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# Passion's Rhetoric: Coleridge on *King Lear* and the New Rhetorical Tradition

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COLERIDGE evoked *King Lear* at crucial points of his literary criticism in order to illustrate the power of poetic imagination. As James McKusick has pointed out, both in the lectures and in the *Biographia*, 'Coleridge's touchstone of imaginative discourse' is a passage from the play.<sup>1</sup> In the latter, Coleridge cites the second storm scene—'What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?' (*Lear* 3.4.63)—as well as Lear's 'preceding apostrophe to the elements' (*BL* I 84-85) in a discussion of imagination as opposed to fancy, which he attempts to clarify by drawing an analogous distinction between mania and delirium. In a lecture note of 1808, the first storm scene of *Lear* had already exemplified Imagination:

the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others, & by a sort of *fusion to force many into one*—that which after shewed itself in such might and energy in *Lear*, where the deep anguish of a Father spreads the feeling of Ingratitude & Cruelty over the very Elements of Heaven— (*LL* I 81)

Read carefully, this passage contains more than a general assertion of imagination's blending power. In the sentence, power is distributed between two agents: imagination, which 'modifies' and 'forces many into one', and Lear's 'anguish', which 'spreads' human feeling onto natural phenomena. Similarly, it is either an 'image', or a 'feeling' which modifies all others, and in the case of *Lear*, it is—at least, directly—the latter that brings about the fusion. It seems that Coleridge is using two, vaguely parallel terminologies: imagination—feeling, images—feelings. In a lecture note of 1811, he mentions Passion in conjunction with Imagination:

I have said before that Images tho' taken immediately from Nature & most accurately represented in words, do yet not characterize the Poet. —In order to do this, they must either be blended with or merged in, other images, the offering of the Poet's Imagination, by the Passion, by the specific modification of pleasurable Feelings which the contemplation of the Image had awakened in the Poet himself—[quotes from Sonnet 33] or by blending it with some deeper emotion, arising out of and consonant with the state or circumstances of the Person describing it—an effect which how true it is to Nature, Shakespeare himself has finely enforced in the instance of Love (113 Sonnet)—and of which we shall hereafter so many occasions to point out in his *Lear* &c, or at least with the poetic feeling itself, so that the pleasure of the Reader as well as the vividness of the Description is in

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<sup>1</sup> James C. McKusick, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p.103.

part derived from the force and fervor of the Describer. (LL I 243)

Imagination, here, has a complicated function that is evidently related to Passion, and to affect in general. Coleridge seems to say that the various natural images are blended either by the 'pleasurable Feelings' of the Poet himself, or by 'some deeper emotion' of the speaker, or 'at least' by 'the poetic feeling itself'.

Paul Hamilton has rightly stressed the importance of the 'poetic feeling', that is, the autonomous, 'self-impassioned' nature of poetry in Coleridge's criticism.<sup>2</sup> The 'poetic feeling' is 'pleasure' or 'excitement' that has no object or cause other than poetry itself; in this respect it resembles Kant's disinterested experience of beauty. However, in the lecture note Coleridge calls this 'latter excellence', taken by itself, 'the lowest indeed of a great Poet, but yet an excellence, characteristic & indispensable' (LL I 243). He rates those instances higher in which the feeling belongs to a speaker in the text who is either the poet 'himself', or one of his characters. In other words, Coleridge in this note privileges a dramatic kind of representation, in which the general 'poetic feeling' is turned to the expression of a particular, albeit fictitious, 'passion'. But what exactly is the connection between Passion and the autonomous Imagination? And why is it necessary for Coleridge to define poetic creation in terms of feeling? A certain hesitation between the two concepts, or rather between the vocabulary of feeling and that of the imagination, is among the most intriguing aspects of Coleridge's writings on literature.

