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TRENDS IN THE CRITICISM OF SHAKESPEARE'S ROMANCES IN ENGLAND AND GERMANY DURING THE ROMANTIC ERA (1750-1850)

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the trends in the critical reception of Shakespeare's Romances in England and Germany from approximately 1750 to 1850, using the methods of description, comparative analysis, and evaluation. Within the overall framework of European Romanticism, such criticism can be seen to exhibit two distinct trends. English criticism is essentially empirical and demonstrates an overriding concern with psychological, moralistic and socio-historical considerations, whereas German criticism takes an idealistic view of literature as a synthesis of dialectical opposites under the influence of a unifying central idea. The German criticism of the Romances therefore involves philosophical speculations about the truth of Shakespeare's characterization and the nature of man generally. Where English criticism reveals an increasingly antiquarian and socio-historical approach to the plays, German criticism becomes more positivistic in its major orientation. Despite the divergences between the two trends, they can be seen to reveal an overall unity, which is enhanced by the points of contact between them.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

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INTRODUCTION

This study was undertaken for several closely related reasons. The most important of these was the desire to begin to make sense of the veritable Babel of critical opinions surrounding the reception of Shakespeare's Romances by studying, in broad outline, the critical responses to these masterpieces of Shakespeare's mature genius from the significant point in their critical evolution when their generally grudging acceptance by neoclassical critics began to make way for the increasingly generous praise bestowed upon them by the Romantics, and when the generally unified body of neoclassical opinion began to be replaced by a variety of critical responses. The assumption underlying this study, then, is that, as a conceptual discipline, criticism is not a haphazard collection of ideas, and that, as part of the history of ideas, it can be seen to exhibit an underlying continuity. The historical 'amnesia' from which many 'modern' critics conveniently or unwittingly would seem to suffer, in part explains why they often parade, without critical acknowledgement, ideas which derive from better brains. That this critical 'amnesia' is also to be found in the English departments of some universities is evident from the fact that the 'ruling' critical interpretation is often that of the lecturer conducting the course.

Another reason for the prevalence of so much critical distortion is that the business of criticism is too often viewed from a narrow national perspective, which must inevitably ignore the obvious fact that it is not an encapsulated phenomenon but often the result of a valuable cross-fertilisation of ideas. That the significant contribution

of German critics to the history of Shakespearean criticism in general, and of the Romances in particular, is seldom, if ever, mentioned or discussed in the English departments of some universities, can only be imputed to a distressing lack of exposure to the work of the great German critics on the part of the lecturers concerned, which is most probably due to over-specialisation and to the fact that such critics' work is not always readily available in translation.

Although it is fully appreciated that each critical text examined in this study often forms part of the much larger critical output of the critic concerned, the sheer vastness of the bulk of their writings(1) made a concentration on their critical commentaries on the Romances as such essential (although some of their other writings were often examined where it became necessary to come to a better understanding of the essential critical principles underlying their work); even so, the volume of primary research material on which this study is based, the bulk of which had to be brought out from Europe, is considerable. The only two critics whose works could not be obtained are Julian Verplanck and I.A. Eccles(2) but, in view of the total amount of critical writing examined, there is sufficient reason to be believe that their omission cannot significantly influence

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1 The critical writings of Johann Gottfried Herder alone, for example, run into some twenty-nine volumes.

2 The two works concerned are Eccles's *The Plays of King Lear and Cymbeline* (1801) and Verplanck's *The Illustrated Shakespeare* (1847). According to Augustus Ralli, the author of the *History of Shakespearean Criticism*, he had searched in vain for Verplanck's book in the London libraries and finally had to resort to borrowing a copy form J.G. fils Robertson (See the Preface to his *History*).

tha findings of s study that examines the general *trends* in the reception of the Romances during the period reviewed.

That which made the study particularly difficult was, first of all, the complexity and scope of the investigation and, secondly, the sheer bulk of material to be analysed and integrated into a flexible conceptual framework. The delays involved in obtaining some of the material often proved a burden. That every attempt has been made not to impose any preconceptions on the material will hopefully be evident from the fact that several conclusions concerning the work of individual critics (those on Richardson's work, for example) run contrary to established opinion), although it must also be pointed out that there is very little secondary material on the actual primary texts on which this study is based. The extensive Shakespeare bibliographies examined have not revealed any single work in which anything like a comparative analysis of the criticism of the Romances during the Romantic age is undertaken.

The method followed in this study is largely that of description, comparative analysis and evaluation in tha interests of identifying a trend or trends in the critical responses to the Romances in England and Germany during the period reviewed, and of accounting for their differences and similarities.

The first chapter of this study looks briefly at the question of genre, tha salient features in the censure of the Romances by some representative neoclassical critics, and the reasons for the total lack of German criticism on tha Romances before 1750. As this study is based on tha reception of the Romances *after* approximately

1750, it follows that it cannot purport to give a detailed account of the neoclassical critics' generally unfavorable responses to the Romances. The second and third chapters of this study purport to examine the critical reception of the Romances in England and Germany respectively; and the final chapter, the divergent trends in English and German criticism, in terms of essential differences, points of contact, and similarities, in that order. The wider context in which this study is embedded, and which it therefore to a certain extent reflects, is the fundamental reorientation in literary criticism heralded by the gradual, though often revolutionary, breakdown of the neoclassical creed which had held sway for almost three hundred years.(3)

It should be explained that the Renaissance brought with it a revival of interest, not only in the spirit of antiquity generally, but also in the critical writings of the ancients, made accessible to the age through the efforts of the Italian theorists and refined and codified by the efforts of the Academie Francaise in the first part of the seventeenth century to extract from them a set of guiding principles for the production of literary art. There is widespread consensus among critics that the instinct which made them consult the writings of the ancients for guidance was essentially sound,(4) but that the scientific spirit of the so-called Age of Reason resulted in too dogmatic and rigid an application of the 'laws' deduced from the

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3 See Wellek, R *A History of Literary Criticism* (Vol. 1), (1981) p. 6.

4 See Wellek, R *op. cit*, (Vol. 1), p. 12, and Atkins, J.W.H., *English Literary Criticism: 17th and 18th Centuries* (1951), p. 12f.

ancients. These 'laws', which derive mainly from Aristotle and Horace, as Wellek points out, were not simply taken over from the ancients but were integrated into their overall rational outlook on life, since they believed them to be based and reason and experience.(5) Although there would seem to be some disagreement among critics as to the intensity or extent of the parallelism assumed between the scientific and literary ideals of the time, there is agreement on the suspicion with which subjective elements in the work of art, and on the part of the poet, were regarded. The imagination, in particular, was almost universally denounced although, as Cassirer argues, the theory of classicism [that is, *neoclassicism* in Cassirer's usage] was by no means "blind to the real nature of the imagination".(6) Wellek sums up the conv very aptly in his statement that neoclassical critics "believed in a rational theory of poetry but not that poetry was entirely rational",(7) pointing out that in poetry, as far as the imagination was concerned, it was deemed necessary to subjugate the fac ty to the tutelage of reason.

Central to neoclassical aesthetics was the concept of *mimesis* or imitation which, as Wellek points out, did not involve giving a photographically accurate cop of reality, but representing or reproducing nature or reality the work of art.(8) In this regard, the unities were mainly supp wit naturalistic arguments, of

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5 Wellek, R. *op. cit.*, p.

6 Cassirer, E. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (1951), translated by Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove, p. 284.

7 Welluk, R. *op. cit*, p. 13.

8 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 1), p. 14.

which the concept of probability was an important ingredient, not in the sense of defending art against reality, but of imposing certain restrictions on art. As a result, the marvellous and supernatural were largely excluded. But *nature* was also interpreted to mean *general nature*: that which is typical or universal and which informed the doctrine of decorum or propriety. Individually ugly, low, or violent actions, it was believed, should not be imitated but excluded from all artistic representation. This, as Wellek argues, naturally led to idealisation in art, resulting in an emphasis on poetic justice. Imitation of nature further led to a rigid theory of genres and to an atomistic approach to the literary work in the sense that it was broken up into any number of formal categories viewed in isolation and, therefore, in violation of Aristotle's organic conception of the work of art.(9) The neoclassical interest in the effect of literature on its audience, which was based, to a certain extent, on Aristotle's doctrine of purgation and on Horace's emphasis on pleasurable instruction, led to a confusion, on the part of a great many critics, of art and morality. This confusion is still reflected in some of the early or so-called pre-Romantic critics' work examined in this study.

The advent of neoclassicism in England was the direct result of the strong French influence in that country after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Although the fundamentals of the neoclassical creed had been developed prior to 1660, it was only during the reign of Louis xiv, from 1661-1715, that the creed came to be codified in its final form by Boileau, Rapin, Le Bossu and others, whose writings

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9 The effects of these responses to the question of artistic imitation will be seen from the discussion, in Chapter 1, on the reception of the Romances in England before 1750.

were almost immediately translated into English to become widely accessible.(10) During this time, as Atkins points out, the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* became increasingly "recognised as the one infallible authority", although frequent modifications of his theory did occur.(11) The well-known system of neoclassical rules that was formulated, and which was based largely on Aristotle and claimed to be in accordance with the fundamental rules of Nature and reason, became authoritative until about 1770, when it began to disintegrate.

One of the main characteristics of English criticism in general, before and even during the advent of Romanticism, was its strong Aristotelian bias which, it will be shown in this study, distinguishes it from that of the Germans. As Spingarn points out, the "introduction of Aristotelianism was the direct influence of the Italian critics"; and the agent in bringing this new influence into English letters was Sir Philip Sidney, whose *Defence of Poesy* is the "veritable epitome of the literary criticism of the Italian Renaissance".(12) He claims that "dramatic criticism in England was thus, from its very birth, both Aristotelian and classical, and [that] it remained so for two centuries".(13) The authority of Aristotle for English critics of the time, as Spingarn shows, was stressed by Ascham, Watson, Sydney, Harrington and others, but only became dictatorial in England with the advent of the so-called

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10 Atkins, J.W.H. *op. cit* (1951), p. 7.

11 Atkins, J.W.H *ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

12 Spingarn, J.E. *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* (1954), p. 268.

13 *ibid.*, p. 282.

French phrase. There is now general agreement among critics that the excessive emphasis on rules considered to be immutable and valid for all times was contrary to the empirical spirit of Aristotle's treatise.

After approximately 1700, the neoclassical creed was more or less generally accepted in England but, at the same time, a growing interest in the more liberal theories of Longinus, Saint-Evremond and others began to present a challenge to the it. Critics such as Charles Gildon, John Dennis and Addison took up the cudgels on behalf of Shakespeare. In his discussion on the growing opposition to the creed, Atkins concludes that, during this time, the it enjoyed a limited acceptance in England and that, after 1740, such opposition mounted. The growing popularity of Longinus brought about an interest in the emotional side of poetry and an interest in the creative personality of the artist. The widening outlook, as Atkins terms it, also witnessed the growth of an antiquarian spirit, with a strong interest in old-world ballads as well as in the works of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, which resulted in the application of historical and psychological methods to criticism. More importantly, the concept of imitation, which had been interpreted more mechanically than imaginatively, now began to be transformed into a spiritual process: prospective writers were urged to capture, not formal details, but the "vital force, the imaginative stimulus that had animated the works of the ancients". (14)

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14 Atkins, J.W.H. *op. cit.*, p. 194.

Another English critic whose influence would seem to have been greater in Germany, or whose thought at least has more in common with the idealistic speculation of the Germans than with the empiricism of his English countrymen, is Shaftesbury (1671-1713). His basic premise that beauty is equal to truth is essentially also that of the German Romantics, which differs from the English equating of beauty with moral good. Shaftesbury directly influenced the pre-Romantic German writer Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) in his emphasis on spontaneity and original composition.

The period 1740-80 Lilian Furst aptly terms the "Age of Sensibility", a period characterised by an "unbridled display of sentiment", a "vogue for the Gothic in architecture and literature after 1750", a melancholy outlook fostered by Methodism, a belief in the efficacy of the doctrine of returning to nature espoused by Rousseau, and an interest in the spontaneous utterances of natural man.(15) Of the many literary dissertations produced at the time, Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759) proved to be of lasting influence. In it he drew a distinction between imitation and originality, learning and genius, the rules and free creation, and emphesised the importance of organic growth, originality and spontaneity. As both Lilian Furst and Abrams point out, the *Conjectures* had little influence in England, unlike in Germany where it was widely studied after it was first translated in 1760.(16) Abrams points out that "German thought was much more receptive than the English to

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15 Furst, L. *Romanticism* (1969), pp. 28-31.

16 See Furst, L. *Ibid.*, p. 37, and M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1958), pp. 201-202.

Young's suggestion that a great work of literature grows out of the impenetrable depths of the mind of genius", and adds that the "dominant English psychology of empiricism had no place either for the concept of growth or of the subliminal in the activities of mind". (17)

An essential difference between the history of aesthetics in England and Germany is that, in Germany, aesthetics formed part of systematic philosophy and therefore experienced a more unified development. The person responsible for attempting to introduce a strict neoclassicism into Germany was the influential critic Gottsched (1700-66). Proceeding in the tradition of Cartesian rationalism, he attempted to impose a set of rigid rules prescriptively upon literary production. His rational approach to literature is well-illustrated by his argument that, "first of all, one should choose an instructive moral thesis suitable to the nature of the purpose one desires to fulfil; then one should think of a general event involving an action which concretely illustrates the chosen moral". (18) The Swiss critics Bodmer and Breitinger rebelled against this conception by arguing that rules should not be imposed from without but should be discovered [inductively] in the works themselves and then conceptualised. (19)

But the first thinker to overcome the dichotomy between rationalism and sensationalism and who achieved a "humanisation of sensibility",

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17 Abrams, M.H. *op. cit.*, p. 202.

18 Cassirer, E. *op. cit.*, p. 336.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 337-38.

in spite of his belief in the importance of reason, was the German thinker Baumgarten (1714-62).(20) A major contribution to the history of aesthetic appreciation was his distinction between the realm of art and the realms of philosophy, morality and pleasure, a distinction that was further developed in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. The gradual development in the direction of a more subjective response to art and aesthetic appreciation generally gained further ground in the work of Johann Elias Schlegel (1719-49), who stressed the emotional effect of art, and that of J.J. Bodmer (1698-1783) and Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86), both of whom stressed the importance of the imagination as a creative principle. In his celebrated defence of Shakespeare against Gottsched, the famous playwright and critic Gotthold E[illegible]ssing (1729-81) not only argued that genius and the rule[illegible]nagination and judgement, are fully compatible, but claimed that, all that matters in the end, is the "coherence of the poet's world".(21) What is clearly evident at this point is the gradual displacement of rationalistic criteria by an emotional concept of poetry, a definite pre-Romantic development.

The real reaction against the French taste, which had also made its influence felt in Germany, as several critics have pointed out, broke out in the form a of a new movement known as the "Sturm und Drang", the ideas of which derived from the French sentimentalists and the British primitivists.(22) As mentioned previously, Edward Young's *Conjectures*, which had excited comparatively little interest

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20 *Ibid*., p. 354f.

21 Wellek, R. *op. cit*. (Vol. 1), pp. 170-71.

22 *Ibid*.(Vol. 1), p. 176.

in England, exerted a very strong influence on the members of the new revolutionary Storm and Stress movement in Germany, especially on Herder. Prior to Herder, Gerstenberg (1737-1823) and Hamann (1730-88) had contemptuously dismissed the so-called rules, emphasising inspiration, imagination, novelty, originality and genius instead. But as the very first German critic to break with the neoclassical past, Herder, who was influenced directly by Shaftesbury, Brown, Blair, Percy, Warton and Young, paved the way for the German Romantics.(23)

In his very useful book on the German Sturm and Stress, Roy Pascal argues that the ultimate touchstone for the supporters of the Storm and Stress movement was "personal experience, impelling experience which intensified their consciousness of being alive",(24) and that for these artists "true art ... must reflect the inner nature of the poet and the external nature and society in which he is placed".(25) His further claim that the fusion of imaginative experience and reality is one of the supreme contributions made to criticism by this movement comes as no surprise, because this movement falls midway between neoclassicism and Romanticism. It also comes as no surprise that Shakespeare should have been regarded as the great exemplar of their theories because of his obvious flouting of the rules of the classical theatre and, by implication, because of the apparent 'lawlessness' of his writings.

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23 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 1), pp. 182-83.

24 Pascal, R. *The German Sturm und Drang* (1959), Chapter VIII, p. 233.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

The importance of Herder in the history of literary ideas will be seen from the discussion on the German critics of Shakespeare's Romances. The salient features of his critical doctrines are his insistence on an organic conception of mind and matter, on studying language in relation to its socio-historical circumstances, on the importance of regarding every work of art as embedded in a field of historical influences into which the reader needs to transport himself if he is to understand it properly, on the one hand, and the importance of intuition and inspiration in literary production, on the other. Herder argues that the poet cannot simply imitate, that he must find and give expression to his own inspiration and, therefore, originality. These viewpoints combine in his statement that, "using native traditions, customs, religion, the spirit of the time and the language, Shakespeare's genius served to combine the most diverse "elements".(26) It has been indicated that, in the second half of the eighteenth century, distinctly Romantic tendencies began to appear.

At this point it should be remarked that the very concept "Romanticism" is fraught with difficulty and that it has given rise to literally hundreds of definitions. Cynical as it may sound, this plethora of definitions characterize what are, essentially, futile atomistic attempts at confining developments during perhaps the most complex *period* in the history of literary criticism within the limited compass of a single definition in the vain belief that it will prove to be definitive. A sample of the "incongruous assortment of definitions" (culled from E. Bernbaum's *Guide Through the Romantic Movement*)

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26 Gerold, K.G. (ed.), *Johann Gottfried Herder: Werke in zwei Bänden* (1963), (Bd. 1), p. 884.

is given by Lilian Furst in her monograph on the period.(27) In her larger volume on the period, she writes that no other term of literary criticism has been invested with such a startlingly wide range of meaning".(28) It is small wonder then that a scholar of the standing of A.O. Lovejoy should argue that the word "Romantic" has come to mean so many different things that it has ceased to have any meaning at all.(29) For the multiplicity of definitions, Lovejoy substitutes a plurality of Romanticisms, a kind of nominalism to which Wellek takes exception.(30) It is not the task of this study to attempt to examine the plethore of strange convolutions in meaning that the concept of Romanticism has undergone since A.W. Schlegel's influential distinction between classical and Romantic.(31) Instead a large debt must be acknowledged to R. Wellek for his impressive scholarly survey of the evolution of, and evaluation of the critical debate centred on, the term;(32) and it must be stated unequivocally that this study does not share the belief in what Lilian Furst calls the "fallacy of the 'synthesising' approach", which she attributes to Wellek for arguing that, despite the many individual differences, European Romanticism, reveals an underlying unity.(33) In his essay

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27 Furst, L. *Romanticism* (1976), pp. 2-4.

28 Furst, L. *Romanticism in Perspective* (1969), p. 17.

29 Quoted by Furst, L. *Romanticism*, p. 1; *Romanticism in Perspective*, p. 17; Wellek, R. *Concepts of Criticism*, p. 128; and by several others.

30 Wellek, R. *Concepts of Criticism* (1963), p. 128.

31 Schlegel, A.W. *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*. (1846), Lecture 1.

32 See the chapters entitled "The Concept of Romanticism" and 'Romanticism Re-examined" in Wellek, R. *Concepts of Criticism*.

33 Furst, L. *Romanticism*, p. 64.

"Romanticism Re-examined", Wellek concludes that in all the various studies on Romanticism,

> "..., however diverse in method and emphasis, a convincing agreement has been reached: they all see the implication of imagination, symbol, myth, and organic nature, and see it as part of the great endevor to overcome the split between subject and object, the self and the world, the conscious and the unconscious. This is the central creed of the great Romantic poets in England, Germany and France. It is a closely coherent body of thought and feeling".(34)

He stresses that he would not be understood to be "minimising national differences or forgetting that great artists have created something unique and individual".(35)

In this study it will be shown that, while the English and German criticism produced on the Romances during the Romantic Era exhibit certain fundamental differences, the several shifts which took place in literary criticism in the course of the transition from neoclassicism to Romanticism are common to both English and German critics. It is also hoped that this study will further elucidate the growing

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34 Wellek, R. *Concepts of Criticism* , p. 220.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 221. In an interesting essay entitled "The Romantic School in Germany" in his *History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century* (1902), H. Baers argues convincingly that Romanticism is not an isolated phenomenon.

enth[illegible]m in the reception of the Romances after approximately 1750, when [illegible]iticism had at last begun to break free from the formalistic constraints imposed upon it by the neoclassical creed. Finally, it should be mentioned that, in this study, the term "Romanticism" will be used as a concept in the sense suggested by Wellek.

CHAPTER 1

THE QUESTION OF GENRE IN RELATION TO THE NEOCLASSICAL RESPONSES TO THE ROMANCES AND THE ABSENCE OF GERMAN CRITICISM BEFORE 1750

Owing to a lack of conclusive external evidence, the actual dating and sequence of Shakespeare's Romances -- *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* -- is surrounded by a great deal of conjecture and speculation, but there is now a large measure of consensus on their forming a distinct group written towards the end of Shakespeare's career and, with the exception of *Pericles* perhaps, belonging to some of his finest dramatic achievements.(1)

In so far as the Romances, written after the terrible tragedies and the 'dark comedies', can be seen to blend elements from Shakespeare's earlier works into an outlook on life and approach to the drama significantly different from those embodied in the rest of the canon, they can be said to constitute a separate genre. As will be shown, they differ not only from the great tragedies and comedies but also from the tragi-comedies, an essential feature critics often tend to overlook. Although the question of genre is too complex and specialized a problem to be dealt with in detail in this study, it

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1 The problem of chronology is discussed by Sir Edmund Chambers in Chapter VIII of his monumental work *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (1930). The dates suggested for the Romances are: *Pericles* (1609-10), *Cymbeline* (1610-11), *The Winter's Tale* (1612-13), and *The Tempest* (1612-13). In assumptions concerning chronology and collaboration this study follows Sir Edmund.

requires some attention to characterise the plays that happened to elicit such negative responses from neoclassical critics and such rapturous praise from the romantics.

A feature which is immediately evident about the Romances as a group is their tragi-comic structure. In each one of these plays the scene is set for tragedy right from the start: although *Pericles* is too virtuous and just to be considered a tragic hero in the Aristotelian sense, his guessing of Antiochus's infamous secret precipitates a series of calamitous events that almost destroy him; in *Cymbeline*, Imogen's secret marriage, the treachery of her evil stepmother, Iachimo's Machiavellian scheming, and Posthumus's potentially disastrous credulity all set the stage for calamity to triumph; in *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes's diseased and inexplicable jealousy causes him to give instructions for his virtuous friend Polixenes, King of Bohemia, to be poisoned, his beloved and chaste wife Hermione to be imprisoned and their child to be abandoned on a desert shore; in *The Tempest* it is only through exercising his humane white magic that Prospero, the great artificer in the play, is able to control the forces of darkness threatening to overthrow him and plunge the island into chaos. Over all these plays, the "shadow of tyranny lies heavily ... and is only lifted after great suffering has been caused",(2) but the evil and suffering in these plays is never as relentless, as merciless as in the tragedies. Pettet argues that the suffering and wickedness depicted in these plays is confined and diluted by the "theatrical emotion", which "creates an abiding sense

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2 Knowles-Williams, G. *The Shakespearean Conception of Comedy* (Vol. 11) (1954), p. 183.

of remoteness and unreality", as well as by the lyric beauty of Shakespeare's language which obscures the "potential distress of a scene".(3) In these last plays, however, the awareness of evil is never so fully dispelled as to clear the stage for the frequently unbridled gaiety characteristic of so much Shakespearean romantic comedy. the humour is muted, and there is little of the spontaneous love interest shown by the pairs of young lovers of the comedies:

> "In these last plays ... the audience is neither closely involved with the suffering of the hero (as in tragedy) nor consistently shielded from such suffering (as in comedy). Tragedy and comedy so blend in these plays that, as R.J. Kaufmann has expressed it, our immediate participation in the suffering is not so much prevented, as it is in pure comedy, but disciplined and calculatedly occesional".(4)

A clearer perspective of the Romances as a seperate genre is gained by comparing them with a tragi-comedy such as *Measure for Measure*, a play which has several features in common with them, for example the basic structure and improbability of its plot, the providential part played by the Duke to prevent the action from becoming that of a fully-fledged tragedy, and the ending on a note of forgiveness and reconciliation. But the conflict in this play

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3 Pettet, E.C. *Shakespeare and the Romantic Tradition* (1970), pp. 180-181).

4 Kaufmann, J. in Mowat, B.A. *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* (1970), pp. 180-181).

involves "suffering to a far greater extent than comedy",(5) and the strongest impression left on the spectator is "one of the seamy side of human nature".(6) More important for the purpose of this discussion is Knowles-Williams's illuminating comment that *Measure for Measure* deals with the seamy side of human nature "in a mood which is predominantly a mood of realism".(7) Similarly, "corruption and lust are frankly depicted without any attempt to mitigate their seriousness. The characters -- except for the Duke -- are drawn realistically".(8)

Compared with the portrayal of the main characters in *Measure for Measure*, the characterization in the Romances is more superficial. The characters in the Romances also have none of the immense psychological complexity and verisimilitude of the major characters in the tragedies, and differ from the characters in the romantic comedies in that they are not fully rounded individuals within the context of the play. This very "sketchiness of the portraiture"(9) is, of course, wholly appropriate to the overall effect of unreality, of remoteness from the realistic concerns of everyday life and the motives underlying people's actions, because it contributes to the fairy-tale atmosphere in these plays.

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5 Knowles-Williams, G. *op. cit*, p. 254.

6 *Ibid*, p. 256.

