

Chapter One:

Coleridge and Romantic Lyricism

In poetry [Southey] has attempted almost every species of composition known before, and he has added new ones; and if we except the highest lyric, (in which how few, how very few even of the greatest minds have been fortunate) he has attempted every species successfully...

(*Biographia Literaria* I 64)

In this chapter I aim to investigate the emergence of Romantic lyricism as a new temporality in “the inchoate cultural moment” (Klancher 3) of the early nineteenth century.

To do this I shall be concentrating firstly on the critical *oeuvre* of Coleridge, particularly the *Biographia Literaria*. What I am not attempting to do by this choice of subject is to read the *Biographia Literaria* as an originary text; Coleridge did not invent Romantic lyricism, in the *Biographia Literaria* or anywhere else. The sources and cultural sites of its emergence are many. But Coleridge is a particularly apt figure to consider in the context as he stands in interesting relations to many strands of the network of intertextual and discursive relations which gave rise to the Romantic *episteme*. In the next chapter I shall be extrapolating some of the considerations of this chapter to describe the protestant cultural field, as it existed in the eighteenth century and how this can give rise to an aestheticised poetics.

Coleridge is a useful figure to consider when thinking about the question of Romantic lyricism for a further reason. The Romantic paradigm is characterised by a lyric temporality; in the late eighteenth century the categorisation of discourse by genre broke down (later in the chapter I shall be discussing one particular instance where this can be seen to be happening). Henceforth, instead of a set of well-defined discursive genres we have a single “metagenre”, the lyrical, and a number of ill-defined “pseudogenres”. To use a favourite locution of Coleridge, though in a way

he would have strongly disagreed with, generic theory is now concerned with differences of degree, but not of kind. I shall be exploring more fully the implications of the new Romantic temporality, as well as justifying the assertions I have already made, later in this chapter. But for the moment it will be enough to allude to the strange, inchoate *bricolage* that is the text of the *Biographia*, or indeed of many of Coleridge's works. *Pace* Thomas McFarland's thesis, these "forms of ruin" are the outward sign of the shift away from genre which has taken place to give rise to Romanticism. Coleridge's intentions, in the *Biographia* or elsewhere, are not the question; instead we have to consider the conditions of possibility for the occurrence of this fragmentary, lyric form, and I shall be suggesting some of these later in the chapter too.

Although the lyric temporality is one which underlies much of the cultural structure of modernity (capitalism, for example, is the perfect example of a lyric, and very wrongheaded, understanding of the economy—in its etymological sense—of the world), this thesis can deal only with a very small and traditional part of the consequences of the neo-classical-to-Romantic paradigm-shift, those consequences found within poetics. The fourth and sixth chapters of this thesis will follow ideas of the short poem¹ through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and thereby account for the shortness of the majority of modern poems. During the course of this investigation it will be necessary to distinguish Romantic *lyricism* from Romantic lyrics. Throughout this thesis I shall be pointing out critics and poets who allege that only short poems can be poetry. These critics are, in fact, attempting to hang on to a hierarchy of genres, after Romanticism has levelled them. This is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Romantic lyricism.² Now it is true that Coleridge contributed to this tradition to the extent that, as Jonathan Bate has pointed out:

Without Coleridge's aside in the *Biographia* to the effect that "a poem of any length neither can be, or ought to be, all poetry", Poe would not have asserted in his essay "The Poetic Principle" that "a long poem does not exist... the phrase, 'a long poem' is simply a flat contradiction in terms". (258)

Yet Coleridge is not often a literal lyricist. Instead his poetic is one which in any form of literary analysis can give a disguised lyrical reading. Bate continues the remarks quoted above thus:

just as Poe assimilated Coleridge, so Poe was himself assimilated, for his assertions that a poem must be "*indefinite*" and cannot be long were taken over by Mallarmé and became central tenets of French Symbolism. And from French Symbolism it is a short step to Modernism; thus, we might say that thanks to Poe's "plagiarism" Coleridge invented Modernism.

Although the steps are neither as short nor as straightforward as Bate suggests, his view of the pedigree of Modernism is one that, broadly, I agree with and which this thesis attempts to document.

In this connection we might mention a final reason why Coleridge is such a useful critic to consider. His influence, however effected and mediated, was not, except in the United States (Fruman "Aids" 142, Harding "Transcendentalism" 235-36), as immediate as that of Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, in its 1802 guise (Owen 64), or Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, or any of the other documents of the first two decades of Romanticism. Instead its reception history is interestingly inglorious at first: the first edition was never reprinted and it took until 1847 for another edition to appear. This was edited by Sara Coleridge and was largely an attempt to clear her father's name from the aspersions of plagiarism which had been cast on it; her editorial efforts were designed to identify and document the extent and nature of his sources (Engell & Bate lxvii, Fruman "Aids" 141-42). Fruman continues his account of the *Biographia's* reception-history thus:

the 1847 edition was never reprinted [in Britain].... To the extent that the *Biographia* was read at all, it was in cheap reprints provided by the old Bohn library (1866) and Everyman[s] Library (1906). (142)

It is no accident that when the *Biographia* appeared in Shawcross's edition of 1907 it did begin to exert an influence. For the previous twenty years interest had been growing in lyric criticism, often in a very overt form.³ The Everyman's edition (which, *pace* Fruman, must share some of the honour of having begun the twentieth-century interest in Coleridge) and Shawcross's appeared, then, at exactly the right time. It is no exaggeration to say that for many twentieth-century critical projects Coleridge has been the starting point, and indeed, for some, the starting *and* finishing point; I.A. Richards is only the most obvious example. Nor is Coleridge's influence dead yet, as the nature of the field of current Coleridge studies, especially in the United States, demonstrates. On the one hand critics such as Thomas McFarland still look to the masterful elements of Coleridge's criticism to elucidate perennial critical problems, and on the other the ingenuously *ad hominem* arguments of a Norman Fruman, still fail to figure Coleridge as a person in cultural history, but as a "Damaged Archangel", someone whose reputation is to be assailed at all points, but who is, though fallen, still an archangel in a world of mortals.