David Miall has convincingly argued that 'feeling' had a key role in the development of Coleridge's concept of the 'imagination', so much so that the latter is not quite comprehensible without the former.<sup>3</sup> Miall links this Coleridgean emphasis to the legacy of David Hartley, showing that feeling had already played a similar role in Hartley's theory of association. In the present paper I would like to call attention to another related context in which we can view Coleridge's references to feeling and passion, one that is more directly pertinent to questions of poetic language. This is the 'new rhetoric' of the second half of the eighteenth century, a mode of thinking about language that found its hugely influential expression in Kames's *Elements of Criticism* (1762). Kames's work was translated into German and became an important source for German critical theory, among others for J. J. Engel whose writings in turn

<sup>2</sup> Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge's Poetics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> "The 'modifying power,' which appears to be central to Coleridge's view of the imagination as a creative process, cannot be understood without an account of feeling that works passively to supply needed images and ideas, together with an active feeling that directs and shapes the material towards some desired and at least partly anticipated end." David Miall, "'I See It Feelingly': Coleridge's Debt to Hartley", in *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J. B. Beer*, ed. by Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 151-163, p. 163. Cf. also Miall, 'Coleridge on Emotion: Experience into Theory', in *The Wordsworth Circle*, 22 (1991), 35-39.

were used by Coleridge in *The Friend*.<sup>4</sup> Kames's theories were also re-considered and developed by a number of British critics and philosophers, including Joseph Priestley, whose critical work and its relevance to Coleridge will be the central concern of this paper.

It has been argued by James Engell that the new rhetoric played a key role in the development of Romantic poetics, and especially of Coleridge's criticism.<sup>5</sup> Apart from Kames, Engell identifies Alexander Gerard, George Campbell, James Beattie, Joseph Priestley, and Hugh Blair as 'new rhetoricians', noting that Robert Lowth also shared important preoccupations with these critics. Coleridge was certainly familiar with Lowth, Blair and very probably Campbell, and it seems reasonable to assume—as Jane Stabler has recently done—that he knew Priestley's *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, published by Joseph Johnson in 1777.<sup>6</sup> This volume contains the lectures Priestley delivered at the Warrington Academy from 1762 onwards, which were also known by the Coleridgean-sounding title, '*Lectures on Philosophical Criticism*'.<sup>7</sup> They offer a lucid and instructive treatment of rhetoric and criticism based on Hartley's doctrine of the association of ideas, but with constant recourse to Kames, especially in discussions related to figurative language and the passions. Priestley's book seems to have had a considerable influence on contemporary critical thought; George Gregory, for instance, the English translator of Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, included among his footnotes a lengthy discussion of figures explicitly based on Priestley's associationist rhetoric.<sup>8</sup>

What distinguishes Kames's criticism and the new rhetoric in general from the earlier rhetorical tradition is the conviction that language is intimately bound up with mental processes, from controlled rational thinking to involuntary movements of emotion and passion. Kames pays special attention to the latter, believing as he does that the essence of poetry lies in its passionate effect. Combining classical rhetoric with the new philosophy of the mind, he studies figures of speech as manifestations of passion in language, loosely analogous to those involuntary motions that violent passion causes in the body. For him, vocal and bodily signs of passion constitute a 'universal language' understood by all – this is what Kames, Thomas Reid, and others

<sup>4</sup> Coleridge borrowed the example of immethodical discourse in his 'Essay on Method' from Johann Jakob Engel's *Anfangsgründe einer Theorie der Dichtungsarten* (1783) (see F I 370 n2; F II 451 n1). See also Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Elements of Criticism*, Intro. by Valdimir Price, 2 vols (London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1993), 1: 20–21. Jonathan Bate points out the recurrence of Kames's example in Shakespearean criticism in *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Engell, James, 'The New Rhetoric and Romantic Poetics', in Bialostosky, Don H. and Lawrence D. Needham eds, *Rhetorical Tradition and British Romantic Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 217–232.

<sup>6</sup> See Jane Stabler, 'Space for Speculation: Coleridge, Barbauld, and the Poetics of Priestley', in Nicholas Roe, ed., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Sciences of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 174–204.

<sup>7</sup> Priestley used this term for his own lectures in *An Examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind* (London, 1775), p. xii. Quoted in Martin Kallich, *The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England: A History of a Psychological Method in English Criticism* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1970), p. 224.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. G. Gregory, with notes by Michaelis, Fourth edition (London: S. Chadwick & Co., 1847), p. 63n.

refer to as the 'language of nature'.<sup>9</sup> Through the use of rhetorical figures, Kames implies, poetry is capable of recreating something of the immediate effect of this 'natural' communication in the medium of arbitrary language.

