Epitaph

Stop, Christian Passer-by—Stop, child of God,
And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he—
O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;
That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found death in life, may here find life in death!
Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame
He ask'd, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same!

1833

From Biographia Literaria

From Chapter 4

[MR. WORDSWORTH'S EARLIER POEMS]

... During the last year of my residence at Cambridge, I became acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's first publication, entitled Descriptive Sketches; and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced. In the form, style, and manner of the whole poem, and in the structure of the particular lines and periods, there is a harshness and acerbity connected and combined with words and images all a-glow which might recall those products of the vegetable world, where gorgeous blossoms rise out of the hard and thorny rind and shell within which the rich fruit was elaborating. The language was not only peculiar and strong, but at times knotty and contorted, as by its own impatient strength; while the novelty and struggling crowd of images, acting in conjunction with the difficulties of the style, demanded always a greater closeness of attention than poetry (at all events than descriptive poetry) has a right to claim. It not seldom therefore justified the complaint of obscurity. In the following extract I have sometimes fancied that I saw an emblem of the poem itself and of the author's genius as it was then displayed:

'Tis storm; and hid in mist from hour to hour,
All day the floods a deepening murmur pour;
The sky is veiled, and every cheerful sight:
Dark is the region as with coming night;
And yet what frequent bursts of overpowering light!
Triumphant on the bosom of the storm,
Glances the fire-clad eagle's wheeling form;
Eastward, in long perspective glittering, shine
The wood-crowned cliffs that o'er the lake recline;
Wide o'er the Alps a hundred streams unfold,
At once to pillars turned that flame with gold;
Behind his sail the peasant strives to shun
The West, that burns like one dilated sun,
Where in a mighty crucible expire
The mountains, glowing hot, like coals of fire.2

The poetic Psyche, in its process to full development, undergoes as many changes as its Greek namesake, the butterfly.3 And it is remarkable how soon genius clears and purifies itself from the faults and errors of its earliest products; faults which, in its earliest compositions, are the more obstructive and confusent because, as heterogeneous elements which had only a temporary use, they constitute the very ferment by which themselves are carried off. Or we may compare them to some diseases, which must work on the humors and be thrown out on the surface in order to secure the patient from their future recurrence. I was in my twenty-fourth year when I had the happiness of know-

1. Written by Coleridge the year before he died.
   One version that he sent in a letter had as a title: "Epitaph on a Poet little known, yet better known by the Initials of his name than by the Name itself."
2. "For in the sense of "instead of" [Coleridge's note].
3. Descriptive Sketches (1815 version), lines 322ff.
4. In Greek, Psyche is the common name for the soul and the butterfly [Coleridge's note].
times seen snow fall on water? Who has not watched it with a new feeling from the time that he has read Burns' comparison of sensual pleasure

To snow that falls upon a river
A moment white—then gone forever∗

In poems, equally as in philosophic disquisitions, genius produces the strongest impressions of novelty while it rescues the most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission. Truths of all others the most awful and mysterious, yet being at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as so true, that they lose all the life and efficiency of truth and lie bedridden in the dormitory of the soul side by side with the most despised and exploded errors." The Friend, p. 76, no. 5.†

[ON FANCY AND IMAGINATION—THE INVESTIGATION OF THE DISTINCTION IMPORTANT TO THE FINE ARTS]

