunt in many cases was following leads given by Johnson. If his theory of 'conception' led him to adopt former attitudes towards Shakespeare's comedy, he may be credited at least with recognising, in his later criticism, that his approach had been too limited.

Coriolanus is the only Shakespearean tragedy about which Hunt is highly critical. Throughout Hunt's Shakespearean criticism, the comments on tragedy reflect Hunt's early notions of 'imagination.'

¹ Examiner, 26 December, 1819.

² Samuel Johnson, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, VII & VIII, Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo (New Haven and London, 1968), VIII, 908. All future quotations from Johnson on Shakespeare will be from this edition.

In contrast to comedy, the emphasis is on the manner in which tragedy elevates by addressing the imagination; Hunt focuses on the emotions of the characters and the feelings of the audience. The imitation Hunt speaks of is not that of real life, nor generally are there specific moral lessons which he draws (as is the case with comedy) concerning the representation of vice and virtue.

Hunt's specific criticism of Coriolanus centered on the issue of the elevation necessary for tragedy. The character of Menenius lacked sufficient elevation, Hunt complained in Critical Essays; Menenius, as a Patrician and close friend of Coriolanus, showed too much familiarity in his address to the public, and Shakespeare had "given the comedian an opportunity of displaying his merriment rather too broadly." Humour had "entirely overcome the man of rank." Coriolanus, said Hunt, was the "proudest man in Rome and [was] not very likely to associate with buffoons."¹

The comments were intended as a criticism of Shakespeare, and not just of a particular performance. Similar complaints were voiced in 1819 and 1820, when Hunt saw Macready and Kean, respectively, playing Coriolanus. On these occasions Hunt was disturbed by the kind of elevation given to the hero. Macready was good in the part, but he "did not touch all the keys of Coriolanus's passions truly;" "we suspect he was intended to be more short, impatient, and soldier-like in his haughtiness, with less of the graceful ungraciousness of the mere patrician."²

¹ All quotations from CE, 84-85. In this instance, Hunt is borrowing directly from John Dennis's discussion of decorum and Coriolanus (Essay On The Genius And Writings of Shakespeare [1711]). Dennis had said that Shakespeare was guilty of "indecorum in representing Menenius as little more than a buffoon. See: J.W.H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: 17th & 18th Centuries (London, 1966), 244.

² Examiner, 5 December, 1819; (DC, 223 & 224).

In 1820, Hunt was answering what he said were the charges of other critics that Kean's *Coriolanus* was not grand or heroic enough:

We confess that we think him occasionally a little over-familiar, or rather over-sarcastic, - two [sic] malignantly subdued in his tones; but with respect to his being not grand enough, or theatrical enough (for that, after all, is what is generally meant by the objection) we own he appears to us in many instances a great deal too much so.¹

Evidently the elevation Kean was supplying was still missing something of the essential character of *Coriolanus*.

Hunt's strong criticism of *Coriolanus*, particularly his early criticism, is unusual, but he did criticise other tragedies of Shakespeare. When Hunt criticised Shakespeare's less popular tragedies, he made it clear that they were not strictly operating in the realm of the 'imagination' and the world of ideal passion, and he mellowed his criticism of the plays accordingly. For instance, there is his comment on *Julius Caesar*:

Julius Caesar, with the exception of *Coriolanus*, has perhaps less of the poetical in it than any other tragedy of Shakespeare; but fancy and imagination did not suit the business of the scene; and what is wanting in colour and ornament, is recompensed by the finest contrasts of character. It is of itself a whole school of human nature.²

Hunt made a similar comment about *King John*, when he reviewed Kemble's revival of the play in 1810, two years before the above comment, Hunt is answering a remark of Johnson's:

The tragedy of *King John* is certainly "not written with the utmost power of Shakespeare," because the utmost power of the poet's wisdom and imagination was not called into play by the nature of the story; but it contains all that is adequate to a just and delicate discrimination of character....³

1 Examiner, 30 January, 1820.

2 Examiner, 29 March, 1812; (DC, 66).

3 Examiner, 3 June, 1810; (DC, 39).

In both of these plays, Hunt was thinking that history was more "the business of the scene" than was 'imagination.' Indeed, concerning the historical tragedies, Hunt almost seemed to prefer 'imagination' to be sacrificed for the sake of historical accuracy.¹ It is interesting to note that in removing these the plays from the realm of 'imagination,' Hunt focuses on issues (like contrasts of characters) which are more typically associated with the art of conception in Hunt's thought.²

Whether or not he was reviewing one of Shakespeare's less popular tragedies, the standards Hunt generally brought to bear on the actors in those plays were the standards dictated by the imagination. Actors were judged by their imitation of passions and images they probably never observed in daily life. They were judged by the contrasts which characterise tragedy and 'imagination' - contrasts of emotion within a character as he struggles with external events. The contrasts Hunt focuses on in tragedy are internal, psychological contrasts, rather than the external and more social contrasts of comedy.

¹ Hunt was against the alteration of history in historical drama. Hunt protested that Shakespeare had violated historical accuracy by making Richard III the epitome of all the rumours about him. (Examiner, 23 June, 1811). Concerning Caesar Hunt noted, "Shakespeare has distorted and tumified Caesar's character enough, as it is", and went on to complain about Egerton's treatment of the role. (Examiner, 5 April, 1812; [DC, 68]).

² Also relating to conception are Hunt's interests in the "manners and greatness" of the Romans in Julius Caesar which Hunt says will give the young student "the clearness of local conception which is afforded us by a panorama." (Examiner, 29 March, 1812; [DC, 65].)

Although Hunt had said that Julius Caesar was not stirred by fancy and imagination, he seemed to mean this as a general comment, because he pointed to a particular part of the play which he said excellently portrayed the ideal world of tragedy. Mr. Young was playing Cassius and Hunt was referring to the speech beginning, "I know that virtue to be in you" (I, ii):

This speech is a string of varieties, from the commonest colloquial familiarity to the loftiest burst of passion; and Mr. Young passes from one to another with the happiest instantaneousness of impression - from an air of indifference to one of resentment, from anecdote to indignant comment, from the subdued tone of sarcastic mimicry to the loud and impatient climax of a jealousy wrought up into rage. The transition in particular from the repetition of Caesar's sick words to the contemptuous simile they occasion, and from that again to the concluding burst of astonishment, accompanied with a start forward and a vehement clasp of the hands, is exceedingly striking. As there is no single passage in Shakespeare more various in expressing the shades of passion and discourse, so I do not remember a speech delivered on the stage by which the actor more nearly approaches to the ideal picture of the person he represents.¹

Hunt's earliest criticism had focused on the kinds of contrast his later criticisms were consistent in claiming belonged to the imagination. In 1805, Hunt had criticised Elliston's performance of Macbeth:

¹ Examiner, 5 April, 1818; (DC, 67).

What Mr. Elliston principally failed in was that nice distinction of emphasis and variety of feature which are so requisite in soliloquies: here he was painfully monotonous, and so little changeable of countenance, that he was evidently deficient in the study of his author, for though his face is not the most happily adapted to tragic expression, we should be loth to imagine that he does not feel and therefore cannot express the variations of tragic emotion.¹

Hunt expressed a similar idea in Critical Essays when he referred to Mr. Raymond's performance in the role of Macduff, except that Mr. Raymond had succeeded in the various gradations and changes of passion:

Everybody can clench his fist, can sob, and can strike his bosom every other minute; but to change the voice and the countenance into all the transitions from desperate to languid sorrow, or from resentment of wrongs to piteous complaint, and gradually to become vehement or gentle, powerful or powerless, as the passion fluctuates, belongs to a master only.²

In 1808 Hunt praised Miss Smith in Rowe's tragedy, Jane Shore, because "the whole tone of Miss Smith's fine variable countenance answers to every cord struck in her feelings:" at the same time, Hunt held little hope for Miss Norton in tragedy because "her face does not exhibit that instantaneous acknowledgement of her feelings."³

In addition to criticising tragic actors for lack of sufficient elevation Hunt's most common criticism of tragic actors was for lack of imagination in portraying fluctuating passion. In particular he criticised them concerning what he called the 'gentler passions.' The easiest tragic passions (and hence the ones which were

¹ The News, 20 October, 1805.

² CE, 30.

³ Examiner, 13 March, 1808.

presented on stage most frequently) were the strongest passions. As Hunt said of the role of Hotspur in The News, "violent passions are always easy and advantageous for two reasons, because they demand action rather than expression, and because they bewilder scrutiny."¹ Hunt had said this concerning Mr. Young, but the same comment was made concerning Mr. Pope in Critical Essays, who played a suitable Hotspur, but had no great tragic talent:

...violence has no sensation of restraint, it has no feelings to hide or to repress, and no niceties of action to study; the gentler passions give us leisure to examine them, we can follow every variation of feeling and every change of expression; but here [in Pope's Hotspur] we have leisure for nothing; every thing is rapid and confused; we are in the condition of a man who should attempt to count the spokes of a wheel in a chariot-race.²

Even the best actors in Hunt's time were prone to failure in roles which demanded the gentler passions. Kemble was the least likely to be an exception, for as his performance of Iago indicated in 1808, his imagination lacked flexibility:

I grant, that it would be almost impossible for Mr. Kemble, even were he to attempt it, to shake off that lofty stiffness which wraps and impedes him like a buckram shirt; but Mr. Kemble ought to be sensible of his obstructions, he ought to be sensible of that rheumatism of mind which sometimes renders his fancy so ludicrously stiff, and not attempt characters that require a peculiar pliability of expression.³

1 The News, 19 July, 1807.

2 CE, 26.

3 Examiner, 31 January, 1808.

Early in October, 1817, Hunt suggested that a Mr. Maywood was probably trying to imitate Kean, but said that Maywood "wants a scene of great incitement in order to rouse his imagination and action";¹ three weeks later Hunt made exactly the same criticism of Kean in Macbeth:

...Macbeth is not one of his best characters; and the reason is, that it is a mixed character, with moderate as well as passionate qualities in it; and Mr. Kean requires a perpetual stimulant, - not because his temperament is sluggish, but because it is restless. Neither does he succeed even in the passionate scenes where the stimulus is ideal. He must grapple with something actual as well as vehement, - with a tragedy bordering on common life. Witches and air-drawn daggers are out of his sphere; but put a rea [sic] sword in his hand, and he has at you. Some of the most familiar touches in Macbeth were excellently done, as the Hush! after the murder; but his mouthing and mastication in the quieter scenes are as little contemplative, as his general appearance is heroic; and his dagger scene is poor and impotent, as the fight with Macduff is rich and forceable. Yet even here, it is not so much Macbeth as it is a desperate gladiator.²

Macready also came in for the same criticism as had Kemble and Kean. With regard to Macready's Richard III, Hunt reminded Macready that "depth of feeling in reflecting minds requires a proportionate depth and quietness of expression."³ By the next year, 1820, Macready evidently had improved his performance in the area where he had failed before:

1 Examiner, 5 October, 1817.

2 Examiner, 26 October, 1817.

3 Examiner, 31 October, 1819; (DC, 221).

We are not in the number of those who think his mad scenes are his best. They are good, but the quieter ones are better, not forgetting however the more agitated scenes of his return before mentioned. Tenderness and dignity are the qualities in which Mr. Macready excels most....The great merit of his Richard is that he made the buoyancy and animal spirit of his character outshine his villainy. ¹

It can be seen that Hunt's theme of imagination and the "imitation of life in passions" placed radical demands on the actor and that Hunt's comments on actors were guided by the relative success with which the demands were met.

Hunt's theme of imagination had particular relevance for the audience, for the object of all imitation, whether tragic or comic, ideal or real, was to involve the audience with the play at the appropriate level. Seeing a performance of Othello in which Mr. Pope played the title role in a mask. helped Hunt to articulate the need for good acting and the effect on the audience's imagination if the imitation was poor:

The best character he [Mr. Pope] performs is Othello, because he performs it in a mask: for when an actor's face is not exactly seen, an audience is content to supply by its own imagination the want of expression, just as when reading a book we figure to ourselves the countenance of the persons interested. But when we are presented with the real countenance, we are disappointed if our imagination is not assisted in its turn; the picture presented to our eyes should animate the picture presented to our mind; if either of them differ, or if the former is less lively than the latter, a sensation of discord is produced, and destroys the effect of nature which is always harmonious. ²

¹ Examiner, 4 June, 1820.

² CE, 25.

It would appear that there were a great many times when Hunt went to the theatre to find that his 'imagination was not assisted in its turn.' Hunt's interest in mimesis may have been fostered by the type of conflict he describes between pictures presented to the eye and presented to the mind; and Hunt's theme of imagination may be seen operating behind many of his specific criticisms of stage management and acting styles.

From the beginning of Hunt's theatre-going - and perhaps more at the beginning than later, on, thanks largely to the innovations of Kean and others - the common style of acting presented problems for Hunt. In June, 1805, Hunt described "what is called, 'clap-trapping,' or the art of gaining applause without deserving it." 'Clap-trapping' was generally easy, Hunt said, if an actor gestured tragically after a speech. Hunt pointed to Charles Kemble who "has a knack of darting his lips asunder, breathing hard, and fixing down the corners of his mouth." Mr. H. Johnston, Hunt noted, "is very fond of rolling his eyes and then clapping his hand over them, being always no doubt in an agony of grief." And there was another trick that was used, and that was, "after bellowing through eight or ten lines, to lower the voice into a kind of passionate tremulousness, give one good flourish with the right arm, and strut fiercely to the left side of the stage."¹

Evidently this latter trick was still being used quite commonly three years later. Hunt described Mrs. Siddons's son, Mr. H. Siddons, in the role of Falkland in Sheridan's The Rivals:

If he made an exclamation of impatience he shook his head dismally, lifted up his hands and shook them too, and then suddenly turned to the right or left and trampled

¹ All quotations are from The News, 9 June, 1805.

up and down the stage, like a hero during the applause of the galleries; if he concluded a scene with any thing serious or impassioned, he prepared for an important and hurried departure, lowered his voice as he hastened towards the end of the speech, and then drove off the stage with a thrust of the arm.¹

In the same review Hunt recorded that another actor, Mr. Liston, had been using the same kind of 'clap-trapping' gestures in another play.

There were other barriers to effective imitation in the affectations of the actors. As Hunt complained, "the appearance of reality is totally destroyed by the affectation of settling the limbs into an attitude, of contemplating the dress, or casting self-sufficient glances into the side-boxes."² In Critical Essays Hunt praised Bannister as a model of the actor's proper approach to the audience, as Hunt saw it:

No actor enters so well into the spirit of his audience...for he engages your attention immediately by seeming to care nothing about you; the stage appears to be his own room, of which the audience compose the fourth wall: if they clap him, he does not stand still to enjoy their applause; he continues the action, if he cannot continue the dialogue; and this is the surest way to continue their applause. The stage is always supposed to be an actual room, or other scene, totally abstracted from an observant multitude....³

There were not many scenes which Hunt pointed to as illustrations of the kind of acting which actually assists, rather than impedes, the audience's imagination. There were a few instances, however. One of those was Kean in Richard III in 1815, standing in front of his tent in the scene before the battle. Kean's acting, Hunt suggested, helped the audience to see into the mind of Richard:

1 Examiner, 9 October, 1808.

2 The News, 27 October, 1805.

3 CE, 60-61.

[It was] impossible to express in a deeper manner the intentness of Richard's mind upon the battle that was about to take place, or to quit the scene with an abruptness more self-recollecting, pithy, and familiar, than by the reverie in which he stands drawing lines upon the ground with the point of his sword, and his sudden recovery of himself with a "Good night."¹

Mrs. Siddons similarly had drawn the concentration of the audience away from the chambers of the castle at Inverness and into the chambers of Lady Macbeth's mind, as Hunt recalled in 1812:

The sleep-walking scene...has been much and deservedly admired; the deathlike stare of her countenance, while the body was in motion, was sublime; and the anxious whispering with which she made her exit, as if beckoning her husband to bed, took the audience along with her into the silent and dreaming horror of her retirement.²

In another performance of Lady Macbeth, several years later, in 1817, Hunt had praised one scene in which Miss Campbell was brilliant. While she had been reading the letter, Miss Campbell had passed her finger lightly around her head in anticipation of wearing the crown. The illustrative action had been very effective, but she had used it too much and it had become, "the reverse of imagination, and of a power of exciting it in others."³

The poor acting Hunt seemed to find generally at the theatre was not the only barrier to imagination Hunt found in contemporary theatre. Hunt claimed in 1806 that "The majority of an audience were certainly never deluded into a belief, that events represented on the stage were realities."⁴ Any dream of reality, he said,

¹ Examiner, 26 February, 1815; (DC, 114).

² Examiner, 5 July, 1812; (DC, 72).

³ Examiner, 26 October, 1817.

⁴ CE, "Appendix", 22 (The News [1806]).

would soon be removed by the frequent cessations on the entertainment, and particularly the alteration of scene, so badly managed at the theatre, where you see two men running violently towards each other, with half a castle or a garden in their grasp.¹

Beyond the problems of interruption and scenery change, there were problems with the costumes and the scenes themselves. Hunt maintained that Mrs. Siddons was the only performer who knew how to dress without incongruity, but noted that Elliston, Kemble, and Charles Kemble were more attentive than most.² The best actor, Hunt stated, "gains but half his effect, if his eloquent imitation is not assisted by the mute imitations of dress and of scenery."³

'Mute imitations of dress and of scenery' seemed lacking most frequently in the Shakespearean productions Hunt saw. Numerous instances of the impediments to the audience which Hunt found may be cited here. In 1805 Hunt complained about a production of The Merry Wives of Windsor:

Master Ford and his Merry Wife had no doubt a very good house in Windsor, but who would think of seeing an apartment in the time of Queen Elizabeth adorned with elegant modern sash-windows and mahogany furniture?⁴

In 1807 Hunt noted that a production of Henry IV had provided the Boar's Head tavern with drinking glasses and mahogany; Hunt congratulated the actors for "so well concealing the amazement, with which their characters must doubtless have been struck at the sight of those luxuries of futurity."⁵ In the same year, concerning Kemble's revival of The Winter's Tale, Hunt made the following observation:

¹ CE, "Appendix", 22 (The News [1806]).

² ibid., 23.

³ ibid., 23.

⁴ The News, 6 October, 1805.

⁵ The News, 19 July, 1807.

The performers indeed seemed to conspire with the author to make the inconsistencies of the play as gross as possible. Mr. Kemble, not content with the anachronisms in the text, gave us, in a Sicilian court of justice during the age of the Delphic oracle, two standards adorned with coat-armour which was an invention of the age of Chivalry, and two judges dressed in the university cap and gown. ¹

Mrs. C. Kemble, in the role of Paulina, "wanted nothing but an oil-skin gypsey bonnet and a basket under her arm to be as energetic a fish-woman, as ever was clamourous in praise of eels."²

Comments similar to these ones in The News may be found in The Examiner. Hunt's first review in the paper was of Kemble's new revival of Much Ado About Nothing. Hunt calculated that the last Sicilian king of the House of Arragon was at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and Hunt was surprised at Kemble:

...the manager of Covent-Garden therefore has dressed his Spanish prince of the 14th or 15th century like a modern English gentleman in a blue coat, white breeches and stockings, and an opera hat; one of his Spanish officers appears in the exact regimentals of our present infantry, and the Italian officers exhibit the same identical coats and breeches which their₃ descendants wear at this day. ³

Hunt had noted that Kemble usually claimed his productions demonstrated thoughtful propriety.

In fact, it was this claim which Kemble made when the Covent-Garden company opened at the King's Theatre in September of 1808, after Covent-Garden Theatre had burned down. Kemble apologised to the audience that the King's Theatre did not have the equipment to assist productions,

¹ The News, 15 November, 1807.

² The News, 15 November, 1807.

³ Examiner, 3 January, 1808; (DC, 7).

and Hunt used this address to attack Kemble:

When Mr. Kemble talks of assisting the works of our own poets...I hope he does not intend to say that Shakespeare was assisted at Covent-Garden Theatre with that vile pitch-kettle and those washerwoman-dresses in the witches' scene of Macbeth, or indeed with any of the scenery of his plays.¹

In 1810, again at Covent-Garden, Cordelia appeared in a modern hat tied under the chin and in a dress that was also modern. Hunt allowed that some anachronisms are permitted in King Lear "both for the author's and for effect's sake" but felt that in instances like this the manager "intended to make his debutantes ridiculous."²

One of the most glaring and consistent failures of the managers, and one which consistently assaulted the imagination of the audience, was the casting of people meant to look alike. In Twelfth Night in 1811, Mr. Brunton was presented "as the facsimile of a delicate little lady, shorter at least by the head and shoulders." The lines, "An apple, cleft in two, is not more twin/ Than these two creatures!" (V, i, 230-231) were retained, adding to the absurdity of what Hunt described as the two people "affecting an unaffected astonishment at the double likeness."³

¹ Examiner, 2 October, 1808.

² Examiner, 21 October, 1810. It seems unusual that Hunt was expecting such a high degree of stage propriety since Kemble's age was the first consistently to strive for period costume. However, Hunt was a product of that age, and certainly was not the first theatre reviewer to point out inaccuracies (but was probably the first to be so stringent). See H.C. Gray, Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795 (New York, 1931), 287-288.

³ Examiner, 3 March, 1811; (DC, 43).

In the review of Twelfth Night Hunt had suggested the advisability of using masks, particularly for Comedy of Errors.¹ Although Hunt had mentioned that Pope used a mask for Othello, masks were not used for Comedy of Errors. As Hunt commented in 1819:

...in an English Comedy of Errors, two men altogether as different as their shins, Jones and Duruset for instance, disenact the two masters; and we are to believe in the identity of their two servants, Liston and Farren, persons no more resembling each other than moisture and drought, or a bowl of cream and a tobacco pipe....²

Hunt commented that the assumption of the identities was "impossible for the spectators' imagination, however willing," and that "the thing is made worse by the parties being represented by different performers."³

Hunt demonstrates an attitude towards women which is of relevance concerning the theme of 'imagination.' It was said in a former chapter⁴ that in 1815, Hazlitt defined 'fancy' and imagination according to the differences he saw between the minds of women and men: women's minds demonstrated fancy because they were versatile and moved from subject to subject, and there was the suggestion that only men's minds had powers of concentration or 'imagination' to focus thoughts around one central idea.

The same kind of distinction seems operant in Hunt's criticism before Hazlitt, and it seems to indicate what might have been a common social attitude determined by the conventions of the time. For instance, Hunt says in 1808 that,

¹ Examiner, 3 March, 1811; (DC, 43).

² Examiner, 26 December, 1819.

³ loc. cit.

⁴ See pp. 83-84 of this thesis.

"A female performer cannot excel in all the variety of an actor, for a certain singleness of thinking and of habits seems to be one of the distinctions between female and male character."¹ Whether or not Hunt's attitude was a common one, it influenced his thought concerning the roles women should play and the style of acting they should use. In general, he did not like women in roles of imagination:

tragic actresses are no favorite of our's [sic]: - we cannot help thinking they must get rid of a good deal of what is pleasant in women, before they can be so; and we prefer pleasant women even to great tragic actresses.²

Imagination demanded an ability to imitate a range of passions easily and naturally, and an actress, more than an actor, risked the audience's respect and the elevation of the tragedy if she failed.

Hunt suggested that an actress had two choices; no similar suggestion was made about men:

When Mrs. Jordan was young, she should have fixed at once either upon the lady or upon the romping girl as her future character; for these two characters will never unite in the same actress. Broadness destroys reserve, and reserve will not allow broadness.³

Hunt was thinking perhaps about his own reaction to a woman who combined reserve and broadness, for the combination was represented as a barrier for his own imagination in Critical Essays:

¹ Examiner, 24 January, 1808.

² Examiner, 26 October, 1817.

³ Examiner, 24 January, 1808.

When the generality of actresses are representing the objects of a man's attachment, their broadness of demeanour produces in the beholders a kind of silent disagreement with the hero's choice that deranges their satisfaction: his compliments become false, his ardour unwarrantable, his sorrows ridiculous; a delicate spectator cannot say "Such is the woman I would marry myself."¹

This notion had far-reaching implications for roles like Rosalind or Viola.² For a woman to adopt the disguise of a man on stage, Hunt felt, she would have to demonstrate either broadness of mind, which would lessen her femininity, or a reserved delicacy of mind, which would lessen the masculinity of the adopted role. In either case the 'imagination' would be affronted. Hunt felt this was a problem new to the modern age:

In Shakespeare's time, when there were no female performers, the personal absurdity was avoided; and this circumstance probably gave rise, in other nations as well as ours, to the fondness for representing women as boys and pages.³

In general, Hunt tried to discourage actresses from adopting male disguises.

Lawrence and Carolyn Houtchens seem to echo an earlier comment by Richard Brimley Johnson when they claim that Hunt "constantly protested against the alteration of Shakespeare."⁴ This is certainly true concerning the plays which suffered most from change on the contemporary stage. Hunt criticised Kemble for retaining the Dryden-Davenant addition of Sycorax to

¹ CE, 209.

² Concerning Rosalind, see CE, 209; and Examiner, 17 January, 1808. Concerning Viola, see Examiner, 5 June, 1808; and Examiner, 3 March, 1811; (DC, 42-3).

³ Examiner, 3 March, 1811; (DC, 42).

⁴ DC, 295. See also R.B. Johnson, Essays and Sketches by Leigh Hunt (London, 1906), v.

The Tempest.¹ He argued that Tate's Lear lessened the dramatic effect of the play and claimed that the insertion of the love scene between Cordelia and Edgar while Cordelia was searching for her father divided the interest of the play, and reduced the play from the level of abstraction and imagination.² Hunt complained that the Garrick version of Romeo and Juliet overloaded the tragic effect by allowing Romeo to survive the poison until after Juliet had awoken - the senses had begun to rule over the imagination.³ While Hunt was enthusiastic about the revival of Timon of Athens in 1816, he regretted that some of the most poetical and profound passages had been omitted.⁴

Whatever Hunt felt about John Kemble as an actor, or in some cases as a manager, Hunt did acknowledge that his age owed much to Kemble for retaining Shakespeare's tragedies on stage: "were it not for Mr. Kemble's exertions the tragedies of our glorious bard would almost be in danger of dismissal from the stage."⁵ As has already been suggested, however, Hunt was not a Shakespeare idolator, and if he generally was against the alteration of Shakespeare's tragedies, he was not against all alteration of Shakespeare. Even considering Lear, he would have excused the omission of some of what he felt were anachronisms,

1 CE, "Appendix", 30; ([1806] News).

2 Examiner, 22 May, 1808; (DC, 15-19). The editors of DC give the date as 28 May.

3 Examiner, 5 April, 1818.

4 Examiner, 3 November, 1816; (DC, 135-6).

5 Examiner, 3 June, 1810; (DC, 38).

the omission of the Fool "which is now out of date", and the sending of Gloucester behind the scenes while he is blinded.¹ It is more usual to find Hunt consenting to minor alterations of Shakespeare's comedies (or perhaps his historical tragedies), in which conception and the imitation of real life play a significant part for Hunt. He objected to some coarseness in the language of Rosalind, and in one review seemed pleased that a production of The Merry Wives of Windsor had omitted some of the farce.² Hunt agreed with several eighteenth century critics when he complained about Shakespeare's love of punning, especially in scenes of despair and death, and added that "many of Shakespeare's errors are endured merely on account of his long reputation."³ If Hunt had a general attitude towards alteration of Shakespeare, it might have been that contained in his advice to the writer who would alter Dryden's Don Sebastian:

...he would study to preserve all the striking and novel effect of the original story, and would omit only such passages as were written in a decidedly wrong taste, and as he might suppose the author himself would have avoided had he been living now.⁴

With the important exception of Hunt's psychological approach to Shakespearean character, most of the significant aspects of

1 See Examiner, 22 May, 1808; (DC, 15-19).

2 Examiner, 10 December, 1809.

3 The News, 22 February, 1807.

4 Examiner, 20 December, 1812.

the theme of 'imagination' in Hunt's Shakespearean and dramatic criticism have now been considered. Critics had shown varying interest in character study throughout the eighteenth century, although the emphasis in criticism, more often than not, was given to other issues. H.C. Gray's study, called Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795, has shown that theatre critics, at least, demonstrated a fairly consistent interest in character in the last part of the century, well before Hunt and the other Romantics.

Gray's study, and more recent ones as well,¹ suggest that the performance of Shakespeare on the stage helped to contribute to an interest in character studies in the late eighteenth century, partially because of the need to evaluate different performances. Hunt's own position as a theatre critic undoubtedly is responsible for a good part of his interest in character. In fact, many of Hunt's early ideas on characters seem less the result of his own meditation on Shakespeare than descriptions of a particular performance. For example he saw Iago as a "mere assassin" and villain whose character "ought not to exhibit a single trait of nobler feeling",² largely because he had seen G.F. Cooke play Iago in that manner. Lamb had complained already about Cooke turning Shakespeare's "man Richard" into a "monster Richard."³

Hunt's theatre experience accounts for some of his interest in Shakespeare's characters, but it does not in itself provide a satisfactory explanation of why his interest is confined almost exclusively to tragic character. Hunt's

1 See: Joseph W. Donohue, Dramatic Character in The English Romantic Age (Princeton, 1970).

2 Examiner, 31 January, 1808.

3 L Works, I, 36ff.

interest in the characters from Shakespeare's comedies generally does not go beyond a superficial assessment of how they are contrasted.

Hunt does not point to character contrasts in Shakespeare's tragedies, but as has been seen already with regard to tragic actors, He looks for the contrasts of feeling which arise within the individual. Wordsworth had written in the 1800 "Preface" (which Hunt apparently did not read until his imprisonment) that his poems were meant "to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement."¹ Hunt's interest in tragic character demonstrates a similar fascination with the effect of passions on the mind, even though his specific understanding of characters at times may be at fault. One of Hunt's criticisms of Johnson was that Johnson lacked sensitivity to Shakespeare's tragedies and experienced "no strength of emotion in witnessing the workings of great minds in awful situations."² Hunt's treatment of tragic character and his understanding of tragedy as an "imitation of a life in passion" suggests that he felt the purpose of tragedy was to explore those inner realities of the mind which Johnson, he felt, had missed.

The theme of 'imagination' relates to Hunt's treatment of tragic character not just for the general reason that Hunt saw tragedy as the realm of imagination. Imagination in Hunt's thought is the process whereby the poet creates

¹ Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, 19.

² Examiner, 29 March, 1812; (DC, 66). Hunt's comment echoes one made earlier in the same month by Lamb in Hunt's Reflector; Lamb spoke of putting the spectator "into possession of that knowledge of the inner structure and workings of mind in a character". (L Works, I, 99)

tragedy, whereby the actor represents the poet's tragic characters, and whereby the audience responds to the imitation of passion on stage. Similarly, the imagination is the process displayed in the minds of the tragic characters themselves - imagination is found in "the workings of great minds in awful situations".

Hunt describes the imagination of the poet as being akin to madness, as Shakespeare and Dryden had done, the latter of whom Hunt quotes:

I can easily conceive that a poet rises from fancies like these, as Dryden is said to have risen from his celebrated ode, with a pulse disordered by inspiration. The imagination looks out into other worlds with an eagerness stretched beyond its natural tension, and it returns back in languor and irritability. In fact, one could almost be persuaded, sometimes, that a true poet in his enthusiasm enjoys nothing but an admirable insanity, and that more truth is contained than we generally imagine in the celebrated distich,

Great wits to madness nearly are allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.¹

Hunt's description of the imagination eagerly stretching into "other worlds...beyond its natural tension" is not unlike the descriptions he gives of some of Shakespeare's tragic characters. This is particularly true when Hunt is tracing movements of the mind which seem related to madness.

Hunt's Shakespearean criticism suggests that he saw madness, like poetic genius,

¹ Examiner, 22 May, 1808; (DC, 18). L.H. and C.W. Houtchens have pointed out the omission of "are sure" after "Great wits" in the quotation from Absolom and Achitophel.

arising from a tension in the mind created by imagination and influenced by passion. Hunt sees Caliban's account of the torments which have been driving him to madness in terms of "the 'fine frenzy' of the poet" which "hovers on that verge of fancy beyond which it is a pain even for poetry to venture."¹ When the tension in the mind becomes too great, madness is the result, as was the case, Hunt felt, with Lear and Ophelia.

Hunt's ideas correspond to some eighteenth century notions which saw madness as resulting from a wild and over-active 'imagination' which disrupted the normal patterns of associative thought. However, Hunt views imagination in a positive way, without the distrust with which it was regarded in much eighteenth-century criticism. His respect for the creative power of imagination is demonstrated by his respect for Lear's mind; Hunt sees in Lear's madness "a world of mighty and awful turbulence, touching in its extremes on the very height of intellectual grandeur and the depth of pathos."² He sees in Lear a person who is "all imagination as well as passion."³ In 1808 Hunt criticised Kemble's failure in the mad scenes,⁴ and in 1820 criticised Kean for the same failure to represent the workings of Lear's imagination:

¹ CE, 110.

² Examiner, 15 August, 1819.

³ Examiner, 30 April, 1820.

⁴ See Examiner, 22 May, 1808; (DC, 20).

All the imaginative parts, - the whole scene of the storm for instance, - fell as flat as the actor's voice. His favorite piece of abruptness, - the one sudden drop of his voice, would not do here. It was not enough by a hundred. Lear should have been all abruptness and distraction, - a mind torn a hundred ways; not one, nor fifty.¹

Hunt's interest in Ophelia similarly was centered on her mind in madness. He criticised Mrs. Corri's performance in 1808 for having no feminine delicacy and "no power of expression for the supernatural and ever-shifting genius of insanity."² Shakespeare's Ophelia, Hunt felt, had degenerated "into a mere singing-girl, a mere opera debutante, full of stage attitudes and a ridiculous self-possession, rational when she should be insane, and insane in nothing but her rationality."³ The tension in the mind of Shakespeare's Ophelia had not been broken. Hunt suggests that her imagination has not lost its eagerness to stretch into "other worlds", but it seems to have lost direction. In Ophelia, Hunt says, Shakespeare

...gave us that beautiful picture of a delicate mind disturbed not distorted into madness, that insanity full of genius and of patient anguish, in which the chords are tangled not snapped, in which the last weakness of nature has not destroyed her strength of mind, nor the last suffering thoughts of her father....⁴

Her mind, Hunt suggests, is vibrant with energy but deprived of a rational focus, not because of her actions, but because of the actions of others. As is often the case with Hunt's discussions of the mind, his comments have more interest in

1 Examiner, 30 April, 1820.

2 Examiner, 25 September, 1808.

3 Examiner, 25 September, 1808.

4 Examiner, 25 September, 1808. See also CE, 162.

themselves than for what they say about the play at large.