7 *Ibid*., p. 256.

8 *Ibid*., p. 262.

9 Pettet, E.C. *op. cit*., p. 166.

But if the effect of the Romances on the spectator is one of unreality, of an insubstantial pageant, what is the essential difference between them and such a play as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with its fanciful plot and elaborate supernatural machinery ? Despite the fantastical elements in this play, the element of realism is stronger than in the Romances.(10) The story of the inconstant Athenian lovers as portrayed in this "court revel"(11) is given full comic treatment, so that the play becomes a "true comedy, a deliberate picture of life as life reveals itself to the shrewd insight of the comic spirit".(12) Chambers further suggests that, as far as the story of the lovers is concerned, "the introduction of the supernatural does not bring about anything which would have been impossible or improbable without it".(13) Knowles-Williams points out that, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, there is not, as in the Romances, "the sense of preoccupation with the theme of the purging of evil, its forgiveness and the emergence of a new order".(14)

By contrast, the unreal, fairy-tale like quality of the Romances, with the possible exception of *Cymbeline*, is in large measure due to the total improbability of their plots, which are crowded with incidents

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10 Concerning the claim that the element of realism in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is stronger than in the Romances, it should be explained that, in the former, the basic plot structure contains elements that are credible in terms of a possible experiential framework; that, essentially, significant aspects of the action could be real. The term "realism", in other words, is not being used as a period concept.

11 Chambers, E.K *Shakespeare: A Survey* (1964), p. 65.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 68.

14 Knowles-Williams, G. *op. cit.*, p. 275.

so far-fetched and fantastic as to strain credibility to the limit; the superficiality of the characterization; the elaborate stage machinery required to realize the spectacle; and the use of Providence as the great manipulator of the action. The fantastic and, therefore, totally improbable nature of the basic plot structure in these plays is well-characterized by Charles Frey in his statement :

> "Shakespeare's Romances share interests and procedures that help us respond with confidence to each. In all, an initial familial disruption, associated with a court context, leads to estrangement and to wandering far in space and time, to intricate contrasts between nature and art as well as between artificers ... , to crises of near despair, to purgative storms and music, and to miraculous reconciliation. In all of these last plays, individuals or groups ... become submerged eventually in dream and wonder, as if to stimulate their, and our, faith in a wider, more benevolent harmony seen in the limiting context of egocentric and anthropomorphic society". (15)

The use of the supernatural is not peculiar to the Romances, of course, but nowhere else in Shakespeare does the spectator become aware of the presence of the supernatural hovering over the play

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15 Frey, C. *Shakespeare's Vast Romance: A Study of The Winter's Tale* (1980), pp.86-87.

continually to determine the outcome of the plot and the destiny of the characters as playthings of the gods, as is especially evident in *Pericles*. In at least one of the plays (*The Tempest*), the action is completely controlled by Providence in the person of the great white magician Prospero and his attendant spirit Ariel. The action involves an engineered shipwreck, which the characters miraculously survive without any physical mark of their ordeal, a masque, a vanishing banquet, and the pursuit of the conspirators by a pack of spirit hounds; in *Pericles*, there is the vision of Diana; in *Cymbeline*, the appearance of Jupiter; in *The Winter's Tale*, the oracle of Apollo. If we add to these the miraculous escapes of the characters, it becomes clear to what extent Providence functions as the great artificer in each of these plays. Spectacle in these plays takes the form of a shipwreck, a near shipwreck and a dumb-show in *Pericles*; a grotesque dance of the satyrs in *Cymbeline*; a 'resurrection' in *The Winter's Tale*; and a shipwreck, a formal masque and a disappearing banquet in *The Tempest*. The use of the supernatural, and particularly of Providence, in these last plays is clearly important thematically in preparing for and bringing about the resolution of the conflict, as well as reconciliation and forgiveness. The much greater scope given to scenes depicting the reunion with loved relatives believed to be dead, Schanzer argues, is one of the main characteristics distinguishing the Romances from the previous comedies (with the exception of *Twelfth Night*).(16) He points out that in three of these last plays "this reunion is accompanied by reconciliation and forgiveness (the exception being

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16 See Schanzer, E. Introduction to the Penguin edition of *The Winter's Tale* (1969), p. 40.

Pericles, in which the united parties have nothing to forgive each other).(17)

Other structural features peculiar to the Romances include the use of a characteristic double plot involving parents and children,(18) not to be found anywhere else in Shakespeare; long time-spans of up to sixteen years; and a general looseness of organization (with the exception of *The Tempest*). It is, however, not isolated features which account for the distinctive quality of the Romances, but rather the cumulative effect of all the features.

The question concerning the specific linguistic features characteristic of the Romances is complicated by an unsystematic approach by critics, a considerable amount of speculation, and often, it would seem, by the necessity of having to prove preconceptions, such as the one that the language of the last plays reflects Shakespeare's resignation at the end of his artistic career. This fault is, for example, evident in as distinguished a critic as B. Ifor Evans who, despite many valuable insights, characterizes the language of *Cymbeline* as having on the whole "a *quietness*, a *thinness*, an absence of overtones or subtle associations ... , a *gentleness*, an *easy intelligibility*" (own emphasis).(19) In the absence of a searching, well-substantiated analysis of the language of the last plays, such statements are of little value. Similarly, the contrast

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17 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

18 Hoeniger, F.D., in his Introduction to the Arden edition of *Pericles* (1969), p. lxxii.

19 Ifor Evans, B. *The Language of Shakespeare's Plays* (1965), p. 201.

between the "boisterous prose scene" and the "deliberately quiet and brilliantly retrospective speech" by Prospero in *The Tempest*(20) is an insight too obvious to warrant communicating. Sir Ifor's basic premise would seem to be that the last plays reflect a "sense of withdrawal, of some imaginative exhaustion"(21) on Shakespeare's part -- the 'end-of-the-road' theory propounded by Strachey and others.

More illuminating are H. Smith's comments on the language and style of the Romances as a group where he discusses two passages from *Cymbeline* (II, v. 13-35) and *The Winter's Tale* (II, i. 81-95) to demonstrate how "self-conscious, rhetorical and tortured in syntax and strange in vocabulary"(22) these plays sometimes are. Quoting Jonathan Smith's description of Leontes's language as composed of an "'exsufflicate' vocabulary, extraordinary in every way", and containing polysyllabic latinisms and such words as "distinguishment" and "federacy", he argues that Leontes's language shifts to suit the context in which and the purpose with which it is employed. He further argues that the language of the Romances is "often used for purposes other than characterization, and that this has led to a "misunderstanding of the quality of the last plays, and especially of *Cymbeline*". He points out that Imogen's speech in I.iii.17-37 is not primarily intended to characterize her but "sharpen the audience's awareness *of the situation*" (own emphasis). Similarly, Shakespeare

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20 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

22 Smith, H. *Shakespeare's Romances : A Study of Some Ways of the Imagination* (1972), p. 176.

would sometimes deliberately "destroy the syntax to indicate a combination of excitement and uncertainty" (Imogen's speech in III.ii.48-68), and would even employ incoherence with calculated *dramatic effect* (own emphasis).(23) Smith further suggests that in the Romances language is used in a way that would render it both dramatically and psychologically persuasive (Iachimo's speech in II.ii.37-51), and that it sometimes is "in that middle ground between prose and verse".(24) In conclusion, he argues that a new *complexity* (my emphasis) and beauty is to be found in the Romances, because

> ... the plays of this group offer more theatrical displays, suitable for the kind of romance material being handled; and because this theatrical emphasis provides more opportunity for music of all kinds. It brings about in the audience a heightened awareness of the improbable, the incredible, the marvellous.(25)

So complex is the use of language in these last plays, that it is even possible to find two kinds of language in opposition in a speech by the same author, a feature Jonathan Smith draws attention to. The first part of Leontes's speech addressed to Mamilius (I.ii.128-146) is colloquial, with a "liberal number of slang words and low

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23 *Ibid.*, pp. 176-178.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 193

26 Smith, J. 'The Language of Leontes" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 19 (1968), p. 318.

phrasings";(26) then the language of 'grace' is invoked in an attempt to impose logic and a decorous cohesion on his thoughts. These lines, so "extraordinarily dense in . uch latinate and rare words", are

> "difficult to speak and to understand. So heavy and pompous, so strained are the words in the mouth, so intricate the rhythms necessary to convey the complex thoughts and distorting passion at dramatic moments that actors have often found great difficulty in delivering Leontes' lines with the subtle variation they demand".(27)

These shifts between the broken-up syntax of Leontes' jealousy and the decorous language he uses, Jonathan Smith argues, are determined by the demands of the occasion and reflect the "movement of this consciousness".(28) In the last act of the play, Leontes has found

> "the true language of a king. It is not so much a fusion of court sophistication and country simplicity, as a completely new language. The maturity is achieved in and through the verse. It is unequivocal, purged now of the pseudo-rational phraseology and the portentous".(29)

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27 *Ibid.*, p.318.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 321.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 326.

Although the essays by H. and J. Smith do not in any way constitute a clear and systematic characterization of the language of the last plays, they have at least the distinction of drawing attention to the highly complex and subtle use made of language in these last plays, the frequent shifts in register and the mixing of more than one kind of language. They implicitly challenge the contention that the language of the Romances may be characterized by a quiet uniformity reflecting Shakespeare's exhaustion and resignation at the end of his prolific career.

Viewed against the transition from neoclassicism to Romaticism as outlined in the introduction to this study, the brief characterization of the Romances in this chapter should give a better insight into the critical responses to them before approximately 1750, when the neoclassical creed began to disintegrate after almost half a century of mounting opposition to its fundamental tenets. Although for various socio-historical reasons, the neoclassical creed was never as deeply entrenched in England as on the continent, and particularly in France where it had been codified, English criticism of the Romances up to 1750 is more or less consistent with the demands of the dominant critical theory of the time.

There is a great deal that a neoclassical critic could take exception to in these last plays. As regards their hybrid tragi-comic structure, they would be seen as being neither flesh nor fish and, therefore, as constituting a direct violation of the rule pertaining to purity of form. The form of a play such as *Cymbeline*, in particular, follows the curve of action of tragedy almost to the very end where, contrary to all expectation, the confusion generated by the

complication of the plots is resolved, the king's sons and their sister united after a separation of almost twenty years, and all is forgiven and all offenders pardoned. A second characteristic of these plays that would qualify for severe censure is their blatant disregard of the supposedly Aristotelian unities of place and time, the only exception being *The Tempest*, in which a lapse of many years is ingeniously bridged at the beginning of the action and in which the unities are otherwise strictly observed Unlike in *The Tempest*, the action in *Cymbeline* extends over several months, and in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* the time span exceeds sixteen years. Although dramatically justified, these inordinately long time spans are unacceptable in terms of neoclassical theory. The frequent scene changes in three of the plays would perplex a serious neoclassicist. In *Pericles* there are some fifteen scene changes, often remote in space;(30) in *Cymbeline* they alternate between England and Rome in rapid succession; in *The Winter's Tale*, between Sicily and Bohemia. The preference neoclassical critics showed for *The Tempest* can only be due to its strict observance of the supposedly classical unities. It would be too laborious a task to list the numerous improbabilities to be found in the plots of these plays -- the action of any one of the plays would serve as an example of just how incredible they are. Neoclassical critics would further object to the inaccuracies of historical detail, such as the "deliberate juxtaposition of scenes from different periods or belonging to different conventions".(31) They would further object to the deliberate

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30 In *Pericles* the scene shifts in rapid succession from Antioch to Tyre, Pentapolis, Tharsus, Mytilene and Ephesus.

31 Muir, K. (ed.), *The Winter's Tale: A Selection of Critical Essays* (1968), p. 11.

violation of the demands of propriety in, for example, the scene where Imogen wakes up next to the headless body of Cloten, which she mistakes for that of her beloved Posthumus. Above all, the *demand* for realism inherent in the neoclassical requirement that art should above all be an 'imitation of nature' would seriously inhibit an appreciate, enthusiastic response to these last plays.

After the excesses and decadence of so much post-Restoration drama, and in the absence of a theory of art, or at least of the imagination, to 'legitimize' the intermingling of realism and fantasy as well as the other 'licences' to be found in Shakespeare's Romances, neoclassical critics in England inevitably responded with ambivalence to these plays, as is evident from their many pronouncements.

As a sumptuous spectacle, *Pericles* was such a popular play among theatre-goers of its time that Ben Jonson, who is often unjustly slated for his supposed animosity to Shakespeare, complained that people were flocking to see it in preference to his own play, *The New Inn*.(32) But after 1661, the play went through a period of neglect lasting almost eighty years. The theatrical success that the play enjoyed in its own day was by no means paralleled by the treatment it received at the hands of critics. Jonson objected to the "faulty construction, jigging chorus and the antiquated dumb show" in the play;(33) Pope lists the play as being one of the "wretched plays"

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32 See Parrot, T.M. *Shakespearean Comedy* (1949), p. 371.

33 *Ibid*., p. 371.

which, he claimed, could not be Shakespeare's;(34) and some years later, in a letter to his fellow-editor Malone, Steevens remarked that

> *Pericles*, in short, is little more than a string of adventures so numerous, so inartificially crowded together, and so far removed from probability, that, in my private judgement, I must acquit even the irregular and lawless Shakespeare of having constructed the fabric of the drama, though he has certainly bestowed some decoration on its parts".(35)

Several of the neoclassical objection raised to Shakespeare's Romances are contained in Steevens's rejection of the play. In fairness to him, it must be said that today it is generally agreed that only the last three acts of the play are by Shakespeare's hand, and that some of Steevens's objections are echoed to this day. But his contention that Shakespeare only "bestowed some decoration" on parts of the play is no longer taken seriously. The objections raised by Steevens, as Hoeniger points out, explain why "most 18th century editors, including Pope, [Malone], Dr Johnson and Capell, refused to include the play in their editions of Shakespeare's works.(36)

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34 See Pope's Preface in *The Plays of William Shakespeare*...(1765) edited by Samuel Johnson. It is interesting to note that Pope's ideas on Shakespeare were disseminated in Germany directly and through the influence of Voltaire. In this regard see L.M. Price, *The Reception of English Literature in Germany* (1968), p. 260.

35 Steevens quoted by Hoeniger, F.D. *op. cit.*, p. lxx.

36 *Ibid.*, p. lxx.

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35 Steevens quoted by Hoeniger, F.D. *op. cit.*, p. 1xx.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 1xx.

The relentless progression of potentially tragic events in *Cymbeline*, arrested only towards the end of the play, and the fact that the historical sub-plot was considered too serious for the play to be grouped with the comedies, probably explain why this remarkable "'historical-pastoral' tragi-comical romance", as Kermode has labelled it,(37) was first grouped with the tragedies in the Folio. As an "unprecedented mixture of ancient Britain and modern Italy, comedy and tragedy, history and romance,(38) the play obviously presented a serious problem of classification to neoclassical editors and critics, who objected on principle to a mixing of genres and of disparate elements. As late as 1765, Dr Johnson is found to condemn the play in almost characteristic neoclassical terms:

> "This play has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and some pleasing scenes, but they are obtained at the expense of much incongruity... To remark 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 imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation".(39)

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37 Kermode, F. *The Final Plays* (1963) p. 29.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

39 Johnson, S. (ed.), *The Plays of William Shakespeare* VII, (1765), p. 403.

The Winter's Tale is yet another of Shakespeare's Romances which was censured by neoclassical critics. Dryden characterized the play as "grounded on impossibilities" and "meanly written", and criticized Shakespeare for the general "lameness" of his plots, claiming that many were "made up of some ridiculous incoherent story".(40) But, as C. Frey points, it "is likely that Dryden was more concerned about the violation of the supposedly classical unities, since his critique of *The Winter's Tale* occurs as part of a more general attack upon alleged defects and failures of Elizabethan drama: "loose plots, coarseness, bombast, incorrect grammar and diction, excessive punning, inconsistency, and frequent dullness".(41) Pope showed himself willing to excuse Shakespeare's blatant violation of the unities but, faithful to his high neoclassical standards, he listed *The Winter's Tale* as being among those "wretched" plays which, he claimed, were not Shakespeare's -- plays in which "only some character, single scenes, or perhaps a few particular passages, were of his [Shakespeare's] hand".(42) Charlotte Lennox went so far as to claim that the poetry story on which the play was founded was superior to Shakespeare's play, which she then proceeded to criticise for its "inconsistencies". Her insistence on verisimilitude, on psychological realism, is obvious from her statement that it is inconceivable that Hermione would

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40 Dryden quoted in H.H. Furness's New Variorum edition of *The Winter's Tale* (1964), p. 379.

41 Frey, C. *op. cit.*, p. 20.

42 See Johnson, S. *op. cit.*, p. xc.

> "conceal herself during sixteen years in a solitary house, though she was sensible that her repentant husband was all that time consuming away with grief and remorse for her death. How ridiculous also in standing on a pedestal, motionless, her eyes fixed, and at last to be conjured down by a magical command of Paulina". (43)

Warburton, in his critique of the play, claimed that the "meanness of the fable" and the "extravagant conduct of it" had led many a critic to overlook the play's merits as regards "sentiment and character". And in conversation with Garrick he is reported to have praised the latter for giving "elegant form to a monstrous composition". (44) Malone stated that "none of our author's plays has been more censured for the breach of dramatic rules than *The Winter's Tale*," pointing out that Shakespeare violated the "laws of drama as clearly laid down by a writer once universally read, and admired, Sir Philip Sidney, who, in his *Defence of Poesie* (1595), has pointed out the very improprieties into which our author has fallen in this play." (45)

Although *The Tempest* enjoyed more widespread acceptance than any other of the Romances during the neoclassical age, it also did not escape censure. Rowe mildly criticizes the play for "departing too

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43 Furness, H.H. *op. cit.*, p. 25.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 379-80.

much from that likeness to truth which ought to be observed in these sort of writings".(46) But although the play fails as an imitation of nature, it is praised for observing the unities and for containing a character as consistent with himself as Caliban, for whom Shakespeare had "devised and adapted a new manner of language".(47) This praise of Caliban's authenticity of character persisted throughout the Augustan Age until it was eventually contemptuously dismissed by Johnson in a statement that clearly shows the shift from an essentially rationalistic (that is, formalistic) approach to criticism to a psychological-empirical one:

> "Whence these critics derived the notion of a new language appropriated to Caliban I cannot find: they certainly mistook brutality of sentiment for uncouthness of words. Caliban had learnt to speak of *Prospero* and his daughter, he had no names for the sun and the moon before their arrival, and could not have invented a language of his own without more understanding than *Shakespeare* has thought it proper to bestow upon him. His diction is indeed somewhat clouded by the gloominess of his temper and the malignity of his purposes; but let any other being entertain the same thoughts, and he will

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46 Johnson, S. *op. cit.*, p. clviii.

47 *Ibid.*, p. clix.

find them easily issue in the same expressions."(48)

Although Dr Johnson was too great an individualist and a literary critic to be considered a strict neoclassicist in any way, it is not altogether surprising to find him echoing the general opinion of "Full Fathom Five" as being an "insufferable and senseless piece of trifling".(49) The abundance of these lyrics in the Romances, and particularly in *The Tempest*, was most probably felt to constitute unnecessary interruptions in the flow of the action and altogether too fanciful to be taken seriously -- neoclassical theory had considerable difficulty in appreciating Shakespeare's imaginative achievement in these plays. The wide-spread desire during the neoclassical age to 'improve' on Shakespeare's play is exemplified by the adaptation composed by Dryden and Davenant in 1667, an adaptation in which "spectacular elements were elaborated and the comic potentialities of Miranda's ignorance of the opposite sex exploited to the full".(50) If this adaptation was designed to render the play more realistic and probable, Dryden and Davenant had failed to realize that, untrammelled by the demands of realism, *The Tempest*, paradoxically enough, achieves a philosophical focus on life sharper than that of many a realistic work. But, whatever their reasons might have been, their decision nevertheless clearly showed a dissatisfaction with the original. Although *The Tempest* was

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48 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

50 Palmer, D.J. (ed.) *Shakespeare: 'The Tempest': A Casebook*. (1968), p. 15.

generally popular and praised for its imaginative power, neoclassical critics showed little awareness of the serious philosophical themes in the play. Consequently, the play was variously enjoyed and praised as a charming fantasy not to be taken at all seriously.

This brief sketch of the characteristic features of the Romances and overview of their critical reception by neoclassical critics cannot lay claim to being at all comprehensive. The purport of this account, which is subordinate to the main concern of this study, is merely to identify the salient features of such criticism which, based on a body of inflexible rules seen to be universally valid for all time, could not but fail to appreciate plays so foreign in structure and spirit from the classical ideal.

The only reason why the Romances escaped censure in Germany is that there were no translations of the plays in that country before 1750. The first Shakespeare translation was only produced during the years 1762-66, when Christoph Martin Wieland, a classicist strongly influenced by the French taste and an admirer of Voltaire, translated twenty-two of he plays into prose, using the notes supplied by the bed Pope-Warburton edition of 1747 to inform his assessment of Shakespeare's achievement. Whatever the demerits of Wieland's prose translation might have been at the time, its immediate effect was to make Shakespeare available to the educated German middle-class.

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seventeenth century, and wandering *far* and *wide* to *perform* to audiences generally appreciative of their art. These English actors, as Albert Cohn points out in his masterly study on the subject, scoured the German countryside at a time when acting was not yet an established profession in that country. When the supply of actors in the English capital exceeded the demand, they were forced to find a means of livelihood elsewhere. That the continent afforded them lucrative possibilities is clear from Cohn's statement:

> "English talent of every description was fully appreciated and well remunerated on the Continent. English musicians, fiddlers, flutists, trumpeters, to say nothing of English athletes and riders, had been objects of popular admiration in Germany and the Netherlands since the middle of the seventeenth century."(51)

These players were often invited by the ruling princes to give performances at their courts, which eventually led to the establishment of court theatres; but their extensive wanderings and performances in public places resulted in their art becoming a genuinely public one. The plays that these actors brought with them were mostly garbled versions of English plays which were then presented to the German public mainly for the spectacle which could be squeezed out of them. Since they were presented in English, the language as such was of little consequence; but as time passed,

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51 Cohn, A. *Shakespeare In Germany In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1967), p. XXI.

German actors eventually came to join the English comedians so that, by the late seventeenth century, "only a minority of the numbers, frequently indeed only the managers, were Englishmen".(52) It was the Thirty Years' War, which eventually embroiled the whole of Germany, that effectively hindered the English companies from further visiting the country.

Cohn points out that in 1720 a collection of "English Comedies" was printed in Germany, but that it included not authentic texts of plays staged by the English Comedians but rather a collection of often garbled lines "taken down in a hurry from the mouths of actors" and even displaying "confusion among the characters".(53) Cohn concludes:

> "We possess therefore in this collection nothing but the *subjects* of pieces which had been brought over by the English players, not the pieces themselves in the form in which they were played; so far from it, indeed, the pieces had been corrupted by rude hands to such an extent, that hardly the mere skeleton was left..."(54)

As many English players came to settle in Germany, more and more German came to be used in the performances so that, gradually, the texts became even farther removed from their sources. Some of the

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52 *Ibid.*, p. XCV.

53 *Ibid.*, p. CV.

54 *Ibid.*, p. CV.

subjects of Shakespeare's plays were acted in garbled versions not even remotely approximating the originals -- notably *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and possibly also *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Othello* and *Julius Caesar* -- but it was only a century later that Shakespeare's name first appeared in Germany.(55)

This brief outline is intended to show why, in Germany, there could not be any serious concern with Shakespeare's work prior to approximately 1750. The first who was "favoured with the gift of appreciating Shakespeare to a certain extent was Baron von Borck, Prussian ambassador in London, who in 1741, translated *Julius Caesar* in German Alexandrines, a very creditable performance for that time, which however was tebooed by Gottsched and his school".(56) As Pascal points out, the German critics of Shakespeare were made up of only a small part of the German population, mainly of middle-class academics, while the theatre-going population at large were exposed to liberal adaptations and bowdlerizations of the plays. The first translation of two of Shakespeare's Romances -- *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* -- was by Wieland (1762-66),(57) followed by Sulzer's prose translation of *Cymbeline* in 1772; a translation (based on Wieland's) of all four Romances by Eschenburg in 1782; another

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55 Robertson, J.G. *Shakespeare in Germany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1967), p. XX1.

56 Cohn, A. *op. cit.*, p. CXXXV1

57 For an interesting discussion of the nature and reception of Wieland's translation, see publisher's Epilogue in Wieland, C.M. *Shakespeares Theatralische Werke* (1909-1-11).

prose translation of Cymbeline by F.L.W. Mayar in 1782; a free verse translation of *The Tempest* by L. Tieck in 1796;(58) and an operatic adaptation of the play by Gotter and Einsiedel in 1797. The first authoritative blank verse translation of Shakespeare's plays, the famous A.W. Schlegel edition, was only completed during 1797-1801 and included only one romance, namely *The Tempest*. This great edition, which was completed under the supervision of Ludwig Tieck by Dorothy Tieck and Count Baudissin during the years 1825-33, contains translations of *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.(59)

The proper reception of Shakespeare in Germany was hampered not only by coarse adaptations and bowdlerizations in the absence of authoritative translations of his work, but by the strength of the neoclassical creed as established through writers such as Martin Opitz and the members of his school. Since this influence is dealt with in the introduction to this study, it should suffice to draw attention to the excellent account J.G. Robertson gives of Voltaire's role as the supreme continental dramatist of the time in first of all acquainting Europe with Shakespeare and then in waging a relentless war against the English dramatist. Voltaire's opposition to Shakespeare was the

> "last determined struggle of the classicism of the seventeenth century, with its Cartesian lucidity and regularity, to assert itself against new and insidious forces which were making themselves

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58 See Koch, M. "Ludwig Tiecks Stellung zu Shakespeare" in *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare Gesellschaft* (first published 1896; reprinted 1963), pp. 330-47.