This excellence, which in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings is more or less predominant and which constitutes the character of his mind, I no sooner felt than I sought to understand. Repeated meditations led me first to suspect (and a more intimate analysis of the human faculties, their appropriate marks, functions, and effects, matured my conjecture into full conviction) that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or at furthest the lower and higher degree of one and the same power. It is not, I own, easy to conceive a more apposite translation of the Greek phantasia than the Latin imaginatio; but it is equally true that in all societies there exists an instinct of growth, a certain collective unconscious good sense working progressively to desynonymize those words originally of the same meaning which the conflux of dialects had supplied to the more homogeneous languages, as the Greek and German: and which the same cause, joined with accidents of translation from original works of different countries, occasion in mixed languages like our own. The first and most important point to be proved is, that two conceptions perfectly distinct are confused under one and the same word, and (this done) to appropriate that word exclusively to one meaning, and the synonym (should there be one) to the other. But if (as will be often the case in the arts and sciences) no synonym exists, we must either invent or borrow a word. In the present instance the appropriation had already begun and been legitimated in the derivative adjective: Milton had a highly imaginative, Cowley a very fanciful, mind. If therefore I should succeed in establishing the actual existence of two faculties generally different, the nomenclature would be at once determined. To the faculty by which I had characterized Milton we should confine the term imagination; while the other would be contradistinguished as fancy. Now were it once fully ascertained that this division is no less grounded in nature than that of delirium from mania, or Otway's

Lutes, lobsters, seas of milk, and ships of amber.2

4. The meeting occurred in September 1795.
5. Salisbury Plain (1793–94), which was left in manuscript until Wordsworth published a revised version in 1815 under the title "Guilt and Sorrow." An excerpt from Salisbury Plain was printed (1798).
7. The first divine command: "Let there be light."
8. Altered from Milton's sonnet "To Mr. Cyprian Skinner upon His Blindness."
9. "Lobsters" in place of "lobsters." (5.2.15).
2. Thomas Otway, in Venice Preserv'd (1682), wrote "lurdes" in place of "lobsters." (5.1.15).
from Shakespeare's

What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?3

or from the preceding apostrophe to the elements, the theory of the fine
arts and of poetry in particular could not, I thought, but derive some addi-
tional and important light. It would in its immediate effects furnish a torch
guidance to the philosophical critic, and ultimately to the poet himself.
In energetic minds truth soon changes by domestication into power; and
from directing in the discrimination and appraisal of the product becomes
influencive in the production. To admire on principle is the only way to
imitate without loss of originality. ***

From Chapter 13

[ON THE IMAGINATION, OR ESEMPLASTIC POWER]

*** The imagination, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The
primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all
human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of
creation in the infinite I am. The secondary I consider as an echo of the for-
mer, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the pri-
mary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode
of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or
where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles
to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects)
are essentially fixed and dead.

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

Chapter 14

OCCASION OF THE LYRICAL BALLADS, AND THE OBJECTS ORIGINALLY
PROPOSED—PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION—THE ENSUING
CONTROVERSY, ITS CAUSES AND ACRIMONY—PHILOSOPHIC DEFINITIONS
OF A POEM AND POETRY WITH SCHOLIA.6

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours,7 our con-
versations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power
of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth
of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying
colors of imagination.8 The sudden charm which accidents of light and
shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar land-
scape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These
are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do
not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the
one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatual; and
the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections
by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such
situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to
every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any
time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects
were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be
such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a medita-
te and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present
themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the Lyrical Ballads; in which it was
agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters
supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature
human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these
shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment,
which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to
propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to things of
every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awaken-
ing the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the
loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure,
but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish soliciti-
ude, we have eyes yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither
feel nor understand.9

With this view I wrote The Ancient Mariner, and was preparing, among
other poems, The Dark Ladie, and the Christabel, in which I should have more
nearily realized my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Words-
worth's industry had proved so much more successful and the number of his
poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance,
appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter.1 Mr. Wordsworth
added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned,
lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form
the Lyrical Ballads were published; and were presented by him, as an experi-
ment,2 whether subjects which from their nature rejected the usual orna-
ments and extra-qualoqioal style of poems in general might not be so managed
in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasurable interest which
it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart. To the second edition3 he
added a preface of considerable length; in which, notwithstanding some pas-
sages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the
extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indef-
sensible all phrases and forms of style that were not included in what he

