ISSN 1755-9928 (Print)
ISSN 2753-3298 (Online)

Journal of
Scottish Thought

Research Articles

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Volume 9, Issue 1
Pp: 75-94
2017
Published on: 1st Jan 2017

1495
ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Veronika Ruttkay

'A beautiful prospect delights the soul, as much as a demonstration…'
The Spectator, No. 411

1. Introduction[1]

'Those who tread the enchanted ground of Poetry, oftentimes do not even suspect that there is such a thing as Method to guide their steps' – Samuel Taylor Coleridge remarked in 1818.[2] Imagery of enchanted grounds may be traced back through a long literary tradition, including Spenser's Bower of Bliss, or Shakespeare's several forests and magical island. Ideas of quest and romance associated with all these lend a somewhat fantastical colouring to Coleridge's emphasis on method. Method, like Prospero's magic, guides the reader through the pleasures of poetry, while the text itself is figured as enchanted ground. But Coleridge's overall argument is far less poetical, or only in the sense in which, as he wrote earlier in the *Biographia Literaria* of 1817, 'Poetry . . . had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science'.[3] His point about poetic method appears in a work entitled *General Introduction; or, Preliminary Treatise on Method*, a lengthy and rigorously argued text that sets out to formulate the essence and importance of method not only in the fine arts but more generally, in all branches of intellectual activity including philosophy and the experimental sciences. The *Treatise* is one of Coleridge's less frequently studied pieces, although I. A. Richards called attention to it already in 1936 in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, remarking that it has 'more bearing on a possible future

1 This paper was supported by the Bolyai János Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Treatise on Method* as published in the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*, ed. Alice D. Snyder, (London, 1934), 25. Subsequent references to this edition appear in the main text as (TM).

3 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, eds. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton, 1983, 2 vols), I, 9.

for Rhetoric than anything I know of in the official literature'.[4] If scholarship has been reluctant to engage with the text, it is probably due to its complicated publishing history: there is no authorized version available, only the printed one heavily edited by Coleridge's publishers.[5] However, if we accept the fact of limited authorial control, we might as well take into account the context in which it first appeared: an emerging field of scientific discourse in which disciplines like the newly scientific 'criticism' were carving out a space for themselves.

The *Treatise* was originally written as an introduction to a new publishing venture the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*, and was printed in its first volume in January 1818. The project, in which Coleridge participated first enthusiastically and later with regret, was meant to revise the encyclopaedic tradition and, specifically, two of its key representatives. The primary target was the Great Encyclopaedia of Diderot and d'Alembert (1751–66), which was being re-structured as *Encyclopédie Méthodique* and in the process of publication at the time (TM, vii).[6] Less conspicuously, the *Metropolitana* was also aimed to rival the influential *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which, by 1797, had already reached its third edition.

The *Britannica* itself was advertised by its Edinburgh publishers as being arranged 'on a new plan'. Instead of 'dismembering the Sciences' through the alphabetical definition of terms, its authors expounded 'the principles of every science in the form of systems or distinct treatises'; that is, the *Britannica* included lengthy and structured articles on the sciences and the practical arts, such as medicine, metallurgy, or metaphysics, themselves arranged alphabetically.[7] The discussions were based on both established and more recent sources, as well as on new research, thus making available to the general British reading public important segments of the scientific and philosophical achievements of the Scottish Enlightenment. The distinguishing feature of the *Metropolitana*, in turn, was to be its innovative 'method': it was arranged in an entirely thematic, not alphabetical, order. When Coleridge rewrote his

4 I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936; New York, 1965), 6.

5 The publication history of the *Treatise* and its rewriting for *The Friend* of 1818 is explained in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke (Princeton, 1969, 2 vols), I, lxxxiii–iv.

6 On the *Méthodique*, begun in 1789 but completed only in 1832, see Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A publishing history of the* Encyclopédie *1775–1800* (Cambridge, MA, London, 1979).

7 William Smellie (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Britannica; or, A Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, Compiled upon a New Plan* (Edinburgh, 1768–1771; 1st edn; 3 vols), I, v.

Treatise as a series of essays for *The Friend* later in 1818, he still emphasised that 'the alphabetical arrangement of a common dictionary' should not be called 'methodical'.[8] Carefully planned and proportioned in advance, the discussion of different areas of knowledge in the *Metropolitana* was intended to move systematically from the abstract and general (the 'pure sciences' such as geometry) to the more empirical (the 'mixed' and 'applied sciences'). As Richard Yeo observes, this unique design reflected the editors' intention to counter the disintegration of knowledge that resulted from increased specialization in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, although, arguably, it also contributed to the crystallization of disciplines at the same time. In any case, Yeo calls the *Metropolitana* 'the last significant attempt at a philosophical ordering of subjects' in the encyclopaedic tradition.[9]

It was the task of Coleridge's general introduction to establish the principles justifying such an arrangement, and he deduces them from the idea of method. Method, according to the *Treatise*, 'literally means *a way*, or *path, of transit*. Hence the first idea of Method is a *progressive transition* from one step in any course to another' (TM, 2). What Coleridge finds important in this etymology is not that method makes intellectual journeying more efficient (something that many earlier authors had emphasised) but that its movement involves a primary mental orientation or 'pre-conception':

> [W]here the word Method is applied with reference to many such transitions in a continuity, it necessarily implies a Principle of Unity with Progression. But that which unites, and makes many things *one* in the Mind of Man, must be an act of the Mind itself, a manifestation of intellect, and not a spontaneous and uncertain production of circumstances. (TM, 2)

8 Coleridge, *The Friend*, I, 457. It may be noted that Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* was considered 'methodical' precisely because of its alphabetical arrangement. See Robin Valenza, 'How Literature Becomes Knowledge: A Case Study,' *ELH* 76 (2009), 215–45.