Hopefully, even in this sketchy outline the affinity with Coleridge's criticism is evident enough. In his lectures on Shakespeare, Coleridge repeatedly refers to the 'Law of Passion' which 'justifies' the use of bold figures such as personification or the apostrophe. In 1811, for instance, he is reported as saying, 'all deviations from ordinary language must be justified by some passion which renders it natural. How ridiculous w<sup>d</sup> it seem in a state of comparative insensibility to employ a figure used only by a person, only under the highest emotion—Such as the impersonation of an abstract being, and an apostrophe to it as it were not only in existence, but actually present' (*LL* I 271). Not content with limiting his 'philosophical' explanation to the classical figures of the sublime, Coleridge, following Lowth, traces repetition or apparent tautology, and even the 'surplus' action of wordplay to 'the same cause that agitates our very limbs & makes our very gestures tempestuous in states of high excitement' (*LL* I 267). In what follows I am going to focus on his treatment of *King Lear* as a paradigmatic illustration of the language of passion, and by comparing his emphases with those of his predecessors, I would also like to draw some tentative conclusions about the specific inflection Coleridge gives to the theory of passionate language.

The storm scenes of *King Lear* were cited by Kames to illustrate passion's irrational influence on the mind.<sup>10</sup> Following him, James Beattie also evoked the play to show how ideas were connected by a predominant feeling, claiming that Lear 'naturally breaks forth' into a 'violent exclamation against the crimes of mankind, in which almost every word is figurative'.<sup>11</sup> In a similar vein, Hugh Blair evokes *Lear* in his *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian*. Discussing personifications and apostrophes in the poem—figures that 'have been, in all ages, the language of passion'—he notes a resemblance between an address to the moon and Lear's words to Edgar. He explains it by observing that the 'mind under the dominion of any strong passion, tinctures with its own disposition, every object which it beholds'.<sup>12</sup> The analogy between the two passages is, for Blair, a proof of the 'naturalness'—and implicitly, of the authenticity—of *Ossian*. Indeed, *Lear* is a perfect example for him, representing a less civilised state, or in Doctor Johnson's words, an age of 'barbarity and ignorance', based on a story which 'would be yet credible, if told

<sup>9</sup> See *Elements of Criticism*, I, 434. For Reid on the 'language of nature' see Roger D. Gallie, *Thomas Reid: Ethics, Aesthetics and the Anatomy of the Self* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), esp. p. 174. Cf. also McKusick, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language*, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> 'Shakespear exhibits beautiful examples of the irregular influence of the passion in making us believe things to be otherwise than they are. King Lear, in his distress, personifies the rain, wind, and thunder; and in order to justify his resentment, believes them to be taking part with his daughters'. (*Elements of Criticism*, p.160) In a later chapter 'On Sentiments', *Lear* 3.5 is 'the first example [...] of sentiments dictated by a violent and perturbed passion'. (*Elements of Criticism*, pp. 456-7)

<sup>11</sup> James Beattie, *Essays: On Poetry and Music* (1779), (London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1996), pp. 245-6.

<sup>12</sup> James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, ed. Howard Gaskill, introduction by Fiona Stafford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996), 345-408, p. 393.

of a petty prince of Guinea or Madagascar'.<sup>13</sup> According to a number of eighteenth-century critics, the world of *King Lear* is dominated by fear and superstition. For Blair, this means that it offers evidence of a state of mind prior to the development of civilisation, displaying a language that abounds in figures, and especially in apostrophes, the figures of myth-making.

Thus far, we have seen two points about *Lear* that will be relevant to Coleridge. The first is James Beattie's argument that 'trains of ideas' can be associated by a predominant passion, which points towards the Coleridgean view that ideas (and words) are associated by feeling. The second is Blair's metaphor of passion 'tincturing' the external world, which anticipates the 'modifying' power Coleridge attributes to both passion and imagination. These two points are also made by Joseph Priestley in his *Lectures*, where *Lear* features as something like a leitmotif. Since this seems to me especially relevant to Coleridge, I will present Priestley's discussion in more detail.