Hunt sees Ophelia and Lear quite explicitly as being mad. He studies the minds of other tragic characters as well, apparently using his understanding of imagination to account for what he interprets as their tendency towards madness. For instance, he sees Cordelia as a character "whose whole imagination is filled with one great, pathetic, and disinterested idea." In the same review an identical thought is expressed concerning Johnson, only this time the fixation of the imagination on one idea is associated with the cause of madness:

Johnson tells us that he was once so shocked by the death of Cordelia that he believes he never could read the last scene again till he undertook to edit the tragedy. This confession easily accounts for his approbation of Tate; he was affected with a morbid melancholy, and when any great emotion found its way to his feelings, it clung to his irritable fancy and produced that impatient fixture of the mind to one object which is the origin of madness.¹

The thought again resurfaces in his interpretation of Lear and Edgar meeting on the heath:

...it is wonderful to see the consummate art with which Shakespeare has preserved in these two pictures of madness that single occupation of thought which at once fixes and distracts the mind. Lear can think of nothing but his daughters, Mad Tom of nothing but the foul fiend.²

1 Examiner, 22 May, 1808; (DC, 16).

2 Examiner, 22 May, 1808; (DC, 17).

In other reviews Hunt may be suggesting again that the tension in the minds is the result of the imagination being dominated by one idea or feeling. Romeo, he says, is completely dominated by love and "every passion should be kept subordinate to the predominate one"; and he adds that Romeo's mind displays "an occasional sameness...a despair too much fatigued with its own thoughts to be always violent".¹ Hunt finds in Hamlet "that mingled air of anxiety and repose, which breathes over the manner of a person whose hours are spent in meditating one great purpose."²

In many of Hunt's analyses of tragic character it is not always possible to determine the precise influence of his understanding of imagination. His use of the word imagination (or fancy) in relation to the characters of Hamlet and Macbeth, for instance, seems quite general. Hunt speaks of Hamlet's movements from familiarity to "the proudest flights of fancy".³ He sees Macbeth's remorse in terms of "the silence of the night, [and] the phantoms of a diseased imagination."⁴ Elsewhere he sees Macbeth struggling between good and evil thoughts, and between human knowledge and a "most inventive fancy".⁵ However, even in these cases, there seems to be a confirmation that Hunt's understanding of imagination has at least some influence in shaping his comments.

¹ The News, 9 June, 1805. See CE, 206 and Examiner, 5 April, 1817 for similar comments on Juliet.

² CE, 183.

³ The News, 28 June, 1807.

⁴ The News, 30 October, 1805.

⁵ The Examiner, 30 July, 1809.

The thematic development of Hunt's ideas of 'imagination' into a broad critical approach first occurred in Critical Essays, where Hunt formulated his ideas of imagination and conception. However, the same lines of critical thought were anticipated in The News and were followed in The Examiner. It has been shown that the theme of imagination was present in Hunt's comments on tragedy and comedy, on acting, and on dramatic mimesis. It has also been shown that Hunt saw 'imagination' not only in terms of the poet and actor, but also in terms of the audience and the mind of the character in the play. The task remains of trying to evaluate Hunt's contribution to Shakespearean and dramatic criticism.

In relation to comedy, there seem to be few claims that can be made for Hunt; he seems to have made little advance on eighteenth-century thought. It may be remembered, however, that many of the limitations in his approach to comedy were limitations belonging to the tradition of Shakespearean criticism which he had inherited. Emphasis on the relation between comedy and manners had dominated many of the considerations of comedy in the eighteenth century and were preserved in Hunt's criticism by his understanding of conception and the imitation of real life. Also, Hunt's focus on the contrasts of character in comedy and the contrasts which contributed to wit and humour were standard approaches to Shakespearean comedy and would have been found in most of the critics Hunt consulted, including Johnson. One of the few critics to have broken through what may be seen

as the traditional approach to comedy was Maurice Morgann (Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff [1777]) whom Hunt, along with Coleridge and Hazlitt, apparently did not know.¹

Hunt's strength does not seem to lie, either, in his specific interpretations of Shakespeare's tragedies. Hunt was a theatre critic first, and a critic of Shakespeare afterwards. His concern in his reviews was more with describing performances for his readers and with correcting obvious misinterpretations of Shakespeare than with giving complete reassessments of plays.

Although Hunt's strength does not lie in his analyses of the tragedies, his critical contributions are directly related to tragedy, particularly in conjunction with 'imagination.' Hunt was the first of the Romantic critics to publish a work in which the 'imagination' was linked clearly with tragedy and in which tragedy was seen as superior to comedy. Hunt was also one of the first theatrical critics to insist upon realistic expression in acting. Hunt's comments on these points and his clear preference for Shakespearean tragedy in his criticism anticipated the published remarks of the other men in this study. Hunt's influence as a critic (and his influence on raising the standards of actors and newspaper critics of his time) may have had some effect in popularizing the acceptance of these notions at a time when eighteenth century debates on the relative superiority of comedy and tragedy were not entirely settled.²

¹ See D.N. Smith, Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1963), xxxvi-xxxvii. See also Stuart M. Tave, "Notes on the Influence of Morgann's Essay on Falstaff," RES, 1952, 371-375.

² See W.P. Albrecht, "Hazlitt's Preference for Tragedy," FMLA, 71 (December, 1956), 1042.

Hunt also made a contribution to theory on the question of mimesis in tragedy. His account in Critical Essays owed much to Aristotle, but it differed from him (and in general with eighteenth century critical thought, including Kames)¹ on the understanding of tragedy. Aristotle said comedy imitated people below the level of the common world, and tragedy imitated people above it,² although tragedy was at all times in keeping with what was probable in the real world.³ Hunt saw both comedy and tragedy on higher levels. Comedy imitated the real world while tragedy imitated a world above the real. There were no models for tragedy in the real world, and the stage had to be above nature in order to remind the audience that passion was being imitated, not events. Further, Aristotle defined tragedy as "an imitation of an action".⁴ In a sense this is closer to what Hunt said about comedy imitating "manners". For Hunt, tragedy did not imitate actions but imitated "passions only". Hunt seems to have been trying to adapt classical theories to something which he felt would be more suitable to Shakespearean drama, and possibly would lead to a new appreciation of Shakespeare's tragedies.

In Hunt's criticism, the emphasis on passion with regard to tragedy was evident. His interest in Shakespeare's tragedies was not in the structure of the plays, nor was it,

¹ See Helen Randall, "Critical Theory of Lord Kames", Smith College Studies in Modern Language, XXII, 52-53. For an indication of the general acceptance of Aristotle and the popularity of his ideas (or what were understood to be his ideas) see H.C. Gray, 279 & 309. See also Atkins, 17 & 18.

² Aristotle on the Art of Fiction: 'The Poetics', trans. L.J. Potts (Cambridge, 1968), 19, 23, & 37; (Chapts. 2, 5, & 15).

³ 'Poetics', 29, 37; (Chapts. 9 & 15).

⁴ 'Poetics', 26; (Chapt. 6).

for the most part, in the morality of the actions. This was a significant departure from much of the eighteenth century criticism which had been fostered in moralist philosophy. It was also a further indication of Hunt's difference from Aristotelian thought. Aristotle had said of Greek tragedy that the most important element was the Fable ("the whole structure of the incidents"), and that after the Fable came Character.¹ Hunt's criticism placed little emphasis on either Fable (in Aristotle's sense) or morality.

The element in tragedy which seems most important to Hunt is Character. His wide critical influence gave increased impetus to an interest in character studies which had been developing in the late eighteenth century. He may have made a more precise contribution in this regard by concentrating specifically on the minds of tragic characters, not the contrasts the characters made, one with another, or on the correctness of their actions, or the lessons taught. From one viewpoint Hunt may have limited his focus too much, for he failed to give comprehensive analyses of individual characters. But from another viewpoint, his focus on "great minds in awful situations" - seen for instance in his comments on Kean's Richard and Mrs. Siddons's Lady Macbeth, and in his tracing the movements of passion within the minds of actors and tragic characters - helped to emphasise his theme of imagination. Despite the differences between Hunt and the other Romantic critics on specific ideas of 'imagination,' his general approach to the theme of 'imagination' in his criticism was not without close similarities to the other men.

¹ 'Poetics', 24-27; (Chapt. 6).

Chapter Six:

THE THEME OF IMAGINATION IN LAMB

Charles Lamb's relations with the theatre have been dealt with in detail by other critics,¹ and need not be the focus of much attention here. It is important to emphasise, however, that by the time Lamb had written his most important criticism of Shakespeare in 1812, he was a seasoned veteran of the London stage. He had attended the theatre regularly, seen many important productions and performers, and knew some of the actors personally. He had written many small pieces for the stage, including an epilogue and a prologue for Godwin's Antonio (1800) and Faulkener (1807), respectively, and another epilogue for Henry Siddon's farce, Time's a Tell Tale (1807); and in 1812 he was working on the prologue to Coleridge's Remorse.² He had also written two plays, the second of which failed at Drury Lane in December of 1806. Mary Lamb explained the failure of Mr H. in a letter of the same month, and she hinted at the knowledge Charles had gained:

The blame rested chiefly with Charles, and yet should not be called blame, for it was mere ignorance of stage effect - and I am mistaken if he has not gained much useful knowledge He intends to write one more with all his dear bought experience in his head, and should that share the same fate, he will then turn his mind to some other pursuit.³

1 See, for example, W.D. Howe's chapter on "Charles Lamb and the Theatre", Charles Lamb and His Friends (New York, 1944), 194-242; and Rudolf Dirck's introduction to Lamb's Plays and Dramatic Essays (London, 1893).

2 See L Works, V, 121-126.

3 The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb, II, 32-33.

Lamb never did put his experience to use by writing another play, but he did put it to use when he wrote his articles for Hunt's Reflector; particularly the article on Shakespeare, the full title of which may be seen to reflect Lamb's early discoveries about representation on stage: "On Garrick, and Acting; and the Plays of Shakespeare, considered with reference to their fitness for Stage Representation."¹

Lamb's Shakespearean and dramatic criticism is not extensive. Unlike the other Romantic critics, he did not write either regular reviews of the theatre or lectures on drama. The most important essays of Lamb on the subject of drama are his essay on Cooke's Richard III (1802), his essay on Shakespeare in the Reflector, two Elia essays written about 1822, called "On Some of the Old Actors" and "On The Artificial Comedy of the Last Century", and a later Elia essay on "Stage Illusion" (1825). Other important comments are found in Lamb's 1808 Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, contemporary with Shakespeare, with Notes, and in a number of minor essays (including four reviews for Hunt in the 1819 Examiner) in various papers to 1825.

Lamb's definition of 'imagination,' as it appeared in the essay on Hogarth, reads as follows: "that power which draws all things to one, - which makes things animate and inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects and their accessories, take one colour, and serve to one effect." It was argued in Chapter Three of this thesis that Lamb's theory of 'imagination' was not related to spontaneous, intuitive acts of creation as much as it was related to the meditative actions of poet and reader which produce or perceive unity.

¹ In 1818 the first part of the title was changed to "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare...."

This idea is central to the thematic development of 'imagination' in Lamb's thought. In effect, Lamb opposes 'imagination' to spontaneity. For instance, a spontaneous or intuitive reaction to Hogarth's prints, he felt, was a superficial reaction based on sensory perception. As appropriate response to the unity of effect in Hogarth's prints was a studied response involving intellectual abstraction. The reader had to employ imagination in order to perceive imagination.

Accordingly, Lamb made a distinction between two kinds of art, based on the involvement of the spectator. The higher kind of art placed demands on the spectator and was characterised by 'imagination.' The lower kind of art allowed no participation to the spectator other than on a sensory level. Lamb quoted from Shakespeare's The Rape of Lucrece, the lines describing the painting of Achilles in which, "'A hand, a foot, a face, a leg, a head,/ Stood for the whole to be imagined.'" (ll. 1427-8) The context of the lines would have been suggestive of the thought Lamb developed:

This he [Shakespeare] well calls imaginary work, where the spectator must meet the artist in his conceptions half way; and it is peculiar to the confidence of high genius alone to trust so much to spectators or readers. Lesser artists shew every thing distinct and full, as they require an object to be made out to themselves before they can comprehend it.¹

The basis for the division between art of 'imagination' and other kinds of art, found first in the "Hogarth" essay, lies behind almost all of Lamb's later major comments on drama and Shakespeare.

¹ L Works, I, 74.

Critics in the past have not noticed the division between art of 'imagination' and other kinds of art in Lamb's thought, nor have they pointed to the theme of 'imagination' in Lamb's "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare". The meditative quality of imagination and its difference from the immediate and sensory, are both important for the essay and determine many of the conclusions Lamb reaches about Shakespeare and the theatre. Because this very important aspect of Lamb's thought has been overlooked, and because his essay often has been dismissed without the significance of his remarks receiving proper appreciation in the light of Romantic ideas of imagination,¹ a close study of Lamb's essay seems justified here.

Like Hunt, Lamb connected the 'imagination' with tragedy; Hunt's idea of tragedy as "an imitation of life in passions," is not unlike Lamb's thought that "the grounds of passion, its correspondence to a great or heroic nature...is the only worthy object of tragedy."² Lamb certainly felt that the grounds of passion and the effects of passion on the mind were the objects of Shakespeare's tragedy:

...in Shakespeare above all, how obvious it is, that the form of speaking, whether it be in soliloquy or dialogue, is only a medium, and often a highly artificial one, for putting the reader or spectator into possession of that knowledge of the inner structure and workings of mind in a character....³

¹ See, for instance, René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism, II, 192-193.

² L Works, I, 102.

³ L Works, I, 99.

This specific comment and the general interest in the minds of characters, shown by Lamb and the other Romantics as well, was clearly anticipated by some of the comments in Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu's An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare (1769).¹

One critic has noted her comment that in the meeting of Macbeth and the witches, Shakespeare "exhibits the movement of the human mind, and renders audible the silent march of thought."²

This critic has claimed that "This statement is the first in Macbeth criticism to put in precise language the premise of psychological criticism: words are external signs of mental events."³ What is significant about Lamb's criticism is not only the continuation and development of this psychological approach, but also the importance he gave it, as Hunt had already done, in his approach to tragedy.

Lamb saw Shakespeare's tragedies in terms of the deep emotional struggles of characters. It was on this deep emotional level that the real action of Shakespearean tragedy took place for Lamb. As seemed to be the case with Hunt, Lamb did not see the Fable as foremost in tragedy:

¹ A.J. Ralli has pointed to some of the comments which may be seen to anticipate Lamb. See: A History of Shakespearean Criticism, London (1932), I, 63.

² Montagu, 183. Cited by Donohue, below.

³ J.W. Donohue, Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age, Princeton (1970), 198.

... [with] characters in Shakespeare so little do the actions comparatively affect us, that while the impulses, the inner mind in all its perverted greatness, solely seems real and is exclusively attended to, the crime is comparatively nothing.¹

Concerning Macbeth, Richard, and Iago, Lamb also says that while reading,

we think not so much of the crimes which they commit, as of the ambition, the aspiring spirit, the intellectual activity, which prompts them to over-leap those moral fences.²

The same kind of thing had been said about the Hogarth prints of The Rake's Progress, in which Lamb looked beyond the surface actions to the drama of the inner mind they contained. Concerning both Hogarth and Shakespeare, it was impossible to gain an understanding of the inner mind without imagination; and imagination was the result of meditation. The "very idea of what an author is," Lamb said, "cannot be made comprehensible without some pain and perplexity of mind".³

Meditation and abstraction were as much ingredients for the proper appreciation of Shakespeare as they were for the appreciation of Hogarth. Lamb describes the effect of reading tragedy, possibly making a distinction between fancy and imagination akin to the distinction between the spontaneous action of the senses and the meditative action of the mind:

1 L Works, I, 106.

2 L Works, I, 106.

3 L Works, I, 98.

[The reading of tragedy] presents to the fancy just so much of external appearances as to make us feel that we are among flesh and blood, while... the better part of our imagination is employed upon the thoughts and internal machinery of the character.¹

Even with imagination focusing the main energy of the reader's mind beyond the external appearances of the play, Lamb noted that an understanding of Shakespeare still might be missed. As Lamb said, Shakespeare's plays "are grounded deep in nature, so deep that the depth of them lies out of the reach of most of us."² Lamb's main argument in the "Shakespeare" essay is developed in conjunction with the theme of imagination, particularly as it relates to tragedy and the proper appreciation of Shakespeare.

The main point in Lamb's essay is that it is preferable to read Shakespeare rather than to see his tragedies acted on stage. In general, Lamb's reason is that the art of the theatre is geared to the senses and the external and is in opposition to 'imagination.' In particular, Lamb points to the limitations of the stage and the limitations of actors in conveying the depth of Shakespeare. It will be seen that while Lamb's particular understanding of imagination showed him to be very sensitive to Shakespeare, it showed him to be remarkably insensitive to the purposes of dramatic representation.

The fact that the spectator has no control over the time in a theatre production, whereas he does in reading Shakespeare, has much to do with Lamb's opposition of stage art to 'imagination.'

¹ L Works, I, 111.

² L Works, I, 102.

Lamb speaks of "the instantaneous nature of the impressions which we take in at the eye and ear at a playhouse, compared with the slow apprehension oftentimes of the understanding in reading."¹ But there is a more direct reason why 'imagination' suffers at the theatre in Lamb's opinion. Stage art deliberately attempts to address the senses of the audience:

...the things aimed at in theatrical representation, are to arrest the spectator's eye upon the form and gesture, and so to gain a more favourable hearing to what is spoken: it is not what the character is, but how he looks; not what he says, but how he speaks it.²

The same point is made later in the essay when Lamb suggests that in reading there is "the perfect triumph...of imagination over the senses.... But upon the stage, when the imagination is no longer the ruling faculty... we are left to our poor unassisted senses".³

Lamb gives specific examples of the dependence on the senses which the contemporary theatres created. He complained of the diminution of supernatural agents, like the witches in Macbeth and the ghost in Hamlet, when they were represented on stage. The serious, the grotesque and the appalling aspect of the spell which Macbeth experiences is lost on the audience. Hunt's comment about the witches looking like washerwomen with a pitch-kettle might support Lamb when he says,

1 L Works, I, 98.

2 L Works, I, 101.

3 L Works, I, 108.

...attempt to bring these beings on to a stage, and you turn them instantly into so many old women, that men and children are to laugh at. Contrary to the old saying, that "seeing is believing," the sight actually destroys the faith....¹

Similarly, making the ghost an object of the senses removed it from the realm of 'imagination' and credibility:

It is the solitary taper and the book that generates a faith in these terrors: a ghost by chandelier light, and in good company, deceives no spectators, - a ghost that can be measured by the eye, and his human dimensions made out at leisure.²

The appeal to the senses rather than 'imagination' in the theatre also gave undue importance to things that were trivial in Shakespeare. Unlike Hunt, Lamb does not point to the incongruity of stage costume. However, he comments on the last time he saw Macbeth on stage and the extraordinary emphasis given to Macbeth's clothes - the coronation robe Lamb describes as "fairly a counterpart to that which our King wears when he goes to the Parliament-house, - just so full and cumbersome, and set out with ermine and pearls."³ The changes of clothing, and the various "shiftings and re-shiftings, like a Romish priest at mass,"⁴ focused the attention on something that was irrelevant in Shakespeare:

1 L Works, I, 109.

2 L Works, I, 109.

3 L Works, I, 110.

4 L Works, I, 110.

...in reading [Shakespeare], what robe are we conscious of? Some dim images of royalty - a crown and sceptre, may float before our eyes, but who shall describe the fashion of it? Do we see in our mind's eye what Webb or any other robe-maker could pattern? This is the inevitable consequence of imitating every thing, to make all things natural.¹

The 'imitation of every thing' extended to Hamlet; Lamb complained that when Hamlet compares the pictures of his father and father-in-law, the audience did not need to see the miniature pictures "lugged out."² Undue importance also had been given to Lady Macbeth's dismissal of the guests, partially because it was Mrs. Siddons's most famous scene: "But does such a trifle as this enter into the imaginations of the readers of that wild and wonderful scene? Does not the mind dismiss the feasters as rapidly as it can?"³

The most serious result of the emphasis on the senses in stage art was the reduction of Shakespeare's tragic characters. This was partly because of the nature of the theatre as a public place. Lamb's consciousness of other people in the theatre, and his inability to escape an awareness of their presence, made the expression of deep personal feelings on stage seem inappropriate. He spoke of the love-dialogues involving Romeo, Othello, or Posthumus as being "delightful in reading," but on stage they were "sullied and turned from their very nature by being exposed to

¹ L Works, I, 111.

² L Works, I, 111. Walter Whiter commented on the miniatures in 1794, hence Lamb was commenting on a fairly typical feature of the production of Hamlet. Whiter believed the introduction of the miniatures to be a modern innovation. See A Specimen of A Commentary On Shakespeare, ed. Alan Over & Mary Bell (London, 1967), 34.

³ L Works, I, 111. Lamb seems obtuse here: at the end of III, iv, Shakespeare's lines precisely require rapid dismissal of the guests.

a large assembly."¹ Lamb felt that Hamlet's soliloquies became ludicrous:

These profound sorrows, these light-and-noise-abhorring ruminations, which the tongue scarce dares utter to deaf walls and chambers, how can they be represented by a gesticulating actor, who comes and mouths them out before an audience, making four hundred people his confidants at once?²

It is with regard to statements like this that the implications of Lamb's association of 'imagination' with quiet meditation became most apparent. Quite clearly, Lamb granted the imagination none of spontaneous power given it by the other Romantics, a power which overcame the obvious drawbacks of the theatre as a public place.

Shakespeare's tragic characters were reduced also because of the limitations of the actor's art. The actor only had the ability to convey the external suggestions of a character and missed the internal workings of the mind. The actor could imitate the signs of passion in the countenance, but as Lamb pointed out, this was often no more than "that symbol of the emotion which passes current at the theatre for it."³ The external effects of passion could be given,

but of the motives and grounds of the passion, wherein it differs from the same passion in low and vulgar natures, of these the actor can give no more idea by his face or gesture than the eye (without a metaphor) can speak, or the muscles utter intelligible sounds.⁴

1 L Works, I, 100.

2 L Works, I, 100.

3 L Works, I, 102.

4 L Works, I, 98.

Because it is impossible for the art of mere imitation to convey the grounds of passion within a tragic character, Lamb concludes, "that there is something in the nature of acting which levels all distinctions."¹ He suggests that Othello's mind will seem little different from that of George Barnwell in Lillo's play.² He suggests that it would make little difference to the effect on the audience if Hamlet had been written by Banks or Lillo, omitting all the poetry and "divine features of Shakespeare," and retaining only the story and "enough of passionate dialogue."³ He suggests that it does not matter whether an actress or an actor takes the role of a Shakespearean character or not:

Are they not spoken of and remembered in the same way? Is not the female performer as great (as they call it) in one as in the other? Did not Garrick shine, and was he not ambitious of shining in every drawling tragedy⁴ that his wretched day produced...?

The 'levelling of all distinctions' meant that the essence of no Shakespearean hero could be conveyed accurately on stage: Shakespeare's characters, says Lamb, have "something in them which appeals too exclusively to the imagination, to admit of their being made objects to the senses without suffering a change and a diminution."⁵

1 L Works, I, 104.

2 L Works, I, 102.

3 L Works, I, 101.

4 L Works, I, 104.

5 L Works, I, 108.

In Lamb's opinion, then, neither the general art of the stage nor the art of imitation of the actor, were addressed to the 'imagination.' When seeing a Shakespearean tragedy on stage, the author's idea was lost in exchange for the superficial notions conveyed by the senses. As Lamb phrases it,

we find to our cost that instead of realizing an idea, we have only materialized and brought down a fine vision to the standard of flesh and blood. We have let go a dream, in quest of an unattainable substance.¹

In 'letting go the dream' the movements of passion in the mind, which should take precedence, are lost in a greater consciousness of the actions of the characters. Their crimes become so obvious to the audience that all pleasure in tragedy is destroyed. When watching Hamlet, the ambiguous features of Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia are not retained, and his actions with regard to her become harsh, unpleasant and painful.² Richard III, particularly as Cooke played it, had all the worst features exaggerated:

Nothing but his crimes, his actions, is visible; they are prominent and staring; the murderer stands out, but where is the lofty genius, the man of vast capacity, - the profound, the witty, accomplished Richard?³

The mind of Macbeth was similarly obscured by the acting. Whereas in the reading of the play we are conscious of only the images, the poetry, and the "state of sublime emotion into which we are elevated", the focus is quite different when imagination is no longer of assistance:

1 L Works, I, 98.

2 L Works, I, 103.

3 L Works, I, 106.

...when we no longer read it in a book, when we have given up that vantage-ground of abstraction which reading possesses over seeing, and come to see a man in his bodily shape before our eyes actually preparing to commit a murder, if the acting be true and impressive, as I have witnessed it in Mr. K's [Kemble's] performance of that part, the painful anxiety about the act, the natural longing to prevent it while it yet seems unperpetrated, the too close pressing semblance of reality, give a pain and an uneasiness which totally destroy all the delight which the words in the book convey....¹

Likewise it was the reality of Lear's pain which was brought most forcibly to the center of attention in the stage production, making any enjoyment impossible for Lamb:

...to see Lear acted, - to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night, has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want to take him into shelter and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of Lear ever produced in me.²

To reduce any of Shakespeare's tragedies to the level of the senses from the level of 'imagination' implied for Lamb an increased and disproportionate emphasis on action and an increased sense of moral revulsion on the part of the audience.

Although Lamb traditionally has been associated with the origin of Romantic notions of the nonactability of Shakespeare, it might be noted that the origin actually lies with Hunt, although Johnson might have been an influence as well. Johnson had said that spectators never believe that actions on stage are real, but

¹ L Works, I, 106.

² L Works, I, 107.

he went on to say that if this were not the case with tragedy, all pleasure would be lost: "The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more."¹ Obviously Lamb contradicted Johnson's understanding of spectators, for Lamb found tragic action on the stage all too real.

Hunt was much closer than Johnson to the idea of non-actability. In June of 1807 he had suggested the idea:

It is evident therefore that none but a Garrick can grasp all the varieties of such a character [as Hamlet] at once, and...we really imagine that there is no actor of the present day equal to the task.²

In Critical Essays, however, the idea was much clearer: "It must be the praise of a man, who shall possess a genius capable of more than the art of acting, to personate Hamlet...."³ Lamb makes the comment about actors that, "To know the internal workings and movements of a great mind, of an Othello or a Hamlet for instance... seems to demand a reach of intellect of a vastly different extent from...bare imitation".⁴ Hunt also seemed to anticipate Lamb when he spoke of the audience's desire for expressions on stage to correspond to those supplied by imagination "in reading a book."⁵ But Hunt is closest to Lamb with an idea central to his notion of tragedy. Tragedy is an imitation of passions, not events; "in proportion as [the spectators] lose sight of this imitation, they

¹ Johnson on Shakespeare, VI, 78.

² The News, 28 June, 1807.

³ CE, 41.

⁴ L Works, I, 98.

⁵ CE, 25.

would be awake to a sorrow too apparently real to be softened into a pleasing effect."¹ This is exactly Lamb's idea in the above passage concerning Macbeth, and lying behind many of Lamb's other comments: "...the too close pressing semblance of reality, give a pain and an uneasiness which totally destroy all the delight which the words in the book convey...."²

Lamb's comments on Shakespeare's tragedies might be taken to mean that he was against the production of Shakespeare's plays at the theatre. He comes close but does not actually say this, and his comments might be given a slightly different emphasis somewhat closer to his intention. Shakespeare's plays become something other than Shakespeare's plays when they are performed on the stage. They lose the depth of the poet's imagination; they gain an emphasis on the senses which was never intended; and they relinquish all capacity to appeal to imagination in the audience. In other words, the entire realm of the 'imagination' is removed from the tragedies, leaving something which has only superficial resemblance to Shakespeare.

The theme of imagination is of central importance to Lamb's comments on Shakespeare's tragedy; and Lamb's particular notions of 'imagination' as meditative and abstracting, and

1 CE, 142.

2 Even considering Hunt's influence, Lamb had formulated the idea about the difference between Shakespeare's Richard III, and the stage Richard of Cooke, as early as 1802. In "G.F. Cooke in 'Richard the Third'", written for the Morning Post of 8 January (L Works, I, 36ff.), Lamb develops contrasts in the "monster Richard" which Cooke drew, and "the man Richard whom Shakespeare drew."

'imagination' as being opposed to the external and sensory, may be seen to be largely responsible for the ideas he presents.

'Imagination' is an essential factor in tragedy for Lamb, and as was the case with Hunt, he believed that 'imagination' was not involved in comedy. The reason for this could be explained simply by considering Lamb's theory of imagination: comedy involved nothing which required meditation or abstraction. The poet's idea was immediately displayed before the spectator and required no "pain and perplexity of mind". There was no risk of 'letting go a dream' or of "[bringing] down a fine vision to the standard of flesh and blood." Indeed, in comedy everything was at the standard of flesh and blood and familiar life.

Since comedy had nothing to do with the imagination or the internal workings of the mind, and it had everything to do with the external and sensual, it might have been expected that Lamb would advocate the performance of Shakespeare's comedies on stage. However, this was not the case. Lamb closed his remarks on Shakespeare's tragedies with the observation that

It would be no very difficult task to extend the enquiry to his comedies; and to shew why Falstaff, Shallow, Sir Hugh Evans, and the rest, are equally in-compatible with stage representation.¹

Lamb did not explain himself, and never returned to the specific subject of Shakespeare's comedies, possibly because the Reflector ceased publication. From what we can see of Lamb's thought, his argument probably would not have

¹ L Works, I, 111.

involved the 'imagination.' It might be supposed that he would have argued that characters like Falstaff are taken more seriously on stage than in reading; as these characters gain in reality, their humour is lost in the moral revulsion one feels for their actions.

It is this thought which seems to have been developed by Lamb in his Elia essays. In "On Some of the Old Actors", Lamb advances a theory of imitation for comedy which is directly opposite to Hunt's. Hunt had argued that comedy must imitate real life, and be as close to it as possible in order that the world might recognise its likeness. Lamb argues that the "absolute sense of reality" can diminish the pleasure of some comedy and that the comedies of Congreve and Sheridan demand artificial acting. What Lamb says about the character of Joseph Surface might apply to the character of Falstaff:

The fact is, you do not believe in such characters as Surface - the villain of artificial comedy - even while you read or see them. If you did, they would shock and not divert you.¹

Lamb says that for such characters an actor is needed who will be "the creature dear to half-belief" and not create discord in the play by suggesting that "a real man has got in among the dramatis personae."²

In two other essays, also written in the 1820s, Lamb gives further treatment to illusion in comedy, and again he is stressing that comedy should be escapist. He praises Congreve and

¹ L Works, II, 140.

² L Works, II, 141.

Wycherley: "I could never connect those sports of a witty fancy in any shape with any result to be drawn from them to imitation in real life."¹ Lamb claims that artificial comedy makes no moral demands; the characters, he says,

have got out of Christendom into the land - what shall I call it? - of cuckoldry - the Utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is duty, and the manners perfect freedom. It is altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is.²

Lamb complains that in the contemporary comedy everything had a reference to the real world of moral judgements:

we recognise ourselves, our brothers, aunts, kinsfolk, allies patrons, enemies, - the same as in life, - with an interest in what is going on so hearty and substantial, that we cannot afford our moral judgement... to compromise or slumber for a moment.³

In order to avoid such a close suggestion of real life in comic representation, Lamb suggests that it is the "proof of the highest skill in the comedian when, without absolutely appealing to an audience, he keeps up a tacit understanding with them."⁴ He points to Bannister in the role of a coward, who would "let out by a thousand droll looks and gestures - meant at us, and not at all supposed to be visible to his fellows in the scene, that his confidences in his own resources had never once deserted him."⁵

1 L Works, II, 142.

2 L Works, II, 143; "On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century."

3 L Works, II, 142.

4 L Works, II, 163; "Stage Illusion".

5 L Works, II, 163-4.

In 1954 Sylvan Barnet wrote a long and very suggestive article entitled "Charles Lamb's Contribution to the Theory of Dramatic Illusion"¹ in which he admitted that Lamb was not usually thought of in relation to dramatic illusion, partially because of his ideas of non-actability. He went on to develop the possible implications of some of Lamb's thought into a theory of dramatic illusion based on his view that Lamb saw the appeal of comedy as intellectual and the appeal of tragedy as emotional. From what has been discussed already, it should be suggested that if Lamb made the kind of distinction that Barnet is arguing, he made it possibly in the reverse order. Tragedy appealed to the imagination, and while closely involved with the emotional, it was meditative and abstracting and placed heavy emphasis on the intellectual.

Apart from this, there remains a need to point out that Barnet's article makes extentions of Lamb's thought which Lamb himself did not make. Lamb did not make the kind of contribution to the theory of dramatic illusion that Hunt made, for instance. Lamb's discussions of stage illusion are limited, almost exclusively, to consideration of comedy. He had said, in effect, that Shakespeare's tragedies created no illusion but that of real life. That illusion he found both painful and, in a sense, unavoidable in the theatre of his age. Shakespeare's tragedies on stage were a lost cause and Lamb spent little time suggesting to tragic actors how they might improve their dramatic imitation. Elsewhere he gives only a hint that

¹ PMLA, 69 (1954), 1150-59.

"scenical illusion" is present in tragedy. He says that "we are told" that the nearest approach to scenical illusion is in tragedy "when the actor appears wholly unconscious of the presence of spectators"¹ and Lamb comments that "Macbeth must see the dagger, and no ear but his own be told of it".²

Lamb does not use his theory of 'imagination' to account for illusion as Hunt did with regard to tragic illusion. Lamb is consistent in keeping his thematic use of imagination in criticism confined to the idea that 'imagination' is meditative and abstracting. He is consistent in maintaining that 'imagination' cannot be found in the theatre. He is consistent, also, in suggesting that the only place to experience the sublime elevation of tragic imagery is at home by the fireside, reading. As Lamb wrote in a letter to Coleridge in 1803:

When shall we two smoke again? Last
night I had been in a sad quandary
of spirits, in what they call the
evening; but a pipe and some generous
Port, and King Lear (being alone),
had its effects as a remonstrance.
I went to bed pot-valiant.³

It was when Lamb was at home reading that he was able to focus totally on the 'internal workings of the mind' in Shakespeare's characters. At the

1 L Works, II, 163; (1825).

2 L Works, II, 165. See also II, 140. About 1827, Lamb gave a note to a quotation from Robert Yarrington: "The whole theory of the reason of our delight in Tragic Representations, which has cost so many elaborate chapters of Criticism, is condensed in these four last lines: Aristotle quintessentialised". The lines read:

But though this sight bring surfeit to the eye,
Delight your ears with pleasing harmony,
That ears may countercheck your eyes, and say,
'Why shed you tears? this deed is but a Play.'
(L Works, IV, 439)

3 L Works, VI, 269.

theatre he felt the real world impinging on the stage, and with the real world, the need to see actions in the light of morality. D.J. Mulcahy made the point, in a different context, that morality for Lamb related to the real world, not to sentiment or imagination.¹ His point might have been taken one step further: morality and the real world - which Lamb found so frequently in the theatre - were inextricably linked. Lamb had the greatest enjoyment at the theatre when morality was avoided, as was the case (he felt) with the Restoration plays.

There is some truth in suggesting that with Lamb, the stage was either too close to reality, as in the case of tragedy, or not sufficiently far away from it, as in the case of comedy. Lamb seemed to find that the stage was too effective a medium: it had too great a power over the senses. While his reaction may appear extreme, it may possibly be understood in the context of the feelings expressed in the previous century (and by Hunt as well) that Gloucester should be sent off-stage while he is blinded. Or perhaps Lamb can be understood in the context of Wordsworth's complaint against the "degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" to which he felt "the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves."²

When Johnson had spoken of the purpose of dramatic representation, he had said simply that the spectators "come to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation."³ Lamb may have lacked Johnson's

¹ D.J. Mulcahy, "The Antithetical Manner and the Two Planes," Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, III, 1963, 517-542; esp. 535.

² Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, 21; (1800 "Preface").