9 Richard Yeo, 'Reading Encyclopedias: Science and the Organization of Knowledge in British Dictionaries of Arts and Sciences, 1730-1850,' *Isis* 82 (1991), 24–49, 25–6. For a different discussion of Coleridge's *Treatise* and scientific specialization in the nineteenth century see James Brooke-Smith, '"A great empire falling to pieces": Coleridge, Herschel, and Whewell on the Poetics of Unitary Knowledge', *Configurations* 20 (2012), 299–325.

Coleridge therefore argues that philosophical or scientific investigation cannot begin with the gathering of data; in this sense, it can never be a purely inductive process. A methodical inquiry must start with a question, an idea, or mental 'initiative', even if this does not guarantee that the inquirer will safely arrive at an answer. Coleridge also admits that an exuberant mind may be led 'to generalize and methodize to excess', and concludes that method, according to its most comprehensive definition, 'must result from the due mean, or balance, between our passive impressions and the mind's re-action on them' (TM, 5).

According to Alice D. Snyder, Coleridge's models included Schelling's *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* of 1803 and Carl C. E. Schmid's *Allgemeine Encyklopädie und Methodologie der Wissenschaften* of 1810 (TM, xxii). Since her 1934 edition, considerable attention has been paid to the influence of German idealism on Coleridge's thinking, especially that of Schelling, who inspired the tripartite structure envisioned for the *Metropolitana*.[10] However, in order to complement such inquiries and to complicate still standard assumptions about Romanticism's 'transcendence' of earlier British thought with the help of German Idealism,[11] this paper focuses on a line of thinking in eighteenth-century English and Scottish aesthetics to which Coleridge also responded, one that used the concept of method to account for 'enchantment' in poetry, figured alternately as a garden or a forest, wild or well-cared-for. Based on the careful reading of a number of examples from this tradition, the present paper investigates how descriptions of the aesthetic experience in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century made use of the concept of method, together with its disparate contexts in rhetorical, logical and scientific discourse.

2. Johnson's Forest

Coleridge illustrates 'the strictest Philosophical application' of the principle of method in the fine arts through 'one single evidence': Shakespeare, to whom he devotes several pages of his preliminary *Treatise*. Clearly, this is meant as a provocation, as British readers, for a long time, 'had been taught to consider

10 Most recently, see Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge and German Philosophy: The Poet in the Land of Logic* (London and New York, 2007). A reliable earlier discussion can be found in J. R. de J. Jackson, *Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism* (Cambridge, MA, 1969).

11 Cairns Craig challenged this way of thinking in 'Coleridge, Hume, and the Chains of the Romantic Imagination' in Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen (eds.), *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (Cambridge, 2004), 20–37, 23.

[Shakespeare's works] as eminently *immethodical*' (TM, 16; emphasis in the original). Coleridge points to 'schools of foreign taste' as responsible for such a view, later bringing up Voltaire by name, but the critic who looms large in this context is the English Samuel Johnson, one of Coleridge's foremost adversaries – and sometimes covert inspirations – in literary criticism. Up to Coleridge's day, Johnson's *Preface* of 1765 to his edition of Shakespeare set the tone and the key terms of discussion. It was reprinted in several publications (e.g. the Variorum editions of Shakespeare used by Coleridge for his literary lectures) and excerpted for the Shakespeare entry of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1797, among others. In a magisterial sentence, Johnson sums up his overall sense of Shakespeare's artistry as follows:

> The work of a correct and regular writer is a garden accurately formed and diligently planted, varied with shades, and scented with flowers; the composition of Shakespeare is a forest, in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and to roses; filling the eye with awful pomp, and gratifying the mind with endless diversity.[12]

The work of art as garden offers all the variegated pleasures that result from good design and diligent 'culture'; it is evidently the product of conscious effort on the part of its author(s) and should be appreciated as such. The work of art as forest is felt, bafflingly, as if it had no design at all, either in the sense of a well-laid-out plan, or in that of having a design on the reader: it seems to exist in absolute disregard of a potential audience. But for Johnson, this is exactly what makes the experience of reading Shakespeare so overwhelming. Verbs like 'extend' and 'tower' express the sense of sublimity or 'awful pomp' that is contrasted, along Longinian lines, with the calculated effects of correct works that even Voltaire could admire, such as Joseph Addison's *Cato* (the subject of Johnson's previous paragraph).[13] These verbs may also be linked to

12 *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Sherbo (New Haven and London, 1968, 2 vols), I, 84.

13 Johnson's Life of Addison suggests that what was missing from Cato was precisely the enchanting power that Shakespeare's plays possessed: 'Nothing here "excites or asswages emotion"; here is "no magical power of raising phantastick terror or wild anxiety". The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow.' Samuel Johnson, The Lives of the Poets, ed. John H. Middendorf (New Haven and London, 2010; 3 vols), II, 656..