59 Pascal, R *op. cit.*, pp. 191-199.

> felt *in* literature and criticism. It was Voltaire's lot to fight in this losing battle to the bitter end..."(60)

It was the singular achievement of Lessing's crushing victory over the rigid classicism of Voltaire and his disciple Gottsched in Germany that marks the beginning of serious Shakespearean scholarship in Germany.

The gradual rise in critical estimation of these plays after a long period of critical neglect and resistance forms the basis of the investigation pursued in the rest of this study, which will explore the reception of the Romances in England and Germany, with particular emphasis on the considerable contribution to Shakespearean scholarship made by some German critics of the Romantic age.

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60 Robertson, J.G. *op. cit.*, p. 287.

CHAPTER 2

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF SHAKESPEARE'S ROMANCES IN ENGLAND FROM 1750-1850

Although Samuel Johnson left no legacy of any sustained aesthetic criticism on Shakespeare's Romances, it would seem inappropriate to commence any discussion of Shakespearean criticism in England after 1750 without reference to Johnson, not only because of his literary stature, but also because his work exhibits the strong empirical bias so characteristic of the bulk of English Romantic criticism. Johnson is furthermore a convenient point of departure since his work signals a break with the neoclassical past, although remnants of the neoclassical creed are still to be found in his writings, and therefore the beginnings of a gradual transition to Romanticism. However, Jean Hagstrum's efforts at suggesting a course midway between neoclassicism and Romanticism in her excellent dissertation on Johnson's literary criticism would seem to ignore the lack of any significant evidence in his Shakespeare commentaries of insights anticipating Romantic criticism -- that is, if one excludes his celebrated dismissal of the unities and the lack of critical censure of the marvelous in Shakespeare. But that this claim is strongly controversial is evident, for example, from the difference of opinion between two such eminent scholars as D. Nicol Smith and Rene Wellek (1)

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1 D. Nicol Smith writes, "...his common sense and independence of judgement led him to anticipate much of what has been supposed to be the discovery of the Romantic school" (D. Nicol

Jean Hagstrum rightly argues that "experience for Johnson did remain the foundation of all knowledge",(2) that for him "all mental action, whether rational or imaginative, is always secondary to the direct experience of reality"(3) and that the philosophical basis of Johnson's empiricism "may have been derived ultimately from the empiricism of Locke, Isaac Watts and David Hume.(4)

Johnson, as Jean Hagstrum argues, "considered the work [of art] as an expression of the reality and nature that the poet had observed and contemplated, and he was profoundly concerned with the psychological effects of the work upon its reader".(5) In this regard, Abrams points out that Johnson's repeated emphasis on Shakespeare's work as an imitation of nature, shows his dependence on mimesis as a criterion, and that this pragmatic orientation only gradually made way for a concern with the personality of the artist.(6) Johnson's celebrated disparagement of the unities was a major contribution to preparing the gradual shift from the concern with plot and structure to the predominant subsequent interest in the personality of the artist and his method of character portrayal.

Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, p. xx.). Wellek, on the other hand, states that Johnson is "no Romanticist or even unconscious forerunner of Romanticism" (R. Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*, Vol. 1, p. 79).

2 Hagstrum, J. *Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism* (1952) , p. 5.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 13-28.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

6 Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1952), pp. 19-21.

As already mentioned, Johnson did not write any sustained aesthetic criticism on any of the Romances, but it is nevertheless possible to draw some conclusions from his textual notes on the plays, the first of which concerns his literal-mindedness. He objects, for example, to old Gonzalo's cry, "Brother, farewell! we split, we split!",(7) pointing out that Gonzalo had no brother on the ship. That a wider meaning could be attributed to the word "brother" is a possibility that Johnson's literal-mindedness does not permit him to entertain. Then he objects to the unrealistic exaggeration implied in "When I have deck'd the sea with drops full salt",(8) an objection which would seem to imply a standard of experiential accuracy. The character of Prospero is related to the "medieval system of enchantment",(9) which could be interpreted to suggest that even the supernatural has to be explained in terms of empirical reality. Johnson's dependence on empirical psychology is evident from his explanation that the effects of Prospero's wonderful tale are fully comprehensible, as "experience will prove that any violent agitation of the mind easily subsides in slumber".(10) On the question of Caliban's language, Johnson disagrees with Warburton and other critics that Caliban's speech constitutes a new language, and argues that Caliban's speech is perfectly in character and appropriate to the occasion: "...let any other being entertain the same thoughts and he will find them easily issue in the same expressions".(11) And finally, Johnson's

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7 Sherbo, S. (ed.), *Johnson on Shakespeare* (1968), p. 118.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 123

11 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

comments on Ariel's lyrics are so soberly realistic and lacking in any imaginative enthusiasm that it is actually difficult to understand his approval of the play:

> "Ariel's lays, however seasonable and efficacious, must be allowed to be of no supernatural dignity or elegance, they express nothing great, nor reveal any thing above mortal discovery". (12)

But that Johnson does approve of the play is evident from his final statement:

> "... whatever might be Shakespeare's intention in forming or adopting the plot, he has made it instrumental to the production of many characters, diversified with boundless invention, and preserved with profound skill in nature, extensive knowledge of opinions, and accurate observation of life". (13)

However, Johnson's statement inevitably conjures up Hume's claim that "this creative power of the mind [the imagination] amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transporting, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and

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12 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

experience".(14) At least it would seem to stress the share of mind in imaginative production while, at the same time, invoking an empirical framework in terms of which such production should be seen.

The next critic after Johnson to write on any one of the Romances, is Joseph Werton, who contributed some essays on *The Tempest* to the *Adventurer* (1753-54). It is significant, as Atkins points out,(15) that Werton not only questioned the greatness of Pope (the leading Augustan poet of the time), although he later lamented his hostility to him,(16) and decried the "shallow learning on which neoclassical doctrine was based", but that he called attention to the changing standards and methods of criticism. As one of the first critics to stress the importance of originality in literary production, Warton also supported the changing outlook on Shakespeare.(17) Wellek points out that the "disparagement of the unities went along with a shift from interest in plot and structure to interest in character drawing and depiction of human nature", and that, during the eighteenth century, a "large body of criticism was devoted to the discussion of Shakespeare's dramatic characters, quite often independently of the plays themselves". Joseph Warton's essays, he argues, are "good examples of a kind of criticism which Warton

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14 Hagstrum, J. *op. cit.*, p. 89.

15 Atkins, J.W H. *English Literary Criticism: 17th and 18th Centuries* (1951), p. 204-5.

16 Sherburne, G. & Bond, D *A Literary History of England: The Restoration and Eighteenth Century* (1660-1789) (1967), p. 1010.

17 Atkins's opinion is echoed by D. Nicol Smith in the Introduction to his *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, (1962) p. xxxii.

himself felt to be new: *namely*... 'psychological'".(18) In passing, it should be remarked that Warton would seem to be doing the right thing for the wrong reason in that his reason for choosing Shakespeare as a subject fit for criticism is trite: whereas the "regularity and correctness of a Virgil or a Horace" afford their critics "few opportunities of diversifying their remarks", Shakespeare's "numerous faults and blemishes" render him "a fit subject for criticism"(19) -- after all, "writers of a mixed character, that abound in transcendent beauties and in gross imperfections, are ... proper and pregnant subjects for criticism".(20) He rejects the neoclassical belief that Shakespeare is "blamed ... for the conduct of his fables, which have no unity, and sometimes ... for his diction, which is obscure and turgid".(21)

Once, however, this tribute to neoclassical theory has been paid, Warton shows himself to be no rigid adherent to the creed: Shakespeare is praised for his "lively imagination, his strokes of nature and passion, and his preservation of the consistency of his characters". It is surprising to find Warton advancing the argument -- which, it is claimed, Johnson was the first to avail himself of in his Preface of 1765 -- that the unities of place and time are purely

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18 Wellek, R. *A History of Modern Criticism*, (Vol. 1), p. 117. In this regard, consider Warton's largely psychological observation that Prospero "appears to be greatly moved; and suitably to this agitation of mind, which his danger has excited, he takes occasion, from the sudden appearance of the visionary scene, to moralise on the dissolution of all things" (J. Warton, in *The Adventurer* edited by J. Hawkesworth, p. 194).

19 *Ibid.*, p. 196.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 185-86.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

mechanical, unlike the unity of action. The empirical-psychological strain of Warton's comments is evident from his statement that, "to portray characters naturally, and to preserve them uniformly, requires ... an intimate knowledge of the heart of man". What sets Warton's essay apart from those of earlier critics' is his explicit and unequivocal praise of *The Tempest* as the "most striking instance of his [Shakespeare's] creative power", as a play in which he has given "the reins to his boundless imagination, and has carried the Romantic, the wonderful, and the wild, to the most pleasing extrevegance". Although the difference in tone between Johnson's and Warton's comments on *The Tempest* cannot be accounted for by the chronological age difference between the two men, it is nevertheless worth noting that Warton was only thirty-one when he wrote his essay, whereas Johnson was already fifty-six when he wrote his Preface. In Warton's essay, the imagination is still very broadly conceived, but it is in any case no longer regarded with suspicion as in the criticism of Johnson and in some of his contemporaries.

For Warton, Shakespeare's "chief excellence is the consistency of his characters", which quality he discusses in relation to Ariel, whose offices are "enumerated with amazing wildness of fancy, and yet with equal propriety". Although the qualifying statement "with equal propriety" echoes an important aspect of neoclassical doctrine, Ariel is acknowledged, not as a relic of the "medieval system of enchantment" referred to earlier on, but as an imaginative creation consistent with his own nature, his own particular character, and with a "set of ideas and images peculiar to his station and

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22 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

office".(22) His famous song "Where the bee sucks..." is enthusiastically praised as delightfully suited to his character, which marks the shift from the rationalistic neoclassical rejection of Ariel's song as an "insufferable and senseless piece of trifling"(23) to an appreciation of its imaginative achievement in relation to Ariel's character. In his brief comment on "Full Fathom Five...", Warton once again stresses the propriety of the song, the words of which are "not proper for any but a spirit to utter".(24) Finally, Shakespeare is said to be a magician greater than his own Prospero in that he is able to sustain the theatrical illusion to the very end and transport us into "a fairy land" where we are "rapt in a delicious dream, from which it is a misery to be disturbed; all around is enchantment".(25) That the imagination is now praised in glowing terms, and no longer denigrated as a "licentious and vagrant faculty", indicates the fundamental changing orientation in Shakespearean criticism after about 1740 and raises, in particular, the heretical question whether Johnson's Shakespearean criticism is at all as remarkable as made out to be -- a question which not intended in any way to minimize the greatness of his contribution to English letters in general or the excellence of his Preface in particular.

In his second essay on *The Tempest*, published in the Adventurer of October 9, 1753, Joseph Warton specifically quotes Horace on the importance of preserving original character with uniformity and

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23 See Chapter 1, p. 36.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

consistency, and pays special tribute to Shakespeare for his supreme achievement in this regard in *The Tempest*. And most interestingly, Warton claims that Caliban is completely a character of Shakespeare's imagination and that the poet could not possibly have derived any "assistance from observation and experience",(26) which clearly indicates a change in the notion of mimesis. Caliban is further

> "...introduced with great propriety, cursing Prospero and Miranda whom he had endeavoured to defile; and his execrations are artfully contrived to have reference to the occupation of his mother ... His kindness is afterwards expressed as much in character as his hatred...".(27)

What Warton is saying, is that Caliban is completely in character with himself and in harmony with the imaginative world he inhabits. Such is Shakespeare's achievement in creating this monster that it is scarcely

> "possible for any speech to be more expressive of the manner and sentiments, than that in which our poet has painted the brutal barbarity and unfeeling savageness of this son of Sycorax, by making him enumerate, with a kind of horrible delight, the various ways in which it was

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26 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

> possible for the drunken sailors to surprise and kill his master". (28)

As proof of Shakespeare's power of "uniting poetry with propriety of character", Warton quotes the line, "Pray you tread softly, that the blind mole may not / Hear a footfall--", and finds it a pity that Shakespeare did not sustain Caliban's "fierce and implacable spirit" to the very end of the play instead of putting into his mouth words implying "repentance and understanding". (29)

Another character that Warton praises as an authentic and unique Shakespearean creation is the "lovely and innocent" Miranda. Finding Ferdinand beautiful, she immediately assumes that he must be one of her father's aerial agents which, Warton argues, clearly shows her responses to be perfectly in keeping with her experience and situation. When she sees him carry the heavy logs, she says, "Would the lightning had burnt up those logs, that you are enjoined to pile", and then offers to carry them for him, which shows that

> "Shakespeare has more truly painted the passions than any other writer: affection is more powerfully expressed by this simple wish and offer of assistance than by the unnatural eloquence and witticisms of Dryden, or the declamations of Rowe". (30)

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28 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Shakespeare is here praised for his ability to render passion naturally and, therefore, devoid of all conventional artifice: once these imaginative creations appear on stage, they are totally convincing and true to themselves. This, Warton, points out, is also true of Prospero, whose consistency of character is preserved throughout the play. Warton's comments further indicate a shift from the rationalism of neoclassical criticism to the emotionalism of Romantic criticism.

Unlike Johnson, Warton is not intent on the general, but on the particular, which may to some extent account for his tendency to discuss character in isolation -- that is, divorced from the overall poetic or thematic structure of the play. Although his comments on *The Tempest* remain isolated in the sense suggested, and show that, unlike later Romantics, he has not yet entered into the characters to explore their 'poetic psychology'(31) as well as the workings of the poet's imagination, they do reflect a movement away from the literal-mindedness of Johnson and earlier critics to an appreciation of Shakespeare's achievement in the Romances. This indicates a change in the attitude to nature in the criticism on the plays. The imagination, in Bate's general terms, has not yet "by an effort of sympathetic intuition... penetrated the barrier which space puts

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31 The concept, which is the writer's own coinage, is meant to imply that, in the works of the Romantics proper, the characters are regarded as imaginative creations which are consistent in themselves and therefore not subject to experiential standards of evaluation which, in neoclassical criticism, inevitably result in demands for propriety and verisimilitude.

between it and its object".(32) To call Warton a Romantic critic would therefore be wrong. Finally, it must also be remarked that Warton's commentary on *The Tempest* contains none of the moral standards invoked by Johnson and by Mesdames Montagu and Griffith, the next two critics to be discussed in this chapter.

The next critical work which contains some significant comments on the Romances, is a dissertation by Mrs Elizabeth Montagu,(33) whom Johnson satirically called the "Queen of the Blues",(34) and who is said to have been the "hostess of perhaps the most elegant, exclusive literary and socially literate *salon* in mid-century London".(35) Written to defend Shakespeare against Voltaire's strictures, and to point out the many blatant mistranslations in his French version of *Julius Caesar* [as any number of critics have pointed out], this work constitutes the "great literary effort of her life".(36) Although the essay was widely admired by her contemporaries, time would seem to have moderated the excessively rapturous praise by at least pointing out its limited value in the bulk of Shakespearean criticism.(37)

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32 Bate, W.J. "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century English Criticism" in *A Journal of English Literary History*, Vol. 12, p. 144.

33 Montagu, E. *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets* (first printed in 1769).

34 Ward, A.W. and Waller, A.R. (eds), *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (1914)., Chapter XIV, p. 346.

35 Montagu, E. *op. cit.*, p. 21.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

37 *Cambridge History*, op. cit., p. 353. In this regard it is interesting to note that Johnson was almost the only one to

In the Introduction to her *Essay*, Mrs Montagu acknowledges the literary and critical standing of Voltaire, but rejects his insistence on the observance of Aristotle's rules as a criterion of artistic merit, quoting Pope on the fallacy of judging Shakespeare "by the laws of another country" and pointing out that "genius is superior to rules".(38) In this regard she pays tribute to Johnson for defending Shakespeare's neglect of the unities of time and place.(39) Two interesting critical features which emerge in this Introduction are the historical nature of her criticism and the emphasis on moral instruction, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs with specific reference to the Romances.

Mrs Montagu's comments on Shakespeare's "preturnatural beings" are prefaced by a few introductory comments on the marvellous fables of antiquity gradually establishing a mythological and literary-historical tradition, thereby imposing certain limits on the poet's imaginative range by at least making him realize that "new inventions lean on the old traditions":

> "The poet, who can give to splendid inventions,
> and to fictions new and bold, the air of reality
> and truth, is master of the genuine sources of

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censure the work. In his Preface to the Essay, Arthur Freeman attributes Johnson's derision to his "endemic misogyny", conveniently ignoring, not only some of the facts of Johnson's life, but also his admiration of Mrs Montagu's intellectual prowess -- a demonstration of the astounding lengths editors would sometimes go to in their efforts to promote the sales of works they happen to partial to.

38 Montagu, E. op. *cit.*, p. 7.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

> the Castalian Spring, and may justly be said to draw his inspiration from *the wellhead of pure poesy*". (40)

The poet, Mrs Montagu would seem to argue, should not simply represent the mythology and fables of other ages, but must create his supernatural beings "within the limits of popular tradition". (41) And to all these beings, she claims, Shakespeare has "assigned tasks, and appropriated manners adapted to their imputed dispositions and characters". (42) Within this suggested historical framework, Mrs Montagu quotes Hurd on the critical importance of truthful *imaginative* representation [own emphasis]. (43)

Her further claim that such representation should "indeed be what our imagination will adopt, though our reason would reject it", clearly highlights the increasing opposition of reason and imagination in early Romantic criticism and the increasingly psychological direction in English criticism within the overall empirical tradition. (44)

Unlike in German Romantic criticism, an "air of reality [some kind of empirical frame of reference] should be given to fictitious existence" in the different scenes of the play and actions of the

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40 *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

characters.(45) Prospero's address to his attendant spirits before their discharge is quoted as a summary of tne "popular stories concerning the power of magicians" of the time.(46) During Shakespeare's time, the world had not yet become entirely "learned and philosophical", with a result that fable had not been refined into allegory.(47) Unlike Ben Jonson, who had created a great many allegorical, and therefore artificial characters, Mrs Montagu argues, Shakespeare "contented himself with giving "... sublimity and its appropriated powers and charms to fiction".(48)

Unfortunately, Mrs Montagu's essay contains only very few comments on the Romances. She concludes her essay by referring to the "ingenious criticism" in the *Adventurer* [which is clearly a reference to the contributions by Joseph Warton] ... which "alone would prove our author to heve had a fertile, a sublime, an original genius".(49)

Considering that the appeal to moral truth is one of the two great principles underlying Johnson's criticism, it is not altogether surprising to find Mrs Griffith paying tribute to and aligning herself with him in her treatise entitled *The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated*. What Mrs Griffith is either ignorant of, or otherwise conveniently ignores, is that Johnson often criticised Shakespeare for his supposed lack of morality, claiming that he generally wrote

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45 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 151.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

to please rather than instruct, that he seemed to write without moral purpose. Mrs Griffith clearly states her 'critical' manifesto in the Preface (which amounts to little more than a series of long quotations) to her work on Shakespeare:

> "I have ventured to assume the task of placing his Ethic merits in a more conspicuous point of view, than they have ever hitherto been presented to the Public".(50)

From her further statement that Shakespeare is not only her "poet" but also her 'philosopher", and that his "anatomy of the human heart is delineated from *nature*, not from *metaphysics*", it is clear that her concern is not only with the poetic and dramatic quality of his work but also with the morality of his work, as perceived by her. What her approach actually amounts to will be seen in the following pages.

At the very outset, the tone of Mrs Griffith's effusions and the uncritical use she makes of her quotations -- not to mention her inane and puerile reference, in the Preface to her study, to Voltaire as "this *minor critic*, this minute philosopher, this *fly* upon a pillar of St Paul's" -- raise serious questions about her critical judgement.

Quoting Warburton's praise of Shakespeare's imaginative achievement in *The Tempest* and A Midsummer Night's Dream, Mrs Griffith would seem to share his conception of the imagination as a creative force

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50 Griffith, E. *The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated* (First printed 1775), p. ix.

which elevates nature [empirical reality] to a higher plane. By the "powers of his genius", Shakespeare

> "contrived to make these chimeras of his brain, act, and speak, in a manner which appears so suited to the anomalous personages his magic has conjured up, that we readily admit them into the scale of Nature, from a presumption, that were they really to exist, they would probably resemble the characters which his wand has endowed them with".(51)

This statement would seem to suggest a dichotomy in the creative act: first the imaginative being is conjured up in the poet's brain, and then endowed with language. At any rate, these "anomalous personages" are found to be consistent with themselves and fully convincing as such, which would be proved empirically if they were to exist. Mrs Griffith does not think highly of *The Tempest*, claiming that there is unfortunately not much to be "collected" from it morally,(52) although the following moral may be deduced from it:

> "...that the ways, the justice, and the goodness of Providence, are so frequently manifested towards mankind, even in this life, that it should ever encourage an honest and guiltless mind to form hopes, in the most forlorn situations; and

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51 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

52 *Ibid.*, p.2.

> ought also to warn the wicked never to rest assured in the false confidence of wealth or power, against the natural abhorrence of vice, both in God and man". (53)

Having disposed of the general moral of the play, Mrs Griffith proceeds to comment on the "particular maxims and sentiments" expressed in the dialogue of the play, which would almost seem to suggest that Shakespeare wrote a series of maxims: Miranda's use of the term "good ship" shows the "peculiar tenderness in her compassion for the unhappy sufferers"; Prospero's statement that Miranda's presence eased his suffering points to "that virtue of true womanhood which serves to strengthen our fortitude and double our activity" when those we love "require our solace or assistance in distress or danger"; Prospero's account of the education he has given Miranda elicits a long statement from Mrs Griffith on the higher aims of education and the folly of abdicating the duty of "forming the minds ... and hearts of children" to "mercenary preceptors"; Trinculo's cosmically humorous comment on Caliban's zoological potential in England, Mrs Griffith protests, should not be interpreted to reflect unfavorably only on the English, since the tendency to stare and gape is the "common disposition and id curiosity of mankind, in general" -- after all,

> "...No nation is more distinguished for charity, humanity, and benevolence, than the English are at present. And this must have been always their

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53 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

> characteristic; for manners may refine, but cannot create virtues. Polishing may give taste, but feelings come from nature".(54)

Mrs Griffith points out that, in Act IV, Sc.I, "a chaste conduct between betrothed lovers is strongly urged, and sanctified, by severe maledictions, and very natural predictions"; and Prospero's famous speech, "Our revels are now ended...", is a

> "...beautiful, but humiliating reflection on the inconsiderableness of life and grandeur, made by Prospero, in this scene, which is worthy of being added to the *golden verses of Pythagoras*, and ought to be placed in gilt characters, as an inscription, on all the palaces, monuments, or triumphal arches of the earth".(55)

Finally, the play rises to the "summit of all Ethic and Christian virtue, humanity and forgiveness"(56) -- presumably indistinguishable from the stone tablets which are said to have contained the Ten Commandments.

Mrs Griffith's moral "illustration" of some passages in *The Tempest* clearly shows that she d proceed from a central idea or system

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54 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

of moral philosophy, and that her comments, which are offered in a spirit of moral zeal, are essentially eclectic, unrelated and lacking in unity. Some of her comments are maudlin and trite, for example when she effuses that "the beautiful sentiment expressed in these last lines, must draw tears of pity from virtuous mothers";(57) whereas others take the form of sweeping generalizations, such as:

> "This is the true character of youth in the different sexes. Sincerity on one side, and confidence on the other. Deceit and diffidence are the fruits of *riper*, or more rotten years".(58)

What is disturbing about Mrs Griffith's comments is not only the facility of her moral 'deductions', but her generally uncritical use of aesthetic terms. Assuming a coterie of like-minded readers, she obviously feels no need to substantiate her assumptions.

The extreme poverty of Mrs Griffith's method -- which does not permit of any organic approach to the plays, any sustained examination of character and the interreletedness of character and action, or of any concern with symbolism -- exemplifies the folly of

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57 *Ibid.*, p. 107. The eighteenth-century sentimental novel, widely distributed by the circulating libraries of the time, and to which Sir Antony Absolute amusingly refers as an "evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge", would seem to have exerted a strong influence on the formation of Mrs Griffith's critical standards. In this context it is interesting to note that she was also the writer of three sentimental plays, viz. *A Double Mistake* (1765), *The School for Rakes* (1769), and *A Wife in the Right* (1772).

58 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

plundering literary texts for moral maxims and parading them with laboured mediocrity in the form of a series of disjointed 'comments on the plays'. Unlike in the German criticism of the Romances, where an attempt is made to understand Shakespeare's moral system through a close examination of each play as a whole -- even though such criticism increasingly fails to do justice to the plays as plays -- Mrs Griffith's effusions disregard the structure of the plays so completely that they simply do not amount to literary or even practical criticism at all. Fortunately Mrs Griffith remains an obscure minor figure, whose work is in no way representative of the bulk of English criticism during the second half of the eighteenth century. In so far as Mrs Griffith's interest in Shakespeare is essentially of an extra-literary nature, it looks forward to the work of Birch discussed later in this dissertation, although Mrs Griffith would have been outraged by Birch's examination of Shakespeare's 'morality'.

The preceding discussion bears out Atkins's claim that, what distinguishes Shakespearean criticism at this point" is not the "vindication of the dramatist" by the impression made but Shakespeare's "skill in characterization [which is essentially psychological in method and often moralistic in its conclusions] as opposed to the study of formal matters" [elements of literary composition]. (59)

The first sustained comment in English criticism on any one of the characters in the Romances derives from the pen of William

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59 Atkins, J.W.H. *English Literary Criticism: 17th and 18th Centuries* (1951).