³ Johnson on Shakespeare, VII, 77.

sympathy with the aim of the theatre, in spite of his large amount of experience with the theatre. However, Lamb did not lack sympathy with Shakespeare. Lamb understood imagination to be a meditative faculty which perceived unity in a work of art. It was Lamb's understanding of Shakespeare in particular, which led him initially to suspect that Shakespeare's tragedies were unsuited for the stage. It is Lamb's understanding of imagination - overlooked by critics in the past - which underlies his comments on Shakespeare and drama.

CHAPTER VII

THE THEME OF IMAGINATION IN
WILLIAM HAZLITT

Hunt and Lamb both defined imagination in the course of their criticisms, and they had both felt the need to define what they meant by the concept very early in their critical careers. With Hazlitt the situation was much different. His theory of imagination was the focus of his system of metaphysics, developed in his 1805 Essay on the Principles of Human Action and revised in 1807, and it remained in favour with him until his death. It was not until 1813, when he began to write newspaper criticisms that he began to adapt his theory to aesthetic purposes. The influences of his early theory may be found in his theatrical criticisms in The Morning Chronicle, The Champion, The Examiner, and The Times; in his 1817 Characters of Shakespear's Plays; in his 1818 Lectures on the English Poets; and in his extensive criticisms dealing with matters less explicitly connected with Shakespeare and drama.

Hazlitt was almost thirty-five when he began his career as a theatre critic with The Morning Chronicle and The Champion. Hunt, six years his junior, had already been writing regular reviews for eight years and was currently serving the first year of his two-year prison sentence for libel against the Prince Regent. Hunt's time in prison was ultimately of assistance to Hazlitt. In the spring of 1814 they began working on "The Round Table", each writing separate essays and Hunt working from his prison room. When Hunt needed someone to cover Edmund Kean on the London stage for the Examiner in July, 1814, he asked Hazlitt. By the time Hunt was released in February, 1815, his own interests had returned to writing poetry and he asked Hazlitt to take over as the theatre-critic for the Examiner. Between March, 1815 and June, 1817, Hazlitt wrote almost one hundred and fifty separate reviews as well as some theatrical "Round Table" issues for The Examiner. This period represents the most active period of Hazlitt's career

as a critic. In 1817 he wrote a few reviews for The Times, and in 1828, just prior to his death, he made several contributions again to The Examiner. In all, just over forty of Hazlitt's reviews were specifically devoted to Shakespearean plays, and many others contained Shakespearean references.

In addition to the reviews, Hazlitt also wrote his well known Characters of Shakespear's Plays in the time of his greatest critical activity. The work was published in 1817, followed, the next year, by his Lectures on the English Poets. The Shakespearean material in both of these works is slightly different from the reviews. In these volumes Hazlitt is for the most part a reader; his concentration is as much on the details of the play, the images, striking passages, and suggestions of a theoretical nature concerning the art of Shakespeare, as it is on character, plot and structure. In the reviews, the emphasis on the latter is present without the same stress on the former, and in addition there is, of course, the material relevant to the theatre-information about the particular production details, the sets and actors, the audience reactions, play alterations and so on. In these reviews Hazlitt is very much a spectator, which makes the stage more immediate to his readers. Both its successes and its failures are laid bare.

In Characters of Shakespear's Plays there is perhaps a greater sense of Hazlitt's own involvement with the Shakespearean work he is discussing than is found generally in his reviews. Herschel Baker describes Hazlitt's style in the work as follows:

Probing motives, testing the force of circumstance on character, quoting endlessly, and exclaiming with delight at the wonders thus revealed, he shows in his responses an extraordinary ardor. ... Hazlitt [in contrast to Johnson], presents himself as advocate and herald [of Shakespeare]. He proclaims his author's power, and tells us to submit. The results are not uniformly good, for one tires of exclamation points and rapture; but when he is able to convey his own exhilaration he writes with stunning force.¹

1. Baker, William Hazlitt, 305.

One might wish to take exception to Baker's claim elsewhere that "Hazlitt's attitude toward Shakespeare is essentially emotional, and his emotion is the gauge by which he tests the plays",¹ but it is true that in Characters Hazlitt's own enthusiasm is often a major force behind his comments. When Hazlitt is sitting in the theatre this enthusiasm is generally toned down because of the shortcomings of the particular production, and the reviews overall are less positive. To a certain extent these two sides of Hazlitt, Hazlitt as spectator and Hazlitt as reader, remain separate in his comments on Shakespeare, providing both a subtle contrast of perspective and an added dimension of interest.

As was shown in an earlier chapter of this thesis, various critics have commented on Hazlitt's 1805 Essay and have understood him to be talking about the eighteenth century notions of the sympathetic imagination. Several critics occasionally have interpreted Hazlitt's literary criticism in terms of the sympathetic imagination. However, Joseph W. Donohue, in his study on Romantic Character, is the only critic to have discussed Hazlitt's Shakespeare criticism specifically in relation to Hazlitt's early thought. Hazlitt's understanding of 'imagination' was closely related to the sympathetic imagination, as it is commonly understood. Donohue's study of Hazlitt has drawn attention to the importance Hazlitt gave to sympathy, for instance with regard to an actor and his character or the audience and events on stage.²

Hazlitt's theory of imagination was much broader in implication than traditional accounts of sympathy and was more in line with what was called earlier the 'democratic imagination'. Much of the critical significance of Hazlitt's early exploration into metaphysics is that it provided him with a basic model of human psychology. That model, and the heavy emphasis it

1 Baker, William Hazlitt, 307.

2 See Dramatic Character in the Romantic Age, 323-344.

placed on imagination, was easily adapted to criticism. It is the intention in this chapter to draw more precise links between Hazlitt's early theory of imagination and his criticism than has been done in the past.

i

Hazlitt is not clear about which plays are his favourites. As You Like It, he says, is Shakespeare's most ideal production:

It is the most ideal of any of this author's plays. It is a pastoral drama, in which the interest arises more out of the sentiments and characters than out of the actions or situations. It is not what is done, but what is said, that claims our attention.¹

Antony and Cleopatra he considers,

the finest of his historical plays, that is, of those in which he made poetry the organ of history, and assumed a certain tone of character and sentiment, in conformity to known facts, instead of trusting to his observations of general nature or to the unlimited indulgence of his own fancy. What he has added to the actual story, is upon a par with it. (IV,228)

Concerning the tragedies he has this to say:

Macbeth and Lear, Othello and Hamlet, are usually reckoned Shakespeare's four principal tragedies. Lear stands first for the profound intensity of the passion; Macbeth for the wildness of the imagination and the rapidity of the action; Othello for the progressive interest and powerful alternations of feeling; Hamlet for the refined development of thought and sentiment. If the force of genius shewn in each of these works is astonishing, their variety is not less so. They are like different creations of the same mind, not one of which has the slightest reference to the rest. (IV,186)

A different perspective is taken elsewhere:

It [Othello] excites our sympathy in an extraordinary degree. The moral it conveys has a closer application to the concerns of human life than that of almost any other of

1 H Works, IV, 338. All future references in this chapter will be to H Works unless otherwise indicated and will be given internally where possible.

Shakespear's plays. 'It comes directly home to the bosoms and business of men'. The pathos in Lear is indeed more dreadful and overpowering: but it is less natural, and less of every day's occurrence. We have not the same degree of sympathy with the passions described in Macbeth. The interest in Hamlet is more remote and reflex. That of Othello is at once equally profound and affecting. (IV, 200)

Hazlitt has a genuine admiration for Shakespeare's plays, and it is clear that he likes each one for different reasons.

The position Hazlitt took with regard to Shakespeare on the stage was much like that of Hunt. He protested radical alteration of Shakespeare's plays for the stage; he encouraged the revival of Shakespeare's original plays and he approved of minor alterations for theatrical effect. A review of Kean in Richard III at Drury Lane in October of 1817 records Hazlitt's displeasure with the Cibber version which was presented and he endorses a proposal he has heard rumoured to restore the original. (XVIII, 255ff) Many of his remarks in this review are anticipated by his comments on Cibber's Richard III in Characters. His main complaint in his own words, is that:

Some of the most important and striking passages in the principal character have been omitted, to make room for idle and misplaced extracts from other plays; the only intention of which seems to have been to make the character of Richard as odious and disgusting as possible. (IV, 300)

It is interesting that Hazlitt is attributing the alteration of Richard's character primarily to Cibber's version of the play, whereas in 1802 Lamb had blamed C.F. Cooke's acting for making Richard into a monster.¹

The Antony and Cleopatra which appeared on the stage of Covent Garden, 15 November, 1813 was the version altered by Kemble.² Hazlitt was not pleased with the "several claptraps in the speeches, which admit of an obvious allusion to passing characters and events, and

1 See n.2 on page 213 of this thesis.

2 See J. Genest, VIII, 419.

which were eagerly seized by the audience". (V, 190) Enobarbus's speech describing Cleopatra's appearance when Antony first saw her ("The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne ..." II, ii, 191ff.) was moved to after the catastrophe; Hazlitt felt the original position had prepared the way for and almost justified Antony's subsequent infatuation, but where the speech was now placed it served no end. (V, 191)¹ Hazlitt further complained that the effect of the play had been injured by the omission of Enobarbus's repentance: "The repentance of Enobarbus after his treachery to his master, the most beautiful and affecting part of the play, is here, for some reason, entirely omitted." (V, 191)²

Hazlitt was in agreement with Hunt on what kind of alterations of Shakespeare were justified for stage production. As Hazlitt said concerning Richard III:

The original play is however too long for representation, and there are some few scenes which might be better spared than preserved, and by omitting which it would remain a complete whole. The only rule, indeed, for altering Shakespeare is to retrench certain passages which may be considered either as superfluous or obsolete, but not to add or transpose anything.
(IV, 300)³

The only exception Hazlitt seems to have made to this general principle was with regard to As You Like It as performed at Covent Garden on October 2, 1816.

Hazlitt apparently approved of the interpolation of the "Cuckoo song" from the end of Love's Labour Lost into Act IV, i, of the former play, and called Miss Boyle's singing of it (in the role of Rosalind) "quite delightful". (V, 337)

An alteration which Hazlitt did approve, for the most part, was Garrick's Romeo and Juliet. Hazlitt wrote about it in his note for the Oxberry's Drama series of 1818:

1 See also IV, 229

2 See also IV, 232

3 See also an earlier comment on Antony and Cleopatra, V, 191.

Garrick has altered 'Romeo and Juliet,' not spoiled it; which indeed it would hardly seem in the power of man to do, if we had not known what has been so ingeniously effected in other instances of Shakespear's plays. He has done chiefly what a judicious manager was perhaps bound to do - omitted some parts and shortened others. (IX, 81)

Hazlitt goes on immediately to say the same thing in other words, with images from nature being used to provide a poetic illustration of his point. It might be noted that this is characteristic of Hazlitt's critical method: he is concerned that his reader share in his feelings.

The play of 'Romeo and Juliet' may be compared for the sweetness and colours of poetry, to a spreading rose-tree: Garrick has pruned and trimmed it, has curtailed it of some of its arching branches, and lopped off some of its fairest flowers, but the crimson dyes still sparkle on its bosom, and its fragrance scents the air. (IX, 81)

Hazlitt's approval of the Garrick Romeo and Juliet was not unqualified - like the other Romantic critics he had serious reservations about the ending Garrick had given it. He expresses the same kind of reservations about the Tate ending of Lear. However, Hazlitt seems more tolerant of both of these for stage production than either Hunt or Lamb. He says in one place that the last scene of the Garrick play, though not from Shakespeare, "tells admirably on the stage". (V, 200) In another place his reaction seems a mixture of approval and disapproval:

The concluding scene of all (or the double revival of hope when the lovers meet at the tomb, and the double agony of despair that follows) is of Garrick's adding, and he may be justified on the score of theatrical effect; but the distress of mind produced by it would accord better with the productions of the modern German school than with the genius of 'the gentle Shakespear'. (IX, 82)

On the subject of Lear in Characters, Hazlitt quotes Lamb at some length and thus apparently gives his own condemnation of the happy ending. (IV, 270-1) However, his closing comments in a review of a Lear production a few years later indicate that his condemnation was not as whole-hearted as Lamb's:

... The rest of the play was very respectably got up, and all we could object to was the interspersions of the love-scenes by Tate. The happy ending, and the triumph and dotage of the poor old king in repeating again and again, 'Cordelia's Queen, Cordelia's Queen,' were perhaps allowable concessions to the feelings of the audience. (XVIII, 329)

Hazlitt was generally in favour of Shakespeare on the stage but at times his frustration with the poor productions he saw is evident in his writing. He compared seeing As You Like It acted for the first time, "after knowing it almost by heart, merely from reading it", with "waking from a golden dream; and like Caliban, disturbed from the imagination of sweet sounds, 'we cry to dream again'." (IX, 91) Hazlitt speaks, in July 1815, of returning from a bad production of the Tempest two weeks earlier and resolving never again to see a Shakespearean play acted, at least by choice. (V, 234)

The most extensive influence of Lamb's theories about the non-actability of Shakespeare's plays is found in Characters of Shakespear's Plays, a book dedicated to Lamb and in which Lamb is frequently cited. In this book much stronger positions are recorded than those above. He concludes the section on Hamlet by saying:

We do not like to see our author's plays acted, and least of all, Hamlet. There is no play that suffers so much in being transferred to the stage. Hamlet himself seems hardly capable of being acted. (IV, 237)

He comments that Richard III is properly a stage play (IV, 298) but that Macbeth is less so because of the difficulty of the acting. (IV, 194) He can think of no one who could play Macbeth properly and remembered no actor who looked as though he believed that he had seen the witches. He agreed with Lamb and Hunt concerning the ridiculous appearance of the Witches on the modern stage. (IV, 194) Similarly, he felt that the fantastic spirit of the Midsummer Night's Dream was lost on stage; the play, when acted, "is converted from a delightful fiction into a dull pantomime." (IV, 247)

Hazlitt does not consistently maintain these positions about the impossibility of acting Shakespeare

outside of Characters of Shakespear's Plays. For example, in November of the same year in which that book was published, Hazlitt reviewed for The Times a production of Much Ado About Nothing. The production was not completely successful, but Hazlitt had this to say about it:

With all the faults which attend the getting up of this play we must not forget that it is Shakespeare's and that an evening passed in hearing one of his plays, especially when given, as at present, nearly in its genuine state, must yield a considerable degree of pleasure. (XVIII, 265)

It would seem unfair to judge Hazlitt for his apparent inconsistency regarding his view of Shakespeare and the stage. Hazlitt was deeply in love with the theatre but like many theatre critics, he could be deeply annoyed with it as well. If he saw a good production of Shakespeare, or even one which was at least tolerable, he met it with an enthusiasm and a sense of gratification which was sufficient to carry him through several productions which were disappointing. It is this kind of fluctuation in mood which comes out in some of his writings.

Hazlitt does not comment a great deal in his writings about the specific features of the theatre of his time. ^{The} occasional comments he does make however, provide a useful insight into the theatre as he experienced it. For instance, he speaks of the new decorations he found at Covent Garden when it reopened with a production of Hamlet in the fall of 1817. Large mirrors had been put at each end of the first row of boxes, which Hazlitt said reflected the company "in a brilliant perspective, and have a very magical effect". (XVIII, 243) A great chandelier had been added which he felt both too bright to look at and too bright for the house. But from the theatrical point of view, Hazlitt noted that it had the advantage of reducing distortion of facial expressions:

... [it throws] the light upon the countenances of the actors from above, instead of from below (which last method inverts the natural shadows of the face, and distorts the expression) [but it] is defeated by the gas lights which are still retained between the stage and the orchestra. (XVIII, 243)

Hazlitt commented that the lower gas lamps could not be removed as they were needed for lightening or darkening the stage through being raised or lowered. Perhaps it was the brightness of the new chandelier which contributed to Hazlitt's complaint that Mrs Egerton's Ghost in the production was "the most substantial we ever saw". (XVIII, 244)

In an 1817 article entitled "Whether Actors Ought to Sit in the Boxes," Hazlitt argues that the habit of some actors appearing in the boxes of the first circle to watch the performance, either in or out of costume, is injurious to stage illusion. Actors unmasking before the public, after playing a part in disguise, Hazlitt says, disturbs the "borrowed impression" (VIII, 272). This is more true for tragedy than comedy, he points out: a tragic actor should "'steal most guilty-like away'", (VIII, 274) On the other hand Mr. Matthews was excused by Hazlitt when, in At Home, Matthews was seen "to slip out quick as lightning, and appear in the side-box shaking hands with our old friend Jack Bannister" - the comic actor, Hazlitt said, could always get another face. (VIII, 273).

In the same article Hazlitt argued that the only place to sit in the theatre to get a proper view of the performance was in the pit. He recounts that he sat in a box-seat of Covent Garden to see Mr. Macready and Elizabeth Brunton in their first appearance in Romeo and Juliet in 1817; although he was told by a good critic afterwards that the production was very good, his seat was so far from the stage, he himself could not tell. (VIII, 277) To understand the acting of an actor like Kean, Hazlitt said, it was imperative to sit in the pit:

His face is the running commentary on his acting, which reconciles the audience to it. Without that index to his mind, you are not prepared for the vehemence and suddenness of his gestures; his pauses are long, abrupt, and unaccountable, if not filled up by the expression; it is in the working of his face that you see the writhing and coiling up of the passions before they make their serpent spring; the lightning of his eyes precedes the hoarse burst of thunder from his voice. (VIII, 277)

n If one sat ~~in~~ a stage-box instead of the pit, one's attention would be drawn off by a number of things; and if one sat in the second or third tier of boxes, or at any distance from the stage, one could neither hear nor see well. (VIII, 274)

ii

It will be remembered that Hazlitt's understanding of the mental faculties was related to the radical division he made when he claimed that past and present were completely cut off from the future. In 1805 the faculties which were related to the past and present were memory, which was a kind of storehouse for images, and consciousness, which was akin to sensory impression. In 1807, the faculty of understanding was added to this scheme.

The radical temporal division Hazlitt made helped to emphasise that imagination was the supreme faculty in his view. Without imagination man was habitually selfish; he was occupied with satisfying his own sensual wants in the present with no concern for the future. With imagination, and only by imagination, man could hope to overcome his total focus on himself and the senses. Imagination gave man an interest in the future, even though his direct interest would be only in the past and present. Imagination broadened the horizon of man's vision, made ideas about the future vivid, and thus allowed the mind to perceive and naturally move towards that which was good. Imagination allowed the future to strike man, Hazlitt said, as "an imaginary idea, or an idea of truth". (I, 48)

The ease with which Hazlitt made the transition from metaphysics to aesthetics becomes apparent when it is recognised that the division Hazlitt made between present and future is essentially a division between that which is sense-orientated and that which is

imagination-orientated. This division in Hazlitt's metaphysical thought is the same kind of division as was used effectively by both Hunt and Lamb in their critical thought. Concerning Hazlitt it is important to recognise that this division occurs first in his philosophy and that it is associated with the distinction he makes in the Essay between 'real' or 'direct' interest in the present and imagined or ideal interest in the future. When the identical notions appear repeatedly in Hazlitt's criticism, several years later (although without the label 'real' to describe that which is primarily sensory), their true source is in the Essay.

It has been usual for critics to consider Hazlitt's notion of the ideal in art in isolation, without adequately stressing its dialectical opposition to the sensory in art. The opposition is important for understanding what Hazlitt meant by the ideal and in explaining or accounting for Hazlitt's connection of the ideal with his own ideas of imagination - something which does not seem to have been done before.¹

The relation between sensory and ideal in art is parallel to their relation in Hazlitt's metaphysics. In the metaphysics, it is the past and present which are primarily sense-orientated. Just as man relates to the past and present with the faculties of memory, consciousness and understanding, so too man relates to the sensory in art with those faculties. The faculties of memory, consciousness and understanding are employed in creating sense-orientated art, and in perceiving it as well.

Similarly, in the metaphysics it is the future which is seen as ideal. Just as man relates to the future with the imagination, so too it is the imagination which creates the ideal in art and which allows it to be perceived as ideal.

1 See for instance, Elizabeth Schneider, The Aesthetics of William Hazlitt, 50 ff. A more recent study is that of Leonard M. Trawick, III, "Hazlitt, Reynolds and the Ideal," Studies in Romanticism, IV (1965), 240-247.

The opposition between sensory and ideal may be found operating in numerous places throughout Hazlitt's criticism, in addition to the one above concerning comedy and tragedy. It is in the criticism that it becomes clear what Hazlitt sees as the precise differences between sense-orientated art and art of the imagination. For instance, it is the opposition of sensory and ideal which is the theme of Hazlitt's essay, "On the Picturesque and Ideal". He connects the picturesque with the senses and the understanding. He connects picturesque with the particular or individual in nature, the factual truth which concentrates on forms and shows discrimination and contrast. He says the picturesque is "merely a sharper and bolder impression of reality." (VIII, 320) In contrast, the ideal is connected with the imagination: "The ideal is that which answers to the preconceived imagination and appetite in the mind for love and beauty." (VIII, 317) The ideal in art is not dependent on discrimination and contrast, but on harmony and continuity, and is dependent on feeling rather than form. The ideal is suggested to be the universal and is connected explicitly with the soul. (VIII, 317-321)

What Hazlitt says about painting in the first of his 1818 Lectures on the English Poets is very much like his description of the picturesque. He contrasts the art of painting with the art of poetry. He says that painting is concerned with the object itself, poetry with what the object implies; painting with the actual event, poetry with the progress of the event; and painting with the emotional fact, poetry with the progress of emotions. (V, 10) A similar distinction had been made at the end of his remarks on Lear in Characters of Shakespear's Plays, when he listed four things that had struck him in the readings of the play. His second point read:

That the language of poetry is superior to the language of painting ; because the strongest of our recollections relate to feelings, not to faces. (IV, 271)

In his third point he connected feelings, particularly the strongest of passions, to the greatest genius and "the power of the imagination". (IV, 271)

The distinction between sense-orientated and ideal in Hazlitt's early theory had encouraged Hazlitt, in 1816, to incorporate Schlegel's distinctions between classical and romantic into his own thought. Though the terms were Schlegel's, Hazlitt had already provided the theoretical basis in his theory of imagination for accepting them:

The great difference, then, which we find between the classical and the romantic style, between ancient and modern poetry, is, that the one [i.e. classical] more frequently describes things as they are interestingly in themselves, - the other for the sake of associations of ideas connected with them; that the one dwells more on the immediate impressions of objects on the senses - the other on the ideas which they suggest to the imagination. The one is the poetry of form, the other of effect. The one gives only what is necessarily implied in the subject; the other all that can possibly arise out of it.¹

It is worth noting, in passing, that the passage contains an indication of why Hazlitt was so opposed to Coleridge's claim that imagination was not associative. If the imagination was not associative (as Hazlitt had suggested it was in his discussion of the 'reasoning' action of imagination in the Essay), then all art, in his way of thinking, would be like classical art - simply interesting in itself rather than "for the sake of associations of ideas connected with [it]."

1 H Works, XVI, 63. Compare this passage with one from Characters of Shakespear's Plays: "Chaucer attended chiefly to the real and natural ... Shakespear exhibited also the possible and the fantastical, not only what things are in themselves, but whatever they might seem to be, their different reflections, their endless combinations Every thing in Chaucer has a downright reality. A simile or a sentiment is as if it were given in upon evidence. In Shakespear the commonest matter-of-fact has a romantic grace about it; or seems to float with the breath of imagination in a freer element." H Works, IV, 226.

The distinction Hazlitt made in his Essay between the sense-orientated and the ideal had considerable significance when applied to aesthetics. Hazlitt established, far clearer than either Hunt or Lamb had done, that the difference between art of the senses and art of the imagination, as he saw it, was that the latter was primarily referential. Art of the senses represented things as they appeared most readily to the senses, placing heavy emphasis on shapes and external appearances. It was an art which was more or less self-contained. Art of the imagination, on the other hand, of necessity referred beyond itself. The imagination went beyond the world of the senses, beyond the shapes and forms of the individual subject to address the soul of man.

Hazlitt's belief in the referential quality of the art of imagination is widely reflected in his dramatic criticisms. He criticises modern opera and modern poetry (in this case, the poetry of T. Moore) for focusing on the senses and ignoring the imagination:

... modern poetry in its retrograde progress comes at last to be constructed on the principles of the modern OPERA, where an attempt is made to gratify every sense at every instant it seduces the taste and enervates the imagination. It creates a false standard of reference, and inverts or decomposes the natural order of association, in which objects strike the thoughts and feelings. (XI, 170)

In another essay Hazlitt again raises the subject of the opera and suggests that although the music may overpower us, it does not raise us to the ideal but rather returns us to nature. (XII, 336) Both opera and ballet, he says, do not "'come home to the bosoms and businesses of men' in the same manner that a Tragedy or Comedy does."¹

Hazlitt complained that the "exclusive and new species of the drama" in the form of the pantomime at the London theatres also fell far short of the ideal. He said that it was "more wonderful than satisfactory"

1 H Works, XII, 337. Hazlitt is quoting from Bacon.

and had "stifling sensation about it"; he said that it was "like tragedy obtruncated and thrown on the ground, gasping for utterance and struggling for breath." (XII, 337) Hazlitt suggested that much of the reason opera, ballet and pantomime failed in the ideal was that only poetry and words could hope to convey the highest objects of the human mind. Hazlitt criticised the domestic tragedy of his time because it, too, lacked sufficient poetry: "The domestic or prose tragedy which is thought to be the most natural, is ... the least so, because it appeals almost exclusively to one of these faculties, our sensibility." (V, 6)

Two questions arise concerning Hazlitt's understanding of the faculty of imagination: firstly, how did he understand its function specifically in the context of art? Secondly, how may the referential quality he saw in imagination in art be understood? The first question is addressed in his discussion of dramatic mimesis at the beginning of his remarks on Othello in Characters of Shakespear's Plays. There, imagination is discussed in relation to sympathy and in contrast to understanding. Tragedy arouses our sympathy; "... it substitutes imaginary sympathy for mere selfishness. It gives us a high and permanent interest, beyond ourselves, in humanity as such." (IV, 200) Tragedy heightens our awareness:

It excites our sensibility by exhibiting the passions wound up to the utmost pitch by the power of imagination or the temptation of circumstances; and corrects their fatal excesses in ourselves by pointing to the greater extent of sufferings and of crimes to which they have led others. (IV, 200)

"The habitual study of poetry and works of imagination," says Hazlitt, is in contrast to the study of science and the faculty of understanding:

Science alone is hard and mechanical. It exercises the understanding upon things out of ourselves, while it leaves the affections unemployed, or engrossed with our own immediate, narrow interests. (IV, 200)

The contrasts between imagination and understanding are further developed in Hazlitt's discussion of Coriolanus in the same volume. His description of imagination here seems to echo Lamb's thought about imagination drawing "all things to one" and making all things "take one colour, and serve to one effect." Imagination is said by Hazlitt to make an immediate impression on the mind by building up and uniting impressions:

The imagination is an exaggerating and exclusive faculty: it takes from one thing to add to another: it accumulates circumstances together to give the greatest possible effect to a favourite object. The understanding is a dividing and measuring faculty: it judges of things not according to their immediate impression on the mind, but according to their relations to one another. (IV, 214)

Hazlitt further develops the idea of imagination as an exaggerating faculty, one which works with extremes in order to heighten contrasts and effect:

The one [i.e. imagination] is a monopolising faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of present excitement by inequality and disproportion: the other [understanding] is a distributive faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of ultimate good, by justice and proportion. The one is an aristocratical, the other a republican faculty. The principle of poetry is an anti-levelling principle. It aims at effect, exists by contrast. It admits of no medium. It is every thing by excess. (IV, 214)

Hazlitt takes these ideas and applies them directly in his interpretation of Coriolanus. He sees Coriolanus as a character who appeals to the imagination and he sees the Roman crowd as appealing to the understanding. Our interest in Coriolanus and our sympathy for his feelings conquer our concern for the plight of the Roman citizens. Our thoughts concerning the citizens are democratic and republican, but as they are the product of the understanding, they are no match for the imaginative excitement provided by Coriolanus. (See: IV, 214-217) The contradiction between imagination here and the "democratic imagination" of Hazlitt is more apparent than real. Hazlitt always maintained that the immediate action of imagination was to magnify bad as well as good, but the overall result was "democratic". This result is illustrated in the moral Hazlitt finds in the whole play, that "those who have little

shall have less, and that those who have much shall take all that the others have left;" a moral which he says depicts both the history and the tragedy of mankind. (IV, 216)

Hazlitt's ideas find further application in Macbeth, a play in which imagination creates extremes which are not normally found in daily life. It creates a world characterised not only by the strange and unusual, but also by the range of its extremes and the tensions which exist in its midst. Hazlitt talks about this imaginative world as it is found in the play, which he says shows more systematic contrast than any other Shakespearean play; it "moves on the verge of an abyss, and is a constant struggle between life and death:" (IV, 191)

The action is desperate and the reaction is dreadful. It is a huddling together of fierce extremes, a war of opposite natures which of them shall destroy the other [sic]. There is nothing but what has a violent end or violent beginnings. The lights and shades are laid on with a determined hand; the transitions from triumph to despair, from the height of terror to the repose of death, are sudden and startling; every passion brings in its fellow-contrary, and the thoughts pitch and jostle against each other as in the dark. The whole play is an unruly chaos of strange and forbidden things, where the ground rocks under our feet. Shakespear's genius here took its full swing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion. (IV, 191)

Hazlitt gives a series of examples of the extremes found in the world of Macbeth, including Lady Macbeth's speech "'Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done't'" as an illustration of "murder and filial piety together". (IV, 191) The description of the Witches is also "full of the same contradictory principle ... they are neither of the earth nor the air, but both". (IV, 191)

A feature of the imagination, as Hazlitt sees it, is that its images are not tied to closely to the things they represent. As in Coleridge's understanding

about the language of transcendental philosophers, Hazlitt makes a distinction between symbol and thought. He suggests that in Shakespeare factual reality is not stressed, and this is in contrast to what is found in Chaucer:

Every thing in Chaucer has a downright reality. A simile or a sentiment is as if it were given upon evidence. In Shakespeare the commonest matter-of-fact has a romantic grace about it; or seems to float with the breath of imagination in a freer element. (IV, 226)

One practical illustration of this remark may be found in Hazlitt's comment on Antony's speech, "Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish, / A vapour sometime, like a bear or lion ..." at the beginning of Act IV, xvi of Antony and Cleopatra:

This is, without doubt, one of the finest pieces of poetry in Shakespeare. This splendour of the imagery, the semblance of reality, the lofty range of picturesque objects hanging over the world, their evanescent nature, the total uncertainty of what is left behind, are just like the mouldering schemes of human greatness. It is finer than Cleopatra's passionate lamentation over his fallen grandeur, because it is more dim, unstable, unsubstantial. (IV, 231)

The "dim, unstable, and unsubstantial" images of imagination which resemble reality and yet point beyond themselves were a characteristic of modern rather than ancient times, Hazlitt thought. In an article on Schlegel he argued that both history and religion had enlarged "the bounds of imagination" by encouraging contemplation on objects in the distant past and future and making the mind accustomed to taking an "interest in the obscure and shadowy". (XVI, 66) In Heathen mythology, he said, the emphasis was always on form; whereas in Christian mythology, with the mystery surrounding the doctrines, "the Infinite is everywhere before us, whether we turn to reflect on what is revealed to us of the Divine nature or our own." (XVI, 66) In Christian mythology, Hazlitt says, going on to misquote Milton's Paradise Lost, "The imagination alone 'broods over the immense abyss, and makes it pregnant'." Briefly then, for

Hazlitt the imagination functions in relation to art by arousing sympathy, by uniting images and exaggerating effect, and by employing images symbolically.

The second of the two questions posed above concerns the 'reference' of imagination in Hazlitt's understanding. To what does imagination refer if it is not immediately concerned with factual truth and if the meaning of its images always lies beyond the images themselves? One might even ask whether imagination does in fact concern itself with reality. It is this question which Hazlitt seems indirectly to be toying with in the following comment:

Hamlet is a name; his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What then, are they not real? They are as real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is we who are Hamlet.
(IV, 232)

The reality of Hamlet, Hazlitt believed, was to be found in the minds of the readers of the play. The truth of Shakespeare's characters was to be recognised when the reader (or viewer) became personally involved in the play.

A similar comment is made concerning Macbeth. The violent and dreadful contrast of extremes which Hazlitt noted in the play did not reduce the realism of the play, he believed. Its reality again existed in the mind of the viewer:

The castle of Macbeth ... has a real subsistence in the mind; the Weïrd Sisters meet us in person on 'the blasted heath'; the 'air-drawn dagger' moves slowly before our eyes; the 'gracious Duncan', the 'blood-boulted Banquo' stand before us; all that passed through the mind of Macbeth passes, without the loss of a tittle, through ours. All ... are brought before us with the same absolute truth and vividness. (IV, 186-187)

Hazlitt wrote in 1821 that both the witches of Macbeth and Milton's Satan were artificial in one sense only. From a poetic point of view they were highly natural. As long as man supposes these creatures to exist, and attributes to them unknown powers, they are "more able to startle and confound his imagination" than either natural or artificial objects. (XIX, 82) The lack of factual or objective reality in the workings of imagin-

ation clearly does not imply an absence of reality for Hazlitt. The reference of imagination is to an internal, subjective or emotional reality, and its truth must be recognised by each person meditating on his or her own response.