Alexander Pope's earlier comparison between Shakespeare and Gothic architecture, which concluded his *Preface* of 1725.[14] But Johnson translates Pope's history-laden image to a description of natural scenery, making Shakespeare's work transcend human time, albeit with its own characteristic mixed temporality spanning the *longue durée* of grand oaks and pines and the ephemeral existence of weeds.

'Weeds and brambles' indicate Johnson's frustration over Shakespeare's carelessness: his tendency to waste his powers on what the critic regarded as unworthy pursuits. According to Sean Keilen, 'the wildness of the natural world serves Johnson as a metaphor for the "barbarity" of Shakespeare's period, the unruliness of the English language at that time and the "extravagance" of the poetic licence that Shakespeare took'.[15] But of course it also conveys Johnson's admiration for his profuse creativity. 'Myrtles and roses' are conventional metaphors for local beauties that might be discovered by attentive readers and collected in anthologies or *florilegia*. The imagery, on the whole, evokes the concept of the Latin *silva*, meaning 'woods, brush, forest', but, as Walter J. Ong explains, also 'meaning an abundance or congeries or quantity, as in Cicero, Suetonius, and Quintilian'.[16] Ong shows that Renaissance rhetoricians often relied on this notion, as well as on the related Greek *ὕλη*, and tended 'to think of the "matter" of discourse in terms of woods to be dealt with by a process of "sorting out" or "cutting out" or "arranging"'.[17] Thus, Ben Jonson entitled his verse miscellanies *The Forest* and *Under-woods*, and his commonplace-book *Timber, or Discoveries upon Men and Matter as They Have Flowed Out of His Daily Readings*. Shakespeare's works had been themselves subjected to 'commonplacing' long before Johnson's time: readers had started to gather passages to be re-used in their own writing or conversation almost from the moment of their first production.[18] Later, printed collections of his 'beauties' (most influentially, William Dodd's *The Beauties of Shakespeare*, first published in 1752) became commercially successful. However, what all

14 See Brian Vickers (ed.), *William Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage, Volume 2, 1693–1733* (London and New York, 1974), 303.

15 Sean Keilen, *Vulgar Eloquence: On the Renaissance Invention of English Literature* (New Haven and London, 2006), 124.

16 Walter J. Ong, S.J., *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (1958; Cambridge, MA and London, 1983), 118.

17 Ibid., 119.

18 See e.g. Margreta de Grazia, 'Shakespeare in Quotation Marks' in Jean I. Marsden (ed.), *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth* (New York, 1991), 57–71.

the abundance of Shakespeare's works could not yield, according to Johnson, was their own plan: they just happened to be the way they were, without any perceivable order, leaving literary travellers to their own devices to find their way into, or out of, the wilderness.

3. Addison's Garden

While Johnson's passage is essentially static, suggesting a place that the reader might not even want to leave, Addison's earlier and closely related discussions are all about movement. The connection is somewhat ironic, since Johnson had already referred to Addison to compare his play, tactfully but ultimately unfavourably, to those of Shakespeare, but the very comparison of the regular garden and the Shakespearean forest is arguably based on the same author. As it has been amply documented, Addison's meditations in *The Pleasures of the Imagination* series had a formative influence on both the theory and the practice of eighteenth-century gardening and especially the landscape garden.[19] Johnson was probably aware of this, when he implicitly described Addison's own kind of regular drama as analogous to an 'accurately formed and diligently planted' garden, 'varied with shades, and scented with flowers'. Compared to the magnificence of Shakespeare's forest, this is all meant to sound a bit underwhelming.

However, a glance at *The Spectator* papers shows that Addison himself had developed a far more generous stance towards gardening, one that could welcome forms of disorderly nature, including marshes and forests. As he points out in *The Spectator* No. 414, the very countryside may be turned, with slight improvements, into a work of art (a 'landscape', as in painting), if the beholder-proprietor wishes so:

> A Marsh over-grown with Willows, or a Mountain shaded with Oaks, are not only more beautiful, but more beneficial, than when they lie bare and unadorned. Fields of Corn make a pleasant Prospect, and if the Walks were a little taken care of that lie between them, if the natural Embroidery of the Meadows were helpt and improved by some small Additions of Art, and the several Rows of Hedges set off by Trees and

19 See e.g. Mavis Batey, 'The Pleasures of the Imagination: Joseph Addison's Influence on Early Landscape Gardens', *Garden History* 33 (2005), 189–209.

> Flowers, that the Soil was capable of receiving, a Man might make a pretty Landskip of his own Possessions.[20]

The secret lies in discovering art *in* nature, and then enhancing it a little further, for instance by adding a conscious frame or border to the natural 'embroidery' of fields through well-cared-for walks or rows of hedges. One might speculate about the importance of such features to Addison's overall scheme; arguably, walking paths lend structure to beautiful prospects when seen from afar, but even more crucially, they determine both the changing perspective and the rhythm of experience enjoyed by the appreciative walker. According to Stephanie Ross, a path receding into the distance is 'the quintessential example of an "invitational" landscape feature' in Addison's writings.[21]

Movement plays an important role also when Addison discusses literature in terms of landscape, as when he compares three classical authors in *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (*Spectator* No. 417):