5. King Lear 3.4.59.
4. Coleridge coined this word and used it to mean "molding into unity."
5. Coleridge conceives of God's creation to be a continuing process, which has an analogy in the creative
perception ("primary imagination") of all human minds. The creative process is repeated, or "echoed," on still a third level, by the "second-
ary imagination" of the poet, which dissolves the
imaginative passage or poem. The "fancy," on the other hand,
can only manipulate "fixities and definites" that
linked by association, come to it ready-made from
perception.
6. Additional remarks, after a philosophic demon-
stration.
7. At Nether Stowey and Alfoxden, Somerset, in 1797.
8. Cf. Wordsworth's account in his Preface to
Lyrical Ballads (p. 504).
9. By Wordsworth, four by Coleridge.
2. Experiments was the word used by Words-
worth in his advertisement to the first edition.
difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by meter, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might attribute the name of a poem to the well-known enumeration of the days in the several months:

Thirty days hath September.
April, June, and November, etc.

and others of the same class and purpose. And as a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm superadded, whatever be their contents, may be entitled poems.

So much for the superficial form. A difference of object and contents supplies an additional ground of distinction. The immediate purpose may be the communication of truths; either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science; or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure, and that of the highest and most permanent kind, may result from the attainment of the end; but it is not itself the immediate end. In other works the communication of pleasure may be the immediate purpose; and though truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the ultimate end, yet this will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs. Blessed indeed is that state of society in which the immediate purpose would be baffled by the perversion of the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the Bathyllus even of an Anacreon, or the Alexis of Virgil, from disgust and aversion.

But the communication of pleasure may be the immediate object of a work not metrical composed; and that object may have been in a high degree attained, as in novels and romances. Would then the mere superaddition of meter, with or without rhyme, entitle these to the name of poems? The answer is that nothing can permanently please which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise. If meter be superadded, all other parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part which an exact correspondent recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. The final definition then, so deduced, may be thus worded. A poem is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.

Controversy is not seldom excited in consequence of the disputants attaching each a different meaning to the same word; and in few instances has this been more striking than in disputes concerning the present subject. If a man chooses to call every composition a poem which is rhyme, or measure, or both, I must leave his opinion uncontroverted. The distinction is at
least competent to characterize the writer's intention. If it were subjoined
that the whole is likewise entertaining or affecting as a tale or as a series
of interesting reflections, I of course admit this as another fit ingredient of a
poem and an additional merit. But if the definition sought for be that of a
legitimate poem, I answer it must be none the parts of which mutually sup-
port and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and
supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement.
The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgment of all
countries in equally denying the praises of a just poem on the one hand to a
series of striking lines or distichs, each of which absorbs the whole atten-
tion of the reader to itself disjoin it from its context and makes it a separate
whole, instead of a harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unsus-
tained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result
unattracted by the component parts. The reader should be carried forward,
not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless
desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind
excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent,
which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path
of sound through the air; at every step he pauses and half recedes, and from
the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him
onward. "Praeceptans est liber spiritus," says Petronius Arbiter most hap-
ply. The epithet liber here balances the preceding verb; and it is not easy to
conceive more meaning condensed in fewer words.

But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we
have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of Plato, and Bishop
Taylor, and the Theoria Sacra of Burnet, furnish undeniable proofs that
poetry of the highest kind may exist without meter, and even without the
contradistinguishing objects of a poem. The first chapter of Isaiah (indeed a
very large proportion of the whole book) is poetry in the most emphatic
sense; yet it would be not less irrational than strange to assert that pleasure,
and not truth, was the immediate object of the prophet. In short, whatever
specific import we attach to the word poetry, there will be found involved
in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can, nor
ought to be, all poetry. Yet if a harmonious whole is to be produced, the
remaining parts must be preserved in keeping with the poetry; and this can
be no otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial
arrangement as will partake of one, though not a peculiar, property of poetry.
And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continu-
os and equal attention than the language of prose aims at, whether collo-
quial or written.