Richardson. (60) The Preface to Richardson's *Essays* clearly suggests that his inquiry will be philosophical in nature; and in the Introduction to the first of the two volumes Richardson expressly states that his intention is to "... make poetry subservient to philosophy, and to employ it in tracing the principles of human conduct". (61)

The use of the term 'philosophical' may lead to confusion unless it is remembered that, during the late eighteenth century, psychology as an empirical science was only gradually beginning to extricate itself from philosophical inquiry in general, and that the word 'philosophy' at the time also embraced many of the distinctly sensualistic-associationist inquiries of Locke and his successors. Although Richardson distils a few moralistic rules and maxims from his investigation into some of Shakespeare's characters, his mode of inquiry is almost exclusively psychological in method and purport. In this sense, it can therefore be said to be continuing in the new psychological tradition of criticism pursued by Joseph Warton and others.

The dichotomy between Richardson's allegiance to neoclassical dogma and his Romantic interest in character analysis leads to a split between some of his theoretical pronouncements on the one hand and actual critical practice on the other -- a split which not only

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60 The author, who was Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow, is not to be confused with the well-known novelist Samuel Richardson.

61 Richardson, W *Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters* (1786) (Vol. 1), p. 41.

illustrates the gradual dissolution of the neoclassical creed and the contradictions which arise from straddling two literary worlds, but which also emphasizes the need to judge the critic's literary historical position from his *actual* critical practice.

In his largely neoclassical chapter entitled "On the Faults of Shakespeare", Richardson argues that the artist requires consummate taste in the sense that he should be capable of "feeling what is excellent", of "discerning the parts which occasion excellence", and that he should have "competent knowledge in those things which are the subjects of an artist's labour".(62)

The first ingredient of "consummate taste" presupposes the Longinian capacity for receiving "exquisite pleasure in contemplating the great and the beautiful"; the second, that the artist will be so deeply cultured as not to blend incongruous emotions, which would only inspire disgust; and the third, that his judgement will be regulated by reasonable reflection.(63) That Richardson conceives of rules of composition in absolutist terms is evident from his subsequent statement that they should be "immutable".(64) His further statement that,

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62 *Ibid.* (Vol. 2), p. 117. This emphasis on consummate taste would seem to be based on Hume's belief in a uniform standard of excellence. In this regard see Sherburne and Bond, *op. cit.*, p. 982.

63 *Ibid.* (Vol. 2), p. 116.

64 *Ibid.* (Vol. 2), p. 125.

> "... in the conduct of life, no less than in our judgements concerning fine composition, if we have no determined principles, independent of present emotion, our deportment will be capricious, unsteady, and inconsistent,"(65)

results in an unjustifiable equation of morals and criticism and raises profound questions regarding standards of literary production and, by implication, literary and practical criticism.

A string of neoclassical reservations about Shakespeare's practice derives from these general pronouncements. Shakespeare's "greatest blemishes" have proceeded from his want of consummate taste:-

> "Having no perfect discernment, proceeding from rational investigation, of the true cause of beauty in poetical composition, he had never established in his mind any system of regular process, or any standard of dramatic excellence. He felt the powerful effects of beauty; he wrote under the influence of feeling; but was apt to be misled by those general maxims, which are often repeated, but ill understood; which have foundation in truth, but must be followed with caution".(66)

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65 *Ibid*. (Vol. 2), p. 125.

66 *Ibid*. (Vol. 2), pp. 127-28.

According to Richardson, Shakespeare misunderstood the rule of following nature to mean that it should be observed literally, with a result that he indiscriminately mixed tragic and comic scenes [the solemn and the ludicrous] and availed himself of vulgar language.(67) Praising Milton in preference to Shakespeare, Richardson propounds a neat little theory of 'one emotion at a time in orderly succession',(68) and stresses the importance for the mind to adhere to "one leading idea" or to be moved by "one particular set of feelings" -- maxims which he attempts to prove with reference to music, painting and gardening.(69) In his imitation of nature, the artist should illuminate only that which "coincides with his purpose" and "conceal those circumstances which may be an opposite or unsuitable tendency".(70) In terms of these arguments, then, Shakespeare failed to understand the maxim of imaginatively improving on life and, instead, adhered to a rigid form of realistic imitation in his art. A curious anomaly arises at this point in the history of Shakespearean criticism: whereas neoclassical critics almost universally criticized Shakespeare for his want of rules, we now find him censured for his supposed improper understanding of the rules.

Shakespeare's second grave error, according to Richardson, arises from his "want of critical and historical knowledge". His ignorance of the classics resulted in his works becoming "irregular and

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67 Richardson would seem to echo the Hobbesian dictum that whatever pleases is good, and whatever causes pain is bad.

68 *Ibid.* (Vol. 2), p. 134.

69 *Ibid.* (Vol. 2), p. 135.

70 *Ibid.* (Vol. 2), p. 136.

incoherent",(71) and his want of proper historical knowledge, in several historical inaccuracies in his plays. In consequence of these glaring errors, Richardson claims, other artists have been corrupted by the "very grossest of his enormities".(72)

According to Richardson, Shakespeare no doubt possessed genius but, "unimproved by the discernment of the philosophical, or the knowledge of the learned critic, his sensibility was exposed to perversion.. ".(73)

In his essay on Shakespeare's imitation of female characters, which contains a brief comment on Miranda, Richardson propounds the critical principle that "diversity of character depends a good deal on diversity of situation, and [that] situations are diversified by variety of employment"(74) -- a socio-historical canon of criticism which is followed by a long reference to social conditions during the Elizabethan Age. In other words, Shakespeare's portrayal of character is subject to the demands of social realism, which "restrains the exertion of female genius; and must limit the display both of talents and dispositions".(75)

Shakespeare's faithful, and therefore realistic, imitation of nature in his portrayal of character is, however, here excused by Richardson.

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71 *Ibid*.(Vol. 2), pp. 142-43.

72 *Ibid*.(Vol. 2), p. 143.

73 *Ibid*.(Vol. 2), p. 145.

74 *Ibid*.(Vol. 2), p. 59.

75 *Ibid*.(Vol. 2), p. 61.

His claim that diversity of character is dependent on situation does, of course, to a certain extent conflict with his emphasis on the need for the artist to imaginatively extend the principle of following nature.

In his commentary on Miranda, Richardson remains faithful to his earlier argument that the artist should be guided by one leading idea or particular set of feelings. In Miranda, "simplicity is extended to be the most striking circumstance".(76) This quality cannot, however, be said to imply a symbolistic view on Richardson's part, since it is briefly deduced from Miranda's singular status in life. Having postulated this leading idea, Richardson extends it by association [a distinctly [illegible]ical mechanism] to embrace other attendant qualities such [illegible]ntleness of disposition" and "compassionate tenderness". He concludes his psychological commentary by arguing that such qualities render Miranda "incapable of any form of dissimulation".(77)

Richardson's long commentary on Imogen is prefaced by an extended argument stressing the Horation dictum of pleasurable instruction. The original poet ultimately "teaches us to know ourselves, inspires us with magnanimous sentiments, animates our love of virtue, and confirms our hatred of vice".(78) He continues to quote Plutarch and Socrates on the value of literature as moral instruction,(79) not

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76 *Ibid*.(Vol. 2), p. 64.

77 *Ibid*.(Vol. 2), p. 65.

78 *Ibid*.(Vol. 1), p. 1.

79 *Ibid*.Vol. 1), pp. 2-5.

realising, it would seem, that such an overriding didactic aim imputed to art as a form of discourse, would render it indistinguishable from a moral or religious tract. Richardson's general commentary on the working of the mind clearly reflects the influence of the British empirical philosophers on his view of the artist, who, he argues, should reflect on his own feelings and on the behaviour of others.(80) An important ingredient in his argument is his belief that the artist should in some measure enter into the person he 'represents' [as opposed to 'describes'], which requires "delicacy of affection" as well as "warmth and facility of imagination" on his part.(81) Shakespeare, he argues, actually "felt the passions and contending emotions ascribed to them" [his characters],(82) and the "excellence of dramatic writing consists in its imitating with truth and propriety the manners and passions of mankind".(83)

It is evident, therefore, that Richardson not only imputes a moral aim to art, which should faithfully observe the neoclassical demands of truth and propriety, but that he argues in favour of an intuitional aesthetics, which is a definite step forward in the direction of Romantic criticism.(84)

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80 *Ibid.*(Vol. 1), p. 7f.

81 *Ibid.*(Vol. 1), p. 26.

82 *Ibid.*(Vol. 1), p. 27.

83 *Ibid.*(Vol. 1), p. 32.

84 In his essay "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-century English Criticism" (p.144), Bate points out that "among the more common romantic *dicta*" which had their roots in the eighteenth century was the insistence that the "imagination, by an effort of sympathetic intuition, is able to penetrate the barrier which space puts between it and its object, and, by actually entering

As the first fully sustained psychological approach to any one of the characters in the Romances, Richardson's commentary on the character of Imogen is actually a landmark in the critical history of the Romances. In its sensualistic method it further distinguishes itself radically from the idealistic trend in the German criticism of the Romances.(85)

The empirical framework of Richardson's psychological observations is that of everyday life as experienced through the senses. As such it involves none of the metaphysical speculations characteristic of German criticism.(86) In keeping with his dictum that the artist should be guided by a leading idea or particular set of circumstances, he then argues that in Imogen the leading passion is love, "but...a love ratified by wedlock, gentle, constant, and refined",(87) a comment which neatly illustrates the imposition of certain moral considerations on empirical fact. From this initial commentary, Richardson evolves a kind of psychological sketch for a theory of the emotions. The "strength and peculiar features" of such a ruling passion [love] become clear when threatened by other emotions, such

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into the object, so to speak, secure a momentary and complete identification with it".

85 Atkins's comment that, in his philosophical analysis of Shakespeare's characters, Richardson "takes for granted the fidelity of Shakespeare's character-drawing and endeavours to extract from the plays the guiding principles of human conduct" raises the perplexing question for the writer of this dissertation whether a critical commentary is essentially philosophical if only some of the conclusions drawn from the main body of psychological speculation are of a moral nature. (See Atkins, J.W.H. *op. cit.*, p. 261.

86 Consider Ulrici's comments on *The Tempest*. (Chapter 3., p. 142)

87 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 1), p. 173.

as fear, hope and grief -- concomitant and secondary emotions called forth by such empirical realities as "separation, the apprehension of inconstancy, and the absolute belief of disaffection". Richardson explains that separation causes sorrow or regret; inconstancy, jealousy or solicitude; and disaffection, despondency;(88) and then relates each of his psychological observations to the actual experiences of Imogen within the imaginative framework of the play. To Richardson, this framework is clearly an imaginative reflection of empirical reality. In his psychological comments on Shakespeare's insight into character and passion, Richardson would seem to have initiated a new direction in the criticism on Shakespeare's Romances. In particular, his work shows a greater awareness of the excellence of Shakespeare's women characters than that of the critics before him.

Richardson continues his sensualistic commentary by pointing out that the banishment of Posthumus Leonatus "overwhelms the lovers with grief", that, reluctant to part with the "objects of its affections", Imogen's heart struggles with disappointment. The separation has caused certain feelings to be "annexed to the idea" of the loved one who is absent, but "memory and imagination" prove to be a poor substitute for actual sensation.(89) Richardson argues that perceptions we receive by the senses are preferred to

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88 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), pp. 173-4.

89 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), pp. 174-6. Terms such as "feelings", "memory" and "imagination", and "actual sensation" clearly belong to the realm of psychology as opposed to that of philosophy, although their usage as distinctly psychological terms had not yet been established in the 18th century.

representations merely fancied.(90) Richardson's speculations are very diffuse at this point, but he would seem to be suggesting that the distant and imperfect view of Leonatus which Imogen is given by Iachimo is still preferable to the images conjured up by the operations of memory and imagination.(91) He does suggest that the lovers' agreement to think of each other at certain fixed periods creates a sensation of reality which gives to the "ideal the authority of actual perception, and [that] its concomitant images would be cherished with Romantic fondness".(92) But why, then, does Shakespeare concentrate on such relatively insignificant actions [earlier in his commentary Richardson quoted Longinus on the importance of "discernment in the choice of significant circumstances and skil' in execution"]?(93) Richardson provides a long analogical argument, claiming that these apparently trivial sentiments and expressions of Imogen lead back to the significant principles on which they are founded; that, considered "in regard to character", they exhibit to us "uncommon affection, sensibility and mildness of disposition", not permitting of any bitterness or resentment.(94)

The second situation that Richardson deals with in his analysis of the character of Imogen is that occasioned by inconstancy. Given to feelings of "apprehension and solicitude", which so often beset lovers, Imogen *momentarily* falls victim to the treachery of Iachimo,

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90 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), p. 178.

91 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), p. 179.

92 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), pp. 179-80.

93 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), p. 178.

94 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), pp. 182-83.

He is sufficiently crafty and evil to realize that since "we never feel any passion or violent emotion without a cause, real or imagined", he has to feign emotion -- the mover himself has to be moved to be at all convincing. He uses pity, which "supposes calamity", to "heighten her uneasiness", disposing her to believe him until she is "overwhelmed with anguish".(95) Ignorant of the "purity of refined emotion", and incapable of distinguishing clearly between feelings of solicitude, which are "sorrowful and tender", and feelings of jealousy, which are "fierce, wrathful and vindictive", Iachimo suggests the idea of revenge, but fails to destroy her love for Leonatus. Motivated by jealousy, instead of by feelings of solicitude, Leonatus orders his beloved wife's death at Milford Haven where, on hearing the charges levelled against her, Imogen's "conscious virtue" once again triumphs. Her momentary resentment is immediately "extinguished ... in her sorrow" and despondency.(96) From this Richardson concludes that "a sense of misfortune, rather than a sense of injury, rules the disposition of Imogen".(97)

From these speculations, Richardson draws a number of general moral conclusions. Since "happiness depends on the gratification of our desires and passions [a distinctly hedonistic psychological argument], and one passion generally "assumes pre-eminence in the mind" [to act as a kind of magnet to others], our happiness becomes attached to one "ruling or ardent passion" which, if frustrated, leads

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95 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), p. 192.

96 *Ibid*., pp. 194-96.

97 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), p. 197.

to sorrow, anguish and despondency.(98) The 'great' moral lesson which is therefore to be distilled from the example of Imogen is that we

> "...ought, therefore to beware of limiting our felicity to the gratification of any individual passion. Nature, ever wife and provident, hath endowed us with capacities for various pleasures, and hath opened to us many fountains of happiness: 'Let no tyrannous passion, let no rigid doctrine deter thee, drink of the streams, be moderate, and be grateful'".(99)

Needless to say, if Shakespeare had observed this utilitarian maxim of hedging his bets and practising a deliberate form of moderation [which would no longer have had anything in common with moderation], there would have been no Imogen and Richardson's essay would not have been written.

Earlier in these pages on Richardson's contribution to the history of criticism on the Romances, mention was made of certain discrepancies between his theoretical and practical criticism. Richardson's repeated emphasis on the importance of the different parts of the literary work forming a harmonious whole would lead one to expect that he would then at least relate, or attempt to relate, his character analyses to the overall design of the play in question, but in his practical

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98 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), pp. 200-2.

99 *Ibid*. (Vol. 1), p. 203.

cr 'sm he does nothing of the kind. In fairness to Richardson, it must however be said that his scathing indictment of Shakespeare in his chapter on the latter's faults could be construed to mean that he simply did not think the overall structure of each play in question worthy or deserving of serious commentary, and that he may have been of the opinion that the characters in a play can be completely divorced from their imaginative context, which would of course be consistent with his aim of making "poetry subservient to philosophy", if the term poetry in his usage is meant to refer to characters exclusively. Furthermore, nothing in his analysis of Imogen's character, which he finds most pleasing and agreeable, suggests that Shakespeare was incapable of an imaginative extension of the principle of following nature in his creation of the character. In fact, Richardson's perceptive psychological comments on and generous praise of Imogen highlight a serious fallacy underlying his pronouncements: if Shakespeare were so deplorably lacking in consummate taste, such a slave to his misinterpretation of the rules, and so totally incapable of any imaginative extension of the rule of following nature -- by virtue of what, then, should he excel at character-drawing, which requires both consummate taste and skill on the part of the artist?

Although Richardson clearly uses the plays to extract some moral rules from them, there is such a breach between his psychologically stimulating [although sometimes confusing] comments on the characters of the plays and the threadbare moral lessons he extracts from them that the reader is left to agonize over the question whether Richardson is really so much less of a literary critic than he is made to be, and whether his work fails to amount to literary criticism at

all, as Ralli would seem to suggest.(100) Whatever the answer to this question may be, Richardson's argument that imaginative art should have at least some underlying relation to empirical reality, his perceptive comments on the character of Imogen, and his emphasis on an intuitional aesthetics in artistic production make his essay a document worthy of serious consideration in the history of the criticism of the Romances. On this point, the writer of this essay cannot but disagree with Ralli's assessment of Richardson in his monumental *History of Shakespearean Criticism*.(101)

The next commentary, after Richardson's, on the Romances, derives from the pen of John Monck Mason,(102) a minor critic who, in his literal-mindedness, is closer to Johnson than to any other of his contemporaries. Since his commentary contains only purely editorial comments on isolated words and phrases in the play, and no sustained aesthetic criticism whatsoever, his work is not discussed here.

The emphasis on character analysis *per se*, which is already an established fact, if not a tradition in the eighteenth century, notably in the work of Warton and Richardson, finds further expression in the work of Coleridge, the first real Romantic critic to be discussed in this chapter on the contribution of English Romantic critics.

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100 Ralli, A. *op. cit.*, p. 90.

101 Ralli, A. *op. cit.*, pp. 91 and 101.

102 Mason, J.M. *Comments on the Last Edition of Shakespeare's Plays* (1785).

In a study such as this one, it would be methodologically unacceptable to discuss Coleridge's contribution to the criticism of Shakespeare's Romances in his 1811 lectures in isolation -- that is, as divorced from the German origin and temper of many of his pronouncements --- because doing so would lead to patently absurd conclusions. The tendency to view Coleridge from a national, as opposed to an international perspective, as Wellek rightly argues, has led to the misconception that his "principles of the reconciliation of opposites," his "definition of the imagination", his "idea of the organic whole" and his "distinction between symbol and allegory" are his own individual contribution to criticism.(103) Needless to say, it has been demonstrated over and over again that these are German ideas that Coleridge mediated to England. It would be tedious to list all the ideas and arguments which Coleridge took over without any acknowledgement from Herder, Schiller, Schelling, the Schlegels and others, but with reference to his Shakespearean criticism it should be mentioned that some forty pages of his lectures were plagiarized from Schlegel.(104)

A disturbing tendency in Coleridgean criticism is the partiality with which some writers attempt to defend the indefensible in the face of the overwhelming evidence of Coleridge's blatant 'borrowings'. It is, for example, disturbing to find so eminent a Coleridge scholar as Raysor pursuing his defence of Coleridge by suggesting similarities in experience and education between Coleridge and Schlegel, by

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103 Wellek, R. *op. cit.*, (Vol. 2), p. 151.

104 See, for example, Coleridge, S.T. *Shakespearean Criticism* (1967) (edited by T.M. Raysor) (Vol. 1), p. xxvi.

explaining that Coleridge "*hastily* drew upon Schlegel for his own ninth lecture",(105) and that Coleridge used such material with "so little deviation from Schlegel's text that they amount to *free translations*", and that the charges of "plagiarism is not *quite* justified in regard to such preparation for oral lectures" [own emphases].(106) It goes without saying that the similarities between Coleridge and Schlegel did not extend so far as to encourage the latter to engage in plagiarism, that 'haste' is no justification for intellectual dishonesty, and that what may reasonably be expected of a 'translator' is that he will at least identify his work as being a translation and indicate whose work he is translating, *especially* if the materials 'translated' are to be presented in the form of a *public* lecture. Raysor's personal conviction that "Coleridge, at best, [is] fully equal or superior to Lessing, to Schlegel, or to any of the other critics described as his teachers", that they were his "teachers only in aesthetics", and that in the "criticism of an actual work of art he was as original a critic as well may be" begs the question why he then found it necessary to pick their brains so extensively and use the principles established by them as if they were his own.(107) Raysor claims that the "German influence has been vastly exaggerated", that Coleridge's studies of Shakespeare's characters "are the most significant part of his lectures and notes", and that, in this regard, the "possible German influence is so insignificant as to be scarcely worth noting"(108) ring singularly hollow considering

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105 *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

106 *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

107 *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

108 *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

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105 *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

106 *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

107 *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

108 *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

the extent of his 'borrowings'. It would seem to have required a comparativist of the stature of Wellek to 'set the record straight' by demonstrating the importance of assessing Coleridge's contribution to Shakespearean criticism from an international perspective so as to form a proper understanding of his indebtedness to his German sources and of his own original contribution to Shakespearean scholarship.

In the following discussion of Coleridge's brief commentaries on the Romances, the question of intellectual dishonesty will no longer be referred to. Instead, an attempt will be made to indicate similarities between Coleridge and Schlegel, to demonstrate Coleridge's significance as a mediator of German ideas in England, and to focus attention on those aspects of his thinking which constitute his own distinct contribution to Shakespearean criticism, difficult as this may prove to be.

With the exception of his comments on Polixenes and Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, which are too brief to warrant discussion, Coleridge's comments on *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* are of a purely textual nature. The only sustained aesthetic commentary on any one of the Romances is his discussion of *The Tempest* in his Ninth Lecture delivered on the 16th December 1811.(109)

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109 See "Records by H.C. Robinson" in Coleridge, S.T. *op. cit.* (Vol. 2), p. 172. In this regard it is also worth noting, as Wellek points out, that already on the 29th January 1811 Coleridge had discussed Schlegel's idea of the Greek chorus with H.C. Robinson; that on the 6th November 1811 Coleridge had written to Robinson saying that he was very anxious to see Schlegel's *Werke* before the lecture commenced; and that on the 12th December 1811 Coleridge was given a copy of Schlegel's *Lectures*

Coleridge specifically refers to *The Tempest* as a "specimen of the romantic drama", stressing that the drama in general is an imitation, and not a copy, of reality,(110) and that the immediate objective of the drama is poetic and theatrical illusion. He rejects the "two extremes in critical decision":

> "... the French, which evidently presupposes that a perfect delusion is to be aimed at -- an opinion which now needs no fresh confutation; the opposite, supported by Dr Johnson, [which] supposes the auditors throughout [to be] in full and positive reflective knowledge of the contrary, [and which] ...makes no sufficient allowance for an intermediate state, which we distinguish by the term 'illusion'".(111)

This illusion, Coleridge argues, is comparable to the act of dreaming,(112) a supposition which he proceeds to explain in the following sensualistic terms: since outward sensory impressions are excluded from the mind during sleep, images are rendered all the more vivid; during sleep, "sensations", "emotions" and" passions"

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by the German auditor Kruse. In this regard, see R. Wellek, *op. cit.* (Vol. 2), p. 155-7.

110 *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115. This is, of course, not an original thought because, throughout neoclassical criticism, one finds the idea of an ideal interpretation of nature, of nature heightened, improved.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

112 Compare Schlegel: "The theatrical, as well as every other poetical illusion, is a waking dream". (A.W. Schlegel, *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, Lecture xvii, p. 246.

[all begging definition] are the "causes of our dream images"; and finally, illusion then results when the mind's "comparative power" and will are suspended.(113) The success of the theatrical illusion "depends on the degree of excitement in which the mind is supposed to be".(114) All the other "excellencies of the drama, [such] as unity of interest, with distinctness and subordination of characters, appropriateness of style, nay, and the charm of language and sentiment for their own sakes are all means to this chief end, that of producing this willing illusion".(115)

After this digression, Coleridge returns to his initial reference to *The Tempest* as a specimen of the Romantic drama, which he characterizes as

> "a drama, the interests of which are independent of all historical fact and associations, and arise from their fitness to that faculty of our nature, the imagination I mean, which owes no allegiance to time and place, -- a species of drama,

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113 Coleridge, S.T. *op. cit.*, p. 116.

114 Compare Schlegel's comment: "Hence the dramatic poet, as well as the orator, must from the very commencement, by strong impressions, transport his hearers out of themselves, and, as it were, take bodily possession of their attention," (Schlegel, A.W. *op. cit.*, Lecture 1, p. 68.) and "to produce it [the poetic and theatrical illusion], the poet and actors must powerfully agitate the mind..." (Schlegel, A.W. *op. cit.*, Lecture xvii, pp. 246-247.