> Reading the *Iliad* is like travelling through a Country uninhabited, where the Fancy is entertained with a thousand Savage Prospects of vast Desarts, wide uncultivated Marshes, huge Forests, mis-shapen Rocks and Precipices. On the contrary, the *Aeneid* is like a well-ordered Garden, where it is impossible to find out any Part unadorned, or cast our Eyes upon a single Spot, that does not produce some beautiful Plant or Flower. But when we are in the *Metamorphosis*, we are walking on enchanted Ground, and nothing but Scenes of Magick lying round us.[22]

Reading each classical work is like passing through a natural scene. It is also, simultaneously, like creating landscapes of the mind, for it is the Fancy that is being 'entertained', especially in a less regular work like the *Iliad*, to envision all kinds of fantastic vistas. There seems to be no road to guide our steps through Homer's 'uninhabited' country, while the 'enchanted Ground' of Ovid might even be purposefully misleading, like a labyrinth. As Katherine Myers has shown, effects of 'enchantment' in eighteenth-century gardening could be created through highly artificial means since, from the beholder's

20 *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1987, 5 vols), III, 552.
21 Stephanie Ross, *What Gardens Mean* (Chicago, 1998), 167.
22 *The Spectator*, III, 564.

subjective experience, 'illusion became a tool of the designer'.[23] Thus Horace Walpole wrote about the 'simple enchantment' of the sunk fence, 'which enabled Kent . . . to use "the pencil of his imagination" (the visual idea) to bestow "all the arts of landscape [painting] on the scenes he handled"'.[24] In Addison's passage, the art responsible for the creation of such enhanced realities is called 'Magick', which puts the reader of Ovid in a precarious position, as signalled by the quaint phrase 'when we are in the Metamorphosis'. It seems to be precisely this kind of experience that Coleridge attributes to the unsuspecting reader of (Shakespearean) poetry: the ground is 'enchanted', that is, it only *seems to be* entirely natural. While in gardening Addison was strongly in favour of such effects, in classical poetry he had other preferences: between the rudeness of Homer and the subtle artfulness of Ovid, the critic praises the human order of Virgil's epic as both safe and natural (in a familiar, cultivated way), expressly meant for the reader's delight.

The complexity of Addison's position when he is thinking of *belles lettres* in terms of landscape is most clearly visible in *Spectator* No. 476, which is devoted to the question of method. This is also the text in which rhetorical and scientific contexts enter into dialogue in what might be recognised today as early aesthetic theory:

> When I read an Author of Genius who writes without Method, I fancy my self in a Wood that abounds with a great many noble Objects, rising among one another in the greatest Confusion and Disorder. When I read a methodical discourse, I am in a regular Plantation, and can place my self in its several Centers, so as to take a View of all the Lines and Walks that are struck from them. You may ramble in the one a whole Day together, and every Moment discover something or other that is new to you, but when you have done you will have but a confused imperfect Notion of the Place; in the other, your Eye commands the whole Prospect, and gives you such an Idea of it, as is not easily worn out of the Memory.[25]

23 Katherine Myers, 'Ways of Seeing: Joseph Addison, Enchantment and the Early Landscape Garden', *Garden History* 41 (2013), 3–20, 15.

24 Horace Walpole, *History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (1771; New York, 1995), 43–5. Quoted in Myers, 'Ways of Seeing', 15.

25 *The Spectator*, IV, 186.

Addison's connection between immethodical discourse and genius calls to mind Shakespeare, the most irregular genius according to the criticism of his time. Such a link may easily be assimilated to later romantic convictions, for instance William Blake's proverb in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: 'Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement are roads of Genius' (plate 10). 'Improvement', of course, is a central eighteenth-century pursuit, whether in agriculture, urban planning, or in gardening.[26] But if Addison here seems to be drawn to the romantic-Blakean view, associating genius with irregularity, this too might be a trick of perception, for apart from a few exceptional cases he deems the pursuit of method a far more advisable strategy. His own writing, he admits, represents both kinds: there are some papers 'written with Regularity and Method', and others 'that run out into the Wildness of those Compositions, which go by the Name of *Essays*'.[27] In the regular works, he has 'the whole Scheme of the Discourse in [his] Mind' – exactly as recommended by rhetoricians. This framework of Addison's thinking comes to the fore when he talks about method as a 'great help to . . . Invention' (i.e., rhetorical *inventio*): the man who has a clear plan of his discourse, 'finds a great many thoughts rising out of every Head'.[28]

On the whole, Ong finds that in the rhetorical writings of Agricola, Ramus and their followers, oral-auditory models were losing ground to give way to an 'inexorable disposition to represent thought and communication in terms of spatial models and thus to reduce mental activity to local motion'.[29] The association of method with 'way' or 'path' proved particularly useful in this context. Melanchton, for instance, writes that method 'opens a way through impenetrable and overgrown places (*loca*), through the confusion of things, and pulls out and ranges in order the things (*res*) pertaining to the matter proposed'.[30] Addison's description of the clear 'Lines and Walks' in methodical discourse, and his recurring conception of reading as walking, are later manifestations of the same tendency, although he shifts the focus, characteristically, to the reader rather than the writer/orator. Clearly, Addison's way of

26 See e.g. Noah Heringman's discussion of 'improvement' in Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* of 1770 and William Chambers's *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* of 1772 in his *Romantic Rocks: Aesthetic Geology* (Ithaca, NY, 2004), 45–7.