My own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the
word, have been in part anticipated in the preceding disquisition on the fancy
and imagination. What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is
a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For

9. Pairs of lines.
1. "The free spirit of the poet" must be hurled
onward. From the Satyricon, by the Roman sati-

tist Petronius Arbiter (1st century C.E.).
2. Thomas Burnet (1635–1715), author of The

Sacred Theory of the Earth. Bishop Jeremy Taylor

Dying. Colderidge greatly admired the elaborate

and sonorous prose of both these writers. He

took from a work by Burnet the Latin motto for

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.
3. A term from the theory of painting for the

maintenance of the luminousness of a picture.
4. Continuous.
5. Driven with loosened reins (Latin).
6. Here Colderidge introduces the concept, which

varies, and reconciles opposite or discordant ele-
ments.

From Chapter 17

[EXAMINATION OF THE TENETS PECULIAR TO MR. WORDSWORTH]

As far then as Mr. Wordsworth in his preface contended, and most ably
contended, for a reformation in our poetic diction, as far as he has evinced
the truth of passion, and the dramatic propriety of those figures and meta-

phors in the original poets which, stripped of their justifying reasons and

ports and reconciles opposite or discordant ele-

ments.
7. Adapted from John Davies's Nowce Trepidum.
converted into mere artifices of connection or ornament, constitute the characteristic falsity in the poetic style of the moderns; and as far as he has, with equal acuteness and clearness, pointed out the process by which this change was effected and the resemblances between that state into which the reader's mind is thrown by the pleasurable confusion of thought from an unaccustomed train of words and images that state which is induced by the natural language of impassioned feeling, he undertook a useful task and deserves all praise, both for the attempt and for the execution. The provocations to this remonstrance in behalf of truth and nature were still of perpetual recurrence before and after the publication of this preface. ***

My own differences from certain supposed parts of Mr. Wordsworth's theory ground themselves on the assumption that his words had been rightly interpreted, as purporting that the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken, with due exceptions, from the mouths of men in real life, a language which actually constitutes the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings. My objection is, first, that in any sense this rule is applicable only to certain classes of poetry; secondly, that even to these classes it is not applicable, except in such a sense as hath never by anyone (as far as I know or have read) been denied or doubted; and, lastly, that as far as, and in that degree in which it is practicable, yet as a rule it is useless, if not injurious, and therefore either need not or ought not to be practiced. ***

[RUSTIC LIFE (ABOVE ALL, LOW AND RUSTIC LIFE) ESPECIALLY UNFAVORABLE TO THE FORMATION OF A HUMAN DICTIO—THE BEST PARTS OF LANGUAGE THE PRODUCTS OF PHILOSOPHERS, NOT CLOWNS OR SHEPHERDS]

As little can I agree with the assertion that from the objects with which the rustic hourly communicates the best part of language is formed. For first, if to communicate with an object implies such an acquaintance with it, as renders it capable of being discriminated reflected on; the distinct knowledge of an uneducated rustic would furnish a very scanty vocabulary. The few things, and modes of action, requisite for his bodily conveniences, would alone be individualized; while all the rest of nature would be expressed by a small number of confused general terms. Secondly, I deny that the words and combinations of words derived from the objects, with which the rustic is familiar, whether with distinct or confused knowledge, can be justly said to form the best part of language. It is more than probable that many classes of the brute creation possess discriminating sounds, by which they can convey to each other notices of such objects as concern their food, shelter, or safety. Yet we hesitate to call the aggregate of such sounds a language, otherwise than metaphorically. The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man; though in civilized society, by imitation and passive remembrance of what they hear from their religious instructors and other superiors, the most uneducated share in the harvest which they neither sowed or reaped. ***

9. Wordsworth's Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800, 1802): "A selection of the real language of men in a state of rude and rustic life was generally chosen... The language, 100% of these men is admired."

