Victorian Verse-Drama with Special Reference to the Plays of Browning and Tennyson.

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INTRODUCTION

"In time", says, W.B. Yeats in *Plays and Controversies*¹

"I think, we can *make the poetic play a living dramatic form again* and the training our actors will get from plays of country life, with its unchanging outline, its abundant speech, its extravagance of thought, will help to establish a school of imaginative acting." This statement of Yeats indicates the modern urge to renovate poetic drama stagnant since the Restoration period. In order to escape from the realism of prose-drama, the cinema and other arts, the poetic playwrights of today strive to revive the dead poetic drama and tap all the resources of the language to convey the modern consciousness. T.S. Eliot says, "I believe that poetry is the natural and complete medium of drama, that the prose play is a kind of abstraction capable of giving you only a part of what the theatre can give, and the verse-play is capable of something much more intense and exciting."² Elsewhere he remarks, "I say that prose-drama is merely a slant byproduct of verse-drama. The human soul in intense emotion, strives to express itself in verse. The tendency at any rate of prose drama is to emphasise the ephemeral and superficial; if we want to get at the permanent and universal, we tend to express in verse."³

After the Restoration period, verse-drama fell on evil days. The eighteenth century, fettered by classical models, could not boast of any enduring attempt in this direction.

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¹ (1923) Page 131.
² *The Listener*, 25th November, 1936.
³ 'A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry' in *Selected Essays*, p.46.
During the Victorian era a new genre arose—the closet drama, well conceived and executed but composed without reference to stage conditions. This artificial situation blighted the prospects of verse as a medium of a living theatre. In the twentieth century, serious attempts to break down the barrier between poetry and drama were made by Stephen Phillips, Yeats and Abercrombie in the earlier decades; more successful attempts have been recently made by Auden and Isherwood, Maxwell Anderson, T.S. Eliot, Christopher Fry and others.

Now it is pertinent to ask what contribution the Victorian age has made to the revival of poetic drama in our age. Even in sheer bulk, it is considerable. Tennyson, Browning and many other writers such as Wells, Laddes, Talfourd, Horne, Lytton, Arnold, Swinburne aspired to achieve success in the theatre. More than the other poets, Tennyson and Browning, indisputably the two greatest poets of the age, had close connections with the contemporary theatre and wrote verse-plays for the stage. Although this verse-drama has not been well thought of by scholars and critics, yet after studying this drama carefully for sometime and comparing it with English verse-drama of other periods (such as the Elizabethan, the Romantic, the Modern), I am convinced that it has much more merit than has generally been conceded to it. Before making a detailed examination of this drama in the chapters that follow, we may consider here some of the principal charges usually levelled against Victorian poetic drama. (1) First, there is the charge levelled by Nicoll,
Reynolds and Lowel that this drama is deficient in stage
craft.4 But, at their best, some plays of this genre attain
to a praiseworthy level of stageability; such plays as A
Plot in the 'Scutehoo, Pocket. The Lady of Lyons, Philip
Van Artevelde and Ien satisfied contemporary playwrights.
(ii) Secondly, despite of the usual charge5 that the theme
in Victorian verse-drama does not arise from contemporary
situation in the manner it does in Elizabethan, Restoration
and Modern Dramas, we notice the essential sensibilities and
ideals of the age deeply imprinted on Victorian drama.
Saturated with Victorian nationalism, Tennyson and Swin-
burne aimed at dramatising British history after the manner
of the Victorian Victorians; the forms of realism, concen-
tration on details and the accuracy of historical data
pursued by Macaulay, Proude, Lecky and others moulded the
technique of these playwrights too. Some of the familiar
themes of the literature of the day - patriotism, idealism,
Church reform etc. find their echo in Tennyson's plays.
Browning's political plays also reveal the contemporary
consciousness in describing democratic ideals aiming at
public welfare; his love plays emphasize the purity of love,
service and sacrifice in accord with Victorian morality.
Browning's plays testify to the contemporary drift towards
the psychological exploration of the mind of man as the
nucleus of his activities.