115 Coleridge, S.T. *op. cit.*, p. 117.

therefore, in which errors in chronology and geography ... count for nothing".(116)

The Tempest, Coleridge argues, appeals so completely to the imagination that elaborate stage effects, which could in some cases support the theatrical illusion, would actually draw attention away from the spirit of the play, "for the principal and only genuine excitement ought to come from within, -- from the moved and sympathetic imagination".(117) In the brief ensuing discussion, Coleridge's approach is shown to be largely psychological: unlike Schlegel, he does not embark on a discussion of the philosophical depth of Shakespeare's world view, but comments very briefly on the aptness of the first scene as an introduction to what is to follow, the psychological and theatrical value of Prospero's "retrospective narration", and the "perfect probability of the moment chosen by Prospero... to open up the truth to his daughter".(118) These observations lead him to remark on the excellence of Shakespeare's portrayal of women, in which heart and mind are brought together in perfect harmony.(119) However, as moral beings, women follow the

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116 *Ibid.*, p. 118. In this regard, compare Schlegel: "The proofs of his ignorance, on which the greatest stress is laid, are a few geographical blunders and anachronisms... The plays [Shakespeare's Romantic comedies and, therefore, also the Romances, which were included in the genre], whatever names they bear, take place in the true land of romance, and in the very century of wonderful love stories...; his audiences entered the theatre, not to learn true chronology, geography, and natural history, but to witness a vivid exhibition". (Schlegel, A.W. *op. cit.*, pp. 354-356)

117 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

118 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

119 *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

heart and are not influenced by the "intervention of the discursive faculty", a characteristic early 19th century argument, which Coleridge then generalises in the following terms:-

> "In all the Shakespearean women there is essentially the same foundation and principle; the distinct individuality and variety are merely the result of the modification of circumstances, whether in Miranda the maiden, in Imogen the wife, or in Katherine the Queen".(120)

Coleridge's characterisation of Ariel as a creature of the air and Caliban as one of the earth is a dialectical distinction which derives from Schlegel.(121)

This dialectical strain of thinking is continued in his interesting observation that "Miranda is never directly brought into comparison with Ariel, lest the natural and human of the one and the supernatural of the other tend to neutralise each other".(122) Caliban, on the other hand, serves to show that, without the moral sense, man remains but a savage: "For it is in the primacy of the moral being that man is truly human".(123) Coleridge claims that

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120 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

121 Compare Schlegel: "In the zephyrlike Ariel, the image of air is not to be mistaken; even his name alludes to it: as, on the other hand, Caliban signifies the heavy element of earth". (Schlegel, A.W. *Werke*, vi, pp. 236-7, as quoted without commentary by Raysor, T.M. (*Ibid.*, p. 120, footnote 3.)

122 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

123 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Shakespeare's plays demonstrate that the moral sense is supreme. This leads him to the nice observation that, in his day, "decency of mannars was preserved at the expense of heart".(124) Shakespeare, he concludes, is "always the philosopher and the moralist", and "if he must have any name, he should be styled a philosophical aristocrat".(125) These convictions form the basis of Coleridge's argument that Shakespeare's characters are "all *genera* intensely individualised"; [a statement which neatly straddles neoclassical and Romantic critical theory]; the results of meditation, of which observation supplied the drapery and the colors [sic] necessary to combine them with each other".(126)

Since Coleridge's aesthetic criticism of the Romances amounts to no more then some ten pages of occasionally convoluted commentary on *The Tempest*, interspersed with digressions, the conclusions to be extracted from it are naturally limited. With Schlegel he would seem to share the belief in *The Tempest* as a romantic drama; the importance of the drama in general as an imitation, and not a mere copy, of life; the nature of the theatrical illusion as being comparable to a "waking dream"; the supremacy of the imagination as the

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124 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

125 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 122. Compare in this regard Schlegel's statement: "Pope and Johnson appear strangely to contradict each other, when the first says, 'all the characters of Shakespeare are individuals,' and the second, 'they are species'. And yet perhaps this opinion may admit of reconciliation... The characters which Shakespeare had so thoroughly delineated have undoubtedly a number of individual peculiarities, but at the same time, they possess a significance which is not applicable to them alone: they generally supply materials for a profound theory of their most prominent and distinguishing property".(A.W. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, Lecture XXIII, pp. 363-64.

fundamental inspiration informing a romantic drama and rendering the claims of realism irrelevant and absurd; the excellence of Shakespeare's character portrayals; and in the sound moral sense informing his artistic judgements. Although Coleridge's commentary on *The Tempest* fails to illustrate the workings of the "moved and sympathetic imagination", it would seem to be based on the belief that Shakespeare had imaginatively entered into his creations and that such sympathetic identification is at the same time moral. This association of the sympathetic and moral senses derives not from Schlegel but is characteristic of a great deal of eighteenth-century and subsequent English criticism.(127) Unless this kind of association is assumed, Coleridge's emphasis on the object of the drama being illusion would raise the question whether illusion should be striven for at all cost -- morality included. If one separates Coleridge's theoretical pronouncements from the practical criticism in his essay on *The Tempest*, there is only enough material for a few general observations. Idealistic pronouncements, such as his emphasis on the imagination as the only genuine internal source of inspiration, on all Shakespeare's women being governed by essentially the same underlying principle, and on the irrelevance on any empirical frame of reference in *The Tempest*, are interfused with psychological observations concerning the sequence of scenes and the aptness of the moment chosen by Prospero to enlighten his daughter. His comment on Miranda and Caliban referred to earlier on could perhaps serve to illustrate the dialectical strain (so characteristic of the Germans) informing his psychological observations, just as his

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127 Consider Beatie's comment in his essay "Of Sympathy" in *Essays*, cited in W.J. Bates, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

statement that Shakespeare's characters are all "genera intensely individualised" not only suggests a mixture of rationalistic and empirical elements but an attempt to particularise the idea as such. The moral conclusions Coleridge draws about Shakespeare and his imaginative creations are more integrated in his overall arguments than Richardson's, for example. This balance between idealistic and empirical elements in Coleridge's thoroughly Romantic criticism on the Romances -- in other words, this bridge between German and English criticism -- is a new development in this history of Shakespearean criticism in England.

The tradition of character-analysis is continued in the brief commentaries on the Romances by William Hazlitt who, in the Preface to his dissertation on Shakespeare,(128) acknowledges the excellence of Schlegel's *Lectures*, which he read in an English translation in 1815. That Hazlitt remains significantly silent on Coleridge's *Lectures*, Wellek, suggests, was "surely prompted by a recognition of Schlegel's priority and the falsity of Coleridge's pretentions".(129) Hazlitt is clearly not a direct literary descendant of Schlegel, of whose work he was not at all uncritical but, as will be pointed out later in this section, some aspects of his commentaries on the Romances do testify to the influence of German thought.

Hazlitt's comments on the differences between ancient and modern drama show the extent to which the Romantic imagination has freed

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128 Hazlitt, W. *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth and Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), p. 246.

129 Wellek, R. *op. cit.*, (Vol.11), p. 189.

itself from the realistic limits imposed by earlier neoclassical criticism:-

> "The ideas of the ancients were too exact and definite, too attached to the material form or vehicle by which they were conveyed, to admit of those rapid combinations, those unrestrained flights of fancy, which, glancing from heaven to earth, unite the most opposite extremes, and draw the happiest illustrations from things the most remote. The two principles of imitation and imagination, indeed, are not only distinct, but almost opposite". (130)

Free, indefinite, and no longer subject to formalistic constraints, the imagination -- like Ariel -- can now engage in the most diverse and limitless flights of fancy and combine the most seemingly discordant elements to achieve unity in diversity. These observations are particularized in his comments on the differences between the classical and romantic styles: whereas the classical style demands that things be described as they are, the romantic style is not at all limited by the demands of psychological verisimilitude, and represents objects "for the sake of the association of ideas connected with them". Unlike the classical style, which concentrates more on rendering immediate sense impressions, the romantic style ' wells on the ideas suggested to the imagination", gives not only that which is implied in the subject but all that can "possibly arise out of it" and, finally, identifies

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130 Hazlitt, W. *op. cit.*, p. 246.

imitation not with an external object but "identifies the original impression with something else . which can strengthen, relieve, adorn or elevate it".(131)

The preceding comment explains Hazlitt's contention, expressed in the Preface to his *Lectures*, that Shakespeare's renderings are "identical with the things themselves, seen through the fine medium of passion".(132) In his brief commentary he further argues that Shakespeare displays the

> "...same insights into the world of the imagination that he has into the world of reality; and over all these presides the same truth of character and nature, and the same spirit of humanity. His ideal beings are as true and natural as his real characters".(133)

This observation, which is a characteristically German one, is also made with reference to *The Tempest*, in which, Hazlitt claims, Shakespeare's ideal characters are as true and natural [in terms of themselves] as his real characters, and that their language, manners and sentiments are therefore perfectly in character.(134)

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131 *Ibid.*, p. 252.

132 *Ibid.*, p. xix.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

134 *Ibid.*, p.82.

Hazlitt's affinity with the Germans becomes clear in his particular comments on the characters of Imogen and Caliban, and in his general observations on the subordinate characters in general. Imogen, the "most tender and artless of Shakespeare's women", who sets a moral example to others, relies not ... her personal charms, but on her merit -- and her merit is in the "depth of her love, her truth and constancy". This philosophical observation stresses her moral stature and grounds this quality in an underlying moral *idea* [own emphasis]. Hazlitt's propensity for abstraction is further evident from his characterisation of Caliban as "one of the wildest and most abstracted of Shakespeare's characters, whose deformity whether of body or mind, is redeemed by the power and truth of the imagination displayed in it".(135) But unlike in his comments on Imogen, there is a strong empirical strain in his philosophical observation that "Caliban shows the superiority of natural capacity over greater knowledge and greater folly".(136) In his specific psychological comments on the influence of Leontes' jealousy, doubts and fears on his speeches, and on the stageworthiness of the play itself, Hazlitt stands almost alone.

A large part of Hazlitt's brief commentaries on the Romances is devoted to stressing the harmony of the different parts that Shakespeare achieves in these plays. Needless to say, this a distinctly German contribution which came to be assimilated into English criticism. In *Cymbelline*, which has a complicated plot and numerous characters, "the links which bind the different interests

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135 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

136 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

of the story together are never entirely broken".(137) He further points out that, in *Cymbeline*,

> "... the plot thickens in the last act; the story moves forward with increasing rapidity at every step; its various ramifications are drawn from the most distant points to the same centre; the principal characters are brought together and placed in very critical situations; and the fate of every person in the drama is made to depend on the solution of a single circumstance: the answer of Iachimo to the question of Imogen respecting the obtaining of the ring from Posthumus".(138)

At the risk of labouring the point, he reiterates the same argument later in the same essay when he writes, "In the casting of the different parts and their relation to one another, there is an affinity and harmony...".(139) Shakespeare, he further argues, makes use of the "principle of analogy to reconcile the great diversities of character and to maintain a continuity of thought throughout", pointing out that, in *Cymbeline*, for instance, the principal interest arises out of the "unalterable fidelity of Imogen to her husband under the most trying circumstances".(140) Shakespeare's conscious artistry

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137 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

138 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

139 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

140 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

in blending the human and imaginary characters, as well as the dramatic and grotesque, is also stressed in his observations on *The Tempest*.(141)

There is evidence of a strong awareness in Hazlitt's criticism of the existence of presumably discordant dialectical elements and their synthesis in Shakespeare's Romances. Such opposites include virtue and vice, court and country, youthful fire and impatience versus prudent imagination, knowledge as opposed to ignorance, solitude versus society, and hill versus valley.(142) Caliban, for example, is said to exemplify the contrast between the "material and the spiritual, the gross and the delicate".(143) In the light of the German contribution to the criticism of Shakespeare's Romances (to be discussed in the following chapter), and Hazlitt's familiarity with the writings of Schlegel, there can be little doubt where these observations derive from.

That empirical reality could, however, to some extent still constitute a framework of reference for Hazlitt, may perhaps be deduced from his statement that Bellarius' answer to the expostulations of Guidarius and Arviragus [in *Cymbeline*] is unsatisfactory because "nothing can be an answer to hope, or the passion of the mind for unknown good, but experience".(144) But, on the whole, Hazlitt's criticism, like that

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141 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

142 *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

143 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

144 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

of Coleridge, permits of no rigid divisions between empirical and idealistic responses to aspects of the plays.

Lest the impression be given that Hazlitt remained completely uninfluenced by Coleridge's *Lectures*, mention should be made of the similarity in their approach to Shakespeare's ideal characters, to their shared belief in the excellence of Shakespeare's female characters, to the blending of all the different parts of the plays into a whole, and to their belief that Shakespeare suspends the subject-object relation by entering into his imaginative creations. Moreover, both Coleridge and Hazlitt evince an interest in Shakespeare's morality, although Hazlitt's comments are so incidental and marginal as to pale beside those of Coleridge. Perhaps Coleridge's brief comments on the Romances are more far-reaching in their implications than those of Hazlitt, but there is a greater warmth and enthusiasm in Hazlitt's thoroughly Romantic observations. It is in any case to be lamented that their comments on the Romances are not more detailed.

The full title of Nathan Drake's dissertation on Shakespeare(145) bears out his claim in the Preface to his study that it has been his aim to "place Shakespeare in the foreground of the picture and to throw around him, in groups more or less distinct and full, the

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145 Drake, N. *Shakespeare and his Times; including THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET; criticism on his genius and writings; a new chronology; a disquisition on the object of his sonnets; AND A HISTORY OF THE manners, customs, amusements, superstitions, poetry and elegant literature of his age* (1817). (According to the edition used for the purposes of this study, Drake's dissertation was first published in 1838, but there is good reason to presume Ralli's dating of 1817 to be correct. Wellek, in his *Concepts of Criticism* (1967) also gives the dating as 1817.

various objects of his design; giving them prominency and light, according to their greater or smaller connection with the principal figure".(146) The perspectivism implied in his statement accounts for the large amount of space Drake devotes, in his commentaries on the Romances, to matters as diverse as chronology and Shakespeare's significance as "almost the inventor of our fairy system".(147) But a considerable part of his commentaries is devoted to praising Shakespeare's skill as a delineator of character.

In *Pericles*, Shakespeare has succeeded in drawing character with his usual "strength and verisimilitude" -- not only as regards those specimens of "inferior life" but also as regards the main characters, Pericles and Marina.(148) Pericles is praised as a "model of knighthood", who is "chivalric in his habits, romantic in his conceptions, and elegant in his accomplishments";(149) Marina, "one of the many amiable and interesting female characters with which the undisputed works of our poet abounds", for the "gentleness and artless tenderness of her disposition".(150) In this regard, Drake claims that almost all the interest of the last two acts is subordinated to a sketch of Marina's tenderness and "subdued suffering".(151)

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146 *Ibid.*, p. v.

147 *Ibid.*, p. 511.

148 *Ibid.*, pp. 473-74.

149 *Ibid.*, p. 474.

150 *Ibid.*, p. 476.

151 *Ibid.*, p. 477.

In point of "variety and truth of character", and in the "display of sentiment and emotion", *Cymbeline*, Drake claims, is one of the loveliest and most interesting of Shakespeare's compositions. In the light of such virtues, Johnson's "sweeping condemnation" of the play cannot fail to astonish; but fortunately there is no shortage of "critics of equal learning with, and superior taste to Johnson", A.W. Schlegel being one of the best. Like almost all the critics after Werton, Drake singles Imogen out for being the loveliest of Shakespeare's female creations, and for arresting our attention by

> "... the pattern of connubial love and chastity, by the delicacy and propriety of her sentiments, by her sensibility, tenderness and resignation, by her patient endurance of persecution from the quarter where she had confidently looked for endearment and protection". (152)

The other characters in the play tend to pale beside Imogen, yet they are "adequately brought out and skilfully diversified":

> "... the treacherous subtlety of Iachimo, the sage experience of Belarius, the native nobleness of heart, and innate heroism of mind, which burst forth in the vigorous sketches of Guidarius and Arviragus, the temerity, credulity, and penitence of Posthumus, the uxorious weakness of Cymbeline, the hypocrisy of his Queen, and

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152 *Ibid.*, p. 562.

> the comic arrogance of Cloten, half fool and half knave, produce a striking diversity of action and sentiment". (153)

In his comments on *The Winter's Tale*, Drake once again quotes Schlegel, this time on the "fervent truth in the delineation of character and passion" which characterises the play. Like the heroine of *Cymbeline*, Perdita now comes in for special praise as a "portrait fresh from nature's loveliest pencil, where simplicity, artless affection, and the most generous resignation are sweetly blended with a fortitude at once spirited and tender". (154) Contained in this lavish praise is also the awareness of antithetical elements and their resolution or synthesis in the person of the main character, from which one may deduce the importance of centrality of character in Drake's approach to the plays.

This resolution of seemingly discordent or antithetical elements is further suggested in Drake's comments on *The Tempest*, that never before had the "wild and the wonderful, the pathetic and the sublime, more artfully and gracefully combined with the sportive sallies of a playful imagination than in this enchantingly attractive drama". (155) What makes the play so remarkable an achievement, according to Drake, is that, within the brief compass of the action, "are brought together, and without any violation of dramatic probability or consistency, the most extraordinary incident and the

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153 *Ibid.*, p. 563.

154 *Ibid.*, p. 577.

155 *Ibid.*, p. 579.

most singular assemblage of characters, that fancy, in her wildest mood, has ever generated".(156) Drake lavishes generous praise on the characters of Miranda, Ariel and Caliban, and on Prospero, the delineation of whose character, he argues, is "founded upon a distinction which was supposed to exist between the several professors of this mysterious science of magic: "those who commanded the service of superior intelligences", and those who, "by voluntary compact, entered into a league with, or submitted to be the instruments of these powers". Prospero belongs to the "highest class of the first order".(157) These comments are followed by an elaborate discussion of Prospero's status and function as a magician in terms of Elizabethan beliefs and views on the subject.

Compared with the work of some of the other British critics discussed in this chapter, Nathan Drake's relatively brief commentaries on the Romances are neither original nor distinguished. The belief in Shakespeare's excellence as a delineator of character, and the supreme importance of the imagination in literary composition, go back at least as far as Warton. Also in his praise of individual characters, Drake is working within the framework of a well-established tradition. What is, however, new in his work is his systematic examination of Shakespeare's imaginative use of popular superstition in the Romances. On the whole, one cannot help but admire Drake for the breadth of his scholarship, even though his work is at times lacking in sufficient depth and subsequent research has produced insights

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156 *Ibid.*, p. 580.

157 *Ibid.*, p. 548.

that conflict with his, notably in the highly specialised field of chronology.

Augustine Skottowe's commentaries on *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*, are exclusively devoted to disentangling Shakespeare from his sources and, in the case of *The Tempest*, to discussing the play against the background of popular superstitions concerning witchcraft, with particular reference to the distinction between black and white magic, the "importance of a book in magical operations",(158) the apparel to be worn by a magician, the magician's power over spirits, the conditions of a spirit's servitude, and the "perfect purity of Prospero's conduct".(159) Skottowe's essay on *Cymbeline* contains a long summary of Boccacio's novel and draws attention to Shakespeare's departure from his source. He concludes that *Cymbeline* is the "junction of a modern Italian novel and an ancient British story over which Shakespeare has thrown the charms of his genius".(160) (The vague effusions which conclude the essay are not worth repeating.) A similar practice is followed in his commentary on *The Winter's Tale*, which he compares with Green's novel *Dorastus and Fawnia*. He praises Shakespeare's conclusion to the play as well as his delineation of the principal characters. Once again, such comments are too vague and sketchy to warrant discussion. Skottowe's interest in the play is largely of an extraneous nature, involving a predominantly antiquarian approach.

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158 Skottowe, A. *Enquiries into Shakespeare's Dramatic Plots and Characters* (1824) (Vol. 1), p 303f..

159 *Ibid.*, pp. 310-23.

160 *Ibid.*, p. 275.

Shakespeare's characters, it would seem, are only interesting in so far as they are relevant to this antiquarian approach to the plays.

The tradition of character analysis in the criticism of Shakespeare's Romances, as established by Warton, Richardson, Coleridge, and Hazlitt, finds further expression in a dissertation by Mrs Jameson.(161) Although her rigid classification of Shakespeare's female characters into three groups -- namely, into characters of intellect and wit, fancy and passion, and moral sentiments and affections -- raises the spectre of eighteenth-century rationalism, which is rendered even more real by her method of abstracting [moral] qualities from the characters, Mrs Jameson insists that Shakespeare's characters are complete individuals and not poetic abstractions.(162)

The first character that Mrs Jameson discusses is Miranda, whom she classifies as a character of passion and imagination. It is especially in her comments on Miranda that her propensity for abstraction becomes evident: Miranda blends the purely natural and the purely ideal; her character resolves itself in the "very elements of womanhood";(163) she is "so perfectly unsophisticated, so delicately refined, that she is all but ethereal"; Shakespeare has removed Miranda from all comparison with her own sex; she has placed her "between the demi-demon of earth and the delicate spirit of air".

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161 Mrs Jamason, *Characteristics of Women: Moral, Poetical, and Historical* (1846).

162 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 1), pp. 25 and 31.

163 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 1), p. 281.

Compared with Caliban, she is "all but ethereal," but the presence of Ariel causes her to "appear a palpable reality, a woman... walking the earth in her mortal loveliness, with a heart as frail strung, as passion-touched, as ever fluttered in a female bosom".(164) Although Mrs Jameson further insists that Shakespeare's characters in general, and Miranda in particular, are distinct individuals, her comments reveal a distinct propensity for abstraction: whilst insisting that Miranda is a "consistent, natural, human being", she adds that "the impulses which have come to her, in her enchanted solitude, are of heaven and nature, not of the world and its vanities"; and further that, while retaining a "woman's heart", her "deportment, her language, her thoughts -- all these, from the supernatural and poetical circumstances around her, assume a cast of the pure ideal".(165) Like Perdita, who also unites differing qualities, Miranda is compounded of the real [the natural] and the ideal, and further exemplifies a contrast between refined and dignified beauty, on the one hand, and "soft simplicity" and "virgin innocence" on the other.(166) In relation to Miranda, the characters of Ferdinand, Ariel and Prospero have been created with perfect propriety.

In the second volume of her dissertation, Mrs Jameson identifies Hermione and Imogen as characters of the affections, in whom "the affections and moral qualities predominate over fancy and all that bears the name of passion".(167) Of all Shakespeare's women, Mrs

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164 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 1), pp. 281-82.

165 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 1), pp. 282-84.

166 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 1), p. 285.

167 *Ibid.*, (Vol 2), p. 22.

Jameson argues, Imogen is the "most *perfect*" [sic], because in no other character are "so great a variety of tints...mingled together into such perfect harmony". Imogen is further the "angel of light, whose lovely presence pervades the whole piece".(168) These comments again suggest a propensity for abstraction on Mrs Jameson's part. However, while lacking in concrete detail and infused with an enthusiastic awareness of sweetness and beauty in the plays, the language of Mrs Jameson's observations on Shakespeare's heroines in the Romances is that associated with high romanticism: concerning the creation of Imogen, for example, Shakespeare is praised for the "essential truth and beauty of the individual character, for the sweet colouring of pathos, and sentiment, and poetry interfused through the whole".(169) Mrs Jameson specifically praises Shakespeare for the imagination and skill of his characters. And as for

> "... the various anachronisms, and the confusion of names, dates, and manners, over which Dr Johnson exults in no measured terms, the confusion is nowhere but in his own heavy obtuseness of sentiment and perception, and his want of poetical faith".(170)

Mrs Jameson further argues that, in *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare has blended

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168 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 2), p. 51.

169 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 2), pp. 56-7.

170 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 2), p. 57.

> "... the marvellous, the heroic, the ideal, and the classical, -- the extreme of refinement and the extreme of simplicity, -- into one of the loveliest fictions of romantic poetry; and, to use Schlegel's expression, 'has made the social manners of the latest times harmonise with heroic deeds, and even with the appearance of the gods'".(171)

In the midst of all this marvellous complexity, Imogen presents "an impression of extreme simplicity".(172) Needless to say, Mrs Jameson's argument of 'unity in diversity' is a distinctly romantic idea. She further argues that, while resembling Juliet, Helen, Isabel, Viola and Portia, Imogen is distinctly different from them, and that all the characters in the Romance are subordinate to her.

From the preceding discussion two things are clear: that for Mrs Jameson the pivotal point or unifying centre [that which the German critics Ulrici and Gervinus call 'unity of idea'] of each play is the character of the heroine, and that her interest is largely moral and not dramatic. The moral adjectives she lavishes on themand her repeated references to the plays as "poems"(173)

emphasise these predilections. Although it is difficult not to have serious reservations about several of Mrs Jameson's observations --

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171 *Ibid.* (Vol. 2), p. 8.

172 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 2), p. 57.

173 *Ibid.*, (Vol. 2), pp. 60 and 82, for example.

for example, her classification of Shakespeare's characters, her propensity for abstraction, and her belief in character (as a vehicle for moral qualities) as the unifying interest of all variety in each play (arguments which tend to reduce the plays to little more than moral disquisitions as opposed to dramatic works) -- there is an underlying awareness in her criticism of the characters as distinct individuals -- this, despite some of the abstractions which one associates with German Romantic criticism, and which prevent her characterizations from having the psychological verisimilitude of Richardson's, for example. In this regard, her sustained commentaries on the individual, and comparisons of different characters result in the creation of portraits painted in a distinctly Romantic style. At the risk of labouring the metaphor, it should be said that these portraits, pleasing as they are to behold, cannot, however, reasonably be expected to come alive in any dramatic context, since they have been created in isolation and are therefore essentially static.

The second last critic to write on Shakespeare's Romances between 1750 and 1850, and the last to concentrate exclusively on the characters in the plays, as the chapter divisions of his dissertation on Shakespeare clearly indicate, is George Fletcher.(174) His criticism differs from that of most of the other 'character critics' discussed in this chapter in that his work contains little, if any theoretical speculation on the nature and aim of literature, the nature of the theatrical illusion, the workings of the imagination, and so on. Fletcher is essentially a 'practical critic', who undertakes a

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174 Fletcher, G. *Studies in Shakespeare* (1847).

comprehensive examination of the character of Imogen as the centre of the dramatic constellation of characters. Once again it becomes evident how completely critical attention has shifted from a concern with formal aspects of dramatic composition and the reaction of the audience to an interest in character *per se*.