As we have seen, Coleridge believes that 'the pleasure of the Reader' and 'the vividness of the Description' are derived from 'the force and fervor of the Describer' (*LL* I 243). 'Vividness' had been long connected with passion in the Humean tradition, and also by Joseph Priestley. In his *Lectures*, Priestley states that our passions are excited 'in proportion to the *vividness of our ideas* of those objects and circumstances which contribute to excite them'.<sup>14</sup> Therefore poets who would like to affect their readers should supply as many particulars as possible, for passions, being 'blind and mechanical principles, [...] can only be connected with the view of suitable circumstances', so whenever these are presented, the passion will be automatically excited.<sup>15</sup> This connection works in both ways: 'upon the perception of the proper feelings, the associated idea of reality will likewise recur'.<sup>16</sup>

Priestley emphasises the 'realistic' implications of this: he insists on the necessity of supplying particular circumstances in order to evoke feeling. Coleridge stresses the other side of the equation: the way the 'force and fervor of the Describer' contributes to the 'vividness of the Description'. The two nevertheless agree that 'poetic fervor' or passion does not merely enliven the described scene; its more important function is to transform the disparate elements and unite them in a newly coherent whole. This, of course, will be a key element in Coleridge's definitions of the imagination. Priestley delineates a similar argument by first observing that passions have an effect on perception and cognition, and giving a philosophical explanation for this:

This connexion of vivid ideas and emotions with reality, will easily furnish the mind with pretences for justifying the extravagance of

<sup>13</sup> Johnson's comment was reprinted in Isaac Reed's variorum edition of the play which Coleridge used for his 1811-12 series. *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Isaac Reed, 21 vols (London, 1813) XVII 611n.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777), ed. by Vincent M. Bevilacqua and Richard Murphy (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1965), p. 79.

<sup>15</sup> Priestley, p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> '*Vivid ideas and strong emotions*, therefore, having been, through life, associated with *reality*, it is easy to imagine that, upon the perception of the proper feelings, the associated idea of reality will likewise recur.' Priestley, 89.

such passions as love, gratitude, anger, revenge, and envy. If these passions be raised, though ever so unreasonably, they are often able, by this means, to adjust the object to their gratification. Besides [...], these passions, while the mind is under their influence, and as it were wholly occupied by them, will excite, in abundance, all such ideas as conspire with themselves, and preclude all attention to objects and circumstances connected with, and which would tend to introduce, an opposite state of mind.<sup>17</sup>

The argument is twofold: Priestley first claims that strong passions 'adjust the object to their gratification', in other words, they distort perception. Second, they call up associations that support their tendency, and make the mind virtually blind to anything that would contradict them. He illustrates this 'conspiracy' with the example of 'the captivated lover' whose eyes transform the outside world. Coleridge in the 1811 lecture note illustrates the same 'blending' effect with Shakespeare's Sonnet 113, a poem on love that also turns on images of blindness and transformative sight:

Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,  
And that which governs me to go about,  
Doth part his function, and is partly blind,  
Seems seeing, but effectually is out;  
[...]  
For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,  
The most sweet favour, or deformed'st creature,  
The mountain or the sea, the day or night,  
The crow, or dove, it shapes them to your feature.

Having discussed what he calls the everyday 'fact' of love, Priestley moves on to literary examples, and to *King Lear*. Quoting passages from the storm scenes, he points out the rhetorical consequence of delusion: that is, personification, which, in this case, is no artificial ornament but a symptom. Lear's address to the elements, Priestley argues, 'is perfectly natural, provided we can suppose his mind to have been so violently agitated as to personify, and feel real indignation against things inanimate.'<sup>18</sup> In his next lecture, he returns to *King Lear*, this time to Lear's address to Edgar, in order to illustrate how passion can lead to faulty reasoning: 'It is a direct consequence of the association of ideas, that, when a person hath suffered greatly on any account, he connects the idea of the same cause with any great distress'.<sup>19</sup> Coleridge in the *Biographia* quotes the same passage to illustrate mania, the pathological state

<sup>17</sup> Priestley, p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> Priestley, p. 93-4.