(Camb.) 1955, pp. 191 and 207; O. Bowell: The Victorian
Theatre, A Survey. 0.U.P.1956 p. 38; E. Reynolds: Early
(Camb.), 1955, pp. 206-07. See also his British Drama
London, '58, p. 322.
(iii) Thirdly, there is the charge that Victorian verse-drama is stylistically an echo of Greek and Elizabethan drama in diction. If there are traces of Elizabethan, there are also deviations from Elizabethan diction in the diction of the Victorian verse-drama. It is true that there are occasional instances of Elizabethanism in diction and turns of phrase; it is a matter that has been elaborately examined in my chapters V and X. It is enough to state here that Browning's conversational style was grounded on colloquial idiom; the long sentences full of parenthetical side-meditations and his innovations in word-formation are found equally in his poems and plays. Tennyson's dramas, too, contain his stylistic independence of Elizabethan offering parallels to the lyrical style of his poems. The phraseology at places, the Lincolnshire dialect employed by the rustics and the figures of speech in his plays have their close counterparts in his poetry. Likewise, the vocabulary of other verse-dramatists, frequently shows current speech. By and large, there is no fundamental difference between the diction of Victorian verse-drama and that of Victorian nondramatic poetry.

These verse-plays reflect certain modifications of dramatic forms also which, though they could not be perfected by the Victorians, showed the way to later dramatists. Browning's "In a Balcony" and Tennyson's "The Falcon" are precursors of modern one-act plays. Browning's stress on

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inwardness suggested possibilities of new developments. Browning's plays contributed to the evolution of ironic plays and tragi-comedies, the staple fare of problem dramatists. Tennyson's plays, full of lyricism, music and dance might have suggested to Yeats and others the usefulness of these elements in heightening the poetic effects of the play. Arnold's and Swinburne's experiments continuing the practice of Milton and Shelley, revealed to T.S. Eliot and other "experimentalistel" the possibility of utilising the Greek chorus for the modern theatre.

A study of Victorian verse-dramas should also lead to a better appreciation of these authors' poems because, frequently, poetic style adopted by them in their poems reappears in their plays. As most of the poets were subjective by temperament, they could not rise above their pet notions and literary techniques to quit the dramatic art. This tendency made these plays closest-dramas isolated from the theatrical needs of the time. Further, a consideration of the period of these plays is also important. Browning composed his dramas in the beginning of his poetic career when he was successfully writing his long poems and dramatic monologues; his plays are complementary to these poems in construction and style. Tennyson's dramatic period commences during the third phase of his poetic career when all his masterpieces which made him the Poet-Laureate, had appeared. His long narrative poem, Idylls of the King, showing affinities with the historical plays, was finished just before he commenced writing dramas. His ideas and attitudes which are traceable in the poems of this period and which are
corroborated by biographical evidences, recur in the dramatic compositions. The same is true of Swinburne and other poets. Consequently, the proper appraisal of the poetry of these poets demands a thorough study of their dramas. The present writer has tried to explore these resemblances for a better appreciation of the plays and poems of Browning and Tennyson in particular and of the other authors in general.

Several leading scholars, especially Nicoll, Fowell and Reynolds have dealt with Victorian verse-drama. (Nicoll's two monumental works History of Early Nineteenth Century Drama, 1800-1850 and A History of Late Nineteenth Century Drama, 1850-1900, with elaborate handlists of plays contain a few chapters on Victorian verse-drama.) Early Victorian Drama, 1810-70 by R. Reynolds is another valuable book on Victorian Drama in general. The Victorian Theatre. A Survey by George Fowell throws light on the theatrical conditions of the age. These important works judge Victorian verse-drama mainly from the theatrical point of view in examining their popularity on the contemporary stage. These scholars are not primarily interested in making a distinction between the poetic and the prose-plays. It is true that Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne and others failed to be as popular as the prose playwrights, yet some of their plays show outstanding literary power and look forward to the poetic drama of the twentieth century. The present dissertation is an effort to fill up these lacunae in our estimate of Victorian verse-drama. It attempts to estimate the worth of the poetic dramas of Browning and Tennyson in particular.