27 *The Spectator*, IV, 185.

28 Ibid., IV, 186.

29 Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, 119.

30 Ibid., 158. Quoting Philip Melanchthon, *Erotemata dialectices...,* Lib. I, *a fine*, in Opera (1834–1860), XIII, col. 573.

thinking is dependent on the same phenomenon that Ong believed to have informed the momentous change: the spread – or, in Addison's case, the flourishing – of print culture. It should be noted, however, that in his *Spectator* paper Addison also considers method in conversation (as Coleridge also will, in the *Treatise on Method*) complaining of too many 'Coffee-house Debates' in which, 'after the three first Sentences', the original question is entirely lost. It is significant that Addison in a little narrative episode at the end of the paper associates the immethodical speech of 'Tom Puzzle' with free-thinking and religious scepticism, while his opponent 'Mr Dry' seems to be regular both in his thinking and in his morals.[31]

As Peter Mack observes, when Addison became a model for polite writing in the course of the later eighteenth century, it was not his 'wilder' compositions (i.e., the essays, in the sense used in No. 476), but his regular treatises – especially on moral and religious subjects – that were recommended for study and imitation.[32] In all probability, it was easier to assimilate this body of work into the new courses on rhetoric and *belles letters* (e.g. those of Hugh Blair, who offered minute analyses of Addison's style), as they shared distant ties to the same traditions. 'Method' first rose to prominence in the context of Renaissance education, offering a 'shortcut' to knowledge. Traces of this educational aspect are still observable in Addison's paper when he writes that methodical discourse is easier to follow and thus to retain in memory. Instead of successive partial views, it offers a totalising visual idea in which 'your Eye commands the whole Prospect'.

4. The Forking Path of Method

The Spectator No. 476 was translated into French and a substantial part of it was included in Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*.[33] The long entry on 'Method', of which it became a part, illustrates a major transformation

31 *The Spectator* , IV, 187–8.

32 Peter Mack, 'Addison's Essays as Models for Composition in School Anthologies and Textbooks of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Paradigm* 13 (1994), 42–54; idem, 'Rhetoric and the Essay', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 23 (1993), 41–9.

33 *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Roud d'Alembert (Paris, 1751–57; 17 vols), X, 460. Online edition by the University of Chicago, ARTF Project: http://portail.atilf.fr/encyclopedie/; http://portail.atilf.fr/cgi-bin/getobject_?a.75:155:4./var/artfla/encyclopedie/textdata/IMAGE, accessed 4 July 2017.

described by Paul K. Alkon as follows: 'From the essentially rhetorical conception of method as the technique of effectively organizing thought for communication – presentational method – there was a gradual shift to the more Cartesian conception of method as a means of inquiry.'[34] This transformation had not been completed until the nineteenth century saw the ultimate disruption of rhetorical modes of thinking and the simultaneous emergence of the sciences in the modern sense; thus, the editors of the *Encyclopédie* (just as Coleridge in the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*) still presented method as, simultaneously, a rhetorical, logical, philosophical and scientific concept. The French version of Addison's text appeared in the section on the 'arts and sciences' written by Louis de Jaucourt, who even warned his readers not to put too much emphasis on method.[35] But it is not at all difficult to see why Addison's approach appealed to the encyclopaedists: its postulation of central perspectives from which it is possible 'to take a View of all the Lines and Walks' clearly resonates with the kinds of argument made in other sections. Diderot, despite his general preference for Newton and experimental science, states that the Cartesian rules of mathematical (or geometrical) method are equally valid in all the sciences.[36] In a sub-section on grammar, he refers to method as 'the means of arriving at an end by the most convenient route'.[37] A map-like view, such as the one available from one of the 'several Centers' of Addison's geometrical garden, would certainly prove useful in deciding which route would be the shortest and most convenient of them all.

In his *Discourse on Method,* Descartes repeatedly employed the metaphor of method as path or route, but often in a way that is messier than anything in Addison. Perhaps most memorably, he recounts in the third discourse his firm resolution 'to follow no less constantly the most doubtful opinions, once I had

34 Paul K. Alkon, 'Critical and Logical Concepts of Method from Addison to Coleridge', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 5 (1971), 97–121, 99.

35 Cf. Ibid., 101–102. For Jaucourt's text see *Encyclopédie,* X, 460.

36 *'La* méthode *dont nous venons de prescrire les regles, est la même que celle des Mathématiciens. On a semblé croire pendant longtems que leur* méthode *leur appartenoit tellement, qu'on ne pouvoit la transporter à aucune autre science. M. Wolff a dissipé ce préjugé, & a fait voir dans la théorie, mais sur-tout dans la pratique, & dans la composition de tous ses ouvrages, que la méthode mathématique étoit celle de toutes les sciences, celle qui est naturelle à l'esprit humain, celle qui fait découvrir les vérités de tout genre.'* Ibid., X, 445.