The relative truth of imagination was again the subject of Hazlitt's remarks in the course of his review of Schlegel in 1816. He maintained that if the "language of imagination" was false "in point of fact", it was actually more true to nature since it "conveys the impression which the object under the influence of passion makes on the mind." (XVI, 63) In the "Preface" to Characters of Shakespear's Plays the superior truth of imagination is again stressed in discussing Perdita's lines:

----- 'Daffodils
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath.'-----

(The Winter's Tale, IV,
iv, 118-122)

Hazlitt quips that "the ordinary routine of [Johnson's] imagination" (IV, 176) would never have appreciated these lines. In what he goes on to say, one is reminded of Hazlitt's own appreciation of "dim, unstable, and unsubstantial" images:

To a mere literal and formal apprehension, the inimitably characteristic epithet, 'violets dim,' must seem to imply a defect, rather than a beauty; and to any one, not feeling the full force of that epithet, which suggests an image like 'the sleepy eye of love', the allusion to 'the lids of Juno's eyes' must appear extravagant and unmeaning. Shakespear's fancy lent words and images to the most refined sensibility to nature, struggling for expression: his descriptions are identical with the things themselves, seen through the fine medium of passion: strip them of that connection, and try them by ordinary conceptions and ordinary rules, and they are as grotesque and barbarous as you please! (IV, 177)

Hazlitt's identification of Shakespeare's descriptions with reality when viewed through the "fine medium of passion" is significant. Hazlitt protests that Shakespeare cannot be tried by "ordinary conceptions and

ordinary rules", (IV, 177) as he felt Dr Johnson tried to do in arguing that Shakespeare's faults were as great as his beauties. Such an approach would determine that Shakespeare was excellent only when his art conformed to the rules and Shakespeare's art would be at fault when the rules were violated, Hazlitt said. Instead, Hazlitt argued, Shakespeare must be approached with a proper understanding of the powers of imagination. Shakespeare's imagination violated the laws of physical nature, but only in order to conform more closely to the way in which physical nature is perceived by the individual, particularly as that individual is affected by moods and feelings with regard to the objects he is viewing. It is this idea which is suggested elsewhere when Hazlitt calls Shakespeare "a half-worker with nature". (XII, 343)

There are many instances in which Hazlitt praises Shakespeare's imagination for depicting nature more accurately than would be achieved by the representation of strict facts. One instance is his praise for the settings of both As You Like It (the forest of Arden) and Cymbeline (the mountain scenes). In both he maintains that Shakespeare has mirrored the minds of his characters by his descriptions of the settings in which they are found:

... how different the contemplative quiet of the one [Arden] from the enterprising boldness and precarious mode of subsistence in the other! Shakespear not only lets us into the minds of his characters, but gives a tone and colour to the scenes he describes from the feelings of their supposed inhabitants. He at the same time preserves the utmost propriety of action and passion, and gives all their local accompaniments. If he was equal to the greatest things, he was not above an attention to the smallest. Thus the gallant sportsmen in CYMBELINE have to encounter the abrupt declivities of hill and valley: Touchstone and Audrey jog along a level path. The deer in CYMBELINE are only regarded as objects of prey, 'The game's a-foot,' etc. - with Jacques they are fine objects to moralise upon at leisure, 'under the shade of melancholy boughs.' (IV, 185)

The inverse may also be true when imagination is acting: the setting may shape the characters. The wild, earthy setting in which Caliban grew is reflected in his character:

Shakespear has described the brutal mind of Caliban in contact with the pure and original forms of nature; the character grows out of the soil where it is rooted, uncontroled, uncouth and wild, uncramped by any of the meannesses of custom. It is 'of the earth, earthy.' It seems almost to have been dug out of the ground, with a soul instinctively superadded to it answering to its wants and origin. (IV, 239)

Earlier Hazlitt had claimed that Caliban was "one of the wildest and most abstracted of all Shakespear's characters" and that he displayed great "truth of the imagination". (IV, 239)

Related comments are made about the minds of other Shakespearean characters. The power and splendour in Shakespeare's characters, Hazlitt says, is:

... that of genius darting out its forked flame on whatever comes in its way, and kindling and melting it in the furnace of affection, whether it be flax or iron. The colouring, the form, the motion, the combination of objects depend on the pre-disposition of the mind, moulding nature to its own purposes; in Sir Walter [Scott] the mind [of the character] is as wax to circumstances, and owns no other impress. (XII, 343)

The minds of Shakespeare's characters are molded by the circumstances of the characters and the passions that they feel.

Hazlitt uses the descriptions that they give of their own situations or their interpretations of events around them as useful tools with which to understand their psychological makeup. For example, Hazlitt discusses Act III, iv, of King Lear, where Lear refuses to believe that Poor Tom has no daughters ("Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdu'd nature/ To such a lowness but his unkind daughters." III, iv, 69-70). Lear's comment is absurd, says Hazlitt, but yet it has truth:

It is the mere natural ebullition of passion, urged nearly to madness, and that will admit no other cause of dire misfortune but its own, which swallows

up all other griefs. The force of despair hurries the imagination over the boundary of fact and common sense, and renders the transition sublime; but there is no precedent or authority for it, except in the general nature of the human mind. (XII, 343)

There is truth also in both Lear (II, iv, 189-192) and Othello (III,iii, 460) when they call to the heavens. Hazlitt uses Lear and Othello to illustrate his idea that imagination seizes symbols in nature which give an adequate reflection of the inner reality of the mind.

... Lear calls on the Heavens to take his part, for 'they are old like him.' Here there is nothing to prop up the image but the strength of passion This finding out a parallel between the most unlike objects, is because the individual would wish to find one to support the sense of his own misery and helplessness (XII, 342)

Concerning Othello Hazlitt says:

So when Othello swears 'By yon marble heaven,' the epithet is suggested by the hardness of his heart from the sense of injury: the texture of the outward object is borrowed from that of the thoughts: and that noble simile, 'Like the Propontic,' &c. seems only an echo of the sounding tide of passion, and to roll from the same source, the heart. (XII, 344)

For Hazlitt, the images of imagination are not directly tied to what they represent. It is this insight which leads him to look for a correspondence between the words of a character and that character's psychological state.

Hazlitt sees no problem in mixing what he calls "the world of reality" and "the world of imagination", which has its own kind of truth. This might take place in every Shakespearean play, but The Tempest is an obvious choice to consider:

[Shakespear's] ideal beings are as true and natural as his real characters; that is, as consistent with themselves, or if we suppose such beings to exist at all, they could not act, or feel otherwise than as he makes them. ... The human and imaginary characters, the dramatic and the grotesque, are blended together with the greatest art, and without any appearance of it.... As the preternatural part [of The Tempest] has the air of reality, and almost haunts the imagination with a sense of truth, the real characters and events partake of the wildness of a dream. (IV, 238)

Hazlitt praises the local scenery of Prospero's island for having "the effect of the landscape background of some fine picture." (IV, 239) Yet even in the transition from the outside world to the dream-like quality of the island, there is a certain consistency. For instance, the drunken sailors who were "at the mercy of the winds and waves" at sea, seem on shore "as much at the mercy of chance as they were before". (IV, 239).

Hazlitt suggests in an article from the "Round Table" in August, 1815, that the bringing together of two different worlds in the same work of art is itself a feature of imagination. He defends Milton for mixing Christian truths and heathen mythology in the same passage by saying that, "To the understanding, the belief of the one is incompatible with that of the other; but in the imagination, they not only may, but do constantly co-exist." (IV, 34) Moreover, Hazlitt maintains that even orthodox Christians have a belief in the "personages of the Heathen mythology" insofar as they "convey a positive identity beyond the mere name It is only by an effort of abstraction that we divest ourselves of the idea of their reality; all our involuntary prejudices are on their side They impose on the imagination by all the attractions of beauty and grandeur." (IV, 34)

Hazlitt's comments above concerning imagination and reality in art dealt primarily with art as it is written or read, not as it is seen on the stage. Concerning stage art, Hazlitt's ideas were quite different. The reality of the stage house had no business intruding upon a play. The imaginative world of the play could be damaged by presentation on stage. As Hazlitt said concerning The Midsummer Night's Dream, "Poetry and the stage do not agree well together". (IV, 247) The stage, he says, tends to make everything exist in the foreground, and leaves no room for the ideal. Hazlitt is talking in particular about the problems of representing supernatural events on stage; he speaks of "an airy shape, a dream, a passing thought," immediately becoming

on stage "an unmanageable reality". (IV, 247) The problem, he points out, is that the imagination cannot over-ride the senses; "Any offence given to the eye is not to be got rid of by explanation". (IV, 248) Hazlitt had described this kind of problem earlier in Characters of Shakespear's Plays and elsewhere as well. He had said of Caliban that "It is not indeed pleasant to see this character on the stage any more than it is to see the god Pan personated there." (IV, 239) He spoke of Macbeth's witches being "nearly exploded on the stage. Their broomsticks are left; their metaphysics are gone" (XII, 343) He was bothered by the visible entry of the ghosts through the trap-doors in Richard III. (V, 184) Concerning ~~The~~ Midsummer Night's Dream, Hazlitt expressed his disappointment that the "fantastic illusion" of Bottom's head in the play had sunk to "an ass's head, and nothing more" on stage; that an attempt had been made "to personate Wall or Moonshine"; that fairies in reading the play are not incredible but that "fairies six feet high are so"; and that what are meant to be shocking monsters are not so at the theatre. (IV, 248) A

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Hazlitt has often been criticised in the past for the subjective nature of his criticism; Herschel Baker claimed that "Hazlitt's attitude toward Shakespeare is essentially emotion, and his emotion is the gauge by which he tests the plays."¹ The remark is not unjustified, for in Hazlitt's writing there is a good deal that is claimed for Shakespeare that is not always carefully documented or supported by argument. His own enthusiasm is often apparent. Hazlitt's

1 William Hazlitt, 307.

approach places a strong emphasis on intuition. As Hazlitt says of the imagination: "The imagination is an associating principle; and has an instinctive perception when a thing belongs to a system, or is only an exception to it." (XII, 51) However, the fact that there is this instinctive factor need not necessarily be seen as negative. Rarely is Hazlitt's response to Shakespeare simply instinctive or intuitional. His emotional responses are seldom without the kind of rational justification which comes from a theory of imagination that recognises a certain 'logic' in the operation of man's passions. Often, when Hazlitt may seem to be rhapsodic in his praise of Shakespeare, there are underlying threads in his thought which lead back to his general understanding about the principles of imagination. In a moment we shall look to some specific comments for support of this view.

An additional dimension of the problem may have been either overlooked or underestimated in the past. Much of Hazlitt's reason for expressing his own emotion in his writing is out of his concern for his reader. Hazlitt wants the points he makes not only to be understood and digested, but he also wants to share with his reader something of his own feeling for what he is discussing. Just as the truth of a Shakespearean play is recognised only in individual reflection and meditation on one's own emotional reactions, in Hazlitt's thought, the truth of critical comments may similarly depend in part on the emotional reaction of the reader to the critic. This is an area of Hazlitt study which will require more research in the future, but it seems appropriate here to mention some examples which suggest that Hazlitt's concern in his writing was to appeal to the imagination of his reader, and thus to convince them that imagination was the only faculty which could judge not only the value of the work, but the value of the critic's comments on that work as well.

Some examples have already been given of the images Hazlitt chose to illustrate imagination and to convey his own emotional reactions. The focus here is primarily on images Hazlitt himself used, rather than

images from Shakespeare which Hazlitt discusses. Consider the image he chose to convey his feelings concerning Garrick's alteration of Romeo and Juliet for the stage: he compared the play to a spreading rose tree which had been trimmed by a gardener and lost some of its finest flowers, but "the crimson dyes still sparkle on its bosom, and its fragrance scents the air". (IX, 81) Hazlitt could have omitted the image from his discussion for the fact of his appreciation of the altered version had been conveyed already. He seemed to want to provide however, a more poetic statement, not unlike what he had said about the "commonest matter-of-fact" in Shakespeare having about it a "romantic grace" and a lightness as if floating "on the breath of imagination".

Hazlitt's favourite images for discussing imagination seem to be images of water. He contrasts Shakespeare's genius with that of Sir Walter Scott: "[Shakespear's] genius is like the Nile overflowing and enriching its banks; that of Sir Walter is like a mountain-stream rendered interesting by the picturesqueness of the surrounding scenery." (XII, 344) In a discussion of the difference between the language of poetry and prose while reviewing Biographia Literaria, Hazlitt uses images of the sea and of flight to describe imagination. Poetry was invented, he says, to correct the lack of "natural harmony in the ordinary combinations of significant sounds" (XVI, 136); poetry is intended,

... to supply this inherent defect in the mechanism of language - to make the sound an echo to the sense, when the sense becomes a sort of echo to itself - to mingle the tide of verse, 'the golden cadences of poesy,' with the tide of feeling, flowing, and murmuring as it flows - or to take the imagination off its feet, and spread its wings where it may indulge its own impulses, without being stopped or perplexed by the ordinary abruptnesses, or discordant flats and sharps of prose (XVI, 136)

The image of the sea is again used to describe what Hazlitt calls the most passionate scenes in Romeo and Juliet. He means the scenes in which Romeo, the Nurse and Juliet each hear of Romeo's banishment, the scene in which Juliet hears of Tybald's death, and the last

tomb scene:

In all of these it is not merely the force of any one passion that is given, but the slightest and most unlooked-for transitions from one to another, the mingling currents of every different feeling rising up and prevailing in turn, swayed by the master-mind of the poet, as the waves undulate beneath the gliding storm. (IV, 255)

Hazlitt used the image of water to discuss the minds of each of what he considered were Shakespeare's four major tragic figures. In one place Hazlitt considers Othello in terms of a river; "The passion in Othello pours along, so to speak, like a river, torments itself in restless eddies, or is hurled from its dizzy height, like a sounding cataract." (XVIII, 332) The river image is employed again in Characters of Shakespear's Plays. Hazlitt mentions Othello's passion moving up "through rapid but gradual transitions" to the extremes of rage and despair and of these emotions at last blending "in that noble tide of deep and sustained passion, impetuous but majestic, that 'flows on to the Propontic, and knows no ebb'". (IV, 201-202) Hazlitt might prefer the river image because of the gradual movement and development it suggests, but in one place, when reviewing Macready's Othello for The Examiner in 1816, the sea image is used for Othello:

The movements of passion in Othello (and the motions of the body should answer to those of the mind) resemble the heaving of the sea in a storm; there are no sharp, slight, angular transitions, or if there are any, they are subject to this general swell and commotion." (V, 339)

Even here, however, the gradual movement is stressed.

Hazlitt contrasted the river image he used for Othello with the sea image he felt appropriate for Lear. The passion in Lear, he said, "is more like a sea, swelling, chafing, raging, without bound." (XVIII, 332) Hazlitt continues on immediately and mixes his metaphors for now Lear is like a ship on the sea: "... without hope, without beacon, or anchor. Torn from the hold of his affections and fixed purposes, he floats a mighty

wreck in the wide world of sorrows." (XVIII, 332)

In Characters of Shakespear's Plays the "rapid, irregular starts of imagination" in Lear are again compared to a ship, and also to a rock and a promontory:

The mind of Lear, staggering between the weight of attachment and the hurried movements of passion, is like a tall ship driven about by the winds, buffeted by the furious waves, but that still rides above the storm, having its anchor fixed in the bottom of the sea; or it is like the sharp rock circled by the eddying whirlpool that foams and beats against it, or like the solid promontory pushed from its basis by the force of an earthquake.

(IV, 258)

Hazlitt had said that the chief interest in Othello was not from "the doubtful conflict between contrary passions" which, he said, "continues only for a short time." (IV, 201) In Macbeth, contrastingly, "there is a violent struggle between opposite feelings, between ambition and the stings of conscience, almost from first to last". (IV, 201) Macbeth is seen by Hazlitt to be like a drifting ship: "Macbeth himself appears driven along by the violence of his fate like a vessel drifting before a storm". (IV, 187) The minds of both Macbeth and Hamlet suggest the sea to Hazlitt, though he sees Macbeth's as the more violent of the two. The "agitation of [Macbeth's] mind", he says, "resembles the rolling of the sea in a storm; or he is like a lion in the toils; fierce, impetuous, and ungovernable." (V, 206-7)

Hazlitt criticised Kemble's acting of Hamlet and says that he:

unavoidably failed from a want of flexibility, of that quick sensibility which yields to every motive, and is borne away with every breath of fancy; which is distracted in the multiplicity of its reflections, and lost in the uncertainty of its resolutions. There is a perpetual undulation of feeling in the character of Hamlet; but in Mr Kemble's acting, 'there was neither variableness nor shadow of turning'. (V, 377)

Elsewhere Hazlitt comments that "The character of Hamlet is made up of undulating lines; it has the yielding flexibility of 'a wave o' th' sea'". (IV, 237)

Hazlitt used the sea image in his evaluation of actors, as he did concerning Kemble above. He criticised Dowton's performance of Shylock at Drury Lane, 5 October, 1815. He said that Dowton gave only the "prosaic" side of the character and lacked the "poetical" which "is the essence of tragic acting." (V, 250) Dowton's Shylock failed in part from "the want of that movement and tide of passion, which overcomes every external disadvantage, and bears down every thing in its course." (V, 250) Kean was deficient in his performance of Macbeth on November 5, 1815, and had not captured the motions of the shifting sea in Macbeth's mind. The fifth act in particular was faulty: the text had been given inaccurately, the pauses were too long, there was little continuity, and all of the turbulence was lost - there was not "that giddy whirl of the imagination". (V, 207) Kean's movements were "too agile and mercurial". (V, 207) One year later, curiously, in November of 1815, Hazlitt used Kean as a model of tragic acting:

[The] truth of nature and passion in Mr Kean's acting carries every thing before it. He was the only person on the stage who seemed alive Nothing can withstand the real tide of passion once let loose; and yet it is pretended [by some actors], that the great art of the tragic actor is in damming it up, or cutting out smooth canals and circular basins for it to flow into, so that it may do no harm in its course. It is the giving way to natural and strong impulses of the imagination that floats Mr. Kean down the stream of public favour. . . . (XVIII, 205)

There are three water images in this passage: Kean as an in-rushing tide, other actors as mechanical diverters of the natural flow of water, and the more mundane image of the "stream of public favour". (Hazlitt might have wanted any image he gave to the public to be mundane, considering his generally low opinion of theatre-goers.) The second of these images was particularly appropriate in a country which, in the previous fifty years¹

1 i.e. from the time of the building of the highly profitable canal linking Manchester and the Mersey River in the early 1760's by the Duke of Bridgewater. See R.K. Webb, The History of Modern England, London 1969, 101-102.

had seen its transportation system revolutionized by the building of canal systems. The channelling image was a favourite of Hazlitt's and he frequently used it, with some variation, to illustrate the opposite of imagination. The most common had to do with plumbing and cisterns. René Wellek has cited several instances in which the image is used, thus it is not necessary to go into great detail here.¹ But one instance of its use which he did not cite and which is fairly representative of the examples he gives is Hazlitt's description of Kemble in King John. Kemble had the correct shape and form, Hazlitt said, but he lacked the emotions to carry the part beyond the surface actions of the play:

The varying tide of passion did not appear to burst from the source of nature in his breast, but to be drawn from a theatrical leaden cistern, and then directed through certain conduit pipes and artificial channels, to fill the audience with well regulated and harmless sympathy. (V, 346).

Hazlitt remembered Kemble's acting in terms much closer to the referential and the ideal after Kemble's death, for in 1825 he spoke of Kemble's "manly sense and plaintive tones, that were an echo to deep-fraught sense." (XII, 301)

One might ask why Hazlitt was as fond as he was of water images? The first reason we might give is psychological. There are a number of different images which can be found in the movements of water to suggest various moods and feelings; images of eddies, whirlpools, streams, meandering rivers, torrential rivers, waterfalls, gently rolling seas, crashing seas in a storm, the ebbing and waning of tides, and the rush of tidal waters are all found in Hazlitt's critical descriptions, usually in reference to the activities of imagination. The sea, or water in general, is also the source of many metaphors in his language, particularly with regard to general psychology, (i.e. phrases like we use: 'surface of thought')

¹ See: A History of Modern Criticism: The Romantic Age, 196-197.

or 'depth of the emotions'). Note Hazlitt's vocabulary in the following comment on Othello:

Not only is the tumult of passion in Othello's mind heaved up from the very bottom of the soul, but every [sic] the slightest undulation of feeling is seen on the surface, as it arises from the impulses of imagination or the malicious suggestions of Iago. (Underlining my own. IV, 202)

Secondly, water images, particularly those associated with the sea, suggest unlimited power and strength. They suggest mystery, for while the surface may be known, all that remains beneath the surface is unseen and hidden; this is highly appropriate for Hazlitt since imagination in his view never points simply to the obvious appearance of things. It is never content simply with form but always refers to something beyond form.

Lastly, water images would have been a natural choice for Hazlitt because water is associated with fertility and creativity (like the image of the Nile applied to Shakespeare), and rivers and seas suggest an ability both to assist life and to destroy it. The mixture of opposites, especially of life and death, are what Hazlitt relished in the powers of imagination.

Water as a fluid mass is suggestive of the imagination for Hazlitt. Imagination moves and is unstable, yet it has unity in its movement. There is a freedom of movement in Hazlitt's understanding of imagination, which is one reason why the image of canals or conduits and pipes, which Hazlitt uses in connection with some actors and writers, is most appropriate to suggest the opposite of imagination. The opposite is controlled, artificial, mechanical and forced.

All of Hazlitt's water images are used to a certain degree for poetic effect. Often they are used to provide a visual illustration of something Hazlitt has already said in more matter-of-fact language. But they usually have a power of their own, and it should not be overlooked that Hazlitt is probably using these images above and beyond their illustrative value as a kind of

emotional appeal to his reader. It is a way for Hazlitt both to suggest his own emotions concerning what he is writing, and to appeal to the same emotions in his readers.

Hazlitt uses other images in his writing as well. For instance he uses an image of the cords of the heart or mind, as Hunt had done when he said that the cords of Ophelia's mind "are tangled not snapped". Hazlitt speaks at one point of "The fine network of the mind itself, the cords that bind and hold our scattered perceptions together, and form the means of communication between them ..." (II, 156) In discussing Lear, Coleridge speaks of the image of the abyss over which imagination peers, which was encountered earlier in this chapter:

[The character of Lear is] sustained, reared to a majestic height out of the yawning abyss, by the force of the affections, the imagination, and the cords of the human heart - it stands a proud monument, in the gap of nature, over barbarous cruelty and filial ingratitude. (XVIII, 332)

Hazlitt uses the image of cords in connection with Hamlet as well: "Hamlet is not a person whose nativity is cast, or whose death is foretold by portents: he weaves the web of his destiny out of his own thoughts ..." (XII, 344)

One of the most beautiful images Hazlitt uses in his writing is in connection with the character of Viola in Twelfth Night. First he discusses the interests which the other characters in the play arouse, interests like friendship, patronage, understanding, kindness and sympathy. But with Viola, he says, "there is something that excites in us a stronger feeling than all this", and he seems to be implying imagination. (IV, 315) He points to her speech, "She let concealment, like a worm i' the bud, / Feed on her damask cheek". (Act III, iv, 110ff). The poetic effect he praises arises from Viola's words functioning on two levels by referring beyond themselves and giving echo to the depth of her concealed feeling of love for the duke. To describe the effect of Shakespeare's imagination in these lines, Hazlitt uses an image Coleridge had used in "The Eolian

Harp" to describe imagination - the image of a harp being played by the wind:

How long ago it is since we first learnt to repeat them [Viola's words]; and still, still they vibrate on the heart, like the sounds which the passing wind draws from the trembling strings of a harp left on some desert shore! (IV, 315)

Hazlitt's comment on Viola has further interest because he recognises that the referential quality of Viola's words which interested him, was not what other critics before him had often praised about the speech: Hazlitt made it clear that he was not speaking about "the image of Patience on a monument, which has been generally quoted, but [about] the lines before and after it." (IV, 315) Indeed, the image of Patience seems much more in line with eighteenth-century critical tastes and what Hazlitt would have called the picturesque or the classical, than with what Hazlitt saw as imagination.

iv

Hazlitt did not make as clear a division between comedy and tragedy on the basis of imagination as did both Hunt and Lamb. For instance, in Characters of Shakespear's Plays he praises the comedies and tragedies alike, without encountering the problems concerning comedy which Hunt met because of the rigidity of his approach to 'conception' and 'imagination.' Hazlitt sees 'imagination' operating in the comedies, at least in so far as the comedies suggest universal aspects of experience, and are not concerned just with the individual.

Nonetheless, Hazlitt expressed an obvious bias toward the tragedies, and this was related to his ideas on imagination. As Hazlitt said, "Much as we like Shakespear's comedies, we cannot agree with Dr. Johnson that they are better than his tragedies; nor do we like them half so well." (IV, 314) Elsewhere, Hazlitt had

said more boldly that Shakespeare "had an equal genius for comedy and tragedy; and his tragedies are better than his comedies, because tragedy is better than comedy." (V, 56) W.P. Albrecht has explained Hazlitt's preference by saying that for Hazlitt comedy was less sympathetic, less orientated toward the identity of others, and therefore was less moral.¹ Albrecht's point seems well-taken. The real distinction between comedy and tragedy in Hazlitt's thought is that comedy displays less imagination than tragedy. It has more appeal to the senses and has less appeal to the ideal. S

When Hazlitt evaluates actors, particularly tragic actors, it is their ability to use imagination which he is judging. Again Hazlitt is applying the distinction he first developed between sensory and ideal in 1805-07. As his description of the best actors indicates, he is looking for acting which goes beyond the mere sense of the words and captures the referential or ideal quality aimed at by the poet:

... a great histrionic genius is one that approximates the effects of words, or of supposed situations on the mind, most nearly to the deep and vivid effect of real and inevitable ones. Joy produces tears: the violence of passion turns to childish weakness; but this could not be foreseen by study, nor taught by rules, nor mimicked by observation. Natural acting is therefore fine, because it implies and calls forth the most varied and strongest feelings that the supposed characters and circumstances can possibly give birth to: it reaches the height of the subject. (XII, 335)

More specifically, however, Hazlitt connected the ideal in tragedy not just with the full potential of a character and the "height of the subject"; he connected the ideal with passions and their effect on the mind.

In 1814 Hazlitt used Lamb's 1812 phrase to account for the difference between the acting of Mrs. Siddons and

1 "Hazlitt's Preference for Tragedy", 1048.

Miss O'Neill. The difference, he said, was "in the expression of the internal workings of the mind."¹

Miss O'Neill was great for characters of "pure natural interest" but it was the "lofty imagination" and commanding intellect and passion of Mrs. Siddons which allowed her to express the inner mind and capture the ideal. Mrs. Siddons showed "that terrible reaction of mental power on the scene, which forms the perfection of tragedy." Further suggestions of what Hazlitt saw as the ideal in acting or writing were given in the same review:

It was those reaches of the soul, in which it looks down on its sufferings, in which it rises superior to nature and fortune, and gathers strength and grandeur from its despair, that gave such majesty and power to Mrs. Siddons' acting. (XVIII, 196)

In 1820 Hazlitt also criticized Miss O'Neill and Macready concerning the ideal in different reviews, and again, in pointing out their failures, Hazlitt indicates what he is looking for in acting. Of Miss O'Neill he says:

There was nothing in her acting of a preternatural or ideal cast - that could lift the mind above morality (XVIII, 284)

and of Macready in Macbeth he says:

Sensibility, not imagination, is his forte the ideal and preternatural beckon him only at a distance and mock his embraces.... He is more like a man debating the reality, or questioning the power of the grotesque and unimaginable forms that hover around him, than one hurried away by his credulous hopes, or shrinking from intolerable fear. (XVIII, 340 & 341)

Hazlitt's approach to the ideal in the theatre is perhaps more precise than has been indicated generally. J.W. Donohue has suggested that for Lamb, Coleridge and Hazlitt, the ideal in the theatre was the "ideal production" in their minds, to which they continually

¹ H Works, XVIII, 196. Lamb's phrase was, "the internal workings and movements of a great mind."

compared the actual production on stage.¹ There may be some truth in this general analysis, and perhaps Hunt could have been included as well, considering his comment about the need for the picture presented to the eye to correspond to the picture presented to the mind. But as has been emphasised, Lamb did not think in terms of an ideal production, and thought very little in terms of production at all. Even for Hazlitt (and also for Hunt), the ideal in the theatre was not a complete mental visualisation of the perfect performance, to which no actor could compare favourably. Hazlitt's ideal in an actor was found when the acting captured not only the literal sense of the poet's words, but also gave an adequate suggestion of the emotion behind the words. This far more reasonable demand on the actor and his imagination perhaps may indicate the degree to which Hazlitt was sympathetic to the purposes of the theatre.

Hazlitt's early Essay provided the theoretical groundwork for the important distinction in his criticism between sense-orientated art and ideal art. Morality, for Hazlitt, became an issue when one did not actively cultivate imagination, for without imagination, the natural tendency of the mind to move towards the good could not be set in motion, carrying an individual out of himself into the self of others. Hazlitt reacted against artists and art which addressed the senses and not the imagination. Art which appealed primarily to the senses could cultivate nothing but selfish interests. Art of this kind - and Hazlitt tended to see Wordsworth and Coleridge in this light - went against all of Hazlitt's notions of the democratic ideal, the same ideal as he had seen in the French Revolution and then later in the campaigns of Napoleon.²

1 This theme is operating in numerous places in Donohue's book, but 280-7 and 337 may be consulted in particular.

2 John Kinnard's review of Baker's William Hazlitt contains a very interesting, if somewhat sharp-pointed, assessment of Hazlitt's dedication to this idea. "The Forgotten Self", Partisan Review, XXX (1963), 303-306.

For the audience sitting in a theatre, the difference between watching sensory art and art of the imagination was essentially the difference between being self-complacent and being moved beyond oneself towards benevolent action. Imagination is the force for Hazlitt which makes good possible by stimulating and vivifying thoughts and feelings about future (or fictional) events.

Hazlitt makes a point in The Round Table concerning the audience and dramatic imitation, which he believed needed to be stressed. His point relates to this idea of imagination stimulating new thoughts about the potential of things:

One chief reason ... why imitation pleases, is, because, by exciting curiosity, and inviting a comparison between the object and the representation, it opens a new field of inquiry, and leads the attention to a variety of details and distinctions not perceived before. The latter source of the pleasure derived from imitation has never been properly insisted on. (IV, 73)

This pleasure, as Hazlitt indicates in numerous places on the subject of tragedy, is not simply the result of imagination being drawn towards that which is morally good, but that which is not, as well:

We are as prone to make a torment of our fears, as to luxuriate in our hopes of good Objects of terror and pity exercise the same despotic control over [the mind] as those of love or beauty Not that we like what we loathe; but we like to indulge our hatred and scorn of it; to dwell upon it, to exasperate our idea of it (V, 7)

Hazlitt seems to elaborate this position elsewhere, indicating that it is the natural action of imagination to magnify impressions made upon the mind by the emotions.

Let an object be presented to the senses in a state of agitation and fear - and the imagination will magnify the object, and convert it into whatever is most proper to encourage the fear. (XVI, 63)

There are suggestions in Hazlitt's criticism that the imagination is more excited by evil forces than good, and the reason is that forces which are loathed provide the greater stimulant. Hazlitt's account

of Coriolanus gives an example of the imagination and admiration being excited by that which might be considered morally wrong. Feelings of the justice of the complaint of the Roman public are quickly turned to contempt for the crowd, Hazlitt says, when Coriolanus enters "to make them submit to the last indignities, from mere pride and self-will". Coriolanus is favoured, Hazlitt continues, because:

The insolence of power is stronger than the plea of necessity. The tame submission to usurped authority or even the natural resistance to it has nothing to excite or flatter the imagination: it is the assumption of a right to insult or oppress others that carries an imposing air of superiority with it. We had rather be the oppressor than the oppressed. (IV, 215)

For Hazlitt, the ultimate effect of imagination in tragedy is not simply the production of sympathy for the sufferings of the character on stage. Rather, the effect is a heightened awareness of both good and evil and a heightened consciousness of the common condition of all men. It creates in man "strong cravings after ideal good, [and] dread of unimaginable evils." (XIX, 74) Hazlitt's language at times directly echoes the language of his early philosophy:

Tragic poetry ... strives to carry on the feeling [of pain or pleasure] to the utmost point of sublimity or pathos, by all the force of comparison or contrast; loses the sense of present suffering in the imaginary exaggeration of it; exhausts the terror or pity by an unlimited indulgence of it; grapples with impossibilities in its desperate impatience of restraint; throws us back upon the past, forward into the future; brings every moment of our being or object of nature in startling review before us; and in the rapid whirl of events, lifts us from the depths of woe to the highest contemplations on human life. (V, 5)

Hazlitt seems to be suggesting that the effect of tragedy is to awaken all of man's faculties - those of the past, present and future: by awakening the faculties, man is freed from the tyranny of his own senses and habitual selfishness, and is able to move towards the ideal of benevolence. At the end of a play, for instance

at the end of Lear, one's self-interests are the least of one's concerns:

The concluding scenes are sad, painfully sad; but their pathos is extreme. The oppression of the feelings is relieved by the very interest we take in the misfortunes of others, and by the reflections to which they give birth. (IV, 270)

Hazlitt gives a slightly different slant to the Aristotelian interpretation of the pleasure of tragedy. The pleasure for Hazlitt does not arise simply from the purgation of the emotions of terror and pity. Hazlitt's idea is that it is the feelings of benevolence which ultimately arise from tragedy which provide the pleasure of tragedy.

It may be, as some critics have suggested, that there is a contradiction in Hazlitt's approach to tragedy.¹ If Hazlitt is interested in selflessness, why is he interested in the self-centeredness of Shakespeare's tragic heroes? In partial answer to this, it might be emphasised that in Hazlitt's 1805 theory it was through self-interest that one became aware of the needs and interests of others. The benevolent or democratic ideal could be achieved only through recognising the extent of one's selfish interests.

Also, it was necessary in Hazlitt's theory that the imagination magnify both good and bad, both selfish interests and unselfish, in order to highlight the consequences of actions. It was in this manner that the mind determined what was good. Hazlitt's interest in the self-centeredness of the tragic hero is, to a certain extent, in how 'imagination' worked in the character. Hazlitt spoke of Shakespeare's imagination going out of himself and into the characters he drew; (V, 191) he spoke of the need for actors to throw their minds out of themselves; (V, 184) and he spoke of the audience in a similar manner. But with Shakespeare's tragic characters he speaks of the failure to escape from self-interest. In other words, it is the failure of 'imagination' in the tragic heroes, a failure which prevents benevolence, which fascinates Hazlitt.

1. See Albrecht, "Hazlitt's Preference for Tragedy", 1048; and Donohue, 326.

Hazlitt explains the plight of Shakespeare's tragic heroes in terms of imagination gone wrong. With Romeo and Hamlet, the 'imagination' had lifted them, to an extent, out of the real world and left them both self-occupied:

Romeo is Hamlet in love. There is the same rich exuberance of passion and sentiment in the one, that there is of thought and sentiment in the other. Both are absent and self-involved, both live out of themselves in a world of imagination. Hamlet is abstracted from every thing, Romeo is abstracted from every thing but his love, and lost in it. (IV, 254)

Hazlitt sees in Lear a mind which similarly is abstracted from the apparent reality of this world, but through causes totally beyond his control. Lear is seen to be totally bewildered and overwhelmed by injuries which are "without provocation, and admit of no alleviation or atonement". (XVIII, 332) The question of benevolence or self-love becomes irrelevant for Lear, whose mind says Hazlitt, is left,

impotent of resources, cut off, proscribed, anathematised from the common hope of good to itself or ill to others - amazed at its own situation, but unable to avert it, scarce daring to look at, or to weep over it. (XVIII, 332)

In this situation, Hazlitt suggests, Lear's 'imagination' works without any of the restraints provided by the other faculties. His 'imagination' seizes on the idea of his misfortune and magnifies the idea into the dominant element of his thought:

[Lear's passion] will admit no other cause of dire misfortune but its own, which swallows up all other griefs. The force of despair hurries the imagination over the boundary of fact and common sense, and renders the transition sublime (XII, 342)

With Romeo, Hamlet, and Lear it is the strength of 'imagination' and passion, not a lack of moral principles, which renders the mind self-focusing.

Hazlitt's description of the effect on him of Iago directly mirrors his description of Iago's mind. This is one of those instances Hazlitt speaks of, in which a viewer's mind in a sense becomes one with the

character he is watching. Hazlitt said that the reason he went to see the character of Iago on stage was because of "the interest it excites, the sharper edge it sets on [the] curiosity and imagination." (V, 213) Iago similarly is a man whose 'imagination' is on edge; Hazlitt describes him as a man whose "whole plot is to keep his faculties stretched on the rack, in a state of watch and ward, in a state of breathless suspense, without a moment's interval of repose." (V, 214) Both the viewer and Iago, Hazlitt says, have a natural desire for mental stimulation and excitement of the kind offered by imagination.