Here let me be permitted to remind the reader that the positions which I controvert are contained in the sentences—"a selection of the real language of men", "the language of these men (i.e., men in low and rustic life) I propose to myself to imitate, and as far as possible to adopt the very language of men." "Between the language of prose and that of metrical composition there neither is, nor can be any essential difference." It is against these exclusively that my opposition is directed.

I object, in the very first instance, to an equivocation in the use of the word "real." Every man's language varies according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth or quickness of his feelings. Every man's language has, first, its individualities; secondly, the common properties of the class to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of universal use. The language of Hooker, Bacon, Bishop Taylor, and Burke differs from the common language of the learned class only by the superior number and novelty of the thoughts and relations which they had to convey. The language of Algernon Sidney differs not at all from that which every well-educated gentleman would wish to write, and (with due allowances for the undeliberateness and less connected train of thinking natural and proper to conversation) such as he would wish to talk. Neither one nor the other differ half as much from the general language of cultivated society as the language of Mr. Wordsworth's homeliest composition differs from that of a common peasant. For "real," therefore, we must substitute ordinary, or lingua communis. And this, we have proved, is no more to be found in the phraseology of low and rustic life than in that of any other class. Omit the peculiarities of each, and the result of course must be common to all. And assuredly the omissions and changes to be made in the language of rusticus before it could be transferred to any species of poem, except the drama or other professions imitation, are at least as numerous and weighty as would be required in adapting to the same purpose the ordinary language of tradesmen and manufacturers. Not to mention that the language so highly extolled by Mr. Wordsworth varies in every county, nay, in every village, according to the accidental character of the clergyman, the existence or nonexistence of schools; or even, perhaps, as the exciseman, publican, or barber happen to be, or not to be, zealous politicians and readers of the weekly newspaper pro bono publico. Anterior to cultivation the lingua communis of every country, as Dante has well observed, exists every where in parts and no where as a whole.

Neither is the case rendered at all more tenable by the addition of the words "in a state of excitement." For the nature of a man's words, when he is strongly affected by joy, grief, or anger, must necessarily depend on the number and

2. Richard Hooker (1554–1600), author of The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Francis Bacon (1561–1626), essayist and philosopher, and Jeremy Taylor were all, together with the late-19th-century politician and opponent of the French Revolution Edmund Burke (1729–1797), lauded for their prose styles.

3. Republican soldier and statesman (1622–1712), who assassinated Charles II.

4. The common language (Latin).

5. For the public welfare (Latin).

6. In De Vulgari Eloquentia ("On the Speech of the people") Dante discusses and affirms the fitness for poetry of the unlocalised Italian vernacular.

7. Wordsworth: "the means in which...
quality of the general truths, conceptions, and images, and of the words expressing them, with which his mind had been previously stored. For the property of passion is not to create, but to set in increased activity. At least, whatever new connections of thoughts or images, or (which is equally, if not more than equally, the appropriate effect of strong excitement) whatever generalizations of truth or experience the heat of passion may produce, yet the terms of their conveyance must have pre-existed in his former conversations, and are only collected and crowded together by the unusual stimulation. It is indeed very possible to adopt in a poem the unmeaning repetitions, habitual phrases, and other blank counters which an unfurnished or confused understanding interposes at short intervals in order to keep hold of his subject which is still slipping from him, and to give him time for recollection; or in mere aid of vacancy, as in the scanty companies of a country stage the same player pops backwards and forwards, in order to prevent the appearance of empty spaces, in the procession of Macbeth or Henry VIIIth. But what assistance to the poet or ornament to the poem these can supply, I am at a loss to conjecture. Nothing assuredly can differ either in origin or in mode more widely from the apparent tautologies of intense and turbulent feeling in which the passion is greater and of longer endurance than to be exhausted or satisfied by a single representation of the image or incident exciting it. Such repetitions I admit to be a beauty of the highest kind; as illustrated by Mr. Wordsworth himself from the song of Deborah. "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead."