37 '*Une* méthode *est donc la maniere d'arriver à un but* par la voie *la plus convenable.*' Ibid., X, 446. Cf. Simpson's point that 'the encyclopedic enterprise retains a clear affiliation with a Ramist-Cartesian tradition, a tradition arguably critical in the formation of the encyclopedic ambition itself'. David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt against Theory* (Chicago and London, 1993), 71.

determined on them, than I would if they were very assured'. Adhering to this maxim, he imitates travellers 'finding themselves astray in some forest', who:

> must not wander, turning now this way now that, and even less stop in one place, but must walk always as straight as they can in a given direction, and not change direction for weak reasons, even though it was perhaps only chance in the first place which made them choose it; for, by this means, if they do not go exactly where they wish to go they will arrive at least somewhere in the end where they will very likely will be better off than in the middle of a forest.[38]

According to this, the path of method is not available (and especially, not measurable) in advance: it comes into being through the very activity of the intellectual traveller. This is in fact surprisingly close to Coleridge's understanding, who wishes to unite rhetorical and scientific concepts of method and insists that what initiates the intellectual 'progress' is always an idea or at least an 'intuition' (his examples include those of a circle and a triangle), and acknowledges how difficult it can be to adhere to it in actual practice:

> It requires, in short, a constant wakefulness of mind; so that if we wander but in a single instance from our path, we cannot reach the goal, but by retracing our steps to the point of divergency, and thus beginning our progress anew. (TM, 4)

Such discipline has to be learnt and practiced; Descartes recalls that he used to put aside some time 'now and again', 'to exercise the method in the solution of mathematical difficulties, or even in that of some others which I could make almost like mathematical problems'.[39]

When eighteenth-century writers were describing the experience of reading poetry, it was often in terms of a leisurely stroll through 'enchanted grounds', without the pressing need to find one's way or to reach a destination. However, this was also the period when a new kind of discourse was emerging, one that ventured to use a self-conscious theoretical framework and a more specialized terminology in order to account for the aesthetic experience, at times making works of art appear 'almost like mathematical problems'. For it was not only

38 René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* and *The Meditations*, trans. F. E. Sutcliffe (London, 1968), 46–7.

39 Ibid., 50.

Coleridge who insisted on a secret affinity between poetry and science: such a connection was already implicit in the works of a number of writers before him, most importantly, the Scottish associationist critics of the second half of the eighteenth century.[40] Henry Home, Lord Kames, unapologetically states in the 'Introduction' to his *Elements of Criticism* of 1762 that his principal aim was to turn criticism into a 'rational science'.[41] Just how strange such a proposition may have felt for his contemporaries can be guessed from a short conversation among members of Samuel Johnson's circle, as transcribed by James Boswell:

> Johnson proceeded: 'The Scotchman has taken the right method in his *Elements of Criticism*. I do not mean that he had taught us anything: but he has told us old things in a new way.' MURPHY. 'He seems to have read a great deal of French criticism, and wants to make it his own; as if he had been for years anatomising the heart of man, and peeping into every cranny of it.' GOLDSMITH. 'It is easier to write that book, than to read it.[42]

These casual remarks suggest that the discourse of the *Elements* could be felt abstruse and foreign (in spite of the fact that Kames vigorously defended Shakespeare against French neoclassicism), and that the relationship between abstract concept and empirical 'fact' was problematic. In fact, Kames's venture involves a series of startling manoeuvres regarding method: he is compelled to combine the concept of method as articulated in connection with poetry (traditionally an area of rhetoric) with the issue of scientific method ('anatomising the heart of man'), and then find the 'presentational method' (in Alkon's term) most adequate to the communication of his findings (a matter closely linked to education). Kames stressed the experimental nature of his project and that his results could only be tentative, nevertheless, his work was greatly influential in Britain and in America, as well as on the Continent (especially in

40 On the emergence of 'criticism' among the disciplines see Neil Rhodes, 'From Rhetoric to Criticism', in Robert Crawford (ed.), *The Scottish Invention of English Literature* (Cambridge, 1998), 22–36. The question of 'mathematization' is raised in Walter J. Ong, 'Psyche and the Geometers: Associationist Critical Theory' in idem, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (1971; Ithaca and London, 1990), 213–36.

41 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, ed. Peter Jones, gen. ed. Knud Haakonssen (Indianapolis, 2005; 6th edn; 2 vols), I, 14.

42 James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (Ware, 1999), 296.

Germany).[43] The success of his disciplinary innovations is also indicated by the fact that his 'Introduction' to *Elements of Criticism* was reprinted in the 1797 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on 'Criticism'.

'Avoid a straight avenue directed upon a dwelling-house: better far an oblique approach in a waving line, with single trees and other scattered objects interposed' – Kames advises in his chapter on the art of gardening.[44] The reason is that a 'direct approach' cannot command the attention for too long, while winding walks open new vistas 'at every step'; they also convey a sense of freedom and leisure: 'my intention is not to make a journey, but to feast my eye on the beauties of art and nature'.[45] Ultimately it all boils down to the question of whether one needs a 'road' or a 'walk', i.e., utility as opposed to aesthetic pleasure (and let us not forget that gardening, for Kames, was a 'useful art' before it became 'fine art'). For any useful purpose a straight road is invaluable, while in a 'pleasure-ground' walks 'ought not to have any appearance of a road'.[46] Of course, a similar question may be raised in connection with Kames's project of establishing a new kind of critical discourse. Is it meant for pleasure, or does it have some other purpose such as finding or communicating knowledge? In theory, the answer to this question should be inextricable from the method of presentation, i.e. whether the author creates 'straight roads' to convey knowledge, or 'winding paths' for entertainment. But in the *Elements* such differences are not as clear-cut as that. Johann Gottfried Herder, an early and careful reader of Kames's work, even compared it to a forest, very much in the sense as Johnson had used the image earlier, to refer to its rich but unsystematic nature.[47]

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43 Norbert Bachleitner, 'Die Rezeption von Henry Homes *Elements of Criticism* in Deutschland 1763–1793', *Arcadia* 20 (1985), 115–33. See also Neil Rhodes, 'Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century' in Robert DeMaria, Jr., Heesok Chang, and Samantha Zacher (eds.), *A Companion to British Literature: Volume III: Long Eighteenth-Century Literature 1660–1837* (Chichester, 2014), 35–48.