Unity in the *Biographia Literaria*

When the *Biographia Literaria* leaps abruptly from the investigation and definition of the imagination in chapter 13, to its second volume and the beginning of Coleridge's "practical criticism" in chapter 14, it begins to invoke the idea of the unity of the literary object. Within a few pages Coleridge produces this definition of a poem:

A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to the works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification *from each component* part. (II 13)

Coleridge explains this further in the same passage:

if the definition sought be for a *legitimate* poem, I answer, it must be one, the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement.

A later definition links the poem with the poet, by means of imagination:

What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is the poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other.... The poet, described in ideal *perfection*, brings the whole soul of man into activity.... 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 the imagination. (II 16)⁴

Thus Coleridge fulfils a promise made on the first page of the work, to settle "the long continued controversy concerning the true nature of poetic diction: and at the same time to define ... the real *poetic* character of the poet [Wordsworth]" (I 5). And finally, although the *Biographia Literaria* has little to say about the act of reading, being more concerned with the essential nature of poetry, a passage from the 1811-1812 *Lectures* on Shakespeare can be subjoined here, to show how, for Coleridge, this unity of the poem and the poet must also stretch to include the reader:

In poetry ... we take the purest parts and combine [them] with our own minds, with our own hopes, with our own inward yearnings after perfection, and being frail and imperfect, we wish to have a shadow, a sort of prophetic existence present to us, which tells us what we are not, but yet, blending in us, much that we are, promises great things of what we may yet be. It is the Truth (and poetry results from that instinct[.]) the effort of perfecting ourselves—the conceiving that which is imperfect to be perfect and blending the nobler mind with the meaner object. (I 224)

What is the most interesting feature of this insistence on unity is that it only really begins in the second volume. It is, except by implication, almost absent from the first volume.⁵

Contrariwise, the most marked feature of the first volume is the frequent and repeated strictures on the contemporary reading public and its lack of taste in literature. At one point Coleridge complains that

In times of old books were as religious oracles; as literature advanced, they next became venerable preceptors; they then descended to the rank of instructive friends; and as their numbers increased, they sunk still lower to that of entertaining companions; and at present they seem degraded to culprits to hold up their hands at the bar of every self-elected, yet not the less peremptory, judge... (I 57)

And a few pages later he continues in the same vein:

Poets and Philosophers, rendered diffident by their very number, addressed themselves to "*learned* readers", then, aimed to conciliate the graces of "the *candid* reader"; till, the critic still rising as the author sunk, the amateurs of literature collectively were erected into the municipality of judges, and addressed as THE TOWN! And now finally, all men being supposed able to read, and all readers able to judge, the multitudinous PUBLIC, shaped into personal unity by the magic of abstraction, sits nominal despot on the throne of criticism. (I 59)

Moreover, large parts of the very long chapter 10 are dedicated to Coleridge's good-humoured, but still painful, memories of his unsuccessful venture into popular publishing, the journal *The Watchman*, and chapter 11 consists of practical advice to young literary figures and is entitled "An affectionate exhortation to those who in early life feel themselves disposed to become authors".

If, as we have seen, the idea of unity is absent in any overt form from volume one of the *Biographia*, and complaints about the contemporary plight of literature and serious writers are more muted in volume two, then it is reasonable to link the two and say that the unity of the literary object becomes an answer of some sort to the disunity of the literary world. And Coleridge does this explicitly, if in a negative sense, in one passage, where a complaint about the number of books is linked to a diagnosis of a faulty prose style:

But alas! the multitude of books, and the general diffusion of literature have produced other, more lamentable effects in the world of letters.... now, partly by the labours of successive poets⁶, and in part by the more artificial state of society and social intercourse, language, mechanized as it were into a barrel-organ supplies at once both instrument and tune. Thus even the deaf may play, so as to delight the many. Sometimes ... I have attempted to illustrate the present state of our language, in its relation to literature, by a press-room of larger and smaller stereotyped pieces, which, in the present anglo-gallican style of unconnected, epigrammatic periods, requires but an ordinary portion of ingenuity to vary indefinitely, and yet produce something, which, if *not* sense, will be so like it, as to do as well. (I 39)

Nor should we forget the bitter irony with which Coleridge described how “the multitudinous PUBLIC, shaped into personal unity by the magic of abstraction, sits nominal despot on the throne of criticism”; the irony being that the process by which this has occurred, “the magic of abstraction”, is the creation of a false, perhaps “mechanical”, unity—the appearance but not the truth of unity.

The pattern by which the problem of a disjunctive and fragmented reading public somehow has its solution in the unity of the literary text, by implication as the possession of a select group of readers, is one which most readers, select or not, take away from the *Biographia*. Coleridge, as is well known, was later to theorise the group of readers who were to make this reading for unity their task as the Clerisy (Maniquis 265). And indeed there are strong hints of this idea in the chapter 11 of the present work (eg I 227-228). Robert Maniquis is one critic who argues for an adumbration of the idea of the Clerisy in this passage and elsewhere in the *Biographia*. For him the *Biographia*'s emphasis on literary property is the clue to Coleridge's political heritage. He quotes Coleridge's rhetorical question “has the poet no property in his works?” (I 42) and adds:

Property should here not be confused with commodities. Coleridge associates property and poetry at a noble level, and with nineteenth-century seriousness against the reproducible, the saleable, the “barrel-organ” of mass-constructed art designed and sold by the deaf for the deaf.... Ideal readers, republican and Christian, knew nothing of themselves if not that their political rights depended on transforming, by means of property, personal into constitutional existence. (259)

Later he goes on to situate Coleridge's political thought more fully:

This archly conservative and yet republican combination of constitutionality and property thus produces a social ideal consistent with the ontological I AM THAT I AM of poetic genius.... From this point on ... Coleridge elaborates associations between aesthetic imagination, Hebraic-Christian constitutional continuity, and a Lockean sense of property that has been called possessive individualism. (260)

Maniquis' collocation of personal property, elite reading practices and personal identity is a very useful one to bear in mind. But for the moment we need to supplement it by reference to the argument of Paul Hamilton's *Coleridge's Poetics*. Coleridge, he argues

postulates a linguistic ideal, pursued by desynonymy, where every word has a separate meaning. Poetry, by being untranslatable, symbolises the completion of this process....Synonyms are “defects in Language; but yet such defects as permit a progress in its powers”⁷.... He seems to be drawn to a way of thinking which tries to retrieve a common culture whose sensibility is imagined to have

been free of dissociation or fragmentation. But this aim is found in competition with an equally powerful instinct towards progress... "All industries, arts, and crafts have gained by the division of labour" wrote Kant. (72)

Hamilton regards the *Biographia* as a failure in its retreat to a "new, specialized philosophical terminology—Kant's 'desperate expedient'" (72), and for him Coleridge's more radical poetics of desynonymization are to be found elsewhere. However in his quotation from one of Coleridge's notebooks, Hamilton supplies us with an understanding we can use to supplement Maniquis' account of Coleridge's ideas of literary property.