The problem with Iago, in Hazlitt's estimation, was not that he was self-centered but rather that he was obsessed with the mental excitement offered by 'imagination'. His mind was "not under the restraint of humanity or the sense of moral obligation." (V, 213) Hazlitt sees in Iago an active 'imagination', not unlike that of a playwright, to which Iago is compared:

He is an amateur of tragedy in real life; and instead of exercising his ingenuity on imaginary characters, or forgotten incidents, he takes the bolder and more desperate course of getting up his plot at home, casts the principal parts among his nearest friends and connections, and rehearses it is downright earnest, with steady nerves and unabated resolution. (V, 215)

Iago as a playwright, Hazlitt says in another review, "plots the ruin of his friends as an exercise for his understanding, and stabs men in the dark to prevent ennui." (V, 214) Elsewhere Iago is interpreted as directing the drama which is going on mainly in the theatre of Othello's mind:

Iago ... shews to Othello that he has 'a monster in his thought'; and it is his object to make him believe this by dumb show, by the knitting of his brows, by stops and starts, &c. before he is willing to commit himself by words. (XVIII, 203)

If Iago had lacked imagination, he would have been merely selfish. But the interest in Iago, in relation to Hazlitt's theory of imagination, is that Iago has a highly active imagination yet abuses its powers, and the effect is the same as (or worse than) self-love. Hazlitt

sees Iago as a member of a class of Shakespearean characters who demonstrate the same kind of abuse of imagination. Characters of this class - like Richard III, Lady Macbeth and Falstaff, in Hazlitt's thought, demonstrate "great intellectual activity, accompanied with a total want of moral principle" and employ 'imagination' to their own ends. (V, 213)

Hazlitt objected to the usual presentation of Richard III as an odious and disgusting king. The groundwork of Richard's character, as with Iago, is "that mixture of intellectual vigour with moral depravity, in which Shakespear delighted to shew his strength - [and which] gave full scope as well as temptation to the exercise of his imagination." (IV, 300) Hazlitt views Richard as a man who is already great by virtue of his intellect:

The restless and sanguinary Richard is not a man striving to be great, but to be greater than he is; conscious of his strength of will, his powers of intellect, his daring courage, his elevated station (V, 181)

It is Richard's consciousness of his own powers which make him dangerous, Hazlitt suggests, for Richard, like Iago, is able to stand back from his actions and control the scenes. He consciously adopts roles:

Richard should woo not as a lover, but as an actor - to show his mental superiority, and power to make others playthings of his will. (V, 182)

In another review Hazlitt summarises the nature of the moral depravity he finds in Richard:

[Richard] looked out and laughed from the watchtower of his confidence and his expectations, on the desolation and misery he had caused around him. He held on his way, unquestioned, 'hedged in with the divinity of kings', amenable to no tribunal, and abusing his power in contempt of mankind. (V, 212)

In Characters of Shakespear's Plays Hazlitt makes the comment concerning King John that few characters on stage were more contemptible: "He has no intellectual grandeur or strength of character to shield him from the indignation which his immediate conduct provokes" (IV, 306-7) Presumably, Hazlitt felt that it was the

grandeur of Richard's intellect which retained the audience's respect.

Similarly, Lady Macbeth is saved from the scorn of the audience. Her character clearly is flawed by her failure to cultivate imagination: "Her fault seems to have been an excess of that strong principle of self-interest and family aggrandisement, not amenable to the common feelings of compassion and justice, which is so marked a feature in barbarous nations and times." (IV, 189) Nonetheless, she has an "obdurate strength of will and masculine firmness" which make her great: "She is a great bad woman, whom we hate, but whom we fear more than we hate. She does not excite out loathing and abhorrence like Regan and Goneril." (IV, 188) It is this strength of character which also renders her sublime in Hazlitt's understanding. He compares her to the witches "who become sublime from their exemption from all human sympathies and contempt for all human affairs, as Lady Macbeth does by the force of passion." (IV, 189) Hazlitt sees her looking into the future and being unflinching in her struggle to attain the imagined greatness which awaits her and Macbeth. He even suggests that she may be wicked only by accident of circumstance:

She is only wicked to gain a great end; and is perhaps more distinguished by her commanding presence of mind and inexorable self-will ... than by the hardness of her heart or want of natural affections Nor do the pains she is at to 'screw his courage to the sticking-place,' ... show anything but her greater consistency in depravity. Her strong-nerved ambition furnishes ribs of steel to 'the sides of his intent'; and she is herself wound up to the execution of her baneful project with the same unshrinking fortitude in crime, that in other circumstances she would probably have shown patience in suffering. (IV, 188)

Falstaff takes enjoyment from the mental excitement offered by the 'imagination', and he, too, lacks moral principle. Hazlitt sees in him a total indifference to truth and a "boundless luxury of ... imagination". His self-indulgence of physical appetites is deceptive:

He keeps up perpetual holiday and open house, and we live with him in a round of invitations to a rump and dozen. - Yet we are not to suppose that he was a mere sensualist. All this is as much in imagination as in reality. His sensuality does not engross and stupify his other faculties His imagination keeps up the ball after his senses have done with it. He seems to have even a greater enjoyment of the freedom from restraint, of good cheer, of his ease, of his vanity, in the ideal exaggerated description which he gives them, than in fact. (IV, 278)

Hazlitt sees method in Falstaff's manner. He sees Falstaff instinctively evade "every thing that threatens to interrupt the career of his triumphant jollity and self-complacency". (IV, 279) Hazlitt explains Falstaff's "pulling out the bottle in the field of battle" as "a joke to shew his contempt for glory accompanied with danger, his systematic adherence to his Epicurean philosophy in the most trying circumstances." (IV, 278) Hazlitt sees him, like Iago and Richard, as an actor, but he is without the maliciousness of the others:

He is represented as a liar, a braggart, a coward, a glutton, etc. and yet we are not offended but delighted with him; for he is all these as much to amuse others as to gratify himself In a word, he is an actor in himself almost as much as upon the stage (IV, 279)

Although Hazlitt does not classify Hamlet as one of the class of Shakespearean characters who combine great intellectual activity with moral depravity, he does find in Hamlet a similar kind of fascination with the workings of his own 'imagination', and he suggests that this is the main reason for Hamlet's lack of action. Part of Hazlitt's analysis is worth quoting at length:

He is the prince of philosophical speculators; and because he cannot have his revenge perfect, according to the most refined idea his wish can form, he declines it altogether. So he scruples to trust the suggestions of the ghost, contrives the scene of the play to have surer proof of his uncle's guilt, and then rests satisfied with this confirmation of his suspicions, and the success of his experiment, instead of acting upon it. Yet he is sensible

of his own weaknesses, taxes himself with it, and tries to reason himself out of it Still he does nothing; and this very speculation on his own infirmity only affords him another occasion for indulging it. It is not from any want of attachment to his father or of abhorrence of his murder that Hamlet is thus dilatory, but it is more to his taste to indulge his imagination in reflecting upon the enormity of the crime and refining on his schemes of vengeance, than to put them into immediate practice. His ruling passion is to think, not to act: and any vague pretext that flatters this propensity instantly diverts him from his previous purposes. (IV, 234-235)

The passage may seem to suggest that Hamlet has considerable control over his own situation, that he could act if he did not prefer to indulge his 'imagination' - but this is not the impression that Hazlitt wishes to give. Later in the same article he clarifies that he sees Hamlet's behavior as necessary: "His habitual principles of action are unhinged and out of joint with the time." (IV, 236) Concerning the behavior towards Ophelia, he adds, "In the harassed state of his mind, he could not have done much otherwise than he did." (IV, 236)

Some of Hazlitt's most interesting observations on the workings of the mind occur outside of his Shakespearean criticism but are informative of the general understanding of 'imagination' that he developed there. In particular there are his comments on sleepwalking, found primarily in his essay "On Dreams", first published in March, 1823. He confesses that, "I myself am (or used some time ago to be) a sleep-walker; and know how the thing is". (XII, 19) He proceeds to attack The Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim (1815) for being rooted in modern philosophy and maintaining that we acquire all our ideas of external objects through the senses. Many of our ideas, he says, are gained as they are when sleepwalking with one's eyes open: "The external impression is made before, much in the same manner as it is after we are awake; but it does not lead to the usual train of associations connected with that impression." (XII, 19)

Hazlitt continues his analysis:

The conscious or connecting link between our ideas, which forms them into separate groups or compares different parts and views of a subject together, seems to be that which is principally wanting in sleep so that any idea which presents itself in this anarchy of the mind is lord of the ascendant for the moment, and is driven out by the next straggling notion that comes across it. The bundles of thought are, as it were, untied, loosened from a common centre, and drift along the stream of fancy as it happens. Hence the confusion (not the concentration of the faculties) that continually takes place in this state of half perception. The mind takes in but one thing at a time, but one part of a subject, and therefore cannot correct its sudden and heterogeneous transitions from one momentary impression to another by a larger grasp of understanding. (XII, 20)

For Hazlitt the determining factor seems to be the degree to which reason is being employed and, consequently, the degree to which 'imagination' is ruling the mind.

Hazlitt goes on to link the "anarchy of the mind" in sleepwalking or dreaming with madness as he understands it:

The difference, so far then, between sleeping and waking seems to be that in the latter we have a greater range of conscious recollections, a larger discourse of reason, and associate ideas in longer trains and more as they are connected one with another in the order of nature, whereas in the former any two impressions, that meet or are alike, join company and then are parted again, without notice, like the froth from the wave. So in madness, there is, I should apprehend, the same tyranny of the imagination over the judgement; that is, the mind has slipped its cable, and single images meet, and jostle, and unite suddenly together without any power to arrange or compare them with others, with which they are connected in the world of reality. There is a continual phantasmagoria; whatever shapes and colours come together are by the heat and violence of the brain referred to external nature, without regard to the order of time, place, or circumstance. (XII, 21)

The reference to shapes and colours brought together by heat and violence seems to echo his words about the flame of Shakespeare's genius kindling and melting whatever comes in its way and determining the colour, form, motion, and combination of objects. Also the process of the mind referring the products of its actions in madness

to external nature is the same process that has been pointed out in Hazlitt's comments on Lear and Othello and their use of the heaven image.¹

In concluding this chapter it might be interesting to note that Hazlitt felt that English literature in his own time was in a period of decline. Imagination, as he understood it, had been exchanged for an excess of emotion that had no deep roots in the personalities of the characters or the situations in which they found themselves. Lord Byron's tragedies were among those he criticised:

Modern tragedy, in particular, is no longer like a vessel making the voyage of life, and tossed about by the winds and waves of passion, but is converted into a handsomely-constructed steam-boat, that is moved by the sole expansive power of words. Lord Byron has launched several of these ventures lately (if ventures they may be called) and may continue in the same strain as long as he pleases. We have not now a number of dramatis personae affected by particular incidents and speaking according to their feelings, or as the occasion suggests, but each mounting the rostrum, and delivering his opinion on fate, fortune, and the entire consummation of things. (XII, 53)

Elsewhere Godwin's tragedies come under attack for the same reason. Notice that Hazlitt again uses the image of steam power to refer to mechanical 'imagination':

... the passions are not excited, qualified, or irritated by circumstances, but moulded by the will of the writer, like clay in the hands of the potter. Mr Godwin's imagination works like the power of steam, with inconceivable and incessant expansive force; but it is all in one direction, mechanical and uniform. (XVIII, 307)

In different articles Hazlitt mentions various causes responsible for the decline of literature in his own time. The first consists in what Hazlitt saw as the abstract and speculative truths which removed poets from their own feelings. It is this abstraction which he saw

¹ With this psychological insight, Hazlitt was, perhaps, ahead of his time. Later in the nineteenth century Ludwig Feuerbach, in his Essence of Christianity (a work which was translated into English by George Eliot) was to argue that man's whole notion of God is the result of projecting and objectifying the self. However, Hazlitt's idea here might have been influenced by Coleridge. See: CSC, I, 212-213. fy

in Byron, Godwin, Coleridge and Wordsworth, and it is this abstraction which he identified as "the reigning spirit of the age". (XVIII, 305)¹ He felt it was irreconcilable with dramatic poetry, which he identified as "the closest imitation of nature". (XVIII, 305) It is Coleridge's abstraction which Hazlitt is speaking about when he remarks, "His metaphysics have been a dead weight on the wings of his imagination - while his imagination has run away with his reason and common sense." (XVI, 137)

Another reason Hazlitt gave for the decline of both comedy and tragedy was the stage itself. In an essay entitled "On Modern Comedy" in "The Round Table", Hazlitt argues that stage productions have succeeded in substituting "artificial and intellectual interest for real passion" and that the interests of spectators are now "ideal, remote, sentimental and abstracted." (IV, 13)² He goes on to say that even Shakespeare would not have been able to write in the current times: "Nature would not have presented itself to him in the same freshness and vigour; he must have seen it through all the refractions of successive dullness, and his powers would have languished in the dense atmosphere of logic and criticism." (IV, 13-14)

A final reason for the decline was the general progress of civilization. As Hazlitt said, "the progress of knowledge and refinement has a tendency to circumscribe the limits of the imagination and to clip the wings of poetry." (V, 9) In his own age, he felt, people looked with less awe and more indifference upon the "preternatural world." Further, he comments with some humour,

At present we are less exposed to the vicissitudes of good or evil, to the incursions of wild beasts or 'bandits fierce', or to the unmitigated fury of the elements But the police spoils

1 For an in depth analysis of abstraction see Roy Park, The Spirit of the Age, esp. Chapter 9.

2 Hazlitt is not using the word ideal here in the same sense as it was discussed earlier.

all; and we now hardly so much as dream of a midnight murder. Macbeth is only tolerated in this country for the sake of the music; and in the United States of America, where the philosophical principles of government are carried still farther in theory and practice, we find that the Beggar's Opera is hooted from the stage. Society by degrees, is constructed into a machine that carries us safely and insipidly from one end of life to another, in a very comfortable prose style. (V, 10)

Hazlitt was not alone in suggesting a link between imagination and an age of superstition - Wordsworth had done something similar in his Note to "The Thorn" in 1800.¹ Nor was he alone in mourning the decline of public taste - virtually all of the main Romantic critics did this. But Hazlitt does seem to be alone in suggesting that the advance of civilization in his own time was leading towards the death of imagination. It is a curious cry to hear coming from an age when literary history recognises (certainly in the field of poetry, although not drama) to be one of the most fertile. Rather than dismissing Hazlitt's evaluation, it is important to see it in the context of his ideas of imagination. An age of superstition and insecurity for Hazlitt would imply a time in which the mind was being stimulated by hopes of good and fears of evil. The imagination would be highly active, magnifying whatever impressions came its way, whether they were good or bad. In this process of magnification and heightened awareness, Hazlitt believed, as we have already seen, that the mind would naturally move towards that which was good. Hazlitt did not find this imaginative process happening in his own time in England (although he did frequently find it in the democratic ideals in France until the defeat of Napoleon). Neither did he find a fertile working of the imagination where we would expect him to find it, in the poetry of at least Wordsworth and Coleridge. He did however, find it in Shakespeare. Allowing for the personal conflict which might have pre-

1 See: Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, p.12

vented Hazlitt at times from giving credit to Wordsworth and Coleridge, there was a real difference which he found between their art and that of Shakespeare. In Shakespeare he saw good and bad presented before the audience. The imagination, excited by both good and bad, inspired the audience towards benevolent action. In Coleridge and Wordsworth he saw less concern with human behavior in terms of morality (or what Hazlitt would see as social concern), and more emphasis on the relation between one's own feelings and ideas (or what Hazlitt would see as selfishness). Coleridge's early 'supernatural' poetry he found abstracted from reality, and Wordsworth's interest in the essential passions of simple life he found egotistical.

Hazlitt and Coleridge had a number of points in common. The theories of imagination of both men led them to explore the psychological make-up of Shakespearean characters and both investigated the symbolic or referential function of language. But throughout Hazlitt's criticism there runs the idea that imagination is linked with morality - as is implied by the idea of "democratic imagination" - which Hazlitt never abandons. It is a fundamental difference between him and his contemporaries.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THEME OF IMAGINATION IN COLERIDGE

On the surface, Coleridge's Shakespearean and dramatic criticism has less in common with the work of his contemporaries than was the case with Hunt, Lamb or Hazlitt. The differences in Coleridge's approach appear in relation to the theatre, the form of his criticism, and the philosophical slant of his criticism - differences which help to emphasise both his wide-ranging intellect and the relative independence of his critical thought, as well as the different circumstances of his personal life. Coleridge's theory of imagination is responsible for the most significant of these differences from the other critics: the emphasis on abstract philosophical concepts. His ideas on imagination have a pervasive influence on his thought. However, it may be seen that much of what Coleridge talks about in abstract symbolic terms is at least analogous to many of the issues that the other critics were led to consider from the vantage points of their own ideas of imagination. Coleridge's theory of imagination, in spite of its abstract metaphysical emphasis, is applied thematically in his criticism along many of the lines already discussed with the other critics.

Coleridge did not write regular theatre reviews and his criticisms do not contain frequent references either to the productions at Drury Lane and Covent Garden or the individual performances of actors. J.R. de J. Jackson has shown that the theatre did have a formative and lasting influence on Coleridge's thought, and that he should not be considered as a closet critic.¹ Nonetheless, it is clear from the body of Coleridge's criticism that the theatre had considerably less influence on his thought than on the other critics. The critical application of his theory of imagination for the most part was not modified by response to the particular needs

¹ Jackson, The Influence of the Theatre on Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism. Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Princeton, 1961.

of the theatre.

Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, if not unknown in his lifetime, was at least largely unrecognised. Hazlitt quoted Schlegel's criticism of Shakespear in the "Preface" to his Characters of Shakespear's Plays and said that,

Certainly no writer among ourselves has shown either the same enthusiastic admiration of his genius, or the same philosophical acuteness in pointing out his characteristic excellences.¹

Hunt made a similar claim when he reviewed Hazlitt's work, only he added praise for both Lamb and Hazlitt.

[Schlegel,] with the exception of a few scattered criticisms from Mr. Lamb, had hitherto been the only writer who seemed truly to understand as well as feel him [Shakespeare].²

Although neither Hunt nor Hazlitt was sympathetic to Coleridge, it was the fragmentary form of Coleridge's criticism more than personal animosity, which accounts for the silence concerning his work. Coleridge's various lectures on Shakespeare from 1808 to 1819 were generally well-attended and reports of them were carried in several newspapers. But the text of his lectures remained unpublished as did his extensive marginalia and other notes on the plays. Although contemporary critics (with the exception of Hunt) would have heard Coleridge in conversation on the subject of Shakespeare, they would have discovered only passing comment on Shakespeare in most of Coleridge's published works.

Most of Coleridge's Shakespearean and dramatic criticism was written before Biographia Literaria and the works on Method. Nonetheless, Coleridge's use of the concept of imagination in his criticism may be seen to relate closely to many of the ideas in his later philosophy.

It is important to recognise what was new in Coleridge's thought in Biographia and the works to 1819, and what was not new. Concerning the primary and second-

1 H Works, IV, 172.

2 Examiner, 20 July, 1817; (DC, 291).

ary imagination, McFarland has this to say:

... the secondary imagination, although named as such only in Chapter Thirteen, seems really to be the imagination Coleridge customarily talks about elsewhere, and to be called secondary only because of the primary imagination. The latter is ~~the~~ the true newcomer.¹

It may be pointed out, however, that even if the definitions of primary and secondary imagination in Biographia are taken at their most basic and literal level, they essentially distinguish between God and man. It is the primary which is God-orientated: "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM." It is the secondary which is man-orientated, highlighting, as Coleridge's Chapter XIV emphasises, the creative act of the poet. Both of these aspects of Coleridge's thought on imagination had been present throughout Coleridge's writing to 1815. The 1795 lectures discuss imagination specifically in the context of theology and philosophy, and might be seen to anticipate directly the later primary imagination. More commonly, though, there is a lack of distinction between the divine and human aspects of imagination, while at the same time both divine and human are implied. What seems to be new in Biographia is not the recognition of the God-orientated imagination which Coleridge calls primary, but is rather the clear separation of primary from secondary, accompanied by the clear definition of their natures.

Concerning Coleridge's discussions on Method in the works from 1816-1819, there were, again, some new elements and some old. Much of the significance of the works lies in further developing the suggestion in Biographia that all knowledge relates back to the ultimate source of knowledge which is God, or the I AM of the primary imagination. One of the principles of consciousness in man, which derived from the consciousness of God, was Method - 'a principle of unity with progression'.

¹ McFarland, "The Origin and Significance of Coleridge's Theory of Secondary Imagination", 213.

As was seen earlier when Coleridge's hierarchy of the faculties was discussed (Sense, Fancy, Understanding - Understanding, Imagination, Reason), the understanding sought a principle of unity by working in the material world, and using Theory to formulate laws of physical nature. The understanding also sought progression by recognising the need for an antecedent principle behind the laws of physical nature. So too, the secondary imagination (called Imagination in the hierarchy) sought unity. It combined the Theory supplied by the understanding with its own natural inclination to the Method of Law,¹ the discovery of absolute principles beyond which man's knowledge could not take him. With symbols the secondary imagination pointed to Reason, or what was suggested to be the mind of God, Law, Idea and the primary imagination. God may be seen in Coleridge's scheme as the absolute 'principle of unity with progression'.

It has been common to assume that Coleridge's ideas on Method, like his concept of primary imagination, represent new departures in his thought. For the most part, the ideas on Method are a new departure, for instance with regard to the hierarchical arrangement of the faculties and the integration of the faculties with his notions of Law and Theory. But the manner in which the imagination is said to function in Coleridge's earlier writing is close to Coleridge's ideas on Method, Idea and Law. This closeness can be seen in the 1795 lectures, when imagination was said to seek the originating Cause, much in the manner of the secondary imagination seeking absolute principles which can have no antecedent:

1 Coleridge's description of the Method of Fine Art (i.e. the Method of secondary imagination), as it is found in the Friend reads:

"Between these two [i.e. Law and Theory] lies the Method in the FINE ARTS, which belong indeed to this second or external relation [of Theory], because the effect and position of the parts is always more or less influenced by the knowledge and experience of their previous qualities; but which nevertheless constitute a link connecting the second form of relation with the first." Friend, I, 464. See also: Treatise on Method, 62.

The noblest gift of Imagination is the power of discerning the Cause in the Effect [,] a power which when employed on the works of the Creator elevates and by the variety of its pleasures almost monopolizes the Soul.¹

Imagination was also said to urge "us up the ascent of Being",² and man's happiness was connected with the "Progressiveness" of his nature;³ both ideas suggest the 'principle of unity with progression' behind Method, in Coleridge's later thought.

Coleridge's Shakespearean and dramatic criticism is largely fragmentary. It is given a certain degree of unity, however, by the fact that throughout the concept of imagination is used in a manner similar to that mentioned above regarding 1795 and the ideas on Method. Coleridge uses the concept of imagination in his criticism as he did in his philosophy; as a means of suggesting ultimate principles, which would at once say something about the nature of art, the nature of man and the similarities of those natures to God.

Jackson's discussion of Method in Coleridge's criticism has made important strides in indicating the connections which exist between Coleridge's criticism and philosophy. He has stressed Coleridge's desire for principles in art and has aligned these with Coleridge's in Method and methodical thinking.⁴ Jackson did not stress, however, the connection between the progressive seeking of unity which is part of man's nature (and is also Method, deriving from God) and the discovery of that unity of God through imagination in art. In other words, there remains a need to develop the link between art and metaphysics in Coleridge's criticism.

René Wellek found one comment in Coleridge's criticism which he felt suggested that art played a "metaphysical role which makes it the center of philosophy"; but in Wellek's opinion this was "merely a

1 Lects (1795), 338-339.

2 ibid., 235 & 238.

3 ibid., 109.

4 Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism. esp. 21-74.

reproduction from Schelling and remain[ed] isolated in Coleridge's writing."¹ With the understanding of Coleridge's metaphysics that has been presented in this paper, it might be suggested that Wellek's initial or momentary suspicion was correct. Coleridge was far too systematic a thinker and far too occupied with art to exclude the role of art from his metaphysics. He looked for basic principles and abstract laws in poetry as well as in philosophy. His understanding of the poetic process occupies the central position in his philosophy, for it was through symbolic language and art, not through science and logic, that one attained ultimate knowledge of the universal.

One of the earliest indications of Coleridge's thinking along these lines can be found in "Religious Musings". There bards and philosophers are linked and represent the forces of Imagination which will save civilization from self-destruction. In 1802 Coleridge wrote to William Sotheby:

Metaphysics [sic] is a word, that you, my dear Sir! are no great friend to / but yet you will agree, that a great Poet must be implicité if not explicité, a profound metaphysician.²

In 1804, in a claim which was to be echoed in Biographia, Coleridge suggested Wordsworth as "the first & greatest philosophical poet".³ And in a note on Macbeth for the second lecture of 1813 at Bristol, Coleridge spoke of Shakespeare "standing[ing] the test of philosophic examination"⁴ and of Shakespeare's images demonstrating "correctness in the only philosophical sense."⁵

In connecting poets and philosophers, Coleridge seems to be doing more than making a general comparison. He seems to be indicating that poets have a means of uncovering absolute truths about the source of man's

1 Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism, II, 159.

2 CL, II, To William Sotheby, 13 July, 1802.

3 CL, II, To Richard Sharp, 15 January, 1804.

4 CSC, I, 78.

5 CSC, I, 79.

knowledge. Wordsworth is the "greatest philosophical Poet", Coleridge says, largely because he uses "Imagination or the modifying Power ... in that sense in which it is a dim Analogue of Creation, not all that we can believe but all that we can conceive of creation."¹ The imagination which Wordsworth demonstrates is symbolic of or analogous to the ultimate creative process of God.

For Coleridge, imagination in art tells us about a realm of reality which cannot be directly perceived. In his metaphysical discussion imagination enabled man to discover the principles of absolute knowledge which resided in God, and imagination in poetry serves the same end. For Coleridge poetry is the means whereby the innate spirit of man discovers the source of its being in God. Consider what Coleridge describes as one of the effects of imagination while discussing "Venus and Adonis":

... [the effect of] combining many circumstances into one moment of thought to produce that ultimate end of human thought and human feeling, unity, and thereby the reduction of the spirit to its principle and fountain, who alone is truly One.²

A similar reference to God is made in Coleridge's discussion of Richard II; this time the reference is to a higher Will:

In the epic a pre-announced fate gradually adjusts and employs the will and the incidents as its instruments while the drama places fate and will in opposition [and is] then most perfect when the victory of fate is obtained in consequence of imperfections in the opposing will, so as to leave the final impression that the fate itself is but a higher and more intelligent Will.³

Part of the excellence of Greek tragedy, Coleridge felt, was that it conveyed to the viewer an awareness both that there is a true source (or "final cause") of humanity and that that source lies beyond mortal life:

1 CSC, I, 79.

2 CSC, I, 216.

3 CSC, I, 142.

[Greek tragedy] carried the thoughts into the mythologic world in order to raise the emotions, fears, and hopes which convince the inmost heart that their final cause is not to be discovered in the limits of mere mortal life [and] force us into a presentiment, however dim, of a state in which those struggles of inward free will with outward necessity, which form the true subject of the tragedian¹

Coleridge goes on to comment in the same place that the ground of all tragedy is the moral law, either as it is obeyed or violated, and his understanding of moral law, here as in other places, is that it is our morality which distinguishes us as humans. Coleridge's comment on Caliban is informative:

Caliban, on the other hand, is all earth, all condensed and gross in feelings and images; he has the dawning of understanding without reason or the moral sense, and in him, as in some brute animals, this advance to the intellectual faculties, without the moral sense, is marked by the appearance of vice. 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, these powers cannot be considered other than means to an end, that is, to morality.²

Coleridge believed that even as we are basically moral creatures, as shown to us by our feelings when aroused by imagination, so too God is a moral God and it is from him that we derive our moral ideas. Because they are rooted in him they are absolute and have no logical antecedents. Coleridge saw modern art, as opposed to ancient, as being concerned with what he called the infinite. His description, heavily influenced by Schlegel, gives a further useful indication of his ideal in art:

Whatever has its root in human nature, is excellent, and to the source we must go, therefore.³

[Modern art is concerned with] the infinite and [the] indefinite as the vehicle of the infinite; hence more [devoted] to the passions, the obscure hopes and fears - the wandering

1 CSC, I, 172.

2 CSC, I, 134.

3 CSC, I, 221.

thro' [the] infinite, grander moral feelings, more august conceptions of man as man, the future, rather than the present, -- sublimity.¹

The reason Coleridge describes the moral feelings arising out of poetry as infinite is that he connects them with God. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the eighth of his 1811-1812 lectures on Shakespeare, recorded by J.P. Collier, he tries to compliment poetry by identifying it with religion. Poetry and Religion, he said, had three objectives in common; the first was "To generalize our notions"² by taking us beyond our individual selves into an awareness of mankind as a whole. The second, was to take us beyond the world of the senses and into the imagination in a way that "suberves the interest of our virtues".³ The third, was to call us to perfection:

It bids us, while we are sitting in the dark round our little fire, still look at the mountain tops struggling with the darkness, and which announces that light which shall be common to us all, and in which all individual interests shall dissolve into one common interest, and every man find in another more than a brother.⁴

The transcript continues:

Such being the case, we need not wonder that it has pleased Providence that the divinest truths of religion should be revealed to us in the form of Poetry, and that at all times the Poets ... should have joined to support all those delicate sentiments of the heart ... which might be called the feeding streams of Religion.⁵

Coleridge allocates to poetry a central place in his metaphysical system, but one of the questions which this raises is why he should connect what he calls above "those delicate sentiments of the heart" or in other places "moral feelings" specifically with God and the Primary Imagination. Up to this point in the current study his metaphysical system has been abstract and

1 CSC, I, 222.

2 C on S, 88.

3 C on S, 88.

4 C on S, 88-89.

5 C on S, 89.

difficult. Is he here, as he describes the approach to ultimate truth, simply abandoning rational argument and casting the proof of his thesis on subjective criteria - obscure hopes, fears and moral feelings? The answer must be a qualified no. In spite of appearances, Coleridge is being consistent with some of the basic tenets of his theory and he had already prepared for objections to this apparent subjectivity. In his description of the 'philosophic consciousness' of transcendental philosophers Coleridge was describing the consciousness which is aroused by poetry. He says that "philosophic consciousness", "lies beneath or (as it were) behind the spontaneous consciousness natural to all reflecting beings."¹ He says it is this which "render[s] the mind intuitive of the spiritual in man (i.e. of that which lies on the other side of our natural consciousness)."² That which is spiritual and related to the Primary Imagination of God can be known only with the aid of intuition and can be conveyed only through symbols - "words which are but the shadows of notions; even as the notional understanding itself is but the shadowy abstraction of living and actual truth."³

What Coleridge says about the transcendental symbol further emphasises the impossibility of escaping from this apparently subjective dimension. Transcendental symbols, unlike mathematical symbols, participated only inadequately in the reality for which they stood. In Statesman's Manual Coleridge had said that the symbols of secondary imagination, though "consubstantial with the truths", were primarily "the conductors" of those truths.⁴ In the same work he argued that the absolute IDEAS of God (the products of the method of Law which can have no antecedents and represent the essence of the things to which they relate) correspond to neither our sensations or perceptions, neither our intuitions nor

1 BL, I, 164; (Everyman, 136-7).

2 BL, I, 168; (Everyman, 139).

3 BL, I, 168; (Everyman, 140).

S 4 The Statesman's Manual, 29.

conceptions, and cannot find "an adequate correspondent in the world of the senses".¹

In Coleridge's apparent appeal to the emotions and the thoughts which arise out of them, two things may be discerned. One is that he is trying to incorporate man's emotional responses into his system. He is not looking for an escape from the difficulties of an objective argument by appealing to that which is subjective. Any truly metaphysical system for Coleridge would have to explore "the laws of the WHOLE considered as ONE".² and this would include not only the whole universe considered in its finite and infinite aspects, but also the whole man (intellect plus emotions) and, when considering art in terms of metaphysics, the whole created work (the relation of part to whole in the poem). The second point is that for Coleridge there was no alternative to incorporating emotions in his plan: the only way to leap the gap between symbol and meaning is by thoughts and emotions. The truths which lie in the Primary Imagination of God and which reside in the individual consciousness (or primary imagination of man) are living truths, just as imagination is a "living power",³ and cannot be immediately or directly translated into words.

Coleridge's ideas on Beauty in art seem related to his notions of absolute Laws residing in the Primary Imagination of God, and again the emphasis is placed on intuition:

The Beautiful arises from the perceived harmony of an object, whether sight or sound, with the inborn and constitutive rules of the judgement and imagination: and it is always intuitive.⁴

He connects the Beautiful with "calling on the soul which receives instantly, and welcomes it as something con-natural."⁵ In numerous places elsewhere in his criticism

1 See: The Statesman's Manual, 113-114.

2 The Statesman's Manual, 69.

3 The Statesman's Manual, 69.

4 "On the Principles of Genial Criticism",
BL, II, 243.

5 loc. cit.

Coleridge connects Beauty with the pleasure in art which arises from reconciliation of opposites or the principle of "Multēity in Unity."¹ When Coleridge points to the universality and unity of Shakespeare's art he seems to be suggesting the manner in which 'one graceful and intelligent whole' intuitively awakens the mind to its spiritual source.

Poetry, through the function of the secondary imagination and resultant emotions, serves Coleridge's ultimate goal of discovering the IDEAS or absolute laws which are the source of our being. This seems to have been what Coleridge had in mind in Biographia when he outlined what he saw as the challenge for natural philosophy:

The highest perfection of natural philosophy would consist in the perfect spiritualization of all the laws of nature into laws of intuition and intellect. The phaenomena (the material) must wholly disappear, and the laws alone (the formal) must remain.²

The course Coleridge is proposing is the one we have already traced in his hierarchy of the faculties. We have seen the movement from the material world and the Method of Theory to the spiritual world and the Method of Law. In light of Coleridge's comment above it might be said that poetry does not only supply the emotional complement to his metaphysical system, but assists in the spiritualization of an intellectual process which began with our initial sensory impressions and moved upwards through the mind's use of the Methods of Theory and Law. Coleridge goes on to point out the ultimate goal of natural philosophy:

The theory of natural philosophy would then be completed, when all nature was demonstrated to be identical in essence with that, which in its highest known power exists in man as intelligence and self-consciousness; when the heavens and the earth shall declare not only the power of their

1 See for instance, "On Poesy or Art", BL, II, 262; and "On the Principles of Genial Criticism", BL, II, 230 & 232.

2 BL, I, 175; (Everyman, 146).

maker, but the glory and the presence of their God, even as he appeared to the great prophet during the vision of the mount in the skirts of his divinity.¹

In the poetic realm the same process of spiritualizing the intellectual process is discussed concerning the goal of tragedy:

The ideal of earnest poetry consists in the union and harmonious melting down, the fusion of the sensual into the spiritual, of the man as an animal into man as a power of reason and self-government, which we have represented to us most clearly in the plastic art, or statuary, where the perfection of form is an outward symbol of inward perfection and the most elevated ideas, where the body is wholly penetrated by the soul, and spiritualized even to a state of glory. Like a perfectly transparent body, the matter, in its own nature darkness, becomes [altogether a] vehicle and fixture of light, a means of developing [its] beauties [?] and unfolding its unity into all its ... [?] wealth of various colors without disturb[ance?] ... [?] or division of parts.²

The same spiritualizing process is discussed in Biographia concerning Shakespeare:

What then shall we say? even this; that Shakespeare, no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it; first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge, become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class; to that power which seated him on one of the two glory-smitten summits of the poetic mountain, with Milton as his compeer, not rival. While the former darts himself forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and the flood; the other attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own IDEAL. All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of MILTON; while SHAKESPEARE becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself.³

1 BL, I, 176; (Everyman, 146).

2 CSC, I, 170-1.

3 BL, II, 19-20; (Everyman, 180).

It has often been a stumbling block for critics that Coleridge proposed pleasure as the distinguishing feature of poetry: "A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth" ¹

M.M. Badawi, for instance, suggests that there is a contradiction between the pleasure principle of poetry and Coleridge's idea that the poetic imagination is concerned with providing a mode of apprehending reality. Badawi sees the contradiction as evidence of the inadequacy of the pleasure theory, and maintains that it was an inadequacy of which Coleridge himself was aware. ²

Perhaps Coleridge's pleasure principle has been a stumbling block because pleasure, as Coleridge means it, has not been understood as a means of apprehending reality in itself. For Coleridge, pleasure is another way of talking about those thoughts and feelings which arise out of the emotional excitement offered by the secondary imagination and which end "in the perfect spiritualization of all the laws of nature". It is through pleasure that the spiritualization takes place. Pleasure is the immediate end of poetry because it is only through experiencing that pleasure that absolute truth, or knowledge of Law, could ever be discovered.