<sup>19</sup> Priestley, p. 103.

in which the mind connects all perceptions with its one obsessive thought.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, Priestley returns once more to *Lear* in a discussion of personification, this time not as a pathological symptom but as a product of the imagination:

One observation, I think, is pretty obvious, that a long-continued personification is more natural when it is supposed to be the work of a lively imagination, than the mechanical effect of a strong and serious passion; and that it is of importance to preserve a distinction between these two kinds of personification. To some it may, perhaps, appear hardly probable, that a man who preserves the use of his senses should be really angry with a *tempest* so long, as was necessary to make the following speech, which Shakespeare hath put into the mouth of King Lear upon that occasion:

Rumble thy belly-full; spit fire, spout rain;  
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters.  
I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness,  
I never gave you kingdoms, call'd you children;  
You owe me no subscription. Then let fall  
Your horrible pleasure.—Here I stand your brave,  
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.  
But yet I call you servile ministers,  
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd  
Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head  
So old and white as this. Oh! Oh! 'tis foul.

Act II. Scene 3.

It lessens the improbability (if there be any) of a man's being serious all the while, that the tempest, and consequently the provocation, was continued through the whole of it.<sup>21</sup>

Is Lear, then, in command of his senses during this speech? Priestley's previous comments suggested that he is not, whereas here he implies the opposite. Is this series of personifications a figure of 'mechanical' and 'blind' passion, or of 'lively' imagination? Is the speech to be read as a continuous elaboration of the same idea, or as a series of immediate reactions to repeated stimuli? Priestley here establishes a strong distinction between figures of

<sup>20</sup> While Coleridge's understanding of mania resembles that of Priestley, his coupling of *Lear* with *Venice Preserved* as examples of different kinds of mental derangement derives almost certainly from Horace Walpole, whose comment in the *Mysterious Mother* was reprinted in Reed's already cited variorum edition: "When *Belvidera* talks of "*Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of Amber*;" she is not mad, but light-headed. When madness has taken possession of a person, such character ceases to be fit for the stage, or at least should appear there but for a short time; it being the business of the theatre to exhibit passions, not distempers. The finest picture ever drawn, of a head discomposed by misfortune, is that of *King Lear*. His thoughts dwell on the ingratitude of his daughters, and every sentence that falls from his wildness excites reflection and pity. Had frenzy entirely seized him, our compassion would abate: we should conclude that he no longer felt unhappiness. Shakespeare wrote as a philosopher, Otway as a poet." (Reed, XVII 477n)

<sup>21</sup> Priestley, pp. 251-2.

passion and of the imagination, only to undermine its application by these uncertainties. Apparently he cannot decide how far Lear actually has gone into delusion, and concludes that the interpretation depends on the reader's sense of probability.

As this example reveals, in the discourse of the 'new rhetoric', feeling or passion is in a characteristic double-bind. On the one hand, it is considered essential for poetry as it 'justifies' the use of figures, which otherwise would be deemed mere affectation. On the other hand, there is a constant sense that passion should be held in check by the conscious faculties, otherwise it would fail to excite sympathy and might even become unrepresentable. The distinction between figures of passion and of imagination was Priestley's way of safeguarding the territory of passion (spontaneous, sincere) from that of the imagination (playful, self-conscious), and—on another level—the realm of sense and sanity from that of possible derangement. The Lear of the storm-scene, 'on the point of distraction', as Blair put it, is a figure marking out the boundary between those territories, while he also remains the most powerful figure of passion in this tradition. For Coleridge, Lear is 'the open and ample Play-Room of *Nature's* Passions' (LL 2:330), while his speech is also a fundamental example of the conscious and voluntary power of poetic imagination.