In his discussion of Imogen's character in *Cymebeline*, Fletcher quotes Iachimo's rapturous, disinterested praise of her beauty in the bedchamber scene, Pisanio's praise of her graceful charms when advising her on what kind of disguise to assume, and the description given by Belarius and his 'sons' of their "sweetest, fairest lily, the seemingly dead Fidele!".(175) In a perceptive observation, Fletcher draws attention to the "exquisite sweetness and harmony of voice" of the heroine which is suggested by Cymbeline's exclemation, "The *tune* of Imogen!", when he recovers from Posthumus' blow. Even the thick-skulled Cloten shows himself sensible of her eauty. Having collated all th's textual evidence of her personal beauty, Fletcher proceeds to examine her "moral and intellectual beauty" as revealed in the relations between her and Posthumus.(176) Fletcher quotes the long authorial comment on Posthumus' ancestry to prove that she has made the "wisest as well as the most generous and most amorous choice of a husband",(177) and then Imogen's own praise of her husband's courageous, noble nature. Posthumus improper conduct in making the wager and subsequently accepting Iachimo's slanderous account of his 'conquest' is accounted for in terms of

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175 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

176 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

177 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

national differences: Fletcher contrasts the proverbially crafty Italian temperament with the presumably 'open' English one to argue that the wager is perfectly comprehensible and excusable in terms of the historical realities which Shakespeare thought fit to render in the play. Underlying Fletcher's defence of Posthumus is no doubt the realisation that any defective judgement imputed to him would seriously reflect on Imogen's moral and intellectual rectitude. Disagreeing with Hazlitt's assessment of Imogen, Fletcher asks,

> "Shall it be said ... that a heroine who can so think, and feel, and speak, is interesting *only* from her affectionate constancy to her husband --- that she has no intellectual charms inherent [in] and independent of any affection whatsoever, notwithstanding that affection stimulates their most beautiful development?"(178)

Once again availing himself selectively of historical arguments, Fletcher claims that, more than anything else, Posthumus' agreeing to the wager signifies "the highest proof of his confidence in her virtue".(179)

The second part of Fletcher's discussion is devoted to highlighting Imogen's moral and intellectual excellence in the exchange with Iachimo, the full extent and consequences of Iachimo's sly and evil

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178 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

179 *Ibid.*, p. 52

rchemings, and the depth of Posthumus' suffering and despair in the prison scenes.

In the final part of his discussion, in which he traces the development of Imogen's character, Fletcher states that the

> "... more we find reason to believe that Shakespeare designed his Imogen as a type of feminine excellence --- a model of rich, genuine, delicate, and cultivated womanhood, -- the more important it seems that we should try to estimate the quelities with which he has really endowed her...".(180)

In the ensuing discussion, he stresses the share of feeling and, above all, of intellect in her decisions. In so far as intellect would seem to be equated with a penetrating insight into falsehood and folly, it acquires a distinctly moral dimension in Fletcher's arguments. Throughout her subsequent trials, Imogen is said to display "clearness of intellect", "purity of heart", "moral energy", "ready self-possession", "pity instead of revenge", "consistency of character" and "unshaken constancy".(181)

Although the preceding paragraphs cannot do justice to the subtlety of Fletcher's well-argued discussion, which runs into more than forty

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180 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

181 *Ibid.*, pp. 75-93.

pages, they do give an outline of the salient features of his criticism on the Romances.

The last critic to be discussed in these pages is William J. Birch, whose treatise on Shakespeare(182) is rightly characterised by Ralli as the "work of a man without humour, with a preconceived plan into which he compels his instances to fit, who assumes that every character spoke Shakespeare's own sentiments".(183)

In Birch's commentary, character-analysis is made subservient to his ng concern, which is to prove that Shakespeare, whose phy was of a "sceptical tendency",(184) had n ed for conventional religion, and that he framed his plays on a human system of love, mercy and forgiveness...greater in extent, than in any religious scheme, present, or to arrive hereafter".(185) This kind of approach, needless to say, subordinates character-study to an extraneous, non-dramatic interest. Birch attempts to prove his thesis by first of all providing biographical -- that is, external -- 'evidence' of Shakespeare's adherence to nature as opposed to religion and, secondly, by drawing attention to intrinsic features in the plays testifying to Shakespeare's 'natural morality'.

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182 Birch, W.J. *An Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakespear* (1848).

183 Ralli, A. *op. cit.* (Vol. 1) p. 291.

184 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

185 *Ibid.*, p. 524.

As extrinsic, and therefore presumably objective, 'evidence' of Shakespeare's profaneness, Birch takes the reader on a tour of the gallery of Shakespeare's famous, albeit 'disreputable' (according to him) friends and acquaintances, identifying Marlowe, who was a "professor of Atheism", and his "dissipated friends";(186) Jonson, who spent his dying days "'twixt wine and women" [fortunate man!];(187) and Raleigh, an atheist with whom Shakespeare is "known to have had private and personal intercourse".(188) He furthermore points out that Shakespeare's father was "sent up as a recusant in 1592, for not attending Church";(189) that Shakespeare was well-versed in the "two most irreligious authors known to his times" -- that is, in Boccaccio and Montaigne;(190) that tradition "does not say he was not adverse to the bottle, or to pursuits still more criminal"; that anyone who has "looked into the original editions of his dramas, will be disgusted with the obscenity of his allusions";(191) that he "sympathised with those who had no religion, rather than with those who had; with infidelity rather than belief"; and that it is believed that Shakespeare drank himself to death.(192)

As regards intrinsic 'evidence', we see that, in *Pericles*, heaven's aid in distress is called in question, and that Pericles' "thoughtless

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186 *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

187 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

188 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

189 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

190 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

191 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

192 *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

impiety more than counterbalances the ejaculatory religion";(193) in *Cymbeline*, that the "existence of a future state is questioned", nature praised but the gods disparaged, and that the "humour of the gaoler [who is made out to be a good man] is conceded to be Voltarian";(194) in *The Winter's Tale*, that nature is changed by natural causes, that "'Dead and rotten' is still the material end of life and of life shadowed forth", and that "Florizel talks Lucretian philosophy";(195) and that, in *The Tempest*, it is "easy to see how immensely the balance preponderates where he [Shakespeare] adheres to natural causes" -- in this regard, Birch argues that Prospero's speech on the dissolution of all things is a "signal and brilliant consummation of the poet's materialistic teachings".(196)

Needless to say, Birch's commentary does not warrant further discussion, as it is perfectly clear, as already stated, that this kind of inquiry is essentially extra-literary and of no aesthetic consequence whatsoever.

From the preceding discussions it becomes clear that the largely empirical orientation of English critical thinking, as reflected in the commentaries on Shakespeare's Romances, to a certain extent encourages an extra-literary approach to the plays. The rest of this study will show that this tendency is more prevalent in the English than in the German criticism of the Romances.

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193 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

194 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

195 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

196 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

CHAPTER 3

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF SHAKESPEARE'S ROMANCES IN GERMANY FROM 1750-1850

A characteristic feature of Romantic criticism is that the focus is no longer on the work of art as an imitation of nature, as in classical criticism, or on the effects of the work of art on the audience, as in neoclassical criticism: instead, the work of art is seen as a mirror turned inward to reflect the workings of the poet's soul. The significance of this new critical orientation, as Abrams suggests, is that the arts are no longer seen to originate in imitation but in the mind of the poet.(1) This new approach underlies the work of all the critics discussed in the rest of this study.

The first Romantic criticism of any one of Shakespeare's Romances by a German critic is contained in a remarkable treatise entitled *Shakespeare's Treatment of the Marvellous* (1793) by Ludwig Tieck.(2) Written some years before Tieck's first meeting with Coleridge, who was responsible for mediating German ideas in England, this treatise, which was first published as an introduction

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1 Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1958), p. 88f.

2 Prior to the publication of Tieck's treatise, the only commentaries on Shakespeare's Romances were those of J.J. Eschenburg, published in the Preface to Vols 1 and 13 of his *Shakespeares Schauspiele* (1777-82). Since, however, Eschenburg's commentaries are exclusively of a textual nature, no proper conclusions about his aesthetic appreciation of Shakespeare can be drawn from them

to Tieck's free verse translation of *The Tempest*, is largely in the vein of English psychological criticism. Just as Coleridge exerted relatively little influence on his native contemporaries, Tieck, who is also the most 'classicist' of the German Romantics, would seem to have remained isolated in his approach to Shakespeare in his own country.

In his treatise, Tieck argues that Shakespeare wrote, not for the mob, but for his people, and that his study of his countrymen made it possible for him to extract the rules for his plays from experience. The superstitions informing the imagination of his people, Shakespeare elevated to the higher level of his own spirit instead of merely pandering to them in his plays. In fact, he succeeded in transforming common superstitions into "beautiful poetic fictions".(3) This socio-historical approach was already noted by Coleridge after their meeting, in the course of which they discussed Tieck's plan for a great work on Shakespeare.(4) However, what remains of this great work, in which an historical approach was to be adopted, Wellek points out, is "no more than a pathetic heap of notes, annotations and remarks, most of which date back to about 1794.(5) In this work, Shakespeare was to be deduced from his time and environment, and especially from his own mind. But that Tieck did not see Shakespeare as a mere 'product' of his age, is clear from his subsequent *Letters on Shakespeare* (1800), in which he argues that the "idea of unity

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3 Tieck, L. "Shakespeares Behandlung des Wunderbaren" in *Kritische Schriften* (Bd.1) (1848).

4 See Mason, F.N. *Deutsche und englische Romantik* (1966) p. 60f.

5 R. Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism* (Vol. 2) (1981), p. 94.

and form of a work of art does not grow with the ages, but [that] it must have its origin in the soul of the poet".(6) In his *Letters* Tieck further argues that Shakespeare "couldn't have found a more propitious time for his works of art, because his audience were as yet so natural and unbiased, and so entirely motivated by a desire to be amused...that it was through Shakespeare himself that they arrived at an understanding of his works...".(7)

In his treatise on the imagination, Tieck argues that it is through Shakespeare's powerful imagination that he is able to initiate the spectator into the marvellous world of *The Tempest* and acquaint him with the many magical beings inhabiting the poetic universe of the play.(8) The major part of Tieck's treatise is devoted to a discussion of the method Shakespeare uses to achieve theatrical illusion in the play.

Tieck first of all argues that by presenting a poetic world which is so entirely marvellous that the wonders become almost natural, Shakespeare is able to transport the spectator out of the world of sober reality. The psychological nature of his criticism becomes noticeable when he compares *The Tempest* to a dream and suggests that Shakespeare derived his inspiration for the play from his own dreams. He even generalizes this supposition to suggest that the poet and the psychologist can enhance their experiences by

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6 Tieck, L. "Briefe über Shakespeare" in *Kritische Schriften* (Bd. 1) (1848), p. 150.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 469.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

researching the progression ("Gang") of dreams.(9) Since Shakespeare does not permit the dreamlike quality and development of the play to be disturbed, we are caught in the magic world of the play and lose our remembrance of reality. In this "waking-dream", as Kames has called it, the wonderful becomes familiar and natural. Cut off from the real world, we are no longer suspicious of the strange beings we encounter. Everything which the imagination can observe in the dream, Shakespeare has realised in *The Tempest*.(10)

Tieck argues that, in *The Tempest*, everyday events are elevated to the level of the rare and marvellous: Prospero is not simply expelled from his dukedom, but suffers the unusual Romantic fate of shipwreck on the shores of an uninhabited island, cut off from the rest of the world. Prospero is furthermore no ordinary human being, but an almost ideal supernatural creation, whereas Miranda, in her love for Ferdinand, strikes a bridge between the real and the ideal worlds. When the spectator witnesses the magical means through which Prospero realises his aims, he has the illusion of sharing all the secrets of the magical world of the play. It is pre-eminently through Ariel and Caliban that the poet creates this magical world around the spectator and prevents him from escaping to the real world before the play ends.(11)

Another technique which Shakespeare uses to sustain theatrical illusion in the play, Tieck argues, involves diversifying the

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9 *Ibid.*, pp. 41-44.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48

representations and softening the passions in the play. Diversity is achieved by the introduction of Miranda and Ferdinand, and by the many marvellous situations distributed throughout the action by Prospero. Passion is strictly controlled by preventing any situation from moving the spectator deeply or any character from inspiring pity, even though tragic situations and high passions are potentially present in the action. The naturalistic strain in Tieck's reasoning becomes more noticeable when he claims that the illusion of a dream and that of a wonderful play end according to the same laws: as soon as the misfortune of a person in a dream becomes excessive, we begin to doubt the veracity of the dream.(12)

Tieck continues his psychological commentary by claiming that theatrical illusion is further sustained by the introduction of the comic. Since the comic and the tragic are closely related in the human soul, and since the imagination can render the same object either tragic or comic, Shakespeare uses comic scenes in his play to prevent our attention from focusing too critically on the creations of his imagination. Without the comic characters, the wonderful world of the play would become too wonderful to be at all convincing. But also the comic elements require careful handling if they are not to obtrude: a Fallstaff instead of a Stephano would, for example, seriously disturb this balance. Tieck concludes that it is essentially due to the presence of realistic elements in the play that the marvellous elements become all the more probable.(13)

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12 *Ibid.*, pp. 51-55.

13 What Tieck probably means is that such 'realistic' elements fling the marvellous or wonderful into sharper perspective: just as one's conception of good depends on one's awareness of evil, the

Finally, theatrical illusion is also sustained by the introduction of the purely mechanical artistic device of music, which has the power to put reason off its guard and trick the imagination into mistaking the unreal for the real. It is interesting that Tieck should avail himself of this argument because, as the most subjective of all the arts, music appeals directly to the feelings or subconscious. Of all the critics discussed in this study, Tieck is the only one who draws attention to the importance of music in *The Tempest*.

Tieck's essay contains two important aspects of Romantic criticism, namely the recognition of the supremacy of the imagination in the creative act and an emphasis on the need for the poet to be creative in terms of his own individual nature, free from the burden of mechanically imposed rules. These socio-historical interests he shares with Herder and several of his own contemporaries.

But in the psychological account which he gives of Shakespeare's method of creating *The Tempest*, and in his claim that Shakespeare "abstracted the rules for his plays from experience",(14) Tieck is closer to his English than to his German contemporaries, an essentiel distinction which Lilian Furst's generalisations in her chapter on the role of the imagination in Romantic literature do not permit her to make.(15) Rudolf Haym rightly draws attention to the naturalistic

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marvellous, in order to be appreciated as such, requires the presence of the real -- in other words, of empirical reality.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

15 Furst, L. *Romanticism In Perspective* (1969), Chapter 2.

elements in Tieck's commentary(16) -- elements which invoke an empirical dimension foreign to the predominantly idealistic speculations of his German contemporaries. But Tieck's essay on the marvellous is perhaps too narrow in focus, and his *Letters on Shakespeare* too "rambling and diffuse", to use Wellek's terms,(17) to draw any conclusions about Tieck's theory of criticism. His profound interest in stagecraft could perhaps, to some extent, account for the naturalistic elements in his essay and for his interest in theatrical illusion. Tieck's approach to Shakespeare, as revealed in his treatise, will be seen to have little in common with that of A.W. Schlegel, the first major German critic to write on the romances.

In clear opposition to the Sturm und Drang conception of Shakespeare as a wild untutored genius and symbol of splendid artistic lawlessness, A.W. Schlegel, in his *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, emphasises Shakespeare's conscious artistry by drawing attention to the "masterly skill" which he has displayed in the economy of his means, and the "dexterity with which he has disguised his preparations" in *The Tempest* and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.(18) In *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare, through his conscious artistry, has successfully blended together "into one harmonious whole the social manners of the newest times with olden heroic deeds,

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16 "Schon die Art und Weise der Fragestellung indes verrät die naturalistischen Begriffe, die er von der eigentlichen Aufgabe der Dichtkunst sich gebildet hat" (Haym, R. *Die Romantische Schule* (1928), p. 56.

17 Wellek, R. *op. cit.* (Vol. 2), p. 95.

18 Schlegel, A.W. *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1846) (Originally composed 1809-11), p. 393.

and even with appearances of the gods. (19) Shakespeare's art is not fortuitous but the result of his masterful skill in subordinating all disparate elements in his plays to the overall design or motif, in balancing dialectical opposites so skilfully as to demonstrate Schlegel's view of literature as mediating between the metaphysical and the physical, the world of fantasy and everyday reality.

In *The Tempest*, "chivalrous magnanimity" [a court idea] and "virgin openness of heart" [uncorrupted rural innocence] are united in the characters of Ferdinand and Miranda; the "black falsehood of the two usurpers is softened by the honest gossiping of the old and faithful Gonzalo; Trinculo and Stephano... find a worthy associate in Caliban; and Ariel hovers sweetly over the whole as the personified genius of the wonderful fable".(20) Although completely opposite, Caliban and Ariel, to Schlegel, are "neither ... simple allegorical personifications but beings individually determined".(21) Thus Schlegel does not fall into the trap of treating *The Tempest* as an elaborate allegory but appreciates it as a work of fantasy hovering delicately between the world of the imagination, of fantasy, and the real world. In *The Winter's Tale*

> ideal poetry is placed side by side with the most vulgar prose. Perdita's foster father and his son are made simple boors, that we may more distinctly see how all that ennobles her belongs

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19 *Ibid.*, p. 397.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 395.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 395-96.

only to herself. Autolycus, the merry pedlar and pickpocket, is necessary to complete the rustic feast, which Perdita on her part seems to render meet for an assemblage of gods in disguise". (22)

In *Cymbeline*, the two princes Guiderius and Arviragus "form a noble contrast to Miranda and Perdita" and "show the superiority of the natural over the artificial". (23)

The subordinating of all elements to the overall design of the play, Schlegel would seem to argue, justifies such departures from or violations of neoclassical doctrine as the sixteen-year interval in *The Winter's Tale*; the inexplicable nature of Leontes's sudden, brutal jealousy; the presence of the "false and wicked queen" (as a mere instrument of the plot) and her stupid son Cloten, to be disposed of at the convenience of the dramatist once they have played their part in the plot.

This blending of disparate elements in the Romances, as in the rest of Shakespeare's works, is fully consistent with the demands of Romantic art. As Schlegel argues in an earlier lecture,

"The ancient art and poetry rigorously separate things which are dissimilar; the Romantic delights in indissoluble mixtures; all

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22 *Ibid.*, p. 397.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 398.

> contrarieties: nature and art, poetry and prose, seriousness and mirth, recollection and anticipation, spirituality and sensuality, terrestrial and celestial, life and death, are by it blended together in the most intimate combination". (24)

In Schlegel's perceptive comments on the romances, as on the plays belonging to the rest of the canon, the skill and philosophical truth of Shakespeare's characterisation features prominently -- he is not intent on giving a psychological exposition of Shakespeare's characterisation. Prospero is celebrated for his princely wisdom, Ferdinand and Miranda for their moral superiority over all the other lesser characters. Imogen, in *Cymbeline*, is praised for her "chaste tenderness, her softness and her virgin spirit, her boundless resignation and her magnanimity towards her mistaken husband..."; (25) the two princes, for the admirable manner in which they exemplify the superiority of the natural over the superficial. Caliban is treated as a synthesis of antitheticel qualities -- a savage whose understanding is rooted in malignity; a brute who is rude, "malicious, cowardly, false and base" but without being vulgar as the low-comedy characters; a poetical being consistent with himself, with a language of his own, a monster throughout inconceivably consistent with himself and profound, and, notwithstanding his

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24 *Ibid.*, p. 342.

25 This echoes Eschenburg's question, "What can be gentler, more captivating and, consequently, more true and natural than the character of Imogen?". See Eschenburg, J.J. *William Shakespeares Schauspiele* (1775), Vol. 111, p. 544.

h tefulness, by no means hurtful to our feelings, as the honour of human nature is untouched" -- and as a foil to the low-comedy characters.(26)

These perceptive comments show that Schlegel's interest in Shakespeare's characterisation takes its point of departure from the moral traits invested in the characters and the skill with which Shakespeare explores their natures as constituent elements of the grand overall design of the plays. This inductive approach leads to a consideration of the plays as embodying a "profound view of the inner life of nature and her mysterious springs" and as showing poetry to be altogether incompatible with mechanical physics. In his comments on *The Winter's Tale*, Schlegel draws attention to the "fervent truth in the delineation of character and passion", an imaginative triumph which "transports ever manhood back to the golden age of imagination".(27)

This imaginative achievement in the creation of such "wonderful and fleeting adventures", has nothing to do with the "calculation of possibilities" -- in other words, the artist is fully justified in violating the so-called laws of probability and verisimilitude when "all end at last in universal joy".(28) Schlegel shows himself to be fully aware of those elements of the plays which have led to their limited acceptance and even outright rejection by neoclassicists. In this regard he draws attention to "licences of anachronisms and

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26 *Ibid.*, pp. 395-98.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 396.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 396.

geological errors" in *The Winter's Tale*, the structural cleft between the last two acts of the play, the inexplicable -- and therefore psychologically unmotivated -- jealousy of Leontes, the strange admixture of fact and fantasy, the use of both poetry and prose, and the presence of low-comedy characters in the play.(29) These 'flaws' are fully justified within the overall framework of these fanciful plays, "attractive and intelligible to childhood" on the one hand, and profoundly thought-provoking (by virtue of the fervent truth in the delineation of character and passion) to grown-ups on the other.(30)

From Schlegel's comments on the Romances a number of critical principles can be gleaned, viz. his belief in the conscious artistry underlying great art (in other words, his rejection of the Sturm und Drang conception of art as the effusions of wild, untutored genius); the superiority of organic form over mechanical form; his emphasis on Romantic character study and his unequivocal rejection of the neoclassical doctrine of the three unities. But, as Pascal rightly points out, A.W. Schlegel (together with Tieck) is the least dogmatic of the Romantic critics in that he does not lay down rules. The element of dogmatism which, after 1800, begins to appear in the form of a search for higher meaning, becomes increasingly clear in the work of the other German critics discussed in this chapter.(31)

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29 *Ibid.*, p. 397.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 396.

31 See Pascal, R. *Shakespeare in Germany (1740-1815)* (1937), p. 33.

The next critic after A.W. Schiegel to write in some detail on the romances in particular is Franz Horn, who pays tribute in his commentaries to Schlegel for his brief survey of Shakespeare's complete works. Although his overview of Shakespeare's critical reception in Germany and England and his commentaries on the individual plays are by no means comparable to Schlegel's in critical acumen, they do evince a sufficiently deep and wide acquaintance with Shakespeare's works to refute the harsh strictures with which Gervinus attempts to discredit his work.(32) In a frank statement of the critical intention underlying his five volumes on Shakespeare, Horn states that [illegible] aim of his work is to give a modest and appreciative appr[illegible] f the progress made in the critical reception of Shakespeare's work, and to contribute his share to the critical tradition by giving an account of what he has thought about Shakespeare and learnt from him.(33) Acknowledging his inability to give an authoritative account of the literary-historical influences [illegible]ch combined to inform so many of Shakespeare's plays, Horn [illegible]'ines himself to an examination of the "inner character" of Shakespeare's plays, of the "idea, the organism and individual characters" by "critically reproducing that which was produced by

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32 He claims, for example, [illegible] Horn's "unqualified praise, coupled with so much absurdity [illegible] an insult". See Gervinus, G.G. *Shakespeare Commenta[illegible]*877), translated by F.E. Burnett, p. 16. (The original G[illegible] ext was first published in 1849).

33 "Ich selbst will auf den [illegible] Wege fortgehen und nach und nach bescheiden mitteilen, [illegible] und zwar auf eine einfache, jedem Denkenden verständliche [illegible]se -- was ich über Shakespeare den Dichter gedacht und von ihm gelernt habe. Ich accentuire dieses Wort hier besonders, um jede andere Forderung, die man etwa machen könnte, abzulehnen." (Horn, F. *Shakespeares Schauspiele Erläutert*)(1823-1831), p. 40.

the poet".(34) It is, however, to be lamented that Horn's stated intention to examine the philosophical themes underlying Shakespeare's works as well as the organic structure of, and characters in, his works is often so diluted by the main stream of 'reproductive criticism' as to disappear altogether. This is particularly true of his commentary on *Pericles*, which fails to rise above the level of a mere summary.

Horn demythologises Shakespeare by attempting to show that "poetry is not the exclusive property of a few individuals or an art secret but a gift belonging to humanity", and that the pleasure to be derived from his work can belong to all people if they sincerely strive to appreciate it as the "very air we breathe and as the essence of life".(35) From this stated conviction it follows that Horn is not writing for a small, select group of Shakespeare specialists, but for the much wider audience of Shakespeare enthusiasts, and that his aim is didactic.

Horn's commentary on *The Tempest* reflects the romantic conception of the literary work as a microcosm imaginatively reflecting [idealised] human nature in all its different shades and nuances: the universally appealing image of shipwreck and of life on a lonely island becomes the focal point of our ideas and dreams, longing and

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34 "Ich werde es lediglich zu thun haben mit dem inneren Wesen der Shakespeare'schen Dramen: ich möchte das Lesen derselben allen, welche denken und empfinden können und wollen, erleichtern, indem ich jene Werke einzeln durchgehe, die Idee, den Organismus und die einzelnen Charactere zu entwickeln versuche: indem ich das durch den Dichter Producirte kritisch reproducire. (*Ibid*, p. 43).

35 *Ibid*., pp. 43-44.

playfulness, seriousness and love.(36) In the opening scene of the play, all levels of society, and such opposing qualities and conditions as reverent age and blossoming youth, fear and jealousy, are dramatically juxtaposed by the magic mirror of the poet's mind.(37) The great success of Shakespeare's achievement in this play, as in several others, is due to his powerful imagination. It is through Shakespeare's masterful control over the fantastical elements in the play that nature becomes synonymous with the wonderful, and the wonderful with nature(38) --- nature is presented as the great wonder controlled by Prospero, so that all the other wonders seem completely natural. That all imitations of the play have failed, Horn argues, is an indication of Shakespeare's inimitable imaginative achievement in the play. It would seem that, in Horn, there is a stronger emphasis on the role of the imagination than in Schlegel: to Schlegel, poetry is speculation through imagination, and mediates between the real and the ideal, whereas, in Horn, it is the imagination *per se* which *fuses* [my emphasis] external reality and human nature. From these few introductory comments it follows that, unlike in neoclassical criticism, the Romances are no longer subjected to the demands of psychological verisimilitude but praised for

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36 "Hier sind alle unsere Ahnungen und Träume, alle Sehnsucht und Scherzhaftigkeit, alle Ernst und alle Liebe, mit denen wir je eine solche Insel austattoten, zu einem großen lieblichen Kunstwerk vereinigt. (*Ibid.*, p.98) This is consistent with Pascal's premise that, after 1815, Shakespeare began to be studied for the depth of his knowledge and for the artistry of his technique (Pascal, R. *op. cit.*, p. 36), although this trend is already discernible in Schlegel's commentaries.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

38 "... wo die Natur selbst zum Wunder und das Wunder zur Natur geworden ist." (*Ibid*, p. 100)

constituting an imaginative universe unshackled by the constraints of realism.