Unity in the *Biographia* is sometimes couched in static, proprietorial terms, but more often than not is a fleeting, lyric unity. For example, in explaining his political views, Coleridge shows that he regards society as built on individuals' self-possession:

it was part of my political creed, that whoever ceased to act as an *individual* by making himself a member of any *society* not sanctioned by his Government, forfeited the rights of a citizen. (I 187)

A formulation that could well have (and probably did) come straight out of Burke. But elsewhere Coleridge shows the influence of the anything-but-static first phase of capitalism; in describing the Church of England establishment as some sort of pattern for an ideal clerical order, as he does in chapter 11, Coleridge comments:

among the instances of blindness, or at best of short-sightedness, which it is the nature of cupidity to inflict, I know few more striking, than the clamors of the farmers against church property.... as the case at present stands, the revenues of the church are in some sort the reversionary property of every family, that may have a member educated for the church, or a daughter that may marry a clergyman. Instead of being *foreclosed* and immovable, it is in fact the only species of landed property, that is essentially moving and circulative. (I 227)

Although Coleridge is interested here mainly in how capital can support cultural capital, the terms of his argument show that he has been reading *The Wealth of Nations*, where Adam Smith is so keen to forestall any stagnation in the circulation of capital that, amongst other things, he inveighs against such a traditional cultural institution as primogeniture (I 408-09, 441). Indeed a very interesting comparison to make in this context is with another book published in 1817, David Ricardo's *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*.⁸ For Ricardo's first task in this work is to tidy up Adam Smith's less-than-satisfactory exposition of the basis of value (3-11). But in trying to find a standard by which to measure value absolutely Ricardo has to concede that in a capitalist economy where everything is commodified, then nothing has any absolute value (27). His pragmatic solution is to use a notionally absolute

standard, that of money (29). But behind this, in his formulation, lie the fundamental quanta of human labour, which can be speeded up and, as it were, supercharged, but cannot vary in relation to one another and to other commodities:

In comparing, therefore, the value of the same commodity at different periods of time, the consideration of the comparative skill and intensity of labour required for that particular commodity needs scarcely to be attended to, as it operates equally at both periods. One description of labour at one time is compared with the same description of another; if a tenth, a fifth, or a fourth has been added or taken away, an effect proportional to the cause will be produced on the relative value of the commodity. (12)

This formulation is the exact counterpart of Coleridge's definition of the literary object, which likewise can "advance", yet at the same time be of constant relative and absolute value at any period in history. Marx's brusque dismissal of Ricardo's "bourgeois economics", can apply equally cogently to Coleridge's project—Ricardo and his followers, Marx argued, had failed to recognise that, insofar as the development of capitalism was not everywhere equal, and did not proceed at the same pace, then quanta of labour could vary, and as such were always already commodified (*Capital* 33-37).⁹

What seems clear then, is that unity, or identity, for Coleridge, often has about it the notion of development, of advance, so that, in the sentence Hamilton quotes, Coleridge talks about the "progress in [the] powers" of language. Or again, in the remarks we quoted earlier, he talks of how "In times of old books were as religious oracles; *as literature advanced*, they next became venerable preceptors (my italics)"; even though the "advance" is one of deterioration, in Coleridge's view, it is an advance none the less. As we shall see, the reason for this double-bind under which Coleridge labours is that the temporality of the lyrical demands, not just unity, but a sort of hyper-charged unity, which must contain within it the dynamics for its own growth.

Coleridge's Lyricism

Perhaps the first thing we should note after discussing the insistence on unity in the *Biographia*, a unity which applies equally to poetry and prose, is that the *Biographia* itself has no very obvious unity. The work is, and this is not being too harsh, a shamelessly padded hotch-potch of literary biography, literary criticism, reminiscence, anecdote, exhortation, philosophy and theology; the padding in the second volume consists of three letters and an expanded play-review, inserted to make up the number of pages.¹⁰ Chapter 10 is a useful microcosm of the work as a whole; it is

described as “a chapter of digression and anecdote, as an interlude preceding that [chapter] on the nature and genesis of the imagination, or plastic power”.¹¹

Robert Maniquis ascribes the nature of the *Biographia* to a: “playful but earnest antagonism ... between text and book, the Word and mere words, the genial utterance and the saleable commodity...” (264) and it is true that in places Coleridge gives much consideration to the practicalities of publishing, especially in chapter 11 (“An affectionate exhortation to those who in early life feel themselves disposed to become authors”). A famous, and audacious, passage where Coleridge uses the practicalities of the book-market to give a twist to the argument of the *Biographia* is in the spoof-letter with which he interrupts the discussion of the imagination in chapter 13:

as for the PUBLIC, [Coleridge’s fictitious friend writes] I do not hesitate a moment in advising you to withdraw the Chapter from the present work... This Chapter, which cannot, when it is printed, amount to so little as an hundred pages, will of necessity greatly increase the expense of your work. (I 302-03)

The whole passage is, however, worth discussing in more detail, since there is more going on than a simple reference to the practicalities of publishing. Elsewhere in the passage there is considerable disquiet voiced, via the “Friend”, as to both the genre and the adequacy of the *Biographia*. Firstly the Friend comments that Coleridge’s philosophy is not fully argued through:

I will not promise to descend into the dark cave of Trophonius with you, there to rub my own eyes, in order to make the sparks and figured flashes, which I am required to see.... You have been obliged to omit so many links, from the necessity of compression, that what remains, looks ... like the fragments of the winding stair of an old ruined tower. (I 302-03)

Secondly the Friend has doubts about the propriety of publishing so heterogeneous a work:

*For who ... could from your title-page ... published too as introductory to a volume of miscellaneous poems, have anticipated, or even conjectured, a long treatise on ideal Realism, which holds the same relation in abstruseness to Plotinus, as Plotinus does to Plato.... Be assured, if you do publish this Chapter in the present work, you will be reminded of Bishop Berkley’s *Siris*, announced as an *Essay on Tar-water*, which beginning with *Tar ends with Trinity*, the omne scibile forming the interspace. (I 303)¹²*

Not only is the *Biographia* heterogeneous—and neither its philosophy nor its theology is fully-argued—but it is not a true biography either, as Coleridge’s *real* biography is only held out as the prospect of a future work (II 237). Moreover, such biography as we do have in the *Biographia* seems almost deliberately submerged amidst the digressions, literary criticism and philosophy. It is true that the ghost of

chronology lingers on, with the narrative of Coleridge's education in chapter one, his political activities and religious beliefs in the mid 1790s in chapter 10, and a narrative of his sojourn in Germany in 1798-99 in the three letters inserted between chapters 22 and 23, but how many readers come away from the work with a strong impression of any biographical narrative?

In this connection, a further fact which needs pointing out is that not only is the *Biographia* generically heterogeneous, seeming at times wilfully to disrupt argument and narrative, but various passages within it seem to envisage an end to genre as a critical tool. Dramatic poetry, for example, receives short shrift in the last chapter; after inveighing against the vicious tendencies of modern drama, Coleridge pauses to remark that "with the Ancients, and not less with the elder dramatists of England and France, both comedy and tragedy were considered as kinds of *poetry*" (II 186). And this is echoed in one of Coleridge's criticisms of Wordsworth's poetry, which, interestingly enough, also evokes the question of authorial property; for Wordsworth's worse fault, Coleridge argues, is

an undue predilection for the *dramatic* form in certain poems, from which one or other of two evils result. Either the thoughts and diction are different from that of the poet, and then there arises an incongruity of style; or they are the same and indistinguishable, and then it presents a species of ventriloquism, where two are represented as talking, while in truth only one speaks.¹³ (II 135)

It seems clear that to account both for the poetry that Coleridge discusses in the *Biographia*, and for the form of the *Biographia* itself, some other classification is needed. But it also seems clear from what we have already discussed that this quality will be related to the idea of unity, as we might deduce from the anecdote of Michaelangelo's *Moses*, which the obtuse Frenchman can see only as a bundle of parts, not a whole (II 117, cf II 13).

But, just as we saw that the text of the *Biographia* is not a unity in any obvious sense, so in discussions of unity in the *Biographia* there is often a slippage away from unity. As often as Coleridge asserts that: "*all* the parts of an organised whole must be assimilated to the more *important* and *essential* parts" (II 72), he seems drawn to the subordinate parts. In volume one he commends as the better critic the critic who "elucidates the *beauties* of an original work" rather than pointing out the faults (I 62); in the second volume, to cite only the most obvious examples, he praises the truly theoretical critic "who can particularize the most striking passages" of the work in question (II 107). Finally, one of his "Beauties of Wordsworth's Poetry" is that

Wordsworth demonstrates “the sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs” (II 148).

From a number of passages we can glean that the solution to this apparent contradiction is in the *balance* between the integrity of individual beauties and the unity of the whole. Southey, in his poem *Roderic*, for example, according to Coleridge, “has surpassed himself in language and metre, in the constitution of the whole, and in the splendour of individual passages” (I 64). A longer passage which supports this interpretation is to be found in volume two:

The philosophical critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgement of all countries, in equally denying the praises of a just poem, on the one hand, to a series of striking lines or distichs, each of which absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself disjoins it from its context, and makes it a separate whole, instead of an harmonising part; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts. (II 13-14)

If we remember Coleridge’s dictum, “that distinction is not division” (II 11) then we can recognise this balance as a dialectic; the whole and the parts can function separately, but the Poem itself is transcendent sameness (II 72). And other passages to bear in mind here are the “water-insect” passage in volume one (I 124) and the definition of the poet’s power in volume two as “the balance and reconciliation of opposite and discordant qualities” (II 16).

Yet we must still answer the question as to what quality it is which has this power of reconciling “multeity in unity”. A clue is provided by Coleridge’s praise for the “DEPTH and ENERGY” of Shakespeare’s thought. The quality in question could well be intensity; and we might note that Coleridge himself was the first to coin the verb “to intensify”, when giving an account of associationist psychology (I 127). This intensity is partly a product of unity, but as we saw with the question of literary property earlier, this explanation is not quite enough. Associated with the unity, and a product of the dialectic of parts and whole, is a *velocity*, one which can redeem the broken structure of the *Biographia* and transform “*the fragments of the winding stair of an old ruined tower*” into a lyrical unity.¹⁴ It is this velocity which makes for the distinctive temporality of lyricism.

This is a consideration which emerges very strongly in the opening pages of volume two, where Coleridge begins to insist upon the defining characteristics of lyrical unity. At one point Coleridge makes the point that the literary object should carry

the reader forward:

not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by the restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of the mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. (II 14)

And just after this he gives a demonstration of the sort of criticism that this would entail, at the same time as illustrating his point:

Precipitandus est *liber* spiritus, says Petronius Arbiter most happily. The epithet, *liber*, here balances the preceding verb; and it is not easy to conceive more meaning condensed into fewer words.

In another passage, the famous description of the act of reading as “a willing suspension of disbelief”, the phrase which follows these words, never remembered along with them, points again to this velocity. The phrase in full reads: “the willing suspension of disbelief *for an instant*” (my italics 6).

Finally, in another famous passage, Coleridge indicates the tropical move which allows for the creation of lyric velocity:

images[,] however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterise the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet’s own spirit. (II 23)

What is interesting here is the way in which Coleridge lays out these four proofs of genius as equivalent, as existing side by side, syntactically, whereas it is clear from the logic of his argument that they are an ascending series, from the rejected solution of neo-classical mimesis, to the final empathetic transfer of poetic spirit. Here, as we noted of the previous passage, Coleridge, in setting out his argument, at the same time performs the operation he describes.¹⁵ For the four proofs of genius are in fact successive stages in the one process, that of reducing “multitude to unity, or succession to an instant”. What this achieves is to take the Lockean chain of association (“associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion”) and compress it to an instant of time, the transfer of poetic power, the lyrical moment.