This already suggests what I think happens in Coleridge's use of *Lear* as the chief example at once of pathological excess and of the imagination. Throughout his lectures, he refers to passion as the cause of figurative language and of poetic metre, but it is not therefore the sufficient cause of poetry. In fact, he usually argues that poetry recreates the effects of passion in the realm of the imagination. Lear's apostrophe is therefore neither simply a figure of passion, nor simply a figure of the imagination, but both at once: a figure of imagined passion. What Coleridge calls passions's 'stimulant', then, should be used self-consciously by the poet; its blind mechanism turned into an artistic tool, and thereby into an object of reflection.<sup>22</sup>

Priestley in his *Lectures* considers such self-conscious use of imaginary passions essentially inauthentic: 'The effect of a real personification is a real passion; but an ideal, or *rhetorical personification*, presents only the *ideas* of thought, sense, and passion; which can never reach the *heart*. Those emotions can hardly be called real passions, which a person works himself into by the force of his own imagination.'<sup>23</sup> Coleridge, while developing the notion of poetry as imagined passion, also spelt out the disturbing implications of his own view. In an early notebook entry he writes, 'Poetry—excites us to artificial feelings—makes us callous to real ones.' (CN I 87) In conclusion I would like to suggest that the 'artificial' passions evoked by *Lear* had

<sup>22</sup> See for instance a later lecture note: 'N.b. how by excitement of the Associative Power Passion itself imitates Order, and the *order* resulting produces a pleasurable *Passion* (whence Metre) and thus elevates the Mind by making its feelings the Objects of its reflection/ and how recalling the Sights and Sounds that had accompanied the occasions of the original passion it impregnates them with an interest not their own by means of the Passions, yet tempers the passion by the calming power which all *distinct* images exert on the human soul.' (LL 2: 217-8)

<sup>23</sup> Priestley, p. 254.

nevertheless a strange tendency to become 'real' for Coleridge, so as almost to undermine this very distinction between 'real' and 'rhetorical' or 'imaginary' feeling. I am thinking here not only of his revulsion at the painful scene of Gloucester's blinding, but also of the illness he described as 'a sort of *ague-fit*' (CL IV 916), which he caught just before lecturing on *Lear*, as if to prove the play's dictum about not being 'ague-proof' (*Lear*, 4.6.104). In fact, Coleridge's attitude to *Lear* is rather ambivalent—throughout his lectures he cites it as the paradigmatic example of the imagination, and in a letter to Tulk even refers to it as the play of the terrible sublime.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, he declares that *Lear* is 'not a good subject for a whole lecture, *in my style*' (CL IV 925). His fascination with the play and his simultaneous tendency to keep it at a distance can be witnessed in the following comment on the second storm scene:

What a World's *Convention* of Agonies—surely, never was such a scene conceived before or since—Take it but as a picture, for the eye only, it is more terrific than any a Michael Angelo inspired by a Dante could have conceived, and which none but a Michael Angelo could have executed—Or let it have been uttered to the Blind, the howlings of <convulsed> Nature would seem concerted in the voice of conscious Humanity - (LL II 333)

The 'language of nature' emerges here at its most elemental: literally, as the convulsions and 'cries of pain' which Enlightenment philosophers thought to have been the first, passionate source of language. Claiming for Shakespeare the power to recreate the force of this 'natural' language, Coleridge characteristically analyses it into pictorial and vocal components, and contemplates the 'terrible' total effect as a work of art. Convulsive passions are thus redeemed and made aesthetically pleasing by the reflective imagination. Interestingly though, the reading of Coleridge's last sentence remains conjectural. What appears in R. A. Foakes's edition as 'concerted' is reprinted in the *Marginalia* as 'concentered' (CM IV 824), whereas in Raysor's old edition we find 'converted' (*SbC* [1960] I 59). 'Concerted' (which I like best) implies that the voice of passion cannot be fully translated into language, but remains something like a continuous undersong accompanying the words on the page or the stage. This might well be an important Coleridgean insight, but interestingly the two other readings also seem to work, opening up different avenues in his thought. 'Converted' stresses the metamorphosis that takes place when the imagination transforms passion into a work of art, while 'concentered' would point towards the intensification and control involved in the creative process. The uncertainty, then, may be fortuitous, but it is also fortunate, suggesting the complexity of Coleridge's understanding of the relationship between feeling and language or between nature and rhetoric; and it is precisely that complexity that distinguishes him from his eighteenth-century predecessors.

<sup>24</sup> 'On Thursday the LEAR, the Δεινότης, *La Terribilità* of Shakespeare's tragic Might' (CL IV: 915).