44 Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, II, 694.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 'Home presents a forest of experiences, observations, and phenomena relating to the soul; but in keeping with his intention, it remains a forest. . . . His book has therefore no system; the fundamental concepts are not progressively elaborated; there is, strictly speaking, no order in its plan.' Johann Gottfried Herder, *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. Gregory Moore (Princeton and Oxford, 2006), 276. The irony of the fact that Herder's own treatise belongs to his *Critical Forests* series (*Fourth Grove, on Riedel's* Theory of the Beaux Arts) is pointed out in Leroy R. Shaw, 'Henry Home of Kames: Precursor of Herder', *Germanic Review* 35 (1960), 16–27.

Kames in his 'Introduction' states that his aim was not 'to compose a regular treatise' but to impart his discoveries 'in the gay and agreeable form of criticism: imagining that this form will be more relished, and perhaps be no less instructive, than a regular and laboured disquisition'.[48] Criticism is therefore essentially pleasurable; however, it is also instructive. The role of 'scattered objects' arranged along a walking path is taken by illustrative examples, or what Kames calls 'facts and experiments', from which he plans 'to ascend gradually to principles'.[49] By this point, the method of science and of pleasure seem to go hand in hand: according to Kames, the genuine scientific method also moves from 'particular effects to general causes', but it has its own aesthetic benefits as well, for 'we feel a gradual dilation or expansion of mind, like what is felt in an ascending series, which is extremely pleasing: the pleasure here exceeds what arises from following the course of nature'.[50] The 'natural' course, for followers of Pierre Ramus, would have been to argue from general principles in order to demonstrate their particular consequences, i.e. the 'synthetic method', but Kames feels certain that the analytic is 'more agreeable to the imagination'.[51]

Thanks to its pleasurable quality, the method of criticism offers an entry into higher-level education. It 'inures the reflective mind to the most enticing sort of logic' because it creates a habit of reflection, which 'prepares the mind for entering into subjects most intricate and abstract.'[52] Disciplined thinking was thus the result of practicing criticism. On these grounds, Kames proposes a new scheme of instruction in which the study of the fine arts would play the role of 'a middle link, connecting the different parts of education into a regular chain'.[53] In this, as in other respects, he is closely allied to his fellow thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, most crucially Adam Smith, whose *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* were sponsored by Kames and attended by many influential contemporaries. John Millar in a letter to Dugald Stewart gave the following account of Smith's scheme in his lectures:

> The best method of explaining and illustrating the various powers of the human mind, the most useful part of metaphysics, arises from an examination of the several ways of communicating our thoughts by

48 Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, I, 18.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., I, 25.
51 Ibid., I, 26.
52 Ibid., I, 15.
53 Ibid.

> speech, and from an attention to the principles of those literary compositions which contribute to persuasion or entertainment. By these arts, every thing that we perceive or feel, every operation of our minds, is expressed and delineated in such a manner, that it may be clearly distinguished and remembered. There is, at the same time, no branch of literature more suited to youth at their first entrance upon philosophy than this, which lays hold of their taste and their feelings.[54]

Such considerations about method – in both the educational-rhetorical and the scientific sense – clearly informed the emerging discourse of British scientific or 'philosophical' criticism. William Richardson, the author of a series of critical analyses of Shakespeare's characters (and a student of Smith's) stresses the educational benefits of the study of poetry in a similar vein, stating that it conducts us 'to the temple of truth, by an easier and more agreeable path than that of mere metaphysics'.[55] The scope of George Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* is different (although rhetoric, for him, still includes poetry), but the justification of his project is similar:

> Besides, this study, properly conducted, leads directly to an acquaintance with ourselves; it not only traces the operations of the intellect and imagination, but discloses the lurking springs of action in the heart. In this view it is perhaps the surest and the shortest, as well as the pleasantest way of arriving at the science of the human mind.[56]

The newly scientific study of rhetoric (Campbell also calls it 'criticism'), is not only the most pleasant, but also the most efficient and reliable way to the understanding of the mind. Given the difficulties involved in observing the minutiae of mental activity, it might even be argued that it is the only way Campbell can think of.

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54 Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J. C. Bryce (Indianapolis, 1985), 11.