As opposed to the particular physical world of his Dukedom, which Prospero so fatefully neglected in his search for deeper spiritual knowledge embracing both love and fantasy, the enchanted island on which he is able to practise his white magic, unrestrained by the exigencies of life, affords him the much yearned for chance to perfect his knowledge of and beneficent control over nature: "his knowledge is enhanced, and Nature serves him, possibly because he has learnt to know and love her more intimately".(39) Nature is therefore not seen as an essentially static external reality to be faithfully rendered by the artist, but as a spiritual force infusing all things, of which man is part. It is only as the spiritual centre of this enchanted island that Prospero is able to realise his great humane wisdom.

Unlike the static, and therefore largely mechanical, supernatural stage machinery created by lesser writers, Shakespeare's creations reveal the "varied and entertaining ways of dealing with the supernetural", particularly in *The Tempest*, where nature is represented as the greatest of wonders -- controlled, significantly enough, by Prospero's superior spirit -- to which all other wonders are inferior. Both Ferdinand and Miranda are superior to the wonders of nature: their greater wonder is that of the wonderful power of love revealed by them.(40)

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39 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

In *The Winter's Tale*, the wonderful fairy-tale of the play, Horn argues, lives on in all seasons of the human spirit because it "blossoms in the richest colours of Romantic poetry and envelops in the most miraculous manner the listener, whose whole being is here refreshed and satisfied". Referring to his use of the word magical ("zäuberlich"), Horn stresses the need for an even more specific term with which to characterise "the wonder of the poet", revealed even more poignantly in this play than in *The Tempest*.(41) Since love can no longer flourish in the stifling world of the court, the poet transports us into the "freedom of nature, under the blue sky, in verdant forests and tranquil valleys".(42) Horn writes, "It is with pleasure that we follow the poet out of the now dark halls of the king's palace, where now only remorse and pain reside, into the freedom of nature". After an interval of sixteen years, we meet Perdita as a "pastoral flower queen, with Florizel at her feet". The love that "unites their souls, is compounded of all the wonders of the courage of early manhood and maidenly loveliness, ancient chivalric nobility of character and pastoral gracefulness"(43)

Taking issue with Pope, Mrs Lennox, Johnson and Warburton, Horn argues that their strictures are understandable if we bear in mind

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41 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

43 "Wir sehen Perditen, nachdem wir sechzehn Jahre übersprungen haben, wieder als schäferliche Königin, ja wenn man will als Blumengöttin, und zu ihren Füßen Florizel, den Sohn des Böhmerkönigs, der als Schäfer verkleidet an dem ländlichen Feste Theil nimmt, zu dessen Feier man jetzt zusammenkommt. Die Liebe, welche beide Gemüther vereint, ist mit allem Zauber des Jünglingsmuthes und der Jungfrauenlieblichkeit, altritterlichen Edelmuths und schäferlicher Zierlichkeit ausgestattet..." (*Ibid.*, p. 133)

that almost no drama offends against "philosophical reality" as does this play which is only concerned with the pure, eternal truth of Nature and love.(44) In view of the purple prose used, it is not surprising that Horn fails to say what this pure, eternal truth is.

In his comments on *Cymbeline*, Horn would seem to use the problematical term 'nature' to refer to the best in human nature, to that which is noble, natural and totally devoid of artifice. The "language of the heart" -- for example, Imogen's utterances on hearing from Iachimo why she was summoned to Milford Haven -- Horn argues, had been lost since the age of Louis xiv until it reappeared again in *Werthers Leiden*. He adds that this loss is not only evident in printed literary works but in life itself which, from the middle of the seventeenth century, started becoming moribund until, in the eighteenth century, having lost the tone of nature ("Ton der Natur"), the full roar of the stream ("Rauschen des Stroms"), it could almost no longer render deep thoughts and sentiments appropriately.(45) The scenes in which Imogen has disguised herself as a boy are rendered so faithful to [human] nature and so artistically as to put a great deal of subsequent literature to shame.

In Horn's pronouncements there is a clear identification of the spontaneous and free 'poetry of the heart' with the natural and unspoiled beauty of nature. In terms of Horn's arguments, Shakespeare is therefore true not to the 'rules of literature' but to the best in human nature and life. And it was his singular

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44 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64.

achievement to render the wonder of nature, and the wonderful in human nature, most successfully in these last plays. The work of art, the poet's magic window to the world, becomes a reflection of the best in human nature; and our critic's concern with the bard's ability to achieve this is evidenced by the generous praise of Shakespeare running through his commentaries.

It is what Lilian Furst aptly terms the "transformation through the creative imagination"(46) that affects the fusion of nature and human nature, reality and fancy, particularly in the romances. Horn mentions Shakespeare's success at suspending disbelief in these last plays, but in his enumerative criticism he unfortunately makes no attempt to systematically explore the manner in which Shakespeare achieves this suspension of disbelief or to explain how nature is rendered synonymous with the wonderful, and the wonderful with nature. However, a hint may be given in his discussion of Caliban and Ariel, whom he regards as two of Shakespeare's most successful fantastical creations.

As a strange hybrid, with something wonderfully stirring and something absurdly elevated in his character, Caliban has "long since been seen as the inimitable creation of a powerful poetic fantasy; and the more we regard him the more he satisfies our attention".(47) We are not told who Caliban's father was, but our fantasy has more than enough to work on if we consider him as Sycorax's son. In Caliban we have a strange mixture of devil, human being and animal; in the

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46 Lilian Furst, *Romanticism in Perspective* (1969), p. 67.

47 Franz Horn, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

art of swearing he displays the highest virtuosity, using language which is totally in character; he revels in abominations because they relieve the monotony of his existence; and he loves disorder for its own sake.(48) Even so, this ridiculously disgusting, weak monster is delightful because the reader realises that he is neither essentially dangerous nor nasty -- in fact, he is superior to Trinculo and Stephano. He is endowed with poetic verisimilitude in that the poet gives us his (Caliban's) history as a being who was once completely ignorant and colossally uncouth and whose only human quality is his love for his mother.(49)

As opposed to the earthly Caliban, Ariel is a spirit of the air [as many a critic has pointed out with an air of authority, not realising that the distinction derives from Schlegel], "charming and liberal, but also roguish and even a little naughty". Although indebted to Prospero for having set him free, he is not given to feelings of gratitude -- in fact, it is only the knowledge that he will be set free in two days' time that restores his "amiability".(50) Unlike the creations of inferior writers, Shakespeare's Ariel is totally convincing imaginatively. Unfortunately, Horn does not attempt to explore the essential differences between their supernatural creations and Shakespeare's, but engages in a brief, generalised and unsubstantiated discussion of Nature as representing the great wonder controlled by Prospero.

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48 *Ibid.*, pp. 105-107.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

However, despite Horn's failure to explore the critical notions or principles underlying his commentaries, it is possible to glean from his brief statements on Caliban and Ariel that he regards them neither as mechanical, supernatural devices nor as mere allegorical presences within the framework of this poetic drama, but as fully-rounded imaginative creations with a verisimilitude of their own and as fusing the realms of fact and fiction, of the real and the ideal, into a credible whole. Horn would also seem to suggest that this delicate balance is achieved because the emotions shown by the characters are real even while the events depicted are unreal.

It is on the basis of this fusion that Horn defends Shakespeare's deliberate violation of fact and of the unities in these plays, particularly in *The Winter's Tale*. Shakespeare's violation of the demand for geographical accuracy, Horn clearly states, is not due to ignorance. Arguing that the fairy tale is not subject to the demands of geographical and topographical accuracy, that the world of the fairy tale has much in common with the world of dreams, in which there are no clear barriers pertaining to time and place, Horn states that the 'liberties' taken by Shakespeare are completely justified. In *The Winter's Tale*, the interval of sixteen years between the third and fourth acts is easily bridged by letting Time himself appear in a humorous appeal to the spectator to 'think away' the long interval. Horn justifies this long interval by drawing attention to ideal as opposed to real time.(51)

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51 "Wer mit einer so gelähmten Phantasie behaftet ist, daß er den Gedanken der idealen Zeit nicht fassen kann, wird sich auch durch die aristotelischen zehn bis vierundzwanzig Stunden wie durch ein Übermaß bedrängt fühlen, da er sich ja gründlich bewußt ist, daß er höchstens drei Stunden auf einer Bank im

In dealing with some of the other well-known neoclassical strictures on the plays, Horn also emphasises the distinction between the real world and the imaginative universe constituted by the literary artefact. It is Shakespeare's singular achievement that he is able to render Leontes's sudden and inexplicable jealousy convincingly. However, Horn's psychological account of Leontes's jealousy is not only uncritical but, by applying the 'test of life' to the character of Leontes, Horn is actually violating his basic premise that the imaginative universe constructed by the poet is subject to its own rules. This dichotomy in his critical outlook is also be found in some of his other pronouncements.

Horn's critical commentaries on Shakespeare's characterisation in the romances are interwoven with his many other pronouncements and are only dealt with separately in this chapter for the sake of clarity. Prospero is celebrated, it would seem, as the epitome of Renaissance man, whose spirit strives for wisdom; whose mind, for love; and whose fantasy longs for knowledge of nature. Although his moral sense earned him the love of his people before his banishment, it is only on the magic island that he becomes Duke *and* father, that which he was previously not. His knowledge prospers and Nature submits to his beneficent control, possibly because he has learnt to know and love her more intimately than before.(52) Endowed with great wisdom, and as the spiritual centre of the play, Prospero now knows how to

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Theater sitze, weshalb er natürlich eben so wenig zehn Stunden als zehn Jahre einräumen kann. Indessen verstent es sich von selbst, daß wir den Monolog der Zeit bei Sh. mit Dank annehmen..."(*Ibid*., p. 122.)

52 "Sain Wissen gedeiht, die Natur gehorcht ihm, vielleicht weil er sie inniger kennen und lieben lernt." (*Ibid*., p. 99)

deal with friend and enemy alike, although his wisdom and goodness of heart are often in conflict. Prospero emerges as a complete, fully-rounded character and as a tribute to Shakespeare's power of characterisation.(53)

If Prospero is the spiritual centre of the moral universe created by Shakespeare in this play, then Miranda is one of his loveliest creations: life-loving, gracious and exquisite in her love for Ferdinand. In these tenderly portrayed scenes between Miranda and Ferdinand, Horn further claims, the world becomes fable and love the only truth.(54) In fact, their world becomes superior to the wonder in nature, since the mainspring of the world is their love for each other.(55)

Another character in *The Tempest* who is celebrated for his salubriousness and goodness of heart is the old courtier Gonzalo, who single-mindedly pursues his self-imposed task of searching for his friends. Horn argues that it is due to these morally beautiful creations of Shakespeare's that the spectator is filled with the "pure

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53 "So haben wir hier einen vollständigen Character vor uns, wo vielleicht tausend andere Dichter uns nichts würden gegeben haben als das Prunkbild eines weisen gekrankten und verzeihenden 'homme de qualite qui s'est retire du monde'". (*Ibid.*, pp. 101-102)

54 "Die Welt wird zur Fabel und die Liebe erscheint als allein Wahrheit". (*Ibid.*, p. 103)

55 "Ferdinand und Miranda sind ohne sichtbaren Zauberstab und ohne weitläufig Anstalten den Naturwundern völlig überlegen und sie lassen sich dieselben bloß als ein ergötliches Schauspiel gefallen, denn das höchste Wunder ist in ihrer eigenen Brust: die Liebe, die rein menschlich und eben deshalb göttliche." (*Ibid.*, p. 112.)

poetry of nature a[illegible] the spirit".(56) This effect, Horn argues, is not dissipated by the "sinful persons" in the play, because they remain "merely ridiculous, ineffectual, and with the cause of their spiritual drunkenness always visible in their hands". As ridiculous characters in a play in which the protagonist's power is more than adequate to deal with their vagaries, they are not as evil as in real life, not sufficiently evil to inspire fear, and merely wretched and objectionable morally.(57)

In his largely psychological initial commentary on Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, Horn would seem to be confusing fantasy and realism: quoting Mamillius's words "a sad tale's best for winter" to emphasise the unreal, fairy-tale atmosphere of the play, Horn nevertheless embarks on a psychological defence of Leontes's actions, which invokes the demand for verisimilitude of character. Experiencing himself to be both spiritually and linguistically inferior to his friend Polixenes, Leontes is said to become increasingly envious of his friend in the course of the latter's nine-month visit, until envy makes way for active hatred.(58) These initial comments Horn generalizes into a moralistic consideration of the "spiritual darkness" that eventually sets in to obscure Leontes's heart and fantasy, arguing that, although a trace of reasonableness is however evident in his decision to send a dispatch to the Delphic Oracle, "someone who has stooped so low" can only regain respect and love if his sense of remorse is "shown to be permanent and if he never ceases to experience the

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56 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

unending pain caused by the loss of his spiritual dignity".(59) And in the last act he is indeed so gentle that the reader responds with anger to Paulina for having deprived Leontes of his beloved wife for so many years. But in the end this painting is so consistent and coherent that only the "arrogant and spiritually barren Lennox could see it fit to criticise the poet".(60) According to Horn, therefore, aspects of Shakespeare's characterisation that are unacceptable to a critic demanding verisimilitude are fully justified in terms of the overall organic conception of the work in question.

Two female characters who qualify for special praise are Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* and Imogen in *Cymbeline*. Horn singles out Hermione for her moral excellence: her purity of soul is such that she is even incapable of understanding the question of infidelity. The manner in which she suffers the terrible accusations flung at her is totally convincing:

> "she suffers the accusations with equanimity, until she is informed of the death of her son. Her collapse is essentially different from the fainting fits experienced by most princesses in French tragedies. Only miraculous strength of

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59 "Wer aber so tief gefallen ist wie Leontes, der kann zwar durch tiefe, flammende Reue unser Mitleiden gewinnen; doch Achtung und Liebe kann er nur zurückerwerben, wenn dieses Gefühl dauernd sich zeigt und er nie aufhört den unendlichen Schmerz über die verlorne Seelenswürde zu empfinden." (*Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.)

60 "So ist denn in diesem Gemälde alles folgerichtig und zusammenhängend, und nur die hochmütige Lennox konnte in ihrer Geistesdürre hier gegen den Dichter auftreten." (*Ibid.*, p. 127)

> character can ve her, and we realise only too well that after she has suffered such pain even a fifteen-year period of rest and loneliness in Paulina's home could be bearable". (61)

In *Cymbeline*, Imogen not only possesses beauty and charm, but combines these qualities with the beauty of a virtuous life. Secure in herself, she knows the people with whom Fate brings her into contact for what they are; and even in her moments of greatest pain caused by her father's treatment of her does she respond not with anger but with sadness. She even suffers Cloten's coarse and distasteful advances with courtesy, until he attacks her husband. (62) But in spite of her angry response to Cloten's insults, she is essentially gentle and loving. Horn argues that her words show her to be so deeply inspired by nature, love and pain, that even Richardson praises the language of love used by her. In the pastoral scenes, where she appears dressed as a boy, the wonder of her presence is sufficient to earn her the immediate liking of the people she encounters. According to Horn, Imogen is one of the finest, most natural and deep characters ever created. (63)

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61 "Sie hält sich aufrecht bis zu dem Moment, wo ihr der Tod ihres Sohnes berichtet wird, und die Ohnmacht in die sie dann sinkt, ist von ganz anderer Art, als die der meisten französischen Tragödien-Prinzessinnen. Nur eine Wunderähnliche Characterstärke konnte sie retten, und wohl begreifen wir, daß nach solchen Schmerzen wie sie ertrug, selbst eine fünfzehnjährige Ruhe und Einsamkeit in Paulinens Wohnung ihr erträglich sein konnte." (*Ibid.*, p. 131.)

62 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 157-60.

In his commentaries on *The Winter's Tale* Horn demonstrates his organic conception of the work of art and praises Shakespeare for having created works in which all elements are in perfect harmony:

> "If we imagine the tone and colour, for example, in the last act to be different from what it is; if we force just one character out of his part; if, for example, we consider the relationship between Florizel and Perdita to be more pathetic; if we depict the suffering occasioned her by the king's wrath to be deeper than it is ... everything is spoilt".(64)

The first three acts of the play, he claims, constitute a "horrible and disturbing painting without the last two; [and] the last two lose their deeper idyllic wonder without the first three".(65) He does concede that some editing could be done, but stresses that, in his opinion, *The Winter's Tale* is one of Shakespeare's most successful plays dramatically. Unfortunately his statements remain unsubstantiated.

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64 "Hier ist der Punkt, wo wir Shakespeare immer nur zu rühmen, ja im höchsten Grade zu rühmen haben. Denken wir uns Ton und Farbe, z.B. nur in den letzten Acten des Wintermärchens, anders, ja rücken wir nur eine Person aus ihrer Stelle, nehmen wir z.B. das Verhältnis zwischen Florizel und Perdita pathetischer, malen wir ihr Leiden bei dem Zorn des Königs tiefer aus, ... so ist alles verderbt." (*Ibid.*, pp. 136-127)

65 "Die drei ersten Acte bilden ohne die zwei letzten ein schauerliches unberuhigendes Gemälde; die zwei letzten ohne die drei ersten verlieren den tiefern idyllischen Zauber." (*Ibid.*, p. 145)

Although it is not the function of this essay to undertake a critical assessment of the merits or failings of individual critics, it must be remarked that Horn's *Commentaries* are often diffuse and vague; that the critical principles underlying his many and varied effusions are sometimes so deeply embedded in sweeping generalisations as to make their extraction difficult; and that he occasionally lapses into sentimentality and purple prose. But in spite of these failings, his comments on the work of art as constituting an imaginative reflection of human nature; his discussion of Shakespeare's ability to render nature and the wonderful synonymous in the Romances by means of his powerful imagination; his defence of Shakespeare's deliberate violation of the unities and the demands of realism in these plays particularly; and his concern with an organic conception of literature -- all these points, although not explored in sufficient depth, are worthy of serious consideration. That his criticism amounts to little more than an insult, as Gervinus claims, is neither fair nor just.

The last two German critics of note to be discussed in this chapter are Ulrici and Gervinus. The importance of their contribution to the history of Shakespearean criticism is evident from Isaacs's statement that "... in Germany Hermann Ulrici and G.G. Gervinus were the chief builders of a Shakespeare whose pattern of growth could be traced in well-marked successive periods".(66) He further points out that "the first serious attempts to present Shakespeare as a whole" were made by these two critics from 1839 to 1847, adding that

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66 Isaacs, J. "From Coleridge to the Present Day" in *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies* (1934) (edited by Granville-Barker, H. and Harrison, G.B.), p. 30.

> "this was so marked that it can be truthfully said, and it was emphatically said by Furnivall in his prospectus of the New Shakspere [sic] Society, 'It is a disgrace to England, that ... no book by an Englishman exists which deals in any worthy manner with Shakspere as a whole', and this was true until Dowden's *Shakspere: His Mind and Art*, 1875, which acknowledges a heavy debt to the Germans". (67)

In his perceptive comments on *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* and *Cymbeline*, Ulrici in each instance takes his point of departure from the title of the play as representing the central idea from which the course of the action and deeper symbolic significance of the play derive. The importance of the leading idea of each play was already stressed by A.W. Schlegel, but it is only in Ulrici and Gervinus that this concern leads to a conceptualistic approach to the plays that fails to treat them as *poetic* works. Ulrici's detailed examination of the supposedly symbolic structure of the play is a new development in the trend in the Romantic criticism of Shakespeare's Romances outlined in this chapter, although the pervasive concern with symbolism can also be traced back to A.W. Schlegel, at least.

Once again, the organic conception of a work of art which, in German criticism, can be traced back to Herder, and which is a pervasive concern in the critical writings of all the German critics examined in this chapter, is the leading idea around which all the other features

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67 *Ibid.*, p. 318.

are arranged, a feature which is stressed more by Ulrici and Gervinus than by the other German critics discussed in this chapter. Unlike Horn, whose criticism does not go beyond the appraisal of the moral qualities invested in the central characters, Ulrici develops his symbolic discussion of the plays into an elaborate metaphysical and profoundly thought-provoking perspective of them. His clarity of thought and expression, persuasive and unlaboured argumentation, concentration on essentials, and depth of insight render the study of his work both enjoyable and rewarding. It must, however, be noted that his overriding concern with the leading idea as the centre of each play involves treating it more as a philosophical than as a poetical entity.

In his discussion of *The Winter's Tale*, Ulrici regards the play as a Shakespearean fairy-tale [although he does not go to the extent of equating the fairy-tale with the poetic, as Novalis does],(68) arguing that as far as the general features of the action are concerned, they are in accordance with reality, whereas the individual features of the play are notably fantastic and characterized by chance and caprice. He further argues that the supremacy of outer chance is that which gives the fairy-tale quality to the play, since outer chance is essential to the fairy-tale as a ruling principle based on a mystic view of life which sees outward circumstance as the manifestation of the deep, unrevealable mystery.(69) He then suggests that, in the play, the wonderful or fairytale-like is presented not so much outwardly

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68 See Wellek, R. *op. cit.* (Vol. 2), p. 84.

69 Ulrici, H. *Shakespeares Dramatische Kunst* (1868), pp. 224-26 (This work was first published in 1839).

as in terms of its inner, ideal nature and content, and that it exists in the play in the incomprehensibility of outward chance and its mysterious relation to the deeds and fates of the leading characters. Having commented on the general and individual features which *The Winter's Tale* has in common with the fairy-tale, Ulrici generalizes his argument to claim that in this play Shakespeare wanted to

> "hold the mirror up to nature, to show the body of time the imprint of its form -- that is, he wanted to show that, from a certain perspective, life itself appears as a strange, serene and yet eerie winter's tale ..."(70)

and that it becomes this only by the mysterious veil covering the force of chance, which is spread out over the whole.(71) Essentially, the spirit of the play is cheerful, because we realise that light will triumph over darkness, good over bad.

This conception of life as a winter's tale should not necessarily be taken to be a complete and absolute truth because, according to Ulrici, it was Shakespeare's intention to set forward only one little regarded element of the whole by illustrating the profound truth that

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70 "Er wollte auch hier 'der Natur gleichsam den Spiegel vorhalten', 'dem Körper der Zeit den Abdruck seiner Gestalt zeigen' -- d.h. er wollte zeigen, daß von einem gewissen Gesichtspunkte aus das Leben selbst wie ein seltsames, heiteres zugleich und schauerliches Wintermärchen erscheint ..." *Ibid.*, p. 228.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 229.

> "life does not simply represent itself to man as a bright, cheerful and clearly transparent summer day, but that a mysterious, not completely removable veil envelops it, that a dark and not always identifiable power governs it". (72)

Ulrici not only attributes a philosophical intention to Shakespeare but gives an ethical dimension to his argument when he claims that man can only protect himself against this force by strictly observing the ethical laws of the world; that by giving free reign to passion and lack of self-control man falls victim to chance to become a mere plaything in her hands. That our play ends happily, Ulrici argues, is due to the comic spirit of the play as a whole. (73)

The departures from the credible, the violations of the unities of time and place, the seemingly unrelated strands of the action -- all these are only fully explicable in terms of the conception of the play as a fairy-tale. Any attempt to regard the play from the point of view of the historian would result in the belief that the two parts of the play were unrelated and that the action was insufficiently motivated -- that is, improbable. (74) From these comments it is clear that Ulrici implicitly rejects the demand for realism as essential to the drama.

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72 "Und in der That birgt sich in dieser Lebensansicht die tiefe Wahrheit, daß das Leben keineswegs blos wie ein heller, heiterer Sommertag in reiner Durchsichtigkeit und offener Klarheit dem Menschen vorliegt, sondern daß ein geheimnisvoller, nicht völlig zu lichtender Schleier es umzieht." *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 230.

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 231-32.

Ulrici stresses that the characters are arranged in a manner that brings out the differences and parallels between them as well as their larger groupings within the play, and that they act in terms of the spirit of the whole. This organic conception of the play, in which all seemingly discordant elements are ideally synthesised, is a pervasive theme in the romantic criticism of Shakespeare's Romances by all the German critics discussed in this chapter.

It is only in his detailed and penetrating commentary on *The Tempest* that the full force of Ulrici's symbolic approach, culminating in a complete metaphysical structure for the play, becomes evident. By far the most detailed analysis of any one of the romances, his commentary on *The Tempest* takes its point of departure from the title of the play as a symbol of a complex poetic world embracing the real and the ideal and serving as an analogy to the real world.(75) *The Tempest*, Ulrici explicitly states, is not a fairly-tale, from which one can deduce that, in his estimation, it is not to be taken much more seriously than *The Winter's Tale*. Explaining that the poetic world of *The Tempest* embraces both the real [the reasonable and predictable, presumably] and the ideal [the fantastic, the wonderful], he argues that *The Tempest* is not a fairy-tale, because the fairy-tale only moves in the realm of the ideal, which, on its own, serves to conceal reality. Since *The Tempest* is compounded of both these realms, the ideal exists and is meaningful only in terms of the real and therefore becomes symbolical.(76) The Marxist base-superstructure model could to a limited extent serve to exemplify

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75 *Ibid.*, p. 236.