Before moving on to further considerations of Coleridge’s supplementation of associationist philosophy and psychology, we need to add a further few considerations to what we have already noted. A useful way of thinking about how the *Biographia* does effect this move to a new temporality would be to compare it with Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*. And the comparison between the eighteenth century’s most

eccentric novel and one of the earliest works of Romantic literary criticism is not as idle as it might appear, for both works are concerned with the “Life and Opinions” of their respective authors. In fact, although we tend to overlook the biographical aspect of the *Biographia*, Coleridge himself, in his letters, always refers to the work as “My Literary Life”. What the comparison might reveal is that the Lockean absurdity of the endlessly digressive novel is predicated, not on a world without causation or signification, but on one full of facts, events and opinions, in which there are causes and effects aplenty. However, so rich is the field of signification that the novel goes nowhere, it can barely even start, and ends with eponymous narrator still a babe in arms.

Coleridge identifies this very danger in associationist philosophy in the passage where he coins the term “intensify”:

the true practical 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 conditions of contemporaneity.... But the will itself by confining and intensifying the attention may arbitrarily give vividness and distinctness to any object whatsoever... (I 127)

And indeed *Tristram Shandy* is probably the best example of all of pure aleatoriness that can be produced by an associationist psychology of mind.¹⁶ Such intensification as does occur in the novel is provided by sentiment, which differs from a lyrical intensity in its self-evident theatricality and by the fact that it is most often invoked to underline the pathos of the passage of time.

The *Biographia's* method is quite different, and has everything to do with the temporality of lyricism. As we have seen the *Biographia* is ostensibly a literary biography, but is an incomplete one; moreover its philosophy is explicitly incomplete, its theology is sporadic, and its literary criticism comes from nowhere. As David Simpson writes:

Organic form has no visible history, but exists wholly in the present. The image of the poem as the well-made or seamless garment or organism has become so standard in the rhetoric of literary criticism that we tend to forget what an extraordinary metaphorical transference has been required to present something made by a writer out of language as an autonomous entity with its own vital laws. (216)

The *Biographia's* intensity is one of fragmentation and in this context we can make another useful comparison, this time with Adam Smith's description of capital in *The Wealth of Nations*. For Smith, capital has no definition other than its own velocity of

circulation (I 210, 295-99 &c); for magnitude and accumulation, the shibboleths of mercantilism, are the signs of an inert and unproductive wealth, as opposed to a circulating capital (I 78, II 461 &c). Coleridge's description of the literary object is exactly of this order, except that, presumably, Coleridge would have been unhappy with the chaotic social and philosophical flux of early capitalism.¹⁷ His solution to the problem is to couple the unity and velocity of the literary object with a markedly eschatological temporality. Smith's economics are predicated upon a world which will continue in its present form indefinitely, and in which capital will continue to develop endlessly in "the great wheel of circulation" (I 309). Coleridge, however, can only contemplate the radically unified literary object if time also can stop and fix its unity for ever, as the concatenation of all association.

The Temporality of Coleridge's Lyricism

The suggestion I have just made, that Coleridge's poetic arises in part from a need to preserve personal autonomy and identity in a social order where traditional distinctions were becoming more difficult to maintain in the face of emergent capitalism, can be supported by reference to several passages in the *Biographia*. At one point, for example, Coleridge writes of the danger of considering

that the will, and with the will all acts of thought and attention, are parts and products of ... blind mechanism, instead of being distinct powers, whose function it is to controul, determine and modify the phantasmal chaos of association. (I 116)

But it should be noted that here Coleridge transfers the "phantasmal chaos", by trope, back to associationist psychology. And, it hardly needs pointing out that the imagination, throughout the work, is a prime index of the autonomous mind, from the moment that Coleridge begins to deduce it from association (I 124-26).

David Simpson has written of the politics of this assertion of autonomy:

Organic form, with its easeful interdetermination of part and whole, can now be recognised as the aesthetic analogue of and model for a social paradigm whose ideal functioning depends on upon a privileged individual (gentleman, poet, critic) who has a good deal of power to subordinate and arrange, but no incentive to abuse it. (222)

But this is an understanding of Coleridge at his most Burkean and it is at this level that the doctrine of organic form is most easily discussed. I would argue, however, that in the *Biographia* we have a continuum, from organic form via the Imagination to the "the repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM", increasing in intensity. Moreover, as figured in the *Biographia* this continuum is of

the same kind as considerations of personal autonomy and identity (as both literary objects and mind are concerned with the dialectic synthesis of thing and thought (Jang 509)). So it is appropriate to discuss organic form in this context, especially when we remember that Coleridge's preferred translation of "I am that I am" was "I am *in that* I am".¹⁸

We have already seen how lyrical identity is, in the *Biographia*, "supercharged", as it were, by its lyricised temporality. And we must next see how this intensity causes Coleridge to ascend the ladder of terms I have just sketched, towards the Godhead. For, it will not have escaped the notice of many readers that one of the most alluded-to phrases in the *Biographia* is that of Jahweh to Moses, his first entry into human consciousness with the assertion of identity ("I AM THAT I AM") that also fascinated Freud. And the phrase is found in most of the key passages of the work, the concluding paragraph, the definition of the Primary Imagination and Thesis VI of chapter 12 (Ryan 48-49), among others. But another divine pronouncement is prominent too in the *Biographia*, *γνοθι σεαυτον*, and is as often invoked as the other. At first it seems at odds with I AM, but in a later passage is coupled with it in dialectic synthesis:

Poor unlucky Metaphysics! and what are they? A single sentence expresses the object and thereby the contents of the science. *Γνοθι σεαυτον*: et Deum quantum licet et in Deo omnia scibis. Know thyself: and so shalt thou know God, as far as is permitted to a creature, and in God all things. (II 240)

This is the ultimate unity of the knower and the known, achieved by the self-knowledge of the knower, an imperative Romanticism took over, with different emphasis, from Christian mysticism.

It is necessary to insist, against such critics as Jonathan Wordsworth, who attempt to read the *Biographia* as a theological work ("I AM" 79-84), that here Coleridge's theology is subordinate to his literary critical work, since it is there that the lyricism of the *Biographia* finds its rationale. Despite the strong theological interest in the *Biographia* and despite such easily cited passages as the formal doxology which closes the work, we must avoid considering Coleridge in a timeless Christian context and instead investigate the historicity of Coleridge's theological interests.