55 William Richardson, *A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters* (Edinburgh, 1774), 26.

56 George Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London and Edinburgh, 1776, 2 vols), I, 16.

5. Coleridge and Kames

There is a notable tension in all these passages between the emphasis on pleasure (which might be still instructive) and the writers' ambition to conduct a rigorously scientific investigation (which might be rather less delightful for a general readership). As we have seen in Kames, the shortest road is hardly the most pleasurable one. The emerging discipline of 'criticism' – which overlaps with what might be called early British aesthetics – was carefully balanced between its two modes of communication, and often found itself stuck between them.[57] This can be observed in the very first chapter of *Elements of Criticism*, in which Kames feels obliged to apologize to his readers for having to explain some abstract principles in advance, and – foreshadowing Coleridge's move in the *Biographia Literaria* – he asks those with 'an invincible aversion to abstract speculation' to 'stop short here'.[58] The problem is not only that of 'disposition' – i.e., of arranging his arguments in the best possible order. It is a problem concerning scientific method. For, as the above excerpts clearly show, the new philosophical criticism was not content with critiquing the effects of rhetoric or poetry by referring to the established principles of mental activity. It also wanted to *discover* them first. It is true that a fundamental approach was already provided by associationism on which all of these authors relied; however, they make clear that there are still large areas of the mind unexplored by philosophy, to which poetry (or rhetoric) might provide the only entry. In his 'Introduction' Kames notes that the analysis of how poetry works might be instrumental to the understanding of mental operations in general. His primary aim was criticism, he concedes, but 'he will not disown, that all along it has been his view, to explain the nature of man, considered as a sensitive being capable of pleasure and pain'.[59] This ambitious scientific 'view' is carefully couched in the rhetoric of pleasure, but it is nevertheless an extension of the Humean 'Science of Man': a remarkable project that rediscovers art as a tool to uncover the workings of the mind.

57 Cf. Robin Valenza's analysis: 'Attempting to imitate physics' extraordinary success, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century moral philosophers aimed to "introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects." However, unlike the physicists, moral philosophers fostered the belief that a popular and a scholarly work could be coextensive, that a single book could advance a discipline and still be readable by a broad audience.' Robin Valenza, *Literature, Language, and the Rise of the Intellectual Disciplines in Britain, 1680–1820* (Cambridge, 2009), 35.

58 Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, I, 27.

59 Ibid., I, 14.

It is in this context that Shakespeare's oeuvre again comes to the fore, and not only as the object of critical scrutiny, but also as something that makes such scrutiny possible. Kames and, following him, several other critics, attempt to trace the laws of the mind from the 'experiments' of Shakespeare's plays. In order to certify, for instance, how the different passions modify thinking, Kames studies the language of *Othello* and *Hamlet*, and based on the insights he gleans from them, he proceeds to judge how far other writers manage to 'follow nature' in various selected passages. Nature is thereby not so much 'methodized' as Shakespeareanized. Thus, when Coleridge in his *Treatise* cites the speech of Hamlet and of Dame Quickly from *Henry IV, Part 2*, in order to show how Shakespeare 'exemplif[ies] the opposite faults of Method in two different characters' (TM, 23), he is squarely working in the Kamesian tradition, even if he makes a pointed reference to Schlegel, 'a foreign critic of great and deserved reputation' who had discovered that Shakespeare 'gives us the history of minds; *he lays open to us, in a single word, a whole series of preceding conditions*' (TM, 20, emphasis in the original). In fact, this was very much the kind of thing that Kames was also after, although he considers the 'single word' always in its associative relation to others (however, the expression 'whole series of preceding conditions' might point in the same direction). In any case, it is hardly a coincidence that the very same passage by Dame Quickly is analysed in the first chapter of *Elements of Criticism* to illustrate the association of ideas, right before Kames's discussion of method.

Editors of Coleridge had assumed that he came across this example in a German book, J. J. Engel's *Anfangsgründe einer Theorie der Dichtungsarten*.[60] However, a glance at this work confirms that Engel himself is deeply indebted to Kames: he not only relies on the concept of '*Ideenreihe*' (no doubt, Kames's 'trains of ideas'), but also introduces a distinction between dramatic 'representation' (*Darstellung*) and undramatic 'report' (*Berichtung*), which is a re-working of Kames's pair of 'expression' ('expressing a passion as one does who feels it') and 'description' ('describing it in the language of a spectator').[61] Significantly, Engel had already published, with his friend Christian Garve, a revised translation of the *Elements* in 1772.[62] Thus, whether Coleridge had found the example of Mistress Quickly in Engel's work, or in Kames (which I think more likely,

60 See Coleridge, *The Friend,* I, 370n; II, 451n.

61 Johann Jakob Engel, *Über Handlung, Gespräch und Erzählung* (Stuttgart, 1964). Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, I, 312.

62 Heiner F. Klemme and Manfred Kuehn (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century German Philosophers* (London etc., 2016), 184.

based on its proximity to his discussion of method), or even in Alexander Gerard (who also cites it in his *Essay on Genius*), the framework is still provided by Scottish associationism. At this point we might conclude that Coleridge's indebtedness to Kames and generally to the Scottish Enlightenment is ripe for further investigation. What seems to be clear, though, is that from the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century Shakespeare's works provided the 'ground' where various concepts of method could be explored – paths of rhetorical analysis, educational schemes, or of scientific discovery, that sometimes met but more often diverged – all playing a crucial role in the emergence of the new discipline of 'criticism'. Conceptual metaphors of gardens, forests, or enchanted landscapes offered a way of working out such interconnections, suggesting points of affinity, but also of resistance, between how literature and gardening could be conceived.

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