1815

1817

From Lectures on Shakespeare

[FANCY AND IMAGINATION IN SHAKESPEARE'S POETRY]

In the preceding lecture we have examined with what armor clothed and with what titles authorized Shakespeare came forward as a poet to demand the throne of fame as the dramatic poet of England; we have now to observe and retrace the excellencies which compelled even his contemporaries to seat him on that throne, although there were giants in those days contending for the same honor. Hereafter we shall endeavor to make out the title of the English drama, as created by and existing in Shakespeare, and its right to the supremacy of dramatic excellence in general. I have endeavored to prove that he had shown himself a poet, previously to his appearance as a dramatic poet—and that had no Lear, no Othello, no Henry the Fourth, no Twelfth Night appeared, we must have admitted that Shakespeare possessed the chief of all the requisites of a poet—namely, deep feeling and exquisitive sense of beauty, both as exhibited to the eye in combinations of form, and to the ear in sweet and appropriate melody (with the exception of Spenser he is [the sweetest of English poets]); that these feelings were under the command of his own will—that in his very first productions he projected his mind out of his own particular being, and felt and made others feel, on subjects [in] no way connected with himself, except by force of contemplation, and that sublime faculty, by which a great mind becomes that which it mediates on. To this we are to add the affectionate love of nature and natural objects, without which no man could have observed so steadily, or painted so truly and passionately the very minutest beauties of the external world. Next, we have shown that he possessed fancy, considered as the faculty of bringing together images dissimilar in the main by some one point or more of likeness distinguished.

Full gently now she takes him by the hand,
A lily prisons in a jail of snow,
Or ivory in an alabaster band—
So white a friend engirts so white a foe.

Still mounting, we find undoubted proof in his mind of imagination, or the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others and by a sort of fusion to force many into one—that which after showed itself in such might and energy in Lear, where the deep anguish of a father spreads the feeling of ingratitude and cruelty over the very elements of heaven. Various are the workings of this greatest faculty of the human mind—both passionate and tranquil. In its tranquility and purely pleasurable operation, it acts chiefly by producing out of many things, as they would have appeared in the description of an ordinary mind, described slowly and in unimpassioned succession, a oneness, even as nature, the greatest of poets, acts upon us when we open our eyes upon an extended prospect. Thus the flight of Adonis from the enamored goddess in the dusk of evening—

Look how a bright star shooteth from the sky—
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.

How many images and feelings are here brought together without effort and without discord—the beauty of Adonis—the rapidity of his flight—the yearning yet hopelessness of the enamored gazer—and a shadowy ideal character thrown over the whole.—Or it acts by impressing the stamp of humanity, of human feeling, over inanimate objects *

Lo, here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in his majesty;
Who doth the world so gloriously behold
That cedar tops and hills seem burnished gold.

And lastly, which belongs only to a great poet, the power of so carrying on the eye of the reader as to make him almost lose the consciousness of words—to make him see everything—and this without exciting any painful or laborious

8. Judges 5.27. Cited by Wordsworth in a note to The Thorn as an example of the natural repeti- tiveness of "impassioned feelings."

1. Although Coleridge's series of public lectures on Shakespeare and other poets contained much of his best criticism, he published none of this material, leaving only fragmentary remains of his lectures in notebooks, scraps of manuscript, and notes written in the margins of books. The following selections, which develop some of the principal ideas presented in Biographia Literaria, reproduce the text of T. M. Rayson's edition—based on Coleridge's manuscripts and on contemporary reports—of Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism (1910); four minor corrections in wording have been taken from R. A. Foakes's edition of Coleridge's Lectures 1808-1819: On Literature (1987).

2. Coleridge here applies the distinction between fancy and imagination presented in Biographia Literaria, chap. 13, to a passage from the narrative poem Venus and Adonis (lines 361-64).

3. Venus and Adonis, lines 515-16.