Although Coleridge inserts himself consciously into the Christian mystical tradition, when he praises Jakob Böhme's writings as superior to formal metaphysics (I 148), there is a crucial epistemological break between traditional Christian neoplatonism and Coleridge's use of it in the *Biographia*.¹⁹ However much Christian neoplatonism wanted to see an image of the divine in the human soul, yet, terrified of

Pelagianism, it had always insisted strongly on the doctrine of “prevenient” grace—the grace of God inhering in the soul prior to any volition of that soul. Nor is Plato’s platonism any more apposite in the context, for Plato believed that the Ideas were exterior to the mind, not, as with Romantic idealism, innate (Jang 509).²⁰

Nor can we, as a way of escaping these considerations, insist on a distinction between the Primary and the Secondary Imaginations, seeing the one as belonging to the metaphysical/theological speculations of the first volume, the other to the practical criticism of the second volume. Those who choose this explanation fail to grasp that the distinction between the two is one of degree and not of kind. Moreover the Primary Imagination may well be notable by its absence from the rest of the *Biographia*, but its very mention in chapter 13 is its own enactment, in the economy of work, where, in the same way that the knower must know him/herself, so the text embodies its own lyrical nature as well as providing the theoretical basis for a lyrical criticism.

Instead of trying to fit Coleridge into this tradition in the most general terms it would be better to investigate how Coleridge took over Schelling’s understanding of the “continuous revelation of the infinite by Art” (Leask 115). And, as with Schelling, we would find that Coleridge owed much, in this hermeneutic endeavour, specifically to the new Higher Biblical Criticism.

This criticism was one which emerged from the Enlightenment suspicion of scriptural revelation, and was concerned to subject the text of the Bible to a linguistic, historical and stylistic analysis. It is crucial to note, however, that none of the first or second generations of Higher Critics, Eichhorn, Herder, Schleiermacher, for example, was concerned to destroy the idea of scriptural revelation, indeed the purpose of most of these critics was the *defence* of the truth of the Bible against rationalist doubt. Coleridge, because of the advanced thinking of the Unitarian circles he frequented in the 1790s, and because of his interest in German thought, was in a position to introduce the Higher Criticism to England.²¹

As the influence of Higher Criticism on Coleridge, and on Romantic thought generally, has been well documented already, in Elinor Shaffer’s *Kubla Khan’ and The Fall of Jerusalem* (1975) and Anthony Harding’s *Coleridge and the Inspired Word* (1983), it will not be necessary for me to go into great detail at this point, especially as I shall be discussing one of the earliest works of Higher Criticism, Robert Lowth’s

Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, in the next chapter.²² Instead I wish to draw attention to two important points about the methods and the outcomes of those methods of the Higher Critics and show how these affect our understanding of Coleridge's lyric criticism and Romantic lyricism.

The first point is that the method of the Higher Critics when faced with the text of the Bible, an obviously composite text, was to assert that the Bible contained passages of differing *degrees* of inspiration. Herder, indeed, in his *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782), claimed that the Bible was *more* authentic when one recognised the differing degrees of intensity in it; this pointed to the "Bardic" and primitive, but also purer, and more truthful, society from which it sprang (Shaffer 77). In the search for the passages of the highest inspiration, however, it naturally came about that the passages of lesser inspiration were neglected. And so the search for true fragments, among the ruins of the time, came to resemble an aestheticised, and lyric, poetic (Harding *Inspired Word* 4). Harding, for example, quotes one North American critic who, in the 1820s, was critiquing the practice of "'turning all our religion into poetry'" (4-5).

The corollary to this is that as those passages of the Bible which are most vulnerable to this sort of decomposition are narrative ones, the stress in these critics came to be on the prophetic, the poetic, rather than the narrative. It became a commonplace, for example, to point to the two versions in *Genesis* of the very first narrative, that of God's creation of the Earth. Even in the New Testament, which contains no poetry at all, the narrative of the first three Gospels, came to be neglected in favour of the christology of the fourth (Shaffer 76).

The second point about the Higher Criticism is that it tapped, unwittingly, into a long Christian tradition that prophecy is not dead. If critical endeavour seeks through the Biblical text for the purest examples of inspiration, and in doing so neglects narrative, then it is likely that the temporal aspects of the text will fall away and the critic, perhaps only by inference, discover the "continuous revelation of the infinite" that Schelling, and Coleridge after him, were able to allege in the name of poetry.

We should, before proceeding, note here the origin of the lyric canon; that is, the canon of authentic lyrics, which a lyric criticism can draw on. One of the perplexing

features of this canon, as figured by, for example, Palgrave, in his *Golden Treasury* (1861), is that it is simultaneously present and past. It can, on the one hand be located in the past to function as a guarantor of lyric heritage, and yet it is, independently of any subsequent mediation, immediately present to the reader in the here and now. And this duality is emphasised by the neglect of the poetry of the eighteenth century in favour of, on the one hand, pre-neo-classical poetry and on the other, Romantic poetry, the past and the present, but both capable of functioning as either canon or immediate, “new” poetry. In the *Biographia* this paradox is found too; we have already noted Coleridge’s strictures on Pope’s poetry, and to him we probably owe one of the earliest wholesale denigrations of the neo-classical school of poetry. But Coleridge was also keen to look back to the poetry of the period before 1660 (Engell & Bate cvi-vii), for example to Donne (*BL* I 23), and his remarks on poetry treat Shakespeare and Milton in the same breath as Wordsworth. Yet at times he can stress the reality of contemporary poetry, Bowles’ sonnets, for example, as against the “classics” of poetry learnt at school (I 12). This paradoxical feature of the poetic canon is undoubtedly a survival of the idea of the continuous revelation of Scripture and the continuation of prophecy.