What does Coleridge say about the pleasure of poetry? He describes it as "that pleasurable emotion, that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the act of composition". ³ In this state, he goes on to say, there "is produced a more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and of the human heart, united with a constant activity modifying and correcting these truths by that sort of pleasurable emotion, which the exertion of all our faculties gives in a certain degree." ⁴ Further, this is the state "which permits the production of a highly pleasurable whole, of which each part shall also communicate for itself a distinct and

1 BL, II, 10; (Everyman, 172).

2 Badawi, 41-42.

3 CSC, I, 163-4.

4 CSC, I, 164.

conscious pleasure".¹ Coleridge clarifies that it is an "intellectual pleasure" about which he speaks. He takes up the topic of pleasure again in Biographia where he makes many of the same points. In addition he points out that the reader is carried to the same heights as the poet and by the same means:

The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself.²

In the same place Coleridge elaborates on the effect of pleasure in the reader, and it is akin to the pleasure of self-harmony:

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity.³

Coleridge had claimed that the self-consciousness of the transcendental philosopher "is not a kind of being, but a kind of knowing, and that too the highest and farthest that exists for us".⁴ Coleridge includes the best poets, and presumably their readers, under the category of transcendental philosophers and he regards poetry as the medium of that highest kind of knowledge. Coleridge was not concerned that his system demanded something which might be regarded as subjective affirmation on the part of his students. After all, did not nature demand the same? Was not God in nature only affirmed or denied by individual experience? For Coleridge the absolute kind of knowledge could only be attained through a willingness to trust the logical progression of ideas to their source. How, it might be asked, was he sure when he had arrived at the source? The answer is indicated in an after-dinner conversation recorded by J.P. Collier on 21 October, 1811. Coleridge was speaking on the subject of God:

1 CSC, I, 164.

2 BL, II, 11; (Everyman, 173).

3 BL, II, 12; (Everyman, 173-4).

4 BL, I, 187; (Everyman, 155).

... if any person asked him why he believed in the existence of a God, his answer was because he ought: but he would not attempt to prove the existence of God, as many did from his works: no: if he acknowledged a Creator, every feeling of his heart, every being in his works, were in harmony and vibrated with the notion: if he did not acknowledge a God, all was confusion and disorder. He therefore believed in God because he ought, and could give no other reason; nor would he seek for any.¹

The unity and order of the creation aroused in Coleridge a deep intellectual pleasure. The experience stood as a revelation for him of God's ordering presence. Coleridge could find evidence of this presence, this absolute truth, in poetry as well as nature, and he expected others could as well.

Poetry occupied a central position in Coleridge's metaphysics, and his metaphysics had a profound influence on his reading of poetry. Wordsworth and Shakespeare were Coleridge's examples of philosophical poets. Part of what he meant was that he found in their works an understanding (and use) of imagination similar to his own. A clearer indication of his meaning is hinted at in the phrase cited earlier, that Shakespeare "followed rules and principles that merit and stand the test of philosophic examination".² The "rules and principles" that Coleridge singles out in Shakespeare's writing are in most cases identical with those which form the basis of his transcendental philosophy. These rules and principles include a concern for universal truths and first causes, the relation of cause and effect, unity, progression, the relation of part to whole, the relation of the material world to the spiritual world, the Methods of Theory and Law, the symbolic nature of imaginative language, and, perhaps most pervasive of all in influence, the reconciliation of opposites.

1 C on S, 39.

2 CSC, I, 78.

Coleridge's praise for Shakespeare is at times unbounded and he confesses, for instance concerning the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius in Julius Caesar (IV, iii), that he finds something of the superhuman or divine in Shakespeare:

I* know no part of Shakespeare that more impresses on me the belief of his genius being superhuman than this scene. In the Gnostic heresy it might have been credited with less absurdity than most of their dogmas, that the Supreme had employed him to create previously to his function of representing.¹

In another place Coleridge said that the poet produces "a more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and of the human heart"² presumably than nature itself, and this certainly applied to Shakespeare in his opinion: "[Shakespeare is] a genuine Proteus; we see all things in him, as images in a calm lake, most distinct, most accurate, - only more splendid, more glorified."³ In Shakespeare Coleridge finds the ability to go beyond the individual to the universal, beyond the particular truths of an object, character, or emotion, to truths which are universally applicable or of universal interest. In one of the 1808 lectures, Coleridge speaks of the manner in which Shakespeare "elevates and instructs" (a phrase which, incidentally, Hunt had used when speaking of imagination in Critical Essays, which had just been published). As Coleridge said, "Instead of referring to our ordinary situations and common feelings, he [Shakespeare] emancipates us from them and, when most remote from ordinary life, is most interesting."⁴ Coleridge praises the care Shakespeare took in developing and contrasting his characters of Troilus and Cressida:

... Shakespeare calls forth nothing from the mausoleum of history or the catacombs of tradition without giving or eliciting some permanent and general interest, brings forward no subject which he does not moralize or intellectualize.⁵

1 CSC, I, 18.

2 CSC, I, 164.

3 CSC, I, 79.

4 CSC, II, 18.

5 CSC, I, 109.

Coleridge praises the universality, yet he praises the particularity which accompanies it, as his comment on Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy indicates:

Of such universal interest, and yet to which of all Shakespeare's characters could it have [been] appropriately given but to Hamlet? For Jaques it would have been too deep; for Iago, too habitual a communion with the heart, that belongs or ought to belong, to all mankind.¹

Elsewhere Coleridge again stressed the universal aspect of Shakespeare when he said that Shakespeare cannot be said "to have written for any stage but that of the universal mind."²

It is the consistent appropriateness of Shakespeare's art in producing and appealing to universal interests and truths which is of particular interest to Coleridge. Everything is done for a reason; nothing is left to chance. Everything speaks to a broader concern beyond the immediate one. Coleridge scoffs at Dr. Johnson's suggestions on how to make Othello a regular tragedy and holds up Shakespeare as one who works with "the rules dictated by universal reason or the true common sense of mankind".³ Shakespeare rightly discarded the unities of time and place in favour of common sense, and as to the unity of action, Coleridge says, it would have been more "appropriately, as well as more intelligibly, entitled the unity of interest".⁴ Even this, he maintains, which cannot be considered a rule, was constantly observed by Shakespeare:

It is not properly a rule, but in itself the great end, not only of the drama, but of the epic, lyric, even to the candle-flame cone of an epigram - not only of poetry, but of poesy in general, as the proper generic term inclusive of all the fine arts, as its species.⁵

Rules, Coleridge points out, must always be remembered as the "means to ends" and instructs that "the end must be determined and understood before it can be known what the rules are or ought to be".⁶ It is a comment similar to

1 CSC, I, 29.

2 CSC, I, 4.

3 CSC, I, 49-50

4 CSC, I, 50.

5 CSC, I, 50.

6 CSC, I, 50.

his maxim in Biographia concerning philosophical works: "Until you understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding".¹

Coleridge always sought Shakespeare's understanding of his own works before he passed judgement, and he expected that the ends of works would be different. To compare any works on the basis of absolute rules instead of principles arising from within the work he suggested was like trying to compare the swan and the dove which are both "transcendently beautiful":

As absurd as it would be to institute a comparison between their separate claims to beauty from an abstract rule common to both, without reference to the life and being of the animals themselves ... not less absurd is it to pass judgement on the works of a poet on ... any ground indeed save that of their inappropriateness to their own end and being, their want of significance, as symbol and physiognomy.²

Coleridge is advocating an organic approach to poetry that treats each work as having a life of its own and operating by its own rules. In his own criticism he applied this attitude not only to the genres of comedy, tragedy and what he called modern comedy, which obviously would have different ends with each "founded on principles of its own"³, but also to individual works, or characters or lines within those works.

Throughout Coleridge's criticism there are recurring indications of his looking for the particular way in which a play, a character, or lines operate by their own principles - it is too basic to his approach to be otherwise. A few immediate examples might serve to clarify how this principle of the organic nature of art manifests itself in his criticism. For instance, he notes the absence of any punning in Macbeth and finds the reason for it in the play at large: "Entire absence of comedy, nay, even of irony and philosophic contemplation in Macbeth - because wholly tragic."⁴ He says this with

1 BL, I, 160; (Everyman, 134).

2 CSC, I, 196.

3 CSC, I, 172.

4 CSC, I, 78.

the exception of the Porter scene which he believes to be an interpolation.¹ Concerning Lear Coleridge notes that it is "the only serious performance of Shakespeare the interest and situations of which are derived from the assumption of a gross improbability",² namely, the conduct of Lear. In a serious play like Lear improbability could damage the work's unity, but Coleridge found that in this case, and in a similar one in Merchant of Venice with the "pound of flesh", Shakespeare had avoided damaging the life of the play. He gave two reasons: firstly, the stories were popular - they were "without any of the effects of improbability". Secondly, the scenes provided simply a canvas or an occasion for the action - "The accidental is nowhere the groundwork of the passions".³ Coleridge normally rebelled against any accident in the plot of a play, but when he found one in Hamlet - Hamlet's capture by pirates - he found that Shakespeare was justified and the reason lay in Hamlet's personality:

Almost the only play of Shakespeare, in which mere accidents, independent of all will, form an essential part of the plot; but here how judiciously in keeping with the character of the over-meditative Hamlet, ever at last determined by accident or by a fit of passion.⁴

Coleridge looks for the reason that Ophelia is re-introduced at the end of IV, v, and discovers it is Laertes: "Shakespeare evidently wishes as much as possible to spare the character of Laertes, to break the extreme turpitude of his consent to become an agent and accomplice of the king's treacheries".⁵ Because of the repetition of the word 'mermaid' in the lines from Julius Caesar:

So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes,
And made their bends adornings; at the helm
A seeming mermaid steers (II, ii, 211-213)

Coleridge finds the lines impaired. He has so much faith in the appropriateness of Shakespeare's usual choice of

1 CSC, I, 77.

2 CSC, I, 59.

3 CSC, I, 59.

4 CSC, I, 35.

5 CSC, I, 35.

phrase that he suggests an error is present in the text:

I* strongly suspect that Shakespeare wrote either "sea-queens," or rather "sea brides" [instead of "so many mermaids"]. He never, I think, would have so weakened by useless anticipation the fine image following --

.... at the helm

A seeming mermaid -- 1

Elsewhere, when Coleridge half-heartedly suggests an alteration to one of Shakespeare's lines which would improve its meter, he reminds himself:

... Shakespeare never avails himself of the supposed licence of transposition merely for the metre. There is always some logic either of thought or passion to justify it.²

That each work had its own 'life' and operated by its own principles of course implied that each work was a unity. The unity Coleridge found in Shakespeare's works was the same unity he found in nature. As he says, in his first lecture at Bristol in 1813,

[Shakespeare] is not to be tried by ancient and classic rules, but by the standard of his age. That law of unity which has its foundation, not in factitious necessity of custom, but in nature herself, is instinctively observed by Shakespeare.³

In Coleridge's early poetry, for instance in "Religious Musings" and "The Eolian Harp" - written when Coleridge was closest to pantheism - the unity in poetry and nature was seen directly as the unity of God. Again, in Coleridge's first distinction of imagination and fancy in 1802, the imagination of the Hebrew poets was seen giving each thing a life of its own, yet each demonstrated what Coleridge called the "one Life". In the parallels Coleridge draws between the unity in nature and the unity in Shakespeare's art, the same kind of connection to the "one Life" is suggested.

Coleridge draws explicit parallels between the unity in nature and the unity in Shakespeare's art. In a discussion of Romeo and Juliet, Coleridge comments:

1 CSC, I, 88.

2 CSC, I, 16.

3 CSC, II, 265.

... the harmon[ies] that strike us in the wildest natural landscapes ... are effected by a single energy, modified ab intra in each component part. Now as this is the particular excellence of the Shakespearean dramas generally, so is it especially characteristic of the Romeo and Juliet.¹

Elsewhere Coleridge suggests a parallel between the unity displayed in the characterisation of Hamlet. The parts of the cathedral, he says,

... are in themselves very sharply distinct and separate, and this distinction and separation of the parts is counter-balanced only by the multitude and variety of those parts, by which the attention is bewildered; - whilst the whole, or that there is a whole produced, is altogether a feeling in which the several thousand distinct impressions lose themselves as in a universal solvent.²

Coleridge goes on to suggest that the unity in a Gothic cathedral, as in Hamlet, is like that found in nature, "in a prospect from a mountain's top": "[T]here is, indeed, a unity, an awful oneness; - but it is [a unity], because all distinction evades the eyes."³

In the first Bristol lecture of 1813 Coleridge spoke specifically of two unities he found in Shakespeare. He spoke of a "unity of feeling" which pervades all of Shakespeare's plays and gives the example of Romeo and Juliet:

In Romeo and Juliet all is youth and spring - it is youth with its follies, its virtues, its precipitancies; it is spring with its odours, flowers, and transiency: - the same feeling commences, goes through, and ends the play.⁴

Coleridge also speaks of a "unity of character which pervades the whole of his dramas", and points to the consistent eagerness and hastiness of the Capulets and Montagues, though they are old; he points to Romeo with his "precipitate change of passion, his hasty marriage,

1 CSC, I, 5.

2 CMC, 149.

3 CMC, 149-150.

4 CSC, II, 265.

and his rash death, [which] are all the effects of youth"; and he points to the "tender and melancholy" love of Juliet which is consistent to the end where "it ends with a long deep sigh, like the breeze of the evening".¹

The unity to which Coleridge most frequently returns in his criticism is the unity of nature found in Shakespeare. No writer equalled Shakespeare; Coleridge claimed, in use of what he called "the language of nature":²

So correct was it that we could see ourselves in all he wrote; his style and manner had also that felicity, that not a sentence could be read without its being discovered if it were Shakespearean. In observations of living character ... [and] in drawing from his own heart Shakespeare excelled [consider] the great characters of Othello, Iago, Hamlet, and Richard III.; as he never could have witnessed anything similar, he appears invariably to have asked himself, How should I act or speak in such circumstances?³

The question that Coleridge imagined Shakespeare to ask was the same question that Coleridge asked himself when he was reading or viewing a play. The basic criteria of the 'language of nature' was how natural does the language appear to me; the fact that Shakespeare succeeded in this for so many people was further proof, not only of the unity of his work with nature but also of the universality of his work. Coleridge further discusses the language of nature in his notes on the first act of Hamlet, particularly concerning the minute sounds that drew the attention of Francisco while he stood on watch. Coleridge found a psychological truth, or what he called "philosophic pertinency",⁴ in Shakespeare's detail:

The attention to minute sounds, - naturally associated with the recollection of minute objects, and the more familiar and trifling,

1 CSC, II, 265.

2 CSC, II, 267.

3 CSC, II, 267.

4 CSC, I, 42.

the more impressive from the unusual-
ness of their producing any impression
at all¹

Beyond that, Coleridge finds another purpose in the conversation:

... commonness in ordinary conversation tends to produce the sense of reality, and at once hides the poet and yet approximates the reader or spectator to that state in which the highest poetry will appear [i.e. imagination], and in its component parts, tho' not in whole composition, really is the language of nature. If I should not speak it, I feel that I should be thinking it; the voice only is the poet's, the words are my own.²

Coleridge's meaning here seems to be that the naturalness of the language helps to move him into the realm of the imagination. The characters' words express thoughts that he himself might have had were he placed in their situations, and this heightens the imaginative power of the work.

Another aspect of natural unity in Shakespeare's work which Coleridge points to is the way in which descriptions unfold to the eye as they would were one actually present in the scene. The comment comes in the course of discussing imagination in Shakespeare:

In its tranquil and purely pleasurable operation, it acts chiefly by producing out of many things, as they would have appeared in the description of an ordinary mind, described slowly and in unimpassioned succession, a oneness, even as nature, the greatest of poets, acts upon us when we open our eyes upon an extended prospect.³

The example he chooses to illustrate this remark are the lines from Venus and Adonis describing Adonis's flight from the enamoured goddess: "Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky,/ So glides he in the night from Venus' eye". (ll.815-6) Here he marvels at the "many images and feelings" which are "brought together without effort and without discord."⁴ Another

1 CSC, I, 42.

2 CSC, I, 42-43.

3 CSC, I, 213.

4 CSC, I, 213.

example of Shakespeare's natural unfolding of his topic Coleridge finds in a brief conversation between Brabantio and Othello where the latter is warned to beware of Desdemona (I, iii, 292-4). Events seem to be foreshadowed, even as they sometimes appear to be in real life:

In real life how do we look back to little speeches, either as presentimental [of], or most contrasted with, an affecting event. Shakespeare, as secure of being read over and over, of becoming a family friend, how he provides this for his readers, and leaves it to them.¹

A further example is the natural movement of Lear which Coleridge compares with "the hurricane and the whirlpool, absorbing while it [i.e. the play] advances. It begins as a stormy day in summer, with brightness; but that brightness is lurid, and anticipates the tempest".²

When Coleridge speaks of the reality of nature which permeates Shakespeare's art, he is not referring to a strict, factual reality, but rather to nature modified by emotion. To try for a strict factual reality, he says at one point,

[is] never attainable, and, if attainable, would disappoint the very purposes and ends of the drama, demonstrat[ing] not good sense, but an utter want of all imagination, a deadness to that necessary pleasure, the being innocently - shall I say, deluded? -- no: but drawn away from ourselves into the music of noblest thoughts in harmonizing sounds.³

Coleridge's belief that imagination provides a "more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and of the human heart"⁴ is re-stated in Biographia. He points to the "union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed"⁵ and praises particularly those instances in which imagination lifts to the ideal world those "forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew-drops".⁶

1 CSC, I, 49.

2 CSC, I, 54.

3 CSC, I, 79.

4 CSC, I, 164.

5 BL, I, 59; (Everyman, 48).

6 BL, I, 59; (Everyman, 48-9).

It was exactly that which Coleridge had praised in the lines at the beginning of Hamlet: "I have heard, / The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn, / Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat / Awake the god of day." (I, i, 149-52). Coleridge's brief comment was this: "how to elevate a thing almost mean by its familiarity, young poets may learn in the cock-crow."¹

Unity is the ultimate aim of Coleridge's metaphysical system. He aims at an awareness of the Oneness or Wholeness of Creation and a recognition of the creative benevolent intelligence of God behind all creation. Insofar as poetry serves the same purpose, in fact provides part of the means of attainment of that end, the unity of Creation is also its concern. On another level, however, the unity of the poem, in Coleridge's system, should be seen as analogous to the unity of God's creation, even as the imagination of man is analogous to God's creative power. It is to be expected that what Coleridge applies to Creation in his system he will also apply, in some manner, to poetry in his criticism.

In Coleridge's hierarchical arrangement of the faculties there was a line drawn half-way. This line, it was argued earlier, separated not only Sense, Fancy, and Understanding from Understanding Imagination and Reason, but also the material world from the primarily spiritual and the Method of Theory from the Method of Law. One of the features common to both Theory and Law, and which served as a basis for Coleridge's understanding of Method, was that the mind had a natural inclination to look for a cause for every effect and a natural inclination to find unity. The difference between Theory and Law was essentially

1 CSC, I, 21.

that Theory looked for natural laws to explain phenomena but did not look beyond those, as did the Method of Law, for an antecedent principle. But Coleridge recognised that in order for the mind to move from Theory to Law, a principle of progression was required. Thus he defined Method as 'a principle of unity with progression'. This idea of progression, (actually formulated first very early in Coleridge's career) when taken in conjunction with the idea of unity formed an important part of his approach to Shakespeare.

Coleridge's idea of progression as applied to poetry is perhaps best suggested in the seventh of his lectures of 1811-1812, immediately following a short discussion of reconciliation of opposites:

These were the grandest effects, where the imagination was called forth, not to produce a distinct form, but a strong working of the mind still producing what it still repels, and again calling forth what it again negatives, and the result is what the Poet wishes to impress, to substitute a grand feeling of the unimaginable for a mere image.¹

The imagination "still producing what it still repels" presents a picture of unceasing progression on the part of the poet toward the unity which is his goal in a work, while the same progressing movement would be experienced by the reader. The progression Coleridge talks about in his criticism is not just the progression of story or plot, although that has much to do with his meaning. Rather it is a movement towards the ideal, the progression from the material or sensual world (where Theory operates) to the imaginative realm (where Law functions). Coupled with this it is a progression which does not permit undue dwelling on each component part of the whole work: instead each part assists in moving the reader forward with anticipation while providing interest in its own right — the kind of attraction-repulsion paradox Coleridge was hinting at above.

Indications of Coleridge's belief in unity with progression in his criticism often appear concerning specific lines of images. It is this principle which guides Coleridge in determining which lines belong to Shakespeare:

¹ C on S, 82.

To distinguish what is legitimate in Shakespeare from what does not belong to him, we must observe his varied images symbolical of moral truth, thrusting by and seeming to trip up each other, from an impetuosity of thought, producing a metre which is always flowing from one verse into the other, and seldom closing¹ with the tenth syllable of the line

He maintained that this cascading movement of thought from line to line was characteristic of Shakespeare's early and later works, and was so clearly to be seen that in Pericles, "written a century before, but [altered by Shakespeare] his alteration may be recognised even to half a line."² Coleridge questions the authenticity of two lines in Antony's speech 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, 208-9). He doubts the authenticity because of the rhythm and because there is not the same kind of progression he usually finds in Shakespeare's associative thought:

I* doubt these lines: not because they are vile; but first, on account of the very rhythm, which is not Shakespearian but just the very tune of some old play, from which the actor might have interpolated them; and secondly, because they interrupt not only the sense and connection, but likewise the flow both of the passion and (what is with me still more decisive) the Shakespearian link of association we have only to read the passage without it to see that it never was in it.³

Coleridge goes on to point out why the particular conceit of the hart Antony uses - and which he had first used three lines earlier in line 205 - is so unlike Shakespeare:

Conceits he has, but they not [only] rise out of some word in the lines before, but they lead to the thought in the lines following. Here it is a mere alien; Antony forgets an image, when he is even touching it; and recollects it when the thought last in his mind must have led him away from it.⁴

1 CSC, II, 267-8.

2 CSC, II, 268.

3 CSC, I, 17.

4 CSC, I, 17.

There are numerous instances in which Coleridge points to the principle of unity with progression operating beyond the scope of individual lines. It is found in the progression to the ideal in the various parts of Shakespeare's world. In Othello, Shakespeare defends the first act at Venice because it assists in this process:

Confirmation of my reason: in how many ways is not Othello made, first, our acquaintance - then friend - then object of anxiety - before the deep interest, is to be approached. So the storm, etc.¹

Coleridge finds a similar kind of progression in Hamlet where he finds the "gradual ascent from the simplest forms of conversation to the language of impassioned intellect".² Coleridge charts this rise from what he suggests is the senses toward the ideal in another place in his criticism of Hamlet:

[The opening language] is the language of sensation among men the armour, the dead silence, the watchfulness that first interrupts it, the welcome relief of guard, the cold, the broken expressions as of a man's compelled attention to bodily feelings allowed no man, - all excellently accord with and prepare for the after gradual rise into tragedy - but above all into a tragedy the interest of which is eminently ad et apud intra³

Coleridge sees the Sergeant's speech in the second act of Macbeth assisting the progression of the play to the tragic level by substituting (as he notes was done with the play in Hamlet) the epic for the tragic "in order to make the latter be felt as the real-life diction".⁴

Edgar's madness in Lear assists the progression into Lear's madness, Coleridge suggests: "Edgar's false madness taking off part of the shock from the true, as well as displaying the profound difference."⁵ The principle of Method was an indication to Coleridge of rational thought and the right use of reason. So too, the absence of the principle

1 CSC, I, 51.

2 CSC, I, 67.

3 CSC, I, 20.

4 CSC, I, 67.

5 CSC, I, 65.

of unity with progression indicated irrational thought, as witnessed in the contrast between Edgar and Lear:

In Edgar's ravings Shakespeare all the while lets you see a fixed purpose, a practical end in view; - in Lear's, there is only the brooding of one anguish, an eddy without progression.¹

An integral part of Coleridge's thinking on the subject of unity with progression in poetry is his understanding of the relation of part to whole in a composition. As he said in numerous places when defining poetry: "external nature and human thoughts and affections" must work "to the production of as great immediate pleasure in each part as is compatible with the largest possible sum of pleasure on the whole".² Man's ability to subordinate one part to another or to the whole, he suggests at one point, is what "constitutes our perfection".³ Excessive pleasure in any part of a composition would draw away from the whole and the progression of the work would be interrupted. Instead, each part must be in harmony with the whole, and the distinction he makes is between the mechanical talent and the imaginative genius:

The distinction, or rather the essential difference, betwixt the shaping skill of mechanical talent, and the creative, productive life-power of inspired genius: in the former each part is separately conceived and then by a succeeding act put together - not as watches are made for wholesale - for here each part supposes a preconception of the whole in some mind,.... but as the pictures on a motley screen.⁴

The imaginative genius like Shakespeare produced a harmony like that found in nature, "effected by a single energy, modified ab intra in each component part."⁵ The effect of this harmony in a work was to fuse the various parts or feelings into one whole. Coleridge had described the poet in Biographia as one who "diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends and (as it were) fuses, each into each".⁶ That action is further described by Coleridge

1 CSC, I, 65.

C on S, 54-55.
2 CSC, I, 254. See also CSC, I, 164 and

3 C on S, 84.

4 CSC, I, 4-5.

5 CSC, I, 5.

6 BL, II, 12; (Everyman, 174).

when discussing Shakespeare's imagination and King Lear:

... imagination ... the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others and by a sort of fusion to force many into one - that which after shewed itself in such might and energy in Lear, where the deep anguish of a father spreads the feeling of ingratitude and cruelty over the very elements of heaven.¹

The same anguish served to bring Lear entirely into the sympathy of the audience, with dislike of him for his faults being fused into the greater feeling of pity:

All Lear's faults increase our pity. We refuse to know them otherwise than as means and aggravations of his sufferings and his daughters' ingratitude.²

In the character of Richard II Coleridge also finds elements which fuse the play together, for Richard's development in the course of the play runs parallel to that of others, most notably York's:

This species [found in York] of accidental and adventitious weakness is brought into parallel with Richard's continually increasing energy of thought, and as constantly diminishing power of acting; - and thus it is Richard that breathes a harmony and a relation into all the characters of the play.³

In another criticism of Richard II, Coleridge similarly notes that Shakespeare "presents the germ of all the after events, in Richard's insincerity, partiality, arbitrariness, favoritism, and in the proud, tempestuous temperament of his barons."⁴

The manner in which the imagination, as Coleridge saw it, acts to fuse disparate elements in poetry is best understood within the context of reconciliation of opposites. It was argued when discussing reconciliation of opposites in the first section of this thesis that the phrase was often misunderstood, and care should be taken that those same misunderstandings should not be brought to his criticism. Reconciliation of opposites does not produce something static. Coleridge emphasised that imagination was essentially vital and the product of its action in

1 CSC, I, 212-213.

2 CSC, I, 65.

3 CSC, I, 150.

4 CSC, I, 153.

reconciliation of opposites is likewise vital. Two things, or thoughts, or feelings of opposite nature are brought together each with their own distinct identities. They try to repel one another, but are unable. Instead, there is some interpenetration of the two. As long as they are held together by the powers of imagination, they are engaged in this dynamic relationship. The product of this relationship is a new identity composed of the intermingling of the two opposites, while their separate identities are not entirely lost to sight. Thus reconciliation of opposites is best understood as an action of the imagination which brings opposites together and holds them in tension, forming a new dynamic identity. Coleridge's understanding of poetic reconciliation of opposites is quite clear in this passage which discusses the reconciliation of Shakespeare's creative and intellectual powers:

In Shakespeare's poems, the creative power and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace. Each in its excess of strength seems to threaten the extinction of the other. At length in the DRAMA they were reconciled, and fought each with its shield before the breast of the other. Or like two rapid streams, that, at their first meeting within narrow and rocky banks mutually strive to repel each other and intermix reluctantly and in tumult; but soon finding a wider channel and more yielding shores blend, and dilate, and flow on in one current and with one voice.¹

Coleridge's interest in reconciliation of opposites in Shakespeare is fully evident in his criticism. He notes that the suppression of Hamlet's feelings at I, ii, 74 prepares for their later overflow.² He praises Shakespeare's repeated entrance of the ghost in Hamlet for reconciling or fusing the objective and the subjective:

... the apparition itself has by its frequent previous appearances [prior to I, iv] been brought nearer to a thing of this world. This accrescence of objectivity in a ghost that yet retains all its ghostly attributes and fearful subjectivity, is truly wonderful.³

1 BL, II, 19 (Everyman, 180).

2 CSC, I, 23.

3 CSC, I, 25.

Coleridge chastises Theobald for trying to remove the contradiction in the III, i, 79-80: "The undiscover'd country from whose bourn/No traveller returns". For Coleridge the logical opposition provides room for imagination: the "apparent contradiction" he suggests need not be removed as it is "a great beauty".¹

Coleridge finds one contradiction in Hamlet which is not reconciled and which he regards as a weakness. The contradiction occurs when the messenger announces to the king the revolt of Laertes:

Fearful* and self-suspicious as I always feel when I seem to see an error of judgement in Shakespeare, yet I cannot reconcile the cool, 'rational and consequential' reflection in these three lines (IV, v, 101-3) with the² anonymousness or the alarm of the messenger.

Examples of reconciliations of opposites are found in Coleridge's criticism of other plays as well. In the friendship of Roderigo and Iago at the opening of Othello Coleridge finds a kind of reconciliation of opposites:

The very three first lines happily state the nature and foundation of the friendship - the purse - as well [as] the contrast of Roderigo's intemperance of mind with Iago's coolness, the³ coolness of a preconceiving experimenter.

Opposed to Iago's strength of character is Roderigo: "the want of character and the power of the passions, - like the wind loudest in empty houses, form his character".⁴ A similar bringing together of opposite characters at the beginning of Act I, vi of Macbeth contributes to the poetic effect:

The lyrical movement with which this scene opens, and the free and unengaged mind of Banquo, loving nature, and rewarded in the love itself, form a highly dramatic contrast with the laboured rhythm and hypocritical over-much of Lady Macbeth's welcome, in which you cannot detect a ray of personal feeling, but all is thrown upon the 'dignities,' the general duty.⁵

1 CSC, I, 103.

2 CSC, I, 34.

3 CSC, I, 45.

4 CSC, I, 44-45.

5 CSC, I, 73.

Coleridge praises Richard II for the opposites brought together in the character of Richard -

The consequent alternation of unmanly despair and of ungrounded hope; and throughout the rapid transition from one feeling to its opposite.¹

and in the character of Bolingbroke, as seen in his speech at III, iii, 31-61, where he kisses Richard's hand -

The fine struggle of haughty sense of power and ambition with the necessity of dissimulation in Bolingbroke's speech.²

Yet in spite of the beauties in the play, Coleridge felt it unsuited for the stage. The reason, apart from the length and number of long speeches which he mentions, might have been that the play presented events in their 'reconciled' state, instead of allowing the tensions to be worked out in front of the audience:

... (with one exception) the events are all historical, presented in their results, not produced by acts seen, or that take place before the audience³

The function of reconciliation of opposites was not limited to tragedy in Coleridge's view, but was a property of any work which strived for the ideal. There were large differences between comedy and tragedy in both Greek and Shakespearean art, he maintained, "But as immediate struggle of contraries supposes an arena common to both [genres], so both were alike ideal"⁴ An example of reconciliation of opposites in Shakespeare's comedies is found at the beginning of The Tempest, where the two roles of Prospero - Prospero the 'magician' and Prospero the 'father' - are brought together and the audience's possible dislike of one is reconciled with its liking of the other:

Observe ... the perfect probability of the moment chosen by Prospero (the very Shakespeare himself, as it were, of the tempest) to open out the truth to his daughter, his own romantic bearing, and how completely any thing that might have been disagreeable

1 CSC, I, 156.

2 CSC, I, 156.

3 CSC, I, 142.

4 CSC, I, 169.

to us in the magician, is reconciled and shaded in the humanity and natural feelings of the father.¹

Coleridge examines the speech of Biron at the end of Act IV of Love's Labor's Lost, as an example of elevated intellectual activity in the play and he points to two kinds of reconciliations of opposites which may be found:

... sometimes you see this youthful god of poetry connecting disparate thoughts purely by means of resemblances in the words expressing them, - a thing in character in lighter comedy, especially of that kind in which Shakespeare delights, namely, the purposed display of wit, though sometimes, too, disfiguring his graver scenes; - but more often you may see him doubling the natural connection of order of logical consequence in the thoughts by the introduction of an artificial and sought for resemblance in the words²

The two kinds of union of disparate thought that Coleridge is talking about seem to be two kinds of punning. The first is based on the resemblance of sound between two words with different meanings. Presumably here the resemblance would be a natural one, for instance as is found between the words 'told' and 'tolled'. The second kind of play on words brings together two words which may be similar, but which are logically opposed, hence there is the doubling of meaning of which Coleridge speaks. The example of the latter which he gives, is the line, "And then grace us in the disgrace of death". He explains that this figure has "force and propriety, as justified by the law of passion" and that it excites the mind in "unusual activity" which seeks a release or an escape, or what Coleridge calls a "means to waste its superfluity".³ Coleridge goes on to explain that there are two kinds of release possible:

... in the highest degree - in lyric repetitions and sublime tautology - (at her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay+down;
at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead), - and, in lower degrees, in making the words themselves the subjects and materials of

1 CSC, I, 133.

2 CSC, I, 95-96.

3 CSC, I, 96.

that surplus action, and for the same cause that agitates our limbs, and forces our very gestures into a tempest in states of high excitement.¹

Reconciliation of opposites, apart from its centrality in helping to understand how the effects of imagination are poetically produced, is of central importance in understanding Coleridge's theory of dramatic mimesis.

Coleridge's discussion of dramatic mimesis is related directly to his understanding of secondary imagination leading man to an intuitive awareness of the primary imagination of God. His theory of dramatic mimesis is essentially this: if drama is purely artificial, it will have little correspondence to reality, and will lack interest; and similarly, if it is a mere "copy" of nature, the interest will be minimal. The imagination is aroused when there is a difference between the representation of the object and the object itself, a difference which at once suggests both identity and contrariety.² Coleridge talks about that difference in this passage:

... drama is an imitation of reality, not a copy - and that imitation is distinguished from copy by this: that a certain quantum of difference is essential to the former, and an indispensable condition and cause of the pleasure we derive from it; while in a copy it is₃ a defect, contravening its name and purpose.