76 *Ibid.*, pp. 237-39.

the relationship batwaen the two realms as Ulrici conceives of them, provided that no strict causal relationship is assumed. The play's centre of gravity is to be found in the real world, in which familiar characters are depicted as subject to laws and customs, but who also interact with the ideal world in which the laws of nature are suspended and in which everything contradicts everyday experience. Ulrici makes it clear that this double perspective clearly distinguishes *The Tempest* from the fairy-tale, and that it is essential to maintain this double perspective of the interpenetration of the real and the ideal, if one is to understand the play.(77) To ground the play to some extent in reality, Ulrici argues, Shakespeare makes use of reali y of detail in the storm scene (which is real and magical at the same time) and individualises the characters by giving them personality and a personal history. The interaction between the real and the ideal is further suggested by the characters' unusual, almost humorous response to calamity in the first scene, by the unreal quality of the foolishness and moral weakness exhibited by the characters from the real world, and by the reality and magic of Miranda's falling asleep.(78) Real action and accurate concrete detail are interrelated with happenings strange and wonderful. The gradual movement of the action away from the real to the ideal crosses the Rubicon with Prospero's strange tale, which still has its basis in reality, and with the introduction of the spirit world that he commands. In terms of Ulrici's interpretation, Prospero is then by implication the central mediating force between the real and the ideal world.

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77 *Ibid.*, p. 236.

78 *Ibid.*, pp. 243-45.

The interaction between the characters and the spirits in the play is the result of the characters losing control over themselves and over outer reality because of their own foolishness, thereby falling victim to chance, to the personified forces of nature represented in the play by Ariel and the lesser spirits under his command, all of whom have nothing in common with reality, with the result that they are also indifferent to man's lot. The real reason for the characters' falling victim to passion and instinct, Ulrici stresses, is to be found in the lack of ethical principle characterising their actions. Although too lengthy to reproduce here, Ulrici's discussion of the action in terms of this movement from the real to the ideal, and the interaction between the tragic and the comic until all confusion is disentangled ("die Entwirrung nach der Verwirrung") and all ends in reconciliation and forgiveness, is most readable.

At the beginning of this discussion on *The Tempest* it was said that Ulrici takes his point of departure from the title of the play. The storm, then, is the central point which serves to contrast and combine the most heterogeneous elements in the play:

> "Happiness and unhappiness, virtue and vice, misdeeds and charitable actions, sudden malignancy and equally sudden remorse, the height of human nobility and dignity together with the deepest depravity, the highest purity and innocence side by side with almost brutish coarseness and sensuality, tragic seriousness and gay laughter, princely sovereignty and common servitude, magic and wonders amidst

everyday reality -- indeed, the extreme end of humanity a pear bound up in one knot".(79)

The violent movement suggested by the title and which characterised the action is called forth by these heterogeneous, antithetical elements in the play, presumably struggling for resolution. As Ulrici points out, at the very outset of the action we are already shown life and death locked in a fierce struggle. The restless movement also takes possession of those characters who have been typified earlier on as having lost control over themselves, and both the inner and outer actions are characterized by a rise and fall. This movement Ulrici generalizes to symbolise human life in general and claims that this is what(80) Shakespeare intended to show in *The Tempest*. He argues that this central idea of life as being buffeted about as if by a storm would explain the title of the play, the nature of the characterisation, the content and development of the action, end the intervention of the supernatural.(81) Prospero's magic is the moving force, and the magical beings commanded by him are really only the fantastic, symbolic forms of the mysterious forces of nature which influence human life. They are furthermore said to be enormously powerful instruments in the hands of Fate and, as such, therefore

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79 "Glück und Unglück, Tugend und Laster, Verbrechen und Wohltaten, rasche Bosheit und eben so rasche Reue, die Spitze menschlicher Hoheit und Würde neben der tiefen Verworfenheit, höchste Reinheit und Unschuld neben halb-tierischer Rohheit und Lusternheit, tragischer Ernst und ausgelassenes Lachen, Fürstenherschafft und Knechtsdienst, Zauberei und Wunder inmitten der alltäglichen Wirklichkeit, -- in der That die äußersten Enden der Menschheit scheinen in einen Knoten zusammengeknüpft". *Ibid.*, pp. 256-57.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 257-60.

81 *Ibid.*, pp 261-62.

also the personified plans of Fate responsible for chance and fortune.(82) The struggle between good and bad is therefore the pivot of the play.

From what has been said so far, it is clear that Ulrici conceives of the poetic universe of the play as analogous to or symbolic of life, real and wonderful at the same time, buffeted about by the forces of nature, and safe only to those characters secure in their ethical convictions and conduct. In terms of this metaphysical interpretation of the play, Ulrici would seem to suggest a metaphysical chain of being ranging from Caliban at the bottom to Prospero at the top.(83) In keeping with the symbolic interpretation which he has given of the play so far, Ulrici argues that Prospero is the personified force of virtue, a "representative of one of the powerful spirits of nature", one of the "geniuses of humanity entrusted with determining the course of destiny". In the course of the action, the spectator is shown that "only those ideas informed by ethical considerations renew the life of the individual and bring about spiritual rebirth".(84) The evil and misguided characters in the play, who had in fact occasioned the tempest by their misdeeds, are punished, which is the sole purpose of the action of the play as a whole, according to Ulrici.

The storms of life, as *The Tempest* clearly demonstrates, come not from within but from without, from "inner discord, from the perennial struggle between the good and the bad", and the real content of the

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82 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

83 *Ibid.*, pp. 265-66.

84 *Ibid.*, pp. 264-65.

play is that the characters have not only "lost their outer happiness of life, but have lost and found themselves".

The question of genre is one that is fraught with some perplexity for the critics whose work on the Romances is examined in this chapter. In the absence of the modern classifying term "romance", they generally refer to the Romances as "dramas (Schauspiele") to denote a genre somewhere in between tragedy and comedy and yet different from tragicomedy. Although the differences between the tragicomedies and the romances are nowhere worked out, these critics in their discussions of the plays all touch on the essential attributes associated with the genre. For example, Ulrici's description of those features which make *Cymbeline* thoroughly Romantic in character also holds good for the other plays: he draws attention to the changing scenery, strange and discordant elements, fantastic and wonderful happenings together with their complication and resolution, and the sudden intervention of the supernatural, claiming that only on the basis of Romantic poetry was this synthesis possible. These comments actually imply a whole body of romantic dramatic criticism.

In his commentaries on all three plays, Ulrici stresses that the mainspring of the action is dramatic in nature: it is largely due to the characters of the main persons in the play and the intrigues that result from their interaction that the action takes the course it does. In other words, Ulrici, together with the other critics discussed in this chapter, believes that action derives from character, and from characters in interaction. The structure of the action resulting from this interaction serves to exemplify the main idea of the play. In *Cymbeline*, the queen's slanderous intrigue; Iachimo's slyness and

fraudulent behaviour; Posthumus's decision to murder his wife while he is overcome with despair and revenge; Pisanio's honest but ill-fated intrigue -- all these complications only serve to exemplify Shakespeare's belief that man is not completely *in control* of his own destiny, although love, loyalty and unsullied purity of mind triumph in the end. In this view, the representation arranges itself to exemplify the struggle between good and bad, with the two poles of the antithesis being represented on the one side by the queen and Cloten, and Imogen and Posthumus on the other. At the centre of the two actions is Cymbeline himself as the static cause of all that happens in the play -- as the resting centre of the play, he nevertheless influences, through his indolence and failure to do his duty, the destinies of the other characters. [Ulrici does not share Gervinus's enthusiastic praise of *Cymbeline*, but echoes Coleridge's, Tieck's and Knight's belief that the play had been attempted in Shakespeare's youth and that he reworked it towards the end of his life.](85)

The reason wh, Ulrici's commentary on *Pericles* has not been discussed together with the other plays is that it is almost exclusively of a textual nature. Although he shares Gervinus's view of *Pericles* as an early play, he argues that Shakespeare remodelled it towards the end of his life, and rightly asks why, if the play in its original form was so wretched as made out to be, Shakespeare, "in the full maturity of his judgement", should have spe t time and trouble on so miserable a production".(86) He argues that *Pericles* is not the

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85 *Ibid.*, p. 393.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

clumsy, mechanical piece it is made out to be, and that the action is by no means unmotivated: the "motives which Shakespeare introduces into the drama" to give action and movement to the play "correspond perfectly with the semi-epic structure and with the thoroughly Romantic basis of the whole".(87) In conclusion, he argues that *Pericles* is much less than a drama than a dramatised narrative, thoroughly epic in colouring, that the characters, although lacking in roundness, are well delineated and with an inner life of their own, and that the action as a whole is held together by the thread of a leading idea. The only 'fault' of the play is that it is more epic than dramatic, which accounts for the general looseness of the action. In the following discussion of Gervinus's contribution it will become clear that he shares Ulrici's view of the interpenetration of action and character as well as his concern with the unifying function of the leading idea in a play. It will also be seen to what extremes this concern with a leading idea can be taken.

Gervinus's critical commentaries on the Romances, which testify to thorough and searching scholarship, marks a clear shift away from the empiricism associated with Aristotelian criticism, although remnants of a belated neoclassicism can still be found in some of them.(88) That is to say, Aristotle's law of the primacy of action is enlarged to include an interpenetration of action and character, of which character is the more important. The characters are furthermore not merely imitations of nature but, as beings deriving

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87 *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

88 Gervinus, G.G. *Shakespeare Commentaries* (1847). See, for example, his discussion on *The Winter's Tale*, p. 802f.

from nature, also representatives of a whole class of men, thereby constituting a blending of the particular and the general. This argument leads him to postulate the maxim that the idea which "penetrates" the chief character also rules the whole action,(89) which clearly introduces an idealistic -- and more specifically, a Platonic -- strain into his approach to Shakespeare. Unity of idea, the intellectual centre of Shakespeare's work, Gervinus would seem to argue, is the great synthesising agent, combining all the dialectical and discordant elements in Shakespeare's work. Shakespeare's moral view, which corresponds to the intellectual centre of each work, shows man to be born with the ability for self-determination and self-government, as well as with the capacity for receiving and developing virtue through active exposure to struggles and temptations. In the end, Shakespeare's art combines "imagination and sober judgement", the "labour of experience and the freshness of soul", and the "reason of age and the youth of the heart" in an ideal synthesis.(90) Gervinus's pronouncements on the Romances, which will be examined in the following pages, clearly reveal the idealistic nature of his responses to Shakespeare, as well as his symbolistic and dialectical view of art.

The first Romance that Gervinus discusses, albeit ever so briefly, is *Pericles*. Quoting Dryden, he also subscribes to the view that it is an early play, and attributes the genesis of this "fantastic, rude, and badly versified play" to Shakespeare's desire to "do homage to

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89 *Ibid.*, p. 853.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 921.

the multitude".(91) In his very brief commentary on the play, Gervinus voices his most fundamental objection to the play: the absence of any unity of idea to "unite the parts of the play".(92) Although the idea of "representing the passion of revenge...is adhered to in its repeated gratification", giving rise to the moral lesson of the contrast between chastity and unchastity, the "middle scenes of the play have no connection with this idea".(93)

In his determination to dismiss *Pericles* as a bad play, Gervinus aligns himself with those English critics who share his assessment of the play. Although these pronouncements are consistent with the main body of Gervinus's critical theories, they are too superficial to warrant such a summary dismissal of the play. They really only serve to reveal the full extent and absurdity of his insistence on the centrality of idea as the ultimate test of artistic merit. With *Pericles* out of the way, Gervinus embarks on a detailed and searching analysis of the remaining plays in terms of his central critical tenets. Since Gervinus's commentaries on *Cymbeline*, are more detailed than those on the other Romances and clearly exemplify his approach to Shakespeare, they will be discussed in detail in this chapter. In *Cymbeline*, Gervinus distinguishes three parts: the first, a minor part which he does not discuss, concerns the "dispute about the tribute and the war between Britain and Rome"; the second, the fate of Cymbeline's sons; and the third, the plot against Imogen.

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91 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

92 This observation was already made by J.J. Eschenburg in 1782. See his *William Shakespeares Schauspiele* (Vol.13), pp. 416ff.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

According to Gervinus, no formal unity is distinguishable between the three different actions and, at a first glance, also little ideal unity. However, on a closer examination of the "internal nature of the different parts and the motives underlying them,

> "we shall see at once persons and actions forming themselves like crystals into a fixed figure; we shall catch the idea which links them together, and, comparing the idea and the mode of carrying it out, we shall obtain clearer elucidation of the whole, and we shall perceive a work of art, the compass of which widens and the background [of which] deepens in such a manner that we can only compare it with the most excellent of all that Shakespeare has produced". (94)

In order to approach the ideal unity underlying the different parts of the play, Gervinus embarks on a critical discussion of the main parts -- the actions involving Belarius and the king's sons and, secondly, Leonatus and Imogen -- in terms of his critical tenet referred to earlier on, viz. that in Shakespeare there is an interpenetration of action and character. At this point it becomes necessary to diverge for a moment to explain what Gervinus has in mind.

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94 *Ibid.*, p. 647.

Gervinus claims that, in Shakespeare, we have an enlargement of Aristotle's essential rule of unity of action -- which, he claims, many of Shakespeare's followers have imitated mechanically at the expense of an inner law -- to include unity of character. Since there is no unity of action to be discerned in a number of those Shakespearean plays which contain a two-fold action, it is reasonable to deduce that Shakespeare either had to abandon Aristotle's law completely or enlarge it, and that he did enlarge it is evident from the fact that in his works character and action penetrate each other completely. He proceeds to point out the obvious, viz. that dramatic action inevitably involves characterisation, however weak, and that no "character could be dramatically developed without action". Consequently, in a Shakespearean theory of poetry -- in contrast but not in contradiction to the Aristotelian -- character, as the cause of the action, is more important, which explains why "Shakespeare's characters have always been his greatest glory".(95) Gervinus nowhere mentions that the distinction between unity of action as being Aristotelian, and the unity of character as being typically English, was already made by A.W. Schlegel and given point to later by Gerstenberg.(96) The disproportionate stress which Gervinus puts on action and character explains the comparative brevity of his comments on *Pericles* and also on *The Tempest*, of which he remarks (not without disappointment) that it contains very little action.(97) It furthermore explains his inability to appreciate *The Tempest* as a poetic drama.

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95 *Ibid.*, pp. 847-49.

96 See R. Pascal, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-9.

97 Gervinus, G.G. *op. cit.*, p. 788.

Although there is no evidence of any formal or deliberate attempt by Gervinus to juxtapose dialectical opposites, his discussion of the first main action of *Cymbelline* shows him to be aware of the dialectical contrasts inherent in the action. On falling victim to calumny, the guiltless and faithful old warrior Belarius abandons the active world of the court -- associated with usury, vainglorious ambition and corruption in general -- for a life of simple-hearted goodness close to nature together with the weak king's two sons, whom he abducted to protect them from the corruption of the court. But the two boys soon find the simple rural life that Belarius prefers in his old age too narrow and lacking in temptations and challenges (which are to be found at the king's court) to be at all fulfilling, with the result that their characters initiate a series of events (although not completely of their own doing) which cause them to gravitate away from the world of the cavern. The dichotomy between court and cavern, Gervinus would seem to imply, is already inherent in the characters of the two boys, who are said to possess the dialectically opposite qualities of gentleness and strength, modesty and ambition, candour and obstinate daring.(98) Further contrasts exist between the two boys themselves -- Guidarius is hasty and passionate; Arviragus, more tender and gentle -- and between their soft, thoughtful and tender service to Fidele and their manly, impetuous rush into battle. Gervinus would seem to argue that, since character is destiny, that of Cymbeline is ultimately responsible for the movement away from the court, and those of the two boys for their turning-away from the world of the cavern. In his comments on Prospero in *The Tempest*, Gervinus also attributes the action to a

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98 *Ibid.*, p. 649.

flaw in the white magician's character, pointing out how his "proneness to intellectual things" caused him to neglect and forfeit his dukedom.(99) Gervinus's love of contrasts and their synthesis is further evident from his characterisation of Prospero as a man whose better nature conquers his wrath, whose virtue overcomes his revenge, whose virtuous nature is more powerful than his magic; who is the "humane reverse of his inhuman enemies", who returns benevolence for malevolence and whose better nature triumphs over his baser instincts.(100)

The abduction of the king's sons may strain credibility and verisimilitude, but a later event flings the "circumstances and relations of the court into clearer perspective: the weak king is easily influenced by his evil, scheming wife to side with the gross and stupid Cloten against his daughter Imogen and his foster-son Leonatus, which, Gervinus would argue, shows how action is to a certain extent determined by character. Hedged in on all sides by falsehood and scheming self-interest,(101) it is not surprising that the weak and morally blind Cymbeline falls prey to prejudice and tyranny. In this second action, the forces of darkness and light are contrasted in two pairs of characters: the dissembling, ruthlessly ambitious, evil queen and her rude blockhead of a son, on the one hand, and Leonatus Posthumus and Imogen, "two personages upon

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99 *Ibid.*, p. 791.

100 *Ibid.*, p. 792.

101 "The hypocrisy and dissimulation of the courtiers, the web of backbitings, persecutions, crafty disobedience, false trust and true falsehood, which we perceive in Cymbeline's house, explains itself as soon as we examine the principal characters that form the circle of the court". (*Ibid.*, p. 651.)

whom the whole glory and worth of perfected humanity seems to have been shed",(102) on the other.

In his searching analysis of the character of Imogen, Gervinus concludes that, "as the most lovely and artless of the female characters which Shakespeare has depicted",(103) Imogen becomes the unsurpassable ideal of feminine beauty: blending "exterior grace with moral beauty," she is the "sum aggregate of fair womanhood", the "perfected portrait of a woman, the traits of whose nature are almost inexhaustible".(104) Gervinus shows that her actions, and also her failure to act in certain circumstances, derive from her character -- that is, from her "mental freshness and healthiness", from the "untroubled clearness of her mind and unspotted purity of her being".(105) Gervinus's commentary illustrates his belief that Imogen's character, like those of all Shakespeare's noble characters, is compounded of both the real and the ideal.(106)

This interpenetration of the real and the ideal also holds true for *The Tempest*, which combines the worlds of the imagination and

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102 *Ibid.*, p. 654.

103 *Ibid.*, p. 657.

104 *Ibid.*, p. 657.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 658.

106 In his chapter on Shakespeare's ideal of art, Gervinus argues that Shakespeare's "most ideal" [sic] characters -- Posthumus and Imogen, for example -- are "realistic ideals, but on that very account truly ideal characters, consistent with truth, whose rare eminence in Shakespeare's group of characters is raised, even by the rareness of their number, into a far higher light than the excellence of those empty personifications of abstract ideals". (*Ibid.*, p. 864.)

reality, particularly in the character of Prospero, whose combination of contradictory qualities -- passionate, wrathful and given to revenge [the real?], on the one hand, and humane, benevolent and virtuous [the ideal?], on the other -- will probably also qualify him for the praise implied in Gervinus's claim that Shakespeare's "favourite characters are those which unite the most contradictory qualities".(107) At this point it is worth noting that Gervinus often attributes his own predilections to Shakespeare. This interpenetration of the real and the ideal is further implied in his comment that Prospero's magic, as used by Shakespeare, is "merely a symbol of the most natural relations", that we "might strike the magic out of the play, and nature would remain". In this ideal world, "Nature is, as it were, elevated above herself, the actual brought into the region of the possible, and reason never offends by the appearance of the supernatural".(108) In his interesting discussion of the differences between Green's and Shakespeare's versions of *The Winter's Tale*, Gervinus shows how Shakespeare has managed to render the events in the play still explicable in terms of nature without the intervention of Providence -- this fictitious play, founded wholly "on the incredible and improbable,"(109) is compounded of both the real and the ideal. Their ideal nature, as Gervinus has suggested elsewhere, becomes clear when we set them side by side with reality as we know it.

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107 *Ibid.*, p. 930.

108 *Ibid.*, pp. 795-96.

109 *Ibid.*, p. 803.

Because Shakespeare's ideal characters are also grounded in reality, their moral nature is not presented as static but is tried and tested in the course of the action. This accords with Gervinus's argument that virtue is not inherent in us, that "inherent in us is only the capacity for receiving it and for developing it in us by culture and habit",(110) and with his conviction that Shakespeare liked above all that

> "purity of morals which has passed through struggles and tests, not the virtue of habit but of principle, not instinctive but tested, the product of the reason and of volition".(111)

In his discussion of Imogen's trials and sufferings, Gervinus shows her to take arms against a sea of troubles: she is forced to suffer the machinations of the evil queen, the scheming of the slanderer Iachimo, and the circumstance of learning that her husband, believing her to be faithless, has commissioned her death. Even in her utmost despair she is "alike collected and courageous, ready to seize on every means for bringing about a reunion with him".(112) Gervinus shows how the faults, or errors of judgement, committed by both Imogen and Posthumus are responsible for steering the action into a potentially tragic direction. This leads him to argue that, at least in "these middle plays", do the "fates of Shakespeare's characters exactly accord with their actions and natures ... whenever the poet

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110 *Ibid.*, p. 914.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 914.

112 *Ibid.*, p. 662.

had to develop a complete life, we shall find that he has himself administered complete [moral] justice".(113)

Having amply demonstrated his belief in the unity of action and character in Shakespeare, Gervinus proceeds to ask what the unity of idea, the intellectual centre of *Cymbeline* is:

> "This masterkey... which can lay open to us at once the various component parts, as well as the way to one innermost centre, from which the plan of the whole structure can be easily recognised as one of artistic harmony, treats uniformly throughout two opposite ideas or moral qualities, namely truth in word and deed (fidelity), and untruth and faithlessness, falseness in deed or perfidy, falseness in word or slander. All the actions and characters of the play combine to exemplify these ideas".(114)

In similar vein, he accounts for the action of *The Tempest* in terms "the overruling idea of the works of the third period -- the representation of the unnatural rupture of natural ties by oppression, falsehood and ingratitude".(115) To emphasise his belief in the power of the idea to unify the double action be found in the romances, he explains the lengths to which he believes Shakespeare went to

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113 *Ibid.*, p. 906.

114 *Ibid.*, p. 671.

115 *Ibid.*, p. 789.

achieve this unity in *The Winter's Tale* and argues that the tenuous link, the leading idea between the two parts of the play, is the contrast between Leontes's reaction to a "suspected love [between Hermione and Polixenes], inadmissible on conjugal and moral grounds", and Polixenes's response to a love [between Florizel and ardita] "incompatible from a parental and conventional point of view",(116) a division between the parents which is healed by the love of the children. This *tour de force* on Shakespeare's part has a.. ..ited "tragedy and comedy, making one elevate the other, and thus enriching the stage with a tragi-comic pastoral".(117)

The cardinal importance of the underlying idea to Gervinus is also evident from his commentary on Shakespeare's characters: he claims that in all of them,

> "every part, every peculiarity [is] referred to the genera' idea of the character, to a ruling motive; every manifestation by word or deed . .to a mental principal in the agent ..which stands out as the main impulse, the nature, the law, the essence, the idea of the character".(118)

This conviction leads Gervinus to claim that "the same idea, then, which in a Shakespearean play penetrates the chief character, rules

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116 *Ibid.*, p. 813.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 804.

118 *Ibid.*, p. 853.

also the whole action". (119) From this statement it is clear that, for Gervinus, unity of character, which he attributes to Shakespeare, supersedes unity of action completely and leads him to claim that "no future genius will ever be able to discover a deeper law of dramatic composition". (120)

Falsehood, associated in the play with the court, and represented above all by the queen, is responsible for ensnaring the weak Cymbeline as well as Posthumus and Imogen. The fidelity and truth of the latter two not only stands in direct opposition to the hypocrisy and evil of the court but eventually triumphs in the course of the dialectical struggle between the two leading moral qualities or ideas in the play. The fidelity, the virtue, of the two main characters is not given as a static quality in the play but is severely tested in the course of the action - in fact, the main purport of the play

> "turns upon it and upon the calumny which makes each doubt the fidelity of the other, and upon the noble endurance of their own fidelity towards the beloved one, even though supposed to be faithless or dead". (121)

Gervinus gives an historical account of the leading idea in the play, tracing it to the heroic age of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* and to the heroic German poems treating of the fidelity of Penelope and Gudrun,

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119 *Ibid* , p. 853.

120 *Ibid* , p. 854.

121 *Ibid.*, p. 672.

and claiming that *Lear* and *Cymbeline* would seem to derive their inspiration from the traditions of those ages of heroic poetry.(122) This interest in historical evolvement is also evident from his comments on the general Elizabethan interest in witchcraft and magic which, he claims, Shakespeare panders to in *The Tempest*, albeit not without a satirical intention,(123) and from the tentative historical account he gives of Antonio's usurpation.

At this point it should be more than evident to what extent Gervinus's commentaries on the Romances are informed by his organic conception of the work of art as growing from an innermost centre -- the idea -- to which all other seemingly disparate ideas are related: his commentaries on the unity of action and character, the moral conflict in the play, and the historical antecedents to the inspiration informing Shakespeare's play are all related to the intellectual centre of the work. That this idea is synonymous with moral truth is not only characteristic of Gervinus's commentaries but of a great deal of German criticism. It still remains to be asked how some of the minor characters are related to the central idea of the play and what kind of moral system Gervinus imputes to Shakespeare on the basis of his searching analysis of the plays.

In *Cymbeline*, the three minor characters who are neither active agents of evil or good, and who are not locked in this dialectical moral struggle within the confines of the play, are Cloten, the king, and Pisanio. Cloten, on whom Gervinus discharges a volley of amusing

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122 *Ibid.*, p. 673.

123 *Ibid.*, p. 788.

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