To return, however, to my main argument. In the last phase of his critical career Coleridge theorised the lyric nugget of Scripture as the symbol, the exegetical counterpart of the literary organic form (Simpson 217), the occasion of a return to a pure, timeless, “Adamic” language (Essick 71-72).²³ However, at the time of writing the *Biographia* Coleridge had not formulated this idea. Instead the influence of Higher Criticism can be discerned in his poetic ambitions and in his literary criticism. Elinor Shaffer’s account of Coleridge begins with his reaction to Eichhorn’s *Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* (1791), and his plans for the “‘last possible’ epic” *The Fall of Jerusalem* (17); which leads to her account of the outcome, in her view, of Coleridge’s “Orientalism”, “Kubla Khan”. What is valuable about Shaffer’s account is the way in which it stresses the apocalyptic temporality of the lyric²⁴, firstly in the very project of Coleridge’s projected epic:

He first conceived of a full-scale epic, based, according to neo-classical precepts, on history, though history interpreted in a symbolic way; in the event he produced something even more radical than a symbolic epic, an apocalyptic one, in which the entire action is concentrated, past, present and future, into onemoment of vision expressed in wholly lyrical style. (18)

And secondly in general terms:

the radical break with the past came [“in the romantic period”], and not with the advent of ‘modernism’, however defined—in short, with ‘Kubla Khan’ and the lyrics of Hölderlin, rather than with Poe or with Lautréamont’s ‘Chants de Maldoror’ (1869). It is not accidental that Hegel, employing the aesthetic categories of romanticism, was able to predict with such accuracy the whole course of art since his time: its history was implicit in the art of his own day, its theory in his own. (12)

The shape of romantic poetry, indeed of poetry to the present day, begins to be visible as the eighteenth-century Biblical epic emerges into the lyrical ballad. (62)

Finally, Shaffer quotes the highly interesting passage from one of Coleridge’s letters of 1815 about his own concept of the temporality of lyric time:

The common end of all *narrative*, nay of *all*, Poems is to convert a *series* into a *Whole*: to make those events, which in real or imaginary History move on in a *strait* Line, assume to our Understandings a *circular* motion—the snake with it’s Tail in it’s mouth.... Doubtless, to *his* eye, which alone comprehends all Past and all Future in one eternal Present, what to our short sight appears strait is but a part of a great Cycle.... Now what the Globe is in Geography, *miniaturizing* in order to *manifest* the Truth, such is a Poem to that Image of God, which we were created into, and which still seeks that Unity, or Revelation of the *One* in and by *Many*.... (*Letters* IV 956, quoted by Shaffer 142)

Now it hardly needs saying that Biblical hermeneutics is not the most obvious feature of the *Biographia*, though there are traces of the critical background from which Coleridge is writing, as, for example, when, in his chapter on poetic metre, he discusses Pindar, and describes his style as: “approach[ing] more nearly, than any other poetry ... to the style of our bible in the prophetic books” (II 86-87).²⁵ However we should remember that the philosophical parts of the *Biographia* are merely the prologue to a work “on the PRODUCTIVE LOGOS human and divine; with, and as the introduction to, a full commentary on the Gospel of St. John” (I 136); in fact the *Biographia* was, even during its writing, only ever considered in this way by Coleridge (cf *Letters* IV 974). What the second volume of the *Biographia*, in which Coleridge considered he had described “the true principles of judgement respecting Poetry, Poem, poetic and *poematic* Diction” (*Letters* V 287), represents is a *secularisation*, along the lines of Schelling’s project, of the Higher Critical endeavour.

“To Speak More Particularly of Poetry”

In the foregoing sections of this chapter I have given an account of the lyric temporality, as figured in Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*. This is a temporality which is not simply confined to the literary object, but, as we have seen, also extends to personal identity, and the shape of consciousness itself. Coleridge was a useful figure to

consider in this connection because, although he was and is an influence second to none in Romantic poetics, his connections with Burkean social theory, and Biblical Hermeneutics, to mention only two areas, are exemplary in demonstrating the wide diffusion of the lyric temporality.

However, in this last section of the chapter I want to discuss poetics in more detail. In particular I should like to demonstrate that lyric considerations, though not signalled by an explicit espousal of the lyric as a genre, are nevertheless the determining force behind Coleridge's poetics. There are two sets of definitions of "the true nature of poetic diction" in the *Biographia*, although both go beyond a neo-classical definition of diction to include the *ensemble* of features which make for "the tone and spirit of unity" (II 16). The second of these sets of definitions is Coleridge's dispraise (II 122ff) and subsequent praise (II 142ff) of Wordsworth's poetry. Although the features of this evaluation are interesting (and I have quoted extensively from it already), it would be easier to discuss Coleridge's discussion of Shakespeare's narrative poems, as, in the latter discussion, Coleridge, as it were, is entering into a dialogue with Wordsworth's poetics, and the outcome is not so clear-cut for my purposes.

I have also quoted extensively from Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism in the *Biographia* already; but it is well worth itemising and discussing the four points that Coleridge makes, to underline some of the points I have already made. What will become more and more evident in this thesis is that the characteristics of poetry which Coleridge describes are the characteristics which subsequent critic after subsequent critic will raise, each time as though new. They are, as it were, a set of shibboleths, to be pronounced anew in each critical project down to our own time.²⁶

The first of the "specific symptoms of poetic power" which Coleridge elucidates from *Venus and Adonis*, is very innocuous. It is "the perfect sweetness of versification" (I 20). We have seen how Coleridge requires poetic meter as an index of difference for poetry, so that, in the end, it can become transcendent sameness. Coleridge here singles out the "sense of musical delight" as the one mark of poetic diction which is truly "a gift of the imagination" and the terms in which he describes its possible false acquisition, support the analysis I have made of Coleridge's poetic as in part a social defensive one:

Imagery ... affecting incidents; just thoughts; interesting domestic or personal feelings; and with these the art of their combination or intertexture in the form of a poem; may all by incessant effort be acquired as a trade, by a man of talents and much reading, who ... has mistaken an intense desire of poetic reputation for a natural poetic genius....

Moreover, once defined as “a gift of the imagination”, this quality is immediately linked with the synthetic power of poetry:

and this together with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, a modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling, may be cultivated or improved, but can never be learnt.