The difference between that which represents and that which is represented is like the difference between symbol and thought in Coleridge's transcendental philosophy. The imagination spans the gap between the two and discovers the nature of the thought behind the symbol. With drama, the opposites which need reconciliation are the play as fiction on the stage and the play as a representation of truth and reality. To accept the presentation as total truth or total falsehood would be wrong. A balance must be maintained:

1 CSC, I, 96.

2 A useful discussion of "copy" versus "imitation" in Coleridge's thought may be found in J.R. de J. Jackson's "Coleridge on Dramatic Illusion and Spectacle in the Performance of Shakespeare's Plays", MP, LXII (1964), 13-21.

3 CSC, I, 127-8.

The mind of the spectator, or the reader is not to be deceived into any idea of reality, as the French critics absurdly suppose; neither, on the other hand, is it to retain a perfect consciousness of the falsehood of the presentation. There is a state of mind between the two, which may be properly called illusion¹

Coleridge had touched on a similar point in one of his 1811-1812 lectures, identifying the middle state as the proper one for imagination:

... there is an effort in the mind, when it would describe what it cannot satisfy itself with the description of, to reconcile opposites, and to leave a middle state of mind more strictly appropriate to the imagination than any other when it is hovering between two images: as soon as it is fixed on one it becomes understanding, and when it is wavering between them, attaching itself to neither, it is imagination. Such was the fine description of Death in Milton, 'Of Shadow like, but called Substance', etc.²

Just as there is an appeal to the imagination in the difference between symbol and thought, so, too, there is that appeal in the difference between fiction and truth in drama. As soon as the imagination fastens on one or the other it becomes static and turns back into understanding. This is perhaps the clearest picture of the imagination being called forth "not to produce a distinct form, but a strong working of the mind still producing what it still repels, and again calling forth what it again negatives."³

There are two reasons that Coleridge gives to account for the mind's acceptance of the apparent reality of stage illusion. The first is Coleridge's well-known idea of the "willing suspension of disbelief". The second is the idea developed earlier in this chapter which has not been dealt with by others, that a reconciliation of opposites which produces illusion in art leads one to an awareness of the eternal consciousness of God. S

With regard to the first, Coleridge suggested that the apparent reality of stage illusion might be

1 CSC, II, 321-2.

2 C on S, 82.

3 C on S, 82.

compared with the apparent reality of a dream:

... as in a dream, the judgement is neither beguiled, nor conscious of the fraud, but remains passive. Whatever disturbs this repose of the judgement by its harshness, abruptness, and improbability, offends against dramatic propriety.¹

It might be noted that in at least two places in Shakespeare Coleridge finds this repose of the judgement abruptly disturbed: the blinding of Gloucester,² and the comic and tragic parts in Measure for Measure which he finds "disgusting" and "horrible", respectively.³

There are three differences between the mind in the state of dreaming and the mind when it is involved in stage illusion. Coleridge says the first is that our dream images are more vivid because they are separate from all outward impressions. Next, sensations and the resultant emotions produce the images in dreams but with stage illusion (and the wakeful state in general), the inverse is true: the images presented to us give rise to our emotions. Lastly, with stage illusion the will comes into play in order to dismiss the act of judgement, and this is not necessary in dreams:

... in sleep we pass at once by a sudden collapse into this suspension of will and the comparative power: whereas in an interesting play, read or represented, we are brought up to this point, as far as it is requisite or desirable, gradually, by the art of the poet and the actors; and with the consent and positive aidance of our own will. We choose to be deceived.⁴

It was this which Coleridge was talking about in Biographia when he used the phrase "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith".⁵ He cautions that all aspects of a play must work, by increasing the viewer's inward excitement, toward the "chief end, that of producing and supporting this willing illusion".⁶ Nonetheless, this does not mean

1 CSC, II, 322.

2 CSC, I, 66.

3 CSC, I, 113.

4 CSC, I, 129.

5 BL, II, 6; (Everyman, 169).

6 CSC, I, 130.

that the excellencies of the drama "therefore cease to be themselves ends, and as such carry their own justification with them as long as they do not contravene or interrupt the illusion."¹

The second reason for the mind accepting the apparent reality of stage illusion is the metaphysical one. It is most clearly stated in a fragment which T.M. Raysor finds evidence of belonging to Coleridge's lectures of 1808.² Coleridge is talking about the delight we feel when we find something in nature which looks artificial, or when something artificial (like a play) appears natural. The pleasure of the illusion created by reconciliation of opposites in both instances leads us to a feeling of the presence of the divine:

Suffice it that one great principle is common to all art, a principle which probably is the condition of all consciousness, without which we should feel and imagine only by discontinuous moments, and be plants or animals instead of men. I mean that ever-varying balance, or balancing, of images, notions, or feelings (for I avoid the vague word, idea) conceived as in opposition to each other; in short, the perception of identity and contrariety, the least degree of which constitutes likeness, the greatest[,] absolute difference but the infinite gradations between these two form all the play and all the interest of our intellectual and moral being, till it lead us to a feeling and an object more awful than it seems to me compatible with even the present subject to utter aloud, tho' most desirous to suggest it.³

The thought at the beginning about reconciliation of opposites as 'the condition of all consciousness' is very close to Coleridge's formulation of primary imagination in Biographia. After the above passage Coleridge continues on immediately to suggest that the "feeling and an object more awful" to which he is led by imagination in dramatic illusion is the principle of the eternal I AM:

1 CSC, I, 130.

2 CSC, I, 199.

3 CSC, I, 204-5. In this quotation, and in the one which follows, I have left out T.M. Raysor's interpolations.

For there alone [i.e. in the feeling and object] are all things at once different and the same; there alone, as the principle of all things, does distinction exist unaided by division - will and reason, succession of time and unmoving eternity, infinite change and ineffable rest.¹

Coleridge's ideas here again show a firm link between art and metaphysics: through dramatic art man becomes aware of the foundations of knowledge.

Coleridge's philosophy had a pervasive influence on his criticism and is one of the factors contributing to the difference between Coleridge's criticism and that of his contemporaries. The influence of his philosophy and his particular ideas on imagination extend into subjects which the other critics approached with their own theories. When Coleridge discusses subjects like tragedy, tragic effect and characterisation in Shakespeare, critical application of his theory of imagination is more in line with that of his contemporaries.

Like Hazlitt, Coleridge does not make a strict division between tragedy and comedy on the basis of imagination - at least in regard to Shakespearean drama. Coleridge does, however, make this distinction when he discusses Greek drama. In lecture notes from 1812 which T.M. Raysor indicates are heavily influenced by Schlegel, Coleridge uses his own language for imagination to define the ideal of tragedy. He says that "tragedy is poetry in its deepest earnest"² and continues: "The ideal of earnest poetry consists in the union and harmonious melting down, the fusion of the sensual into the spiritual."³ Greek comedy, in contrast, is "poetry in unlimited jest"⁴ and its ideal is found "by making the animal the govern-

1 CSC, I, 205.

2 CSC, I, 169.

3 CSC, I, 170.

4 CSC, I, 169.

ing power and the intellectual the mere instrument."¹
 The division Coleridge is making between poetry of imagination and poetry of the senses, is basically the same division Hunt and Lamb used to apply to Shakespearean tragedy and comedy respectively. Coleridge does not apply this distinction to Shakespeare. It should be noted, however, that while he extends imagination to comedy he does not directly connect imagination with wit and humour. Wit and humour in Coleridge's thought appeal to the faculties of sense, fancy, and understanding,² - those faculties orientated towards the material world in Coleridge's hierarchy of the faculties.

Coleridge uses his ideas of imagination to support various divisions in his critical thought. For instance, he develops Schlegel's distinctions between classical and romantic into distinctions between art of an "elevated understanding" (perhaps the higher understanding in Coleridge's hierarchy) and art of imagination. Classical drama, he said,

addressed eminently to the outward senses; and tho' both fable, language, and characters appealed to the reason rather than the mere understanding, inasmuch as they supposed an ideal state rather than referred to an existing reality, yet it was a reason which must strictly accommodate itself to the senses, and so far become a sort of more elevated understanding.³

The art of imagination which Coleridge goes on to describe, is almost identical to the formulations of the other Romantic critics, with the exception that Coleridge is not just talking about tragedy:

... the romantic poetry, the Shakespearean drama, appealed to the imagination, rather than to the senses, and to the reason as contemplating our inward nature, the workings of the passions in their inmost retired recesses.⁴

The phrase "the workings of the passions in their inmost retired recesses" may have prompted Lamb's similar comment

1 CSC, I, 170.

2 CMC, 112 & 117.

3 CSC, I, 198.

4 CSC, I, 198. See also C on S for further comparison of Shakespeare and the classical drama.

about the inner workings of the mind, but it is impossible to tell whether this passage was written before or after Lamb's.¹

Coleridge makes other distinctions on the basis of imagination. He favoured the stage of Shakespeare's time as opposed to the ancient because the former forced author and actor "to appeal to the imagination, and not to the senses".² He suggested that he favoured the dramatic over the epic on the same kind of distinction.³ Elsewhere he seemed to be talking about plays in which the ideal was dominant as opposed to the real.⁴ It might be noted that wherever the distinction between imagination-orientated art and sense-orientated art is operating, it is also possible to see the other metaphysical (and critical) distinction operating: the distinction between the spiritually-orientated Method of Law and the materially-orientated Method of Theory.

Coleridge sees imagination characterising works which are not tragedies. The difference between imagination in tragedy for Coleridge and imagination elsewhere seems to be the point of one of his notebook entries in 1808. He talks about imagination "in its tranquil & purely pleasurable operation" and contrasts that with imagination when it is "passionate". In the former case, imagination acts,

chiefly by producing with out of many things, as it would have appeared in the description of an ordinary mind, described slowly & in suee unimpassioned succession, a oneness/ even as Nature, the greatest of Poets, acts upon us when we open our eyes upon an extended prospect⁵

The example Coleridge gives of this is the lines from Venus and Adonis ("Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky,/ So glides he in the night from Venus' Eye -." 815-816) in which "many images & feelings are ... brought

1 Raysor merely suggests that it is written after 1810.

2 C on S, 100. Again there is the possibility of Lamb - Coleridge contact.

3 CSC, I, 138.

4 C on S, 106.

5 CN, 3290 f 14-f 15^v. Also in CSC, I, 213, already cited.

together without effort & without discord".¹ "Passionate" imagination, on the other hand is that found in the mind of King Lear:

... one image or feeling is made to modify many others, & by a sort of fusion to force many into one - that which after shewed itself in such might & energy in Lear, where the deep anguish of a Father spreads the feeling of Ingratitude & Cruelty over the very Elements of Heaven -.²

The difference between the two examples may be read as the difference between employing imagination to create a unity and showing imagination working in the mind of a character to the same end.

Part of the difference between "passionate" and "tranquil" imagination also lies in the fact that "passionate" imagination arouses more sympathy in the audience. Coleridge is not commonly associated with the sympathetic imagination of the eighteenth century, as Hazlitt has been, but sympathy is something which Coleridge links with imagination in various places. He speaks of Shakespeare "project[ing] his mind out of his own particular being, & [feeling and making] others feel, on subjects no way connected with himself."³ In one of his 1811 lectures he spoke of the need to learn "the first great truth, that to conquer ourselves is the only true knowledge."⁴ In a note for his 1813 lectures Coleridge speaks of being "drawn away from ourselves into the music of noblest thoughts in harmonizing sounds."⁵ In speaking on the subject of educating children in 1818, Coleridge commented: "For this object [of exhibiting moral being] thus much is effected by works of imagination; - that they carry the mind out of self, and show the possible of the good and the great in the human character."⁶ Elsewhere Coleridge had linked the origin of tragedy with the fact that "Men

1 CN, 3290 f 15^v.

2 CN, 3290 f 14.

3 CN, 3290. See also CSC, II, 12.

4 C on S, 57.

5 CSC, I, 79.

6 CMC, 194.

like to imagine themselves to be the characters they treat of".¹ Coleridge is partly interested in the degree to which "passionate" imagination excites the spectators through sympathy, although Coleridge does make clear that it is the universality of tragedy, not sympathy, which provides the greatest appeal.²

One of the Shakespearean plays which was characterized by imagination but which was not a tragedy was The Tempest. Coleridge wrote that its interests "arise from their fitness to that faculty of our nature, the imagination I mean, which owes no allegiance to time and place."³ Shakespeare's history plays are also seen in the context of imagination, particularly, Coleridge says, when "unity of a higher order" than succession operates, connecting events with people and motives and presenting men "in their causative character".⁴ But if Coleridge's criticism makes no explicit statement of preference for Shakespeare's tragedy on the basis of imagination, Coleridge's treatment of Shakespearean character makes at least an implicit statement to that effect.

Coleridge's interest in "the workings of the passions in their inmost retired recesses", his interest in men "in their causative character", and his interest in a "higher order of unity" than succession (i.e. than the association of thoughts and feelings by fancy and understanding?) are related. They each demand the workings of the imagination, or rather, the Method of Law, which seeks ultimate cause through effect. The Method of Law is spiritually orientated and when applied to character analysis, seeks the deepest spiritual, or in this instance what may be understood as psychological, causes. The workings of passions and their causes are displayed most clearly in tragedy where the tumult of circumstances throws the mind into highest relief.

Coleridge felt that in his own age Shakespearean tragedy was often read or viewed as being merely symbolic

1 CSC, II, 8.

2 CSC, II, 9.

3 CSC, I, 131. See also C on S, 106.

4 CSC, I, 139.

of passion and the real workings of the passions often missed. His reason was the same Hunt and Hazlitt had given: "Men are now so seldom thrown into wild circumstances and violences of excitement that the language of such states ... [is] judged by authority, not by actual experience"¹ - the authority here being related presumably to the tone of the speech and the positive manner in which it is uttered. Coleridge argued that the language of tragedy should not be read as symbolic of emotional excitement but should be seen as "the self manifestation" of excitement - as "natural symbols"² partaking of the reality they represent. The passions in a character should be related to a deeper psychological or causative reality, as Coleridge himself tried to do.

Coleridge connects "wild circumstances and violences of excitement"³ with the height of poetic talent. He connects "the language of such states" with certain movements of the mind involving both fancy and imagination, or as he puts it, with

the laws of association of feeling with thought, the starts and strange far-flights of the assimilative power on the slightest and least obvious likenesses presented by thoughts, words, and objects, and even, by this very power, the after as strange but always certain return to the dominant idea⁴

In character analysis, Coleridge examines language of excitement and tries to discover the dominant idea to which the character returns. He is interested in the exterior or outward aspects of the character's behaviour and language - the images, thought patterns, changes of focus and the like - and in how those relate to the deeper or more inward aspects of the character's psychological make-up. In other words, Coleridge tries to see each character as a whole and considers the emotional dimension of characters to be as important as their actions.

Coleridge's phrase concerning the "starts and strange far flights of the assimilative power" might well have been inspired by the first act of Hamlet. Coleridge

1 CSC, I, 209.

2 CSC, I, 209.

3 CSC, I, 209.

4 CSC, I, 209.

notes the "broken expressions" of the guard which suggest to him "a man's compelled attention to bodily feelings allowed to no man".¹ The guard's inward terror manifests itself in his shift of attention to an outward object and in the change in the style of his speech:

The effort of the narrator to master his own imaginative terrors; the consequent elevation of the style, itself a continuation of this effort; the turning off to an outward object, 'yon same star.' O heaven! words are wasted to those that feel and to those who do not feel the exquisite judgement of Shakespeare.²

In a lecture of 1818, five years later than the above passage, Coleridge expanded on the comment:

... the exquisite proof of the narrator's deep feeling of what he is himself about to relate, [is shown] by his turning off from it, as from a something that is forcing him too deep into himself, to the outward objects, the realities of nature that had accompanied it ...³

Coleridge also spoke in more detail of another aspect of the relation between the inward and the outward in the scene: "the ghost-seers were in a state of cold or chilling damp from without, and of anxiety from within".⁴ In the highly agitated states of their minds they were being assaulted from within by their thoughts and assaulted from outside by the elements; in this condition they were particularly vulnerable to the visions that they saw.

The visions which appear to both Hamlet and Macbeth may be seen to a certain extent with the same kind of understanding. The reason the ghosts appear at the particular moments that they do, lies at least partly within the characters themselves. Their conversations, immediately prior to the visions, concern indifferent matters. Coleridge goes beyond the outward appearances and suggests that the indifference is in fact the result of the greatness of their concern; because of the weight on their minds they have had to shift their attention away from themselves and in doing so they became open to the ghosts:

1 CSC, I, 20.

2 CSC, I, 20-1.

3 CSC, I, 43-44.

4 CSC, I, 42.

The moment before the Ghost enters, Hamlet speaks of other matters in order to relieve the weight on his mind; he speaks of the coldness of the night, and observes that he has not heard the clock strike, adding, in reference to the custom of drinking, that it is 'More honour'd in the breach, than the observance'. From the tranquil state of his mind he indulges in moral reflections The same thing occurs in Macbeth: in the dagger scene, the moment before he sees it, he has his mind drawn to indifferent matters.¹

Each of the above examples of Coleridge's insight concerning the relation of the outward reality to the inward has terror or fear as the dominant, returning idea.

There are numerous other places in Coleridge's criticism where his interest in the psychological motives of characters leads him to discuss the discrepancy between inward and outward reality. In his notes on Richard II he speaks of Richard's "wordy courage that betrays the inward impotence".² He speaks of the discrepancy between the world that Hamlet is in, and the world within Hamlet,³ a subject we will return to shortly. He finds the same thing in Lady Macbeth:

One* who had habitually familiarized her imagination to dreadful conceptions and was trying to do it still more. All the false efforts of a mind accustomed only to the shadows of the imagination, vivid enough to throw the every-day realities into shadows, but not yet compared with their own correspondent realities.⁴

Macbeth is also living in a kind of private world within himself:

Who* by guilt tears himself life-asunder from nature is himself in a preternatural state; no wonder, therefore, if [he is] inclined to all superstition and faith in the preternatural.⁵

Coleridge believed that there were two levels of action in a play: a surface level and a deeper level. Failure to go beyond the surface action had resulted in

1 C on S, 125.

2 CSC, I, 155.

3 See: CSC, I, 37-8.

4 CSC, I, 72.

5 CSC, I, 76.

the formulation of the dramatic unities and had led to seeing passionate speeches as being merely symbolic of emotional excitement. It would be on the surface level of the play that the Method of Theory would be involved. Theory would be concerned with the more material aspects of the poem: rhyme, ^hrythm, decorum, images, character contrasts, wit, humour, fancy, and sequence of events. Theory would also suggest the need to look for deeper principles.

The other level of action in a play Coleridge saw as psychological. On this level the Method of Law would be operating to discover the true psychological reasons for behavior. Coleridge suggests that it is on this level of the play that the most meaningful action takes place. As he says, even in a history play,

The events themselves are immaterial, otherwise than as the clothing and manifestation of the spirit that is working within. In this mode, the unity resulting from succession [i.e. Theory] is destroyed, but is supplied by a unity of a higher order, [i.e. Law] which connects the events by reference to the workers, gives a reason for them in their motives, and presents men in their causative character.¹

An illustration of this thought may be found in Coleridge's comment on Lear. He praises the speed with which the details of Lear's foolish trick and the differences between Albany and Cornwall are dealt with. By dealing with them quickly, the real subject of the play may be turned to:

... the premises and data, as it were, [are] thus afforded for our after-insight into the mind and mood of the person whose character, passions and sufferings are the main subject-matter of the play²

Similarly it was the psychological action which was the main action of The Tempest, and Coleridge cautioned the theatres:

It addresses itself entirely to the imaginative faculty; and although the illusion may be assisted by the effect on the senses of the complicated scenery

1 CSC, I, 139.

2 CSC, I, 56.

and decorations of modern times yet this sort of assistance is dangerous. For the principal and only genuine excitement ought to come from within, - from the moved and sympathetic imagination; whereas, where so much is addressed to the mere external senses of seeing and hearing, the spiritual vision is apt to languish, and the attraction from without will withdraw the mind from the proper and only legitimate interest which is intended to spring from within.¹

If we turn now to examine more closely some of Coleridge's character analyses, we will gain a better idea of the psychological action he found in Shakespeare and in addition we will see some of the specific results of "causative character." He wondered why Macbeth was so open to the prophecies of the witches at the beginning of the play. In his analysis he discovers two causes. The first was in the nature of Macbeth's profession, intellect, and imagination. Macbeth as a general must often feel, Coleridge says, "how great a share chance had in his successes"² and hence at the beginning we see him with "the superstition natural to victorious generals".³ His main focus of attention becomes the hope presented to him by the witches. He is not concerned about their reality, but instead about the challenge which is presented:

Hope [is] the master element of a commanding genius, meeting with an active and combining intellect, and an imagination of just that degree of vividness which disquiets and impels the soul to try to realize its images. Greatly increase this creative power, and the images become a satisfying world of themselves⁴

Macbeth, like Hamlet and others, was to fall victim to the satisfaction or excitement of these images within. The second cause of Macbeth's openness is his ambition. Coleridge maintains that when Macbeth enters, inflated with his victory, he has already been "rendered temptable by previous dalliance of the fancy with ambitious thoughts."⁵

1 CSC, I, 130-131.

2 CSC, I, 81.

3 CSC, I, 81.

4 CSC, I, 81.

5 CSC, I, 68.

While some critics who look at surface action only might find the origin of Macbeth's feelings of guilt in the temptation, Coleridge finds their source and cause in the earlier ambition: "So truly is the guilt in its germ anterior to the supposed cause and immediate temptation."¹

When Macbeth yields to the temptation and sacrifices his moral will, he becomes a victim of both himself and fate, Coleridge suggests: "the link of cause and effect more physico" commences.² With his consent to a plan of action, so too, Coleridge discovers, his cowardice first appears:

This, however, [in Act I, iv] seems the first distinct notion as to the plan of realizing his wishes; and here, therefore, with great propriety, Macbeth's cowardice of his own conscience discloses itself.³

In Coleridge's metaphysical thought a plan, such as he speaks of here, would imply methodical thinking, and since the idea is 'a means to a physical end' - the act of murder - the Method would be Theory. How appropriate then that at the same time as Macbeth begins thinking about the future in terms of cause and effect his mind, almost against its wishes, finds itself drawn past material considerations of Theory and into the horrors of spiritual matters produced by imagination and resulting in cowardice.

Coleridge compares the difference in Macbeth's mental activity before and after the crime as a means of explaining his decline. Before the crime Macbeth tries to fool himself about his conscience: he "mistranslates the recoilings and ominous whispers of conscience into prudential and selfish reasonings."⁴ Coleridge believed that correct moral understanding was intuitive and that any departure from it had to be wilful. He sees Macbeth wilfully going against what he knows he should do. Macbeth's feelings of remorse, rising from within, are mistranslated into fear of dangers from without.⁵ On a similar point,

1 CSC, I, 69.

2 CSC, I, 68.

3 CSC, I, 71.

4 CSC, I, 80.

5 CSC, I, 80.

once Macbeth has attained the object of his hope, his imagination converts the remaining passion into fear and makes him irresolute.¹ With the dislocation of his ability to correctly connect cause and effect, he becomes

like delirious men that run away from
the phantoms of their own brain, or,
raised by terror to rage, stab the real
object that is within their own reach²

Coleridge used 'imagination' to account for the actions of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the murder scene, and he saw a direct comparison, though on a lower key, with Antonio and Sebastian in their attempted assassination of Alonzo and Gonzalo in The Tempest. In both plays there was the same kind of mental activity:

... the same ... manner of familiarizing a mind, not immediately recipient, to the suggestion of guilt, by associating the proposed crime with something ludicrous or out of place, - something not habitually matter of reverence. By this kind of sophistry the imagination and fancy are first bribed to contemplate the suggested act, and, at length to become acquainted with it.³

Elsewhere Coleridge had commented that behind the actions of Lady Macbeth there was "a superhuman audacity of fancy which she cannot support" and an imagination "vivid enough to throw every-day realities into shadows".⁴

In J.P. Collier's diary entry for October 13, 1811, there is the following record of Coleridge's conversation:

It was in characters of complete moral depravity, but of first-rate wit and talents, that Shakespeare delighted; and Coleridge instanced Richard the Third, Falstaff, and Iago.⁵

Apparently in the eleventh of his lectures of 1811-12 Coleridge dealt with the matter again, but Collier makes no report of that lecture and all that we find is at the beginning of the twelfth lecture:

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- 1 CSC, I, 81.
 - 2 CSC, I, 80.
 - 3 CSC, I, 136.
 - 4 CSC, I, 72.
 - 5 C on S, 130.

In the last lecture he endeavoured, he said, to point out those characters where the pride of intellect, without moral feeling, is supposed to be the ruling impulse, as in Iago, Richard 3rd, and even in Falstaff.¹

It was in the sixth of the 1813-14 lectures at Bristol that Coleridge again picked up on the topic. The newspaper report included the following:

The characters of Richard III., Iago, and Falstaff, were the characters of men who reverse the order of things, who place intellect at the head, whereas it ought to follow like geometry, to prove and to confirm Richard, laughing at conscience, and sneering at religion, felt a confidence in his intellect Iago, on the same principle, conscious of superior intellect, gave scope to his envy, and hesitated not to ruin a gallant, open, and generous friend Falstaff ... a man of degraded genius, with the same consciousness of superiority to his companions, fastened himself on young prince, to prove how much his influence on an heir₂ apparent could exceed that of statesmen.

It will be remembered that Hazlitt had selected these three characters as examples of self-centeredness. Although his own reason for fascination with the characters was to be found in the context of his ideas on imagination, Hazlitt's selection, as well as some of his ideas, can be assumed to have been influenced by Coleridge's conversations or lectures.

Coleridge's interest in these three characters may be understood in the context of his metaphysical thought. He feels that each of the characters is intellectually superior, that each is conscious of that superiority, and that each has allowed intellect to over-rule conscience. Coleridge speaks of them as men "who reverse the order of things, who place intellect at the head whereas it ought to follow like geometry, to prove and to confirm". Coleridge is suggesting that they are examples of Method being perverted. Method places moral sense or moral truth in the highest position since primary imagination and Law are at the highest point in Coleridge's hierarchy. All

1 C on S, 116.

2 CSC, II, 286-7.

of man's other faculties are to serve the highest. What ~~each of~~ the Shakespearean characters had done was to cut off the mind's natural inclination to moral feeling and thus make their faculties serve their own ends. Coleridge connects this perversion of Method with the demonic in his discussion of the "motiveless malignity" of Iago (as seen in Iago's soliloquy at the end of I, iii):

The last speech, the motive-hunting of motiveless malignity - how awful! In itself fiendish; while yet he was allowed to bear the divine image, too fiendish for his own steady view. A being next to devil, only not quite devil¹

In this respect, Richard, Iago and Falstaff are like Edmund in King Lear in Coleridge's eyes: all are impressive in their power. Shakespeare knew "that courage, intellect, and strength of character were the most impressive forms of power ... without reference to any moral end".² Coleridge felt there was a danger for the poet in developing any of these characters:

But in the display of such a character it [is] of the highest importance to prevent the guilt from passing into utter monstrosity - which again depends on the presence or absence of causes and temptations sufficient to account for the wickedness, without the necessity of recurring to a thorough fiendishness of nature for its origination.³

Coleridge is saying that a perversion of Method in the minds of characters can be prevented from becoming ~~monstrous~~ monstrous by depicting the motives of characters. Coleridge goes on to say that Iago is the one character that "approached to this" fiendishness, and sees it as evidence of Shakespeare's genius that he was able to carry it off without accounting for the wickedness.⁴ Edmund's wickedness Coleridge feels might have been caused in part by the fact of his "absence from home and a foreign education from boyhood to the present time" and his father's clear favouritism of Edgar.⁵ A further cause was the notoriety

1 CSC, I, 49.

2 CSC, I, 58.

3 CSC, I, 58.

4 CSC, I, 58.

5 CSC, I, 59.

of his birth, the effect of which Coleridge traces brilliantly:

... the consciousness of its notoriety - the gnawing conviction that every shew of respect is an effort of courtesy which recalls while it represses a contrary feeling - this is the ever-trickling flow of wormwood and gall into the wounds of pride, the corrosive virus which inoculates pride with a venom not its own, with envy, hatred, a lust of that power which in its blaze of radiance would hide the dark spots on his disk, [with] pangs of shame personally undeserved and therefore felt as wrongs, and a blind ferment of vindictive workings towards the occasions and causes, especially towards a brother whose stainless birth and lawful honors were the constant remembrancers of his debasement, and were ever in the way to prevent all chance of its being unknown or overlooked and forgotten.¹

Similarly, the cause of Richard's wickedness Coleridge finds in his deformity: "The inferiority of his person made him seek consolation in the superiority of his mind; he had endeavoured to counterbalance his deficiency".² Falstaff, whom Coleridge recognised as contrasting Richard though still showing "the subordination of the moral to the intellectual being",³ was also given motives by Shakespeare. He did not love evil for evil's sake but delighted in the pleasure of competition with his friends:

... Falstaff was no Coward but pretended to be one merely for the sake of trying experiments on mankind!! That he was a liar only with the same object and not because he loved falsehood for itself! That he was a man of such pre-eminent abilities that he had a profound contempt for all those around him, and was determined to make them, notwithstanding their fancied superiority, his absolute tools. He knew that however low he degraded himself his own talents would extricate him from every difficulty.⁴

A further instance of Coleridge finding he could accept a character if he could understand something about the motives behind the actions related to Cleopatra. She

1 CSC, I, 57.

2 C on S, 116.

3 CSC, I, 234.

4 C on S, 30.

seemed to be wholly occupied with "the love of passion and appetite",¹ yet, "the sense of criminality in her passion is lessened by our insight into its depth and energy ... that it is supported and reinforced by voluntary stimulus and sought for associations, instead of blossoming out of spontaneous emotions."² Coleridge was puzzled by the character of Brutus, particularly Shakespeare's denying to him any personal motive in the speech, "It must be by his death: and, for my part, / I know no personal cause to spurn at him, but for the general" (II, i, 10 ff):

This is singular - at least I do not at present see into Shakespeare's motive, the rationale - or in what point he meant Brutus's character to appear. For surely ... nothing can seem more discordance with our historical preconceptions of Brutus, or more lowering to the intellect of this Stoico-Platonic tyrannicide, than the tenets here attributed to him, to him, the stern Roman republican; viz. that he would have no objection to a king or to Caesar, a monarch in Rome³

Coleridge thinks Shakespeare should be faulted on this point for not having "brought these things forward",⁴ although he concedes that his own understanding may yet be lacking.

Coleridge's most extensive character analysis deals with Hamlet, and here he is again struggling to find the psychological causes of surface actions. He notes "the impassioned continuity" of Hamlet's speech prior to and during the appearance of the Ghost in I, iv. There is no break when the Ghost appears, and Coleridge's understanding of this is as follows:

[In Hamlet's earlier speech the] momentum had been given to his mental activity, the full current of the thoughts and words had set in, and the very forgetfulness, in the fervor of his argumentation, of the purpose for which he was there, aided in preventing the appearance from benumbing the mind.

1 CSC, I, 86.

2 CSC, I, 86.

3 CSC, I, 16.

4 CSC, I, 16.

Consequently, it acted as a new impulse, a sudden stroke which increased the velocity of the body already in motion, while it altered the direction.¹

Coleridge goes further and traces the unexpressed thoughts and feelings of Hamlet while he is viewing the Ghost. Coleridge suggests that already there is the beginning of a split in Hamlet. On the one hand he is aware of reality and sensations around him; on the other hand his mind is totally preoccupied with its own meditations:

The knowledge, the unthought of consciousness, the sensation, of human auditors, of flesh and blood sympathists, acts as a support, a stimulation a tergo, while the front of the mind, the whole consciousness of the speaker₂, is filled by the solemn apparition.²

In Act III, i, where Ophelia is acting as a decoy, Coleridge finds in Ophelia's "strange and forced manner" proof that she "was not acting a part of her own".³ Coleridge reads Hamlet's "Ha, ha! are you honest?" (1.103) as Hamlet's perception of the trick and maintains that the speech which follows is not directed to Ophelia but to the spies.⁴ The most obvious feature in Hamlet's speech for Coleridge is his "sporting with opposites" which Coleridge implies Hamlet does both wilfully and in spite of himself:

[That Hamlet discovers he is watched] in a mood so anxious and irritable accounts for a certain harshness in him; and yet a wild upworking of love, sporting with opposites with a wilful self-tormenting irony, is perceptible throughout: ex. gr. "I did love you" and [his reference to] the faults of the sex [of Ophelia]⁵

This "sporting with opposites" is not simply an aspect of Hamlet's behaviour in that particular instance - it points to the heart of his problem. Coleridge saw Hamlet as being unable to reconcile the opposites in his life, whether these opposites were particular (his love for Ophelia ^{versus} ~~vs.~~ his 'hatred' for women) or general (the

1 CSC, I, 25.

2 CSC, I, 25.

3 CSC, I, 29.

4 CSC, I, 29.

5 CSC, I, 30.

world within himself ^{versus} ~~vs.~~ the outer world):

In Hamlet I conceive [Shakespeare] to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to outward objects and our meditation on inward thoughts - a due balance between the real and the imaginary world. In Hamlet this balance does not exist - his thoughts, images, and fancy [being] far more vivid than his perceptions, and his very perceptions instantly passing thro' the medium of his contemplations, and acquiring as they pass a form and colour not naturally their own. Hence great, enormous, intellectual activity, and a consequent proportionate aversion to real action¹

Coleridge's remark about the form and colour of Hamlet's perceptions becoming altered in meditation is similar to Coleridge's praise of imagination; that imagination's best effects are not in producing "distinct forms", but in "producing what it still repels" and substituting "a grand feeling of the unimaginable for a mere image".² This would seem to be a fairly accurate description of Hamlet's mental activity and Coleridge suggests that Hamlet suffers from an excessive activity of imagination. But Hamlet at times also approaches Coleridge's description of insanity in Biographia: "The sanity of the mind is between superstition with fanaticism on the one hand, and enthusiasm with indifference and a diseased slowness to action on the other."³

In the last of his 1811-12 lectures Coleridge said that the external world interested Hamlet only as it was reflected "in the mirror of his mind";⁴ he had a "vivid imagination" but was like a man "who shuts his eyes, [and] sees what has previously made an impression upon his organs."⁵ Coleridge is almost suggesting that Hamlet is a man in a state of dream, and his comment on dreams and imagination may be of relevance. Coleridge had said that in a waking state, the mind looks for the cause of an external impression and the imagination supplies

1 CSC, I, 37.

2 C on S, 82.

3 BL, I, 20; (Everyman, 17).

4 C on S, 124.

5 C on S, 124.

one, which may have no correspondence to the reality.¹ In a sense, this seems to be what is happening with Hamlet in Coleridge's opinion, but there is a difference. Hamlet's mind has found the cause of its anxiety and it lies in the act he must do; as Coleridge says, "There was no indecision about Hamlet; he knew well what he ought to do, and over and over again he made up his mind to do it".² But instead of accepting this cause, his imagination tried to find an escape by "retiring from all reality, which is the result of having what we express by the term 'a world within himself'".³

For Coleridge the tragedy of Hamlet lay not only in the split between internal and external but also in Hamlet's knowledge of it: "Hamlet [had] the perfect knowledge of his own character, which with all strength of motive was so weak as to be unable to carry into effect his most obvious duty."⁴ Hamlet is like Claudius, whom Coleridge notes is unable to reconcile the difference between willing and wishing in his, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below".⁵ Hamlet is unable to reconcile the particular with the general, and instead runs "away from the particular in[to] the general";⁶ he displays an "aversion to personal, individual concerns, and escape[s] to generalizations and general reasonings".⁷ His jesting when overtaken by his companions (I, v, 112 ff.) is explained by a similar kind of lack of middle ground, only in this case the reason is more common:

The familiarity, comparative at least, of a brooding mind with shadows is something. Still more the necessary alternation when one muscle long strained is relaxed; the antagonist comes into action of itself. Terror [is] closely connected with the

1 CSC, I, 202.

2 CSC, I, 125.

3 C on S, 126.

4 C on S, 126.

5 CSC, I, 33.

6 CSC, I, 39.

7 CSC, I, 39.

ludicrous; the latter [is] the common mode by which the mind tries to emancipate itself from terror.¹

Coleridge comments on Hamlet's eulogy on Horatio "as one whose blood and judgement were happily commingled"² - it is interesting that Hamlet praises Horatio for having what he himself lacks. Coleridge argues that the play ends with Hamlet never reconciling the opposites in his life. Instead, he turns himself over to fate:

... after still resolving, and still refusing, still determining to execute, and still postponing the execution, he ... finally [gave] himself up to his destiny, and, in the infirmity of his nature, at last hopelessly place[d] himself in the power and at the mercy of his enemies.³

Coleridge's use of the concept of reconciliation of opposites in character analysis is not limited to Hamlet. Many of Shakespeare's other characters were also seen by Coleridge to lack an ability to find a balance between extremes. An isolated instance is in Romeo's initial love for Rosalind, where he fails to reconcile his passion for the ideal love with the practical reality.⁴ In a more general approach, Shakespeare's characters may be divided roughly into two groups according to the subject of reconciliation of opposites. There are those who are unable to reconcile their feelings with action. Aside from Hamlet there is Richard II whose "Constant overflow of feelings [and] incapacity of controlling them [produce a] waste of that energy which should be reserved for action".⁵ Lear might also be included for his "brooding of the one anguish, an eddy without progression"⁶ takes him within himself to madness. The problem with each of these men might also be in terms of Coleridge's analyses, an inability to reconcile the strength of their moral beliefs with their intellectual and physical capacities to alter their situations.