The second characteristic, “the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself” (II 20), is again rather obliquely lyrical, and seemingly only susceptible to a reference to “disinterested” aesthetic judgement. However, Coleridge’s discussion opens out into the psychology of both the writer and the reader in quite fascinating ways. In the first place the reading of *Venus and Adonis*, it is alleged, gives the reader access to the mind of the poet itself:

It is throughout as if a superior spirit more intuitive, more intimately conscious than even the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view; himself meanwhile unparticipating in the passions, and actuated only by that pleasurable excitement which had resulted from the energetic fervour of his spirit in so vividly exhibiting, what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated. (II 21)

And this dialectic of calm contemplation, expressed in vital action, extends to the reader too, as Coleridge goes on to talk of “the perpetual activity of attention required on the part of the reader” (II 22) which means that he or she

is forced into too much action to sympathize with the merely passive of our nature. As little can the mind thus roused and awakened be brooded on by mean and indistinct emotion, as the low, lazy mist can creep upon the surface of a lake, while a strong gale is driving it onward in waves and billows.

The two last criteria for true poetry are more obviously lyrical and can be seen to restate the first two in more explicit terms. The third lays down that:

images[,] however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterise the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet’s own spirit. (II 23)

Which is an expanded restatement of the first point. And the fourth, similarly recapitulates the second in its emphasis on the “DEPTH, and ENERGY of THOUGHT” of the poet (II 25). Shakespeare, in Coleridge’s conclusion, was “no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it” (II 26-27); instead “SHAKESPEARE becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself” (II 28). The terms of this dialectical paradox remain personal, for indeed this is their origin, but are extended, here and in a host of critical pronouncements subsequently, to the literary object, to the lyric.

Notes:

¹ It is a measure of the shift I am discussing that we talk about poems at all. Dr Johnson, for example, would hardly have understood the term, since the occasions for the use of the modern term were never present to him. He would have used the term “verse” probably more often than “poetry” too.

² In Classical rhetoric this was not a pejorative expression, but instead referred to the logical procedure of taking one’s argument to its limit and seeing whether, in the extreme case, the premises still held.

³ See my chapter three.

⁴ We might note that the *Biographia* was originally conceived as a preface to a volume of Coleridge’s poems, *Sibylline Leaves* (BL I 303).

⁵ An exception is Coleridge’s criticism of Pope’s translation of the *Iliad* as “a conjunction disjunctive, of epigrams” (I 19).

⁶ Coleridge is referring here to the “artificial” poetic style of Dryden, Pope and others.

⁷ Here we might remember Foucault’s account of “The Return of Language” (303-307), particularly this passage:

language had to be made more flexible and more fluid, as it were, from within, so that once emancipated from the spatializations of the understanding it would be able to express the movement and temporality of life. (305)

⁸ I quote from the Everyman’s Library edition of the third edition of 1821.

⁹ A remark which, among others in *Capital*, supports the view that Marx was no Marxist.

¹⁰ The decision to expand the *Biographia* to two volumes was a mistake on the part of Coleridge’s publisher, who had too much copy for one volume, and thought he had enough for two (*Letters* IV 657).

¹¹ The edition of 1847 omitted the three letters and the play review, the most obvious pieces of padding in the work, and editions based on the 1847 edition have continued to omit them, as extraneous.

¹² It is worth noting that despite the Friend’s fears of generic heterogeneity, Berkley’s example was a congenial one for Coleridge:

Coleridge, whose entire life was a struggle “to idealize and to unify”, had found in the idealist Berkley a necessitarian optimism that corresponded exactly to Hartley’s (and Priestly’s) materialism. (J. Wordsworth, “Lamb” 43)

¹³ How this squares with Coleridge’s use of the fictitious Friend in chapter 13 is difficult to see.

¹⁴ As Yeats was later to do both literally and literarily.

¹⁵ As we shall see later, it is vital for Coleridge’s purpose, as indeed for Romantic epistemology, that the knower know him/herself in the act of knowing.

¹⁶ Though we should remember that Stearne was a devastatingly witty satirist of manners, and his treatment of Locke and others is hardly “fair”, and certainly not “philosophical”.

¹⁷ In 1802 we find Coleridge writing to Thomas Poole, then setting out for France:

I advise one thing only—that before you go you skim over Adam Smith, & that in France you look thro’ some of their most approved writers on political Economy—& that you keep your mind *intent* on *this*/ I am sure, that it is a Science in it’s Infancy ... & you ... will be a Benefactor to your Species by making it so. (*Letters* II 799)

Twenty-three years later Coleridge has this to say on the same subject: “In my Conviction the whole pretended Science is but a Humbug” (*Letters* V 442).

¹⁸ It is also worth remembering Coleridge’s plaintive idealization of Kant’s *Ding-an-Sich* in this context. The grounds for this are, according to Coleridge, that Kant could never have conceived “a matter without form” (I 155 cf Leask 99).

¹⁹ In Coleridge’s later work, much of it explicitly theological, such strictures do not apply of course, though the theology is still the theology of *its time*.

²⁰ It is similarly easy, though wrong, to assimilate the neo-platonism of Sir Philip Sidney with that of Shelley in their respective defences of poetry. Shelley’s neo-platonism is of the Romantic variety, and destroys, even more radically than Coleridge, all generic distinctions, whereas Sidney’s defence rests upon an argument about the hierarchy of genres.

²¹ His manuscript notes, which he titled “Letters on the Inspiration of Scripture”, were not, however, published until after his death, when they emerged as *Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit* (1840), to some little scandal, but, apart from this, to universal neglect. Ultimately it was the rationalistic third generation of Higher Critics, headed by Strauss and Renan, who were to influence Victorian debate in this area (Harding *Inspired Word* 8).

²² I am indebted to their accounts of Higher Criticism for my general understanding of the subject and for the information in the previous paragraph and subsequent paragraphs to the end of the section, even where not stated.

²³ This formulation, as with other, similar ones among the Higher Critics drew heavily on the idea that just as the New Testament clarified and explained the far-from-clear prophecies and pronouncements of the Old Testament, so this criticism was the latest new testament, which would purify and explain the obscurities of both the Old and the New Testaments (Shaffer 113-14).

²⁴ See also Harding *Inspired Word* 54-57.

²⁵ For the eighteenth century Pindar was the very type of a lyric poet.

²⁶ In talking of Coleridge’s influence we might instance John Middleton Murry’s essay “The Nature of Poetry”, which I discuss in chapter six. I think it is fair to say that Coleridge’s discussion of *Venus and Adonis* here, is the inspiration for Murry’s investigation of *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, in which he discerns all the characteristics of lyrical intensity and describes them, sometimes in Coleridge’s very words.