1 CSC, I, 39-40.

2 CSC, I, 43.

3 C on S, 128.

4 C on S, 86.

5 CSC, I, 155.

6 CSC, I, 65.

The inverse is true for the other possible grouping of characters. These characters are unable to reconcile the strength of their intellectual powers with moral feeling, and they over-ride their consciences with their intellect. This group includes Richard III, Iago and Falstaff, discussed earlier; as well as Lady Macbeth, who fails to reconcile "the courage of fantasy" with "bearing the consequences of the realities of guilt."¹ Macbeth similarly does not reconcile his conscience and his reasoning.² Edmund and Shylock might also be included for the one appeals to nature to avoid his own moral responsibility and the other tries to avoid the moral issue by concentrating solely on the physical act:

In this speech of Edmund [Lear, I, ii, 9-14] you see, as soon as a man cannot reconcile himself to reason, how his conscience flies off by way of appeal to nature, who is sure upon such occasions never to find fault [T]he oppressed will be vindictive, like Shylock, and in the anguish of undeserved ignominy the delusion secretly springs up, of getting over the moral quality of an action by fixing the mind on the mere physical act alone.³

Coleridge found it useful in his character analysis to discuss psychological motivation by identifying opposing forces within the character. What those forces were and the manner in which characters failed to reconcile them could be many and various. One thing clearly emerges from Coleridge's ideas on "causative character": the failure to achieve a balance or reconciliation of opposites interrupts the basic principle of Method which is "unity with progression". A character who fails to find a natural balance between moral principles and intellect will find no peace, no harmony, no unity within himself. Further, there will be no growth, no progression to an awareness of the harmony which underlies all creation in the benevolent intellect of the Primary Imagination of God. Coleridge believed

1 CSC, I, 72.

2 CSC, I, 80.

3 CSC, I, 62.

that viewers of these characters in the theatre would perhaps in their own imaginations reconcile the opposites they saw within the characters, and be led by the whole experience of the play to that same awareness of God. In any case, Coleridge wished all of his readers to recognise the necessity of employing the principles of Method not just in the theatre, or in studying his own metaphysical writing, but in all actions and thoughts.

CHAPTER NINE:

IMAGINATION AND METAPHOR

In 1949, René Wellek took up the challenge offered by A.O. Lovejoy, twenty-five years earlier, when he had attacked the use of the word 'romantic' on the basis that it was used to apply to many things which in fact lacked a common denominator.¹ Part of Wellek's argument, which is still important, relates to the subject of 'imagination':

Turning to England, we can see a complete agreement with the French and the Germans on all essential points. The great poets of the English Romantic movement constitute a fairly coherent group, with the same view of poetry and the same conception of imagination, the same view of nature and mind. They also share a poetic style, a use of imagery, symbolism, and myth, which is quite distinct from anything that had been practised by the eighteenth century, and which was felt by their contemporaries to be obscure and almost unintelligible.²

Wellek's paper was successful in its attempt to prove that there were sufficient unified strands in the evolution of European culture to justify continued use of the term 'romantic'. Later, Wellek answered another critic that he had not proved that the writers had used the terms 'imagination', 'nature', and 'symbol' with the same literal sense: "I do not see how anybody can prove a literal identity exclusive of all individuality."³

Wellek's point was justified, at least with regard to Romantic poetry. The relationship between imagination theory and poetic practice is often ambiguous - in order to talk about 'imagination' operating in Romantic poetry, that is, in order to use the concept of imagination as a tool in approaching the Romantic movement,

1 "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," PMLA (1924), 229-253; reprinted in Essays in the History of Ideas (Baltimore, 1948), 228-253.

2 "The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History," Concepts of Criticism (New Haven, 1963), 178.

3 "Romanticism Reconsidered," Concepts of Criticism, 199.

it may be necessary to use the concept in a general manner. The concept has been used very profitably, for example in Sir Maurice Bowra's The Romantic Imagination, which develops elements common to a wide range of poets, from Blake to Christina Rossetti.

However, there is also a considerable danger involved in using a modern, generalized understanding of 'imagination' in relation to the Romantics. This is especially true concerning Romantic criticism, although it applies to the poetry as well. Romantic criticism, in contrast to Romantic poetry, frequently uses the term 'imagination' and is often quite precise about the characteristic functions of 'imagination'. In addition, the criticisms of each particular author show a fairly consistent understanding of 'imagination'. This understanding is on many points in disagreement with the understandings held by the contemporaries of each. A modern understanding of 'imagination' applied to the Romantics overlooks important differences in their thought. Too readily in the past has it been assumed that Lamb, Hazlitt or Hunt must have meant the same thing by 'imagination' as Coleridge, or Wordsworth, or some earlier writer. Within Romantic studies, and also within the history of literary criticism as a whole, it is fallacious to assume that a word which is used critically by several people at the same period in time is used with the same understanding.

The present study has traced the historical development of ideas of 'imagination' in relation to Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt and Lamb, the four main Romantic critics of Shakespeare and drama. It has tried to develop precisely what each critic saw as 'imagination'. With each the Shakespearean and dramatic criticisms have been examined for the manner in which 'imagination' has been used as a critical tool. Every attempt has been made to interpret the criticisms in a manner which seems authorized by and consistent with the particular ideas of 'imagination' of each critic, in order to avoid distortion.

This thesis presents a more balanced historical perspective on the evolving Romantic ideas of imagination than there has been in the past. Not only has the thought

of each of the critics been traced from his earliest writings, but also the definite and possible influences of his contemporaries have been explored. It would seem appropriate here, in this concluding chapter, to review briefly some of the conclusions reached in the first part of the thesis.

One fact which was discovered was that Hazlitt, Hunt and Lamb each had their own specific theories of 'imagination' which were neither mere copies of ideas expressed in the eighteenth century, nor mere paraphrases of Coleridge and Wordsworth. In fact, both Hazlitt and Hunt had published their theories of 'imagination' almost a decade before Coleridge and Wordsworth published their most important remarks. Also, it was found that the ideas of Hazlitt and Hunt were largely unrecognised by their contemporaries. It has been recognised by critics that Coleridge had an interest in 'imagination' before he met Wordsworth in the fall of 1795; but it has not been noticed previously that in the early part of 1795, Coleridge underwent a considerable change of attitude towards 'imagination'. Whereas fancy had at first been the superior faculty, 'imagination' took its place as the faculty of poetic creation and also became the faculty of religious perception. These changes indicated a radical change in Coleridge's attitude to poetry and anticipated the flowering of his poetic talents in 1797, when there was intimate contact with Wordsworth and considerable mutual influence. Further, it was seen that when Coleridge rejected Hartley's theory of association of ideas in 1803, he substituted for it a theory of aggregation, which maintained that ideas are called to mind by aggregation or conjunction of feelings. In 1812, and again in 1816, both the Hartley idea and Coleridge's new theory were brought together to describe the function of fancy, as Coleridge then understood it.

The study given here to Biographia Literaria has found that the work has greater integrity than has been generally believed. There remains work to be done elsewhere on the subject of its integrity, but the conclusion reached here is that Chapter XII is not a simple borrowing

of another author's thought inserted into Coleridge's argument. Instead, it is fundamental to Coleridge's own argument and one of the most important chapters in the work. His definitions of Primary and Secondary Imagination in Chapter XIII, seen in the light of Chapter XII, take on a new meaning and some of what have been formerly thought to be contradictions or ambiguities in his thought are resolved. It has further been seen that his definitions are closely related to his later works on Method and the ideas of Law and Theory, and are not inconsistent with some of his earliest thoughts.

William Hazlitt had close contact with both Coleridge and Wordsworth, particularly around the turn of the century when the friendship was new and Hazlitt's ideas on imagination were in a formative stage. Coleridge was instrumental in encouraging Hazlitt to develop and publish his ideas. It is surprising therefore, that when Hazlitt did publish in 1805, his ideas were not of an identical cast. It has been seen that his Essay on the Principles of Human Action demonstrated originality of thought and less influence of the eighteenth century than it has been the custom to assume. His idea of what here has been called the "democratic imagination" is in essence that if imagination is cultivated in individuals and society at large, mankind will naturally move towards the good of all. Various powers of imagination that modern studies have found mentioned only in Hazlitt's later work have been shown to be present already in 1805.

Hazlitt and Coleridge developed their ideas of imagination to serve their own particular needs and interests: Coleridge was concerned with both poetic creation and metaphysics; Hazlitt only with metaphysics. Leigh Hunt's needs and interests concerned the theatre, and he developed his theories to assist in his critical reviews. It was seen that although Hunt was working in isolation from the other critics, his imagination - conception distinction was remarkably similar to the imagination - fancy distinctions of Coleridge and Wordsworth.

No critic had greater opportunity to be exposed to the ideas of all other critics on the subject of imagination than Charles Lamb. He had been a close friend of both Coleridge and Wordsworth since the 1790's, would have come in contact with Hunt's Critical Essays, and entertained Hazlitt regularly at his home. In spite of this contact, Lamb's ideas of imagination presented the most striking contrast with the other theories. This was because his concept was tied to the meditative action of the mind.

The most general conclusion of the first part of the thesis was that none of the Romantic critics thought of 'imagination' in the same way as the rest. When the critical application of the particular theories was considered in the second part of the thesis, these differences were again clearly evident. It was seen that Hunt applied his distinction between imagination and conception in a fairly rigid manner to reinforce the classical separation of tragedy and comedy. The relative inflexibility of his overall approach at times lessened the critical value of his comments, particularly concerning his view of comedy as an imitation of real life. His approval tended to be greater towards those comedies which do "imitate life" - especially Much Ado About Nothing, Henry IV Part One, The Merry Wives of Windsor, and the low comics in Twelfth Night.¹ Similarly his insistence that tragedy has nothing to do with imitation of real life led to his dislike of some Shakespearean tragedy, most notably, Coriolanus. The main contributions of Hunt's criticisms (many of which have not previously received critical attention), apart from the information they provide about the early nineteenth century theatre, were found to lie in the area of imagination and tragedy. He understood tragedy to be "an imitation of life in passion" and his theory of imagination led him to an interest in "the workings of great minds in awful situations".²

1 See p. 160 ff. of this thesis.

2 Examiner, 29 March, 1812; (DC, 66).

When Lamb's Shakespearean and dramatic criticism was considered it was discovered that it was his idea of imagination as meditative rather than spontaneous which led him to be against Shakespeare in the theatre. He believed that meditation and abstraction were the actions of 'imagination' and were necessary both to discern and appreciate 'imagination' in art. His understanding led him to be entirely unsympathetic to the aim of the theatre: in his opinion Shakespeare's characters appealed almost exclusively to the 'imagination' and the theatre appealed almost exclusively to the senses.

Hazlitt's early theory of 'imagination' was metaphysical, not aesthetic. However, it has been seen that it was easily adapted for aesthetic purposes when Hazlitt began critical writing. His early theory had been based on a division between sensory (i.e. past and present) and ideal (future). He used this distinction in his critical writings to make divisions between the picturesque and the ideal, between classical and the romantic or modern, between form and feeling, and between painting and poetry. Related to this, it was seen that he was interested in the referential quality of the words of the characters: 'imagination' for him referred to an internal, emotional reality and this was its proper focus. It was seen that his own choice of images in his critical remarks was meant to appeal to the 'imagination' of his readers. Further, it was observed that the moral purpose of 'imagination', which had been his focus in 1805, continued to be his concern throughout his criticism. He rejected art which addressed the senses and he rejected the art of Coleridge and Wordsworth for failure to present their readers with relevant moral alternatives. His interest in the self-centeredness of Shakespeare's tragic characters was again concerned with morality: he was interested in how the 'imagination' of each of the characters had been abused to work for selfish action rather than the good of all.

In the previous chapter we took the insights into Coleridge's metaphysical system that were gained in the first part of the thesis and applied them to his criticism.

Scholars and critics have generally believed that Coleridge's art and criticism remained isolated from his metaphysical thought. However, we have seen not only that metaphysics plays a major role in his criticism but also that poetry serves the end of his metaphysical system. The understanding of Method, Theory, Law, progression, cause and effect, and reconciliation of opposites (among other ideas) was extended to his criticism, where each concept was shown to be of importance. Pleasure and the "willing suspension of disbelief" were shown to assist the spiritualization of knowledge which Coleridge sought as the end product of the progression from Theory to Law. Coleridge's critical interest in men in their "causative character" was explored and it was found that he and Hazlitt were interested in the same characters and for the same reason: to explore their moral depravity. For Coleridge it was a study in the abuse of Method.

This thesis has shown not only that there are clear differences in how each Romantic critic thought of 'imagination' but also in the manner in which those theories were applied. Clearly there have been many similarities, as well, in the critical application of the theories. These include many specific points of similarity, which have been mentioned along the way, and many general ones as well. For example, it was seen that each critic used his theory of 'imagination' to define tragedy, to account for a preference for it, and to discuss dramatic mimesis. Each critic used his theory as a critical tool in dealing with poet, actor, audience, and character.

Our task in concluding should be to try to draw the four approaches closer together than has been possible up to this point. Are there further similarities in the critical use of 'imagination' which can assist us in seeing what is common among the approaches? Part of the challenge is to suggest guidelines for modern use of the word 'imagination' in relation to the Romantics. These guidelines are needed both to prevent generalizations concerning Romantic 'imagination' which ignore the real differences in Romantic thought, and to facilitate use of the term in contexts which correspond with the essential Romantic concerns.

In the space we have here perhaps only a beginning can be made. It might be helpful to concentrate more on what the Romantics suggested were goals of their critical use of 'imagination' than on their specific achievements. With this in mind it is possible to see that the Romantic critics stood on common ground in thinking of 'imagination' as a tool for describing transcendent reality, or what we may call metaphoric experience. In some respects the Romantic ideas of 'imagination' are less close to modern understanding of that term than they are to modern understanding of the term 'metaphor'.¹

The term metaphoric experience is coined to accommodate the Romantic experience of encountering two levels of action in a work of imagination, be it the written work or the theatrical production. These two levels are recognised by the contemporary understanding of the concept of metaphor, for instance in I.A. Richard's terms 'vehicle' and 'tenor'. The levels have recently been given significant attention by Paul Ricoeur in his essay entitled, "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics".² As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, Ricoeur's argument provides useful tools for drawing out the similarities in approach and will be given attention here.

1 On a cautionary note it should be remembered that the Romantics themselves did not necessarily regard metaphor as we do today. Cyrus Hamlin has argued that "metaphor was defined [by the literary tradition of the Romantics] exclusively as a kind of verbal ornament" and was rejected along with the entire tradition of rhetorical theory. ("The Temporality of Selfhood," in New Literary History, (Autumn, 1974) Vol. VI, No. 1, p.170) While Hamlin is probably correct in general terms, he might be questioned concerning Coleridge and Wordsworth. In these two quotations from Coleridge, metaphors are not necessarily to be seen as negative, and in the first metaphors are connected with Imagination. Part of CN 2723 (1805) reads: "A man's Imagination fitfully awaking & sleeping = the odd metaphors and no metaphors of modern poetry/Language in its first state without the inventive passion;" and from CN 2724: "Metaphors mistaken for Reality one of the Springs of the many-headed Nile of Credulity . . ." In Wordsworth's 1815 Preface, metaphor is used in a positive sense and is connected with imagination: "...but, by the intervention of the metaphor broods, the affections are called in by the imagination to assist in marking the manner in which the Bird reiterates and prolongs her soft note . . ." Literary Criticisms of Wordsworth, 147.

2 In New Literary History, (Autumn, 1974) Vol. VI, No. 1, 95-110.

He argues that metaphor may be understood in contexts larger than the specific word-groupings or parts of a sentence to which the definition of metaphor usually refers. He sees the principle of metaphor operating in whole works, or what he calls discourses, and he outlines the opposing levels that are there:

I enumerate the basic polarities of discourse in the following condensed way: event and meaning, singular identification and general predication, propositional act and illocutionary acts, sense and reference, reference to reality and self-reference.¹

For Ricoeur these polarities are basically different descriptions of the main polarity which exists in metaphor. He points out that the fundamental issue in any of these is the shift from a literal meaning to the new meaning given by the metaphor. The basic differentiation in any metaphor exists between the literal meaning or the "sense" and that to which it refers or the "reference". He explains these terms further: "I oppose reference to any sense by identifying 'sense' with 'what' and 'reference' with 'about what' in discourse."² He relates the contextual "sense" of metaphor to fable or plot in a discourse (Aristotle's mythos); it is the literal connection between the discourse structure and the metaphor.³ He suggests that the "reference" is related to "the intentionality of the work as a whole, that is, in its intention to represent human actions as higher than they actually are: and this is mimesis."⁴

Ricoeur's work facilitates using the concept of metaphor in relation to the Romantic 'imagination' and his analysis of the levels, particularly of "sense" and "reference", in a work are useful to us here.

The Romantic critics recognised at least two different kinds of art: sense-orientated art and imagination-orientated art. For Hunt sense-orientated art was characterized by conception and involved comedy, real life, manners, and common feelings. For Lamb it was

1 Ricoeur, 98.

2 Ricoeur, 105. See also, 98.

3 Ricoeur, 109.

4 Ricoeur, 109.

art which did not permit the meditative and abstracting action of imagination: comedy, as well as the art of acting in general, imposed too great a sense of reality on the viewer. For Hazlitt it was a variety of things: it was the picturesque and the classical. It was concerned, as he felt painting was, with the object itself, with factual truth, with form and outward shapes, or as he said concerning modern opera, with satisfying our sensory appetites. For Coleridge, sense-orientated art was art which functioned by the Method of Theory. It was art concerned with the Material world and was related to the faculties of Sense, Fancy and Understanding.

The Romantic critics are in basic agreement as to what constitutes sense-orientated art. They agree that it is the lower kind of art, and with their emphasis on its relation to the real or material world they agree that its representation is of a literal sort. It represents things as they most readily appear to the senses. It is mainly concerned with shapes and external appearances. Its intention and meaning are readily apparent and lie within the work per se, not beyond it. It is a self-contained art which has no external referent.

If we consider this kind of art in relation to Ricoeur's discussion, we can see a correspondence between it and what Ricoeur calls "sense". We have already seen that he connected "sense" with "what", or the factual reality of a work. Ricoeur's "sense" is also related to its correspondent parties in the other polarities mentioned, hence its affiliation is primarily with event or action, with specific structure, with the individual as opposed to the general, with "content" as opposed to "force" or power, with the "act of saying" as opposed to what "I do in saying", with the problems of "explanation" as opposed to "interpretation", and with reference to reality.¹ Ricoeur, like the Romantics, is thinking of this dimension of art as being the most literal, and the most external. It is immediate and accessible.

For Ricoeur, "sense" related more to the fable or plot structure of a work as a whole than to the interpretation of that work. Obviously, Ricoeur was not intending "sense" to be understood as one of two kinds of

1 See: Ricoeur, 97-98.

art; "sense" was one of two poles in the metaphoric structure of any work or discourse. It is also clear that the Romantics were thinking of sense-orientated art as being a kind of art in itself: it was not one of two poles which served as a vehicle for communicating the other.¹ Sense-orientated art for them was one-dimensional. To try to relate Ricoeur's ideas too closely to Romantic ideas of sense-orientated art would be a mistake.

However, we are on much more solid ground with Romantic notions of imagination-orientated art. This kind of art is two-dimensional for them. It has two levels: one level is implied in their comments and relates to their understanding of literalness of the sense-orientated art and to the "what" of Ricoeur's "sense". The other is explicitly discussed and relates to Ricoeur's "reference". It is in connection with imagination-orientated art that contemporary understanding of metaphor is of most significance.

Our purpose is to emphasise what each critic saw as the purpose of imaginative art, in other words, to review what they themselves thought was the 'reference' of imagination. Ricoeur saw "reference" of metaphor as being related variously to "about what", to meaning, to general truths, to the "force" of the work, to the intent or achievement behind "the act of saying", to interpretation, and to the self of the speaker as opposed to the reality of the world around him.² The Romantics, with their ideas of the 'reference' of imagination were in remarkable agreement, not only among themselves, but also with Ricoeur's thoughts on the "reference" of metaphor. To develop and illustrate this point let us return briefly to the words of the critics themselves. Many of the quotations we have already seen and discussed in the context of each man's particular thought, but they are repeated here to draw out the similarities among the critics.

1 Coleridge is a possible exception to this for clearly he did feel that the purpose of the material dimension was not static but was expressed in the progression from Theory to Law.

2 See: Ricoeur, 97-98.

Leigh Hunt was fairly clear as to what the 'reference' of imagination was for him: it was the realm of emotions. He saw imagination reaching behind normal experience to another dimension of reality removed from senses and the "sense" of the play. In his view imagination transcends ordinary human encounter:

Imagination then is the great test of genius; that which is done by imagination is more difficult than that which is performed by discernment or experience. It is for this reason, that the actor is to be estimated, like the painter and the poet, not for his representation of the common occurrences of the world, not for his discernment of the familiarities of life, but for his ideas of images never submitted to the observation of the senses.¹

The purpose of the words of the play, the plot, and the stage art itself was presumably to serve this dimension of reality of which Hunt speaks. The standard for evaluating imagination-orientated art was the degree to which it corresponded to inner psychological reality. Imagination, he felt, was "an imitation of life in passions" - it was not concerned with factual reality but with emotional. There is a hint that Hunt felt that the 'reference' of imagination was the emotional response of the character and the viewer. He defended the lines from Gray which Wordsworth had quoted in his Preface (1800-1802) and marked as unworthy poetry. Hunt felt that Wordsworth had been using the word poetry in too restricted a sense. The lines were specimens of "the secondary species of poetry," demonstrating "fancy" not "feeling", but were still poetry because, if they did not create emotions, they at least spoke of them.² Imagination and poetry of feeling went beyond the mere explanation of emotion to the creation and interpretation of emotion.

Lamb's point is similar. He suggests the plot or "sense" of the play is of secondary importance to the "reference", or, "the inner structure and workings of the mind in a character":

1 CE, 51.

2 Feast of the Poets, (1814), 102-3.

But in all the best dramas, and in Shakespeare above all, how obvious it is, that the form of speaking, whether it be in soliloquy or dialogue, is only a medium, and often a highly artificial one, for putting the reader or spectator into possession of that knowledge of the inner structure and workings of mind in a character, which he could otherwise never have arrived at in that form of composition by any gift short of intuition.¹

What Lamb is saying is that one must use the immediate sense of a character's words as a vehicle - a vehicle for conveying psychological truths beneath the surface action of the play. 'Imagination' refers the reader away from the obvious actions in the play:

...[with] characters in Shakespeare so little do the actions comparatively affect us, that while the impulses, the inner mind in all its perverted greatness, solely seems real and is exclusively attended to, the crime is comparatively nothing.²

The actual actions and external appearances should assist the 'reference' of 'imagination' and not distract from it. As readers we should have

present[ed] to the fancy just so much of external appearances as to make us feel that we are among flesh and blood, while the better part of our imagination is employed upon the thoughts and internal machinery of the character.³

Lamb believed that art which functioned totally on the level of the senses and "sense" allowed no participation for the reader or viewer: 'imagination' required meditation and abstraction. In the same manner an author's true intent could not "be made comprehensible without some pain and perplexity of mind";⁴ one had to go beyond the literal sense of the words.

In Chapter VII~~II~~ of this thesis we already studied what Hazlitt believed was the 'reference' of imagination.⁵ We saw that for him imagination referred to an inner, subjective, emotional reality as opposed to an objective, factual reality. The passage in which Hazlitt contrasts

1 L Works, I, 99.

2 L Works, I, 106.

3 L Works, I, 111.

4 L Works, I, 98.

5 See pp. 238-240 of this thesis.

classical and romantic art (i.e. Shakespearean art, not Wordsworthian or Coleridgean for Hazlitt) may be taken as fairly representative of his comments:

The great difference, then, which we find between the classical and the romantic style, between ancient and modern poetry, is, that the one [i.e. classical] more frequently describes things as they are interestingly in themselves, - the other for the sake of associations of ideas connected with them; that the one dwells more on the immediate impressions of objects on the senses - the other on the ideas which they suggest to the imagination. The one is the poetry of form, the other of effect. The one gives only what is necessarily implied in the subject; the other all that can possibly arise out of it.¹

What Hazlitt is doing in this passage is establishing that classical poetry, in effect, is poetry of "sense", while romantic poetry has two levels, "sense" and "reference". Romantic poetry has descriptions of things, but the descriptions go beyond the things themselves. It makes impressions on the senses but calls on the 'imagination' as well. It has form, but its emphasis is on emotional power or effect. Recognition of the two levels in imagination-orientated art was present in Hazlitt's praise of the "dim, unstable, and unsubstantial" images in Antony and Cleopatra which resembled reality yet pointed beyond themselves.² Similarly the levels are implied when Hazlitt speaks of "the instinct of imagination" as being the "intuitive perception of the hidden analogies of things":³ beyond the "things" themselves are deeper meanings. As an interesting note, Hazlitt believed that meter contributed to ^{the} 'two-dimensional' quality of imaginative art. Perhaps in answer to Wordsworth and Coleridge on the subject, Hazlitt maintained that meter functioned:

to supply the inherent defect of harmony in the customary mechanism of language, to make the sound an echo to the sense, when the sense becomes a sort of echo to itself ... to take the language of the imagination

1 H Works, XVI, 63.

2 H Works, IV, 231.

3 H Works, XVI, 8-9.

from off the ground and enable it
to spread its wings where it may indulge
its own impulses.¹

Meter helps to remove language from a mere literal level to a level of 'imagination', where he says the sense begins to echo itself.

Coleridge was fully aware of the possibility of words functioning on two levels. He felt that readers of transcendental philosophy perhaps were not, and in his address to its potential critics he was concerned to point out the 'referential' dimension:

the Critics, who are most ready to bring this charge of pedantry and unintelligibility, are the most apt to overlook the important fact, that, besides the language of words, there is a language of spirits (sermo interior) and that the former is only ~~a~~ vehicle of the latter.²

In Chapters V and VII of this thesis we saw that Hunt and Hazlitt, in at least one place, clearly connected the 'imagination' with the soul³ and Coleridge is doing something similar here in suggesting that the 'reference' of 'imagination' is spiritual. To be aware of the two dimensions of language one had to be aware of a dimension of experience beyond the senses which for Coleridge was the exclusive domain of transcendental philosophy: "There is a philosophic (and inasmuch as it is actualized by an effort of freedom [i.e. an act of will], an artificial) consciousness, which lies beneath or (as it were) behind the spontaneous consciousness natural to all reflecting beings."⁴ It is this which "render[s] the mind intuitive of the spiritual in man (i.e. of that which lies on the other side of our natural consciousness)." It is only communicable, "through words which are but the shadows of notions; even as the notional understanding itself is but the shadowy abstraction of living and actual truth."⁵

1 H Works, V, 12.

2 BL, I, 190-1; (Everyman, 158).

3 See pp. 153 and 232 above.

4 BL, I, 164; (Everyman, 136-7).

5 BL, I, 168; (Everyman, 139).

Without going deeply into Coleridge's criticism again, we may say that his idea of Method as "unity with progression" preserved recognition of the two levels of which we have been speaking, throughout his critical approach. The mind was to employ the principles of Method whether contemplating a specific image or an entire play; one was to move from the material level of Theory (i.e. from "sense") to the Spiritual level of Law (i.e. to "reference"). In Coleridge's idea of "causative character" there was the same attempt to go beyond appearances and discern higher truths which in this case concerned psychological motivation.

The purpose of reviewing these various ideas of the critics, in relation to Ricoeur's terms, has been to try to clarify the similarities among the critics. In spite of the clear differences in the specific theories of imagination, the similarities should by now be quite apparent. Each critic identified imagination-orientated art with an art of two levels, quite similar to the "sense" and "reference" Ricoeur uses to identify his understanding of metaphor. The "reference" of imagination for the Romantics, although variously connected with the emotions or the spirit, may be exemplified by their common descriptions of their interest in Shakespeare. Coleridge spoke of his interest in "the workings of the passions in their inmost retired recesses";¹ Lamb sought "possession of that knowledge of the inner structure and workings of mind in a character"² and spoke of the need of actors of Shakespearean tragedy "To know the internal workings and movements of a great mind ...";³ Hunt praised the emotional involvement that was created "in witnessing the workings of great minds in awful situations";⁴ and Hazlitt praised actors for "the expression of the internal workings of the mind".⁵

The Romantic critics were not without their excesses. In relation to our immediate topic, it might be questioned whether Hunt was right in expecting the kind

1 CSC, I, 198.

2 L Works, I, 99.

3 L Works, I, 98.

4 Examiner, 29 March, 1812; (DC, 66).

5 H Works, XVIII, 196.

of tragic decorum in Shakespeare as is implied in his phrase "great minds in awful situations" or whether Lamb was right in describing Othello, for instance, as a "great mind". Also, it might be questioned whether the Romantics did not tend generally to overvalue the "reference" as opposed to the "sense"; their idealisation of Shakespearean tragedy and the imbalance of their criticism, weighted in favour of character, perhaps contributed to later problems of criticism.

On the positive side, it may be that one of the defining elements of the Romantic movement is the increased historical reliance on linguistic "reference" to carry the poet's meaning and increased appreciation of that reliance on the part of the critic.

The Romantic movement has long been plagued with labels of excessive subjectivity, and as long as Romantic "reference" has been considered in purely subjective terms, it has been difficult to develop a meaningful vocabulary with which to discuss the distinctive features of Romantic perception. Ricoeur may be of further assistance to us here for the problem of subjectivity in Romantic imagination is similar to the problem of subjectivity he found in hermeneutics. He felt that the interpretation of a work (i.e. the "reference") in relation to the cultural setting of its reader, might be reacted against as implying a subjectivist approach. A correct reading of the process, he said, would displace it "from a subjectivist to an ontological level":¹

Far from saying that a subject already masters his own way of being in the world and projects it as the a priori of his reading ... I say that interpretation is the process by which the disclosure of new modes of being - or, if you prefer Wittgenstein to Heidegger, of new forms of life gives to the subject a new capacity of knowing himself.²

The Romantics were interpreting in their criticism and were discovering "new modes of being" and "new modes of life". Certainly they regarded their work more in an ontological sense than a subjectivist one and might have

1 Ricoeur, 107.

2 Ricoeur, 107.

had trouble identifying with our modern view of them as excessively subjective. The "reference" of imagination for them was a dimension of existence that was 'more real', more true, than everyday material reality. Hunt, as we have just seen, praises the tragic actor for his "discernment of ...images never submitted to the observation of the senses". The actor's discernment could be tested against the viewer's own. In other words actor and viewer recognised a common reality above the world of the senses. Lamb had said that in Shakespeare "speaking" was "a medium, and often a highly artificial one" for conveying psychological truth: he was suggesting that if anything was artificial it was the "sense", not the "reference", for the latter spoke to the meaning of being. Coleridge, as we saw in the previous chapter, incorporated the emotions into his metaphysical system; for him this was to serve the purpose of discovering ultimate truth concerning existence. For Hazlitt, imagination opened up new dimensions of experience which are removed from the senses but are just as real, in fact more so, because they demonstrate truths on a deep psychological level:

Let an object be presented to the senses in a state of agitation and fear - and the imagination will magnify the object, and convert it into whatever is most proper to encourage the fear. It is the same in all other cases in which poetry speaks the language of the imagination. This language is not the less true to nature because it is false in point of fact; but so much the more true and natural, if it conveys the impression which the object under the influence of passion makes on the mind.¹

The Romantics were not concerned with frivolous emotion but with acquiring a greater knowledge of a dimension of life that was difficult to understand.

Ricoeur's discussion of 'sense' and 'reference' enhances contemporary ability to use the concept of metaphor more vigorously in criticism. He felt himself to be pointing to new possibilities in criticism and he ended his paper, rather significantly for the purposes of

1 H Works, XVI, 63.

the present enterprise, by discussing imagination:

Our conclusion should ... "open up" some new vistas. On what? Maybe on the old problem of imagination, which I cautiously put aside. We are prepared to inquire into the power of imagination, no longer as the faculty of deriving "images" from sensory experiences, but as the capacity to let new worlds build our self-understanding. This power would not be conveyed by emerging images but by emerging meanings in our language. Imagination, then, should be treated as a dimension of language. In that way, a new link would appear between imagination and metaphor.¹

Perhaps Ricoeur was unaware that beyond the possibility of his thoughts having application to the subject of imagination, the Romantic ideas of imagination in fact could be seen to have anticipated many of his remarks on metaphor.

The Romantic critics did not have a homogeneous understanding of 'imagination'. Nor did they believe themselves to be engaged in a systematic debate on 'imagination'. Nor did they critically apply their ideas of 'imagination' in an identical fashion. Nonetheless, as we have seen, there were important similarities in their ideas. These similarities became apparent not so much when considering their specific theories, but rather when considering their theories in relation to their Shakespearean and dramatic criticism. The similarities are important: they point to the similarity between our critical consciousness and their own.

1 Ricoeur, 110.

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