7- Subsequently, these works have been published as A History of English Drama (1660-1900), Vol.IV and Vol.V respectively.
and of other Victorians in general equally from the theatrical and poetical point of view. It deals chiefly with Victorian
verse-drama — problems raised by them and their value, their relation to contemporary literature and conditions and their relation to the traditional poetic drama. Thus this thesis aims at judging the contributions of these poets to the evolution of English poetic drama.

Poetic drama has certain problems peculiar to itself. With its emphasis on what is heard, it resembles modern radio-play most. The main stress in this literary genre is on the evocative power of the spoken word. Heightened dialogue is more important than visual actions and is fused with them. Dramatic effect is intensified by the spoken word which takes precedence over conventions governing actions, the gestures of the actors and situations on the stage.

Poetic drama is opposed to the cinema and the prose play which lay emphasis upon realism. A verse play requires a constant search for forms in accordance with the new theatrical conditions of the age. As T.S. Eliot says, "The dependence of verse upon speech is much more direct in dramatic poetry than

8 - I have not read any criticism on Tennison’s plays except a brief account by Iyall in Tennison (S.M.L. Series) and by Baum in Tennison Sixty Years After (New Jersey). Browning’s plays have been dealt with by many critics along with his poems but all of them are merely surveys. I have studied three interesting articles on Browning’s plays - Robert Browning and the Experimental Drama by J.P. McCormick (PMLA, 1935, LXVI 952-91), Robert Browning, Dramatist by F. Arthur Du Bois in Studies in Philology (Vol. 39, October, 1936, pp. 626-635) and Browning as a Dramatist by H.B. Charlton (Manchester, 1950). These authors have tried to evaluate Browning’s plays from new angles.

9 - F.M. Lucas says, "The drama indeed is lost when the eye begins to steal from the ear." Tragedy, p. 145.
in any other." There is a difference between the dramatic and all other kinds of verse, a difference in music based upon the current spoken language. The poet has to notice changes in colloquial speech, which are fundamentally the changes in thought and sensibility. He hits upon new word-combinations which lead to new imagery and vice-versa. Some critics object that poetry looks artificial on the stage. But prose on the stage appears as artificial as poetry, or alternatively that poetry can be as natural as prose. The prose-dramatist is unable to express some aspects of life, a fringe of infinite extent, a feeling of which we are only aware in a kind of temporary detachment from action. Dramatic poetry can express this peculiar range of sensibility at its moments of great intensity. The perfection of verse drama would consist in a design of human action and of words in order to combine the dramatic and the musical effects.

In the Victorian age, the great problem before verse-dramatist was to correlate verse-drama to the spirit of the age. In the eighteenth century, the streams of true poetic drama had already run dry; now the task before the Victorians was to appreciate new trends in drama as the melodramatists and the

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11- E.B. Lytton discusses this problem in 1833 in a chapter of his England and English which ends with an interesting passage on drama. "Not then by pondering over inapplicable rules—not by recurring to past models, not by recasting hackneyed images, but by a bold and masterly adaptation of modern materials to modern taste, will an author revive the glories of drama. In this he will in reality profit by the study of Shakespeare, who addressed his age and so won the future." My quotation is from the 1874 (New York) edition of the book, p. 275.
prose-dramatists had done. The majority of the poets could
not do so through a failure to accept the challenge of the
changing times. Yet, the literary drama, inferior to other
forms of drama theatrically, was superior to them in respect
of sheer literary merit. These poets did not crave for
popularity by stooping down to the mediocre taste of the
audience; they tried to maintain the same high literary stan-
dard equally in their dramas and in their poems. The cheap
though popular plays of the age have now fallen into oblivion
while some of the poetic plays occupy a permanent place in
the works of these authors and are read even today. It is
unjust to condemn all these plays on the ground of their
untheatrical nature and unpopularity; with their antiquated
forms, most of them contain excellent poetry, lofty imagina-
tion and originality.

As most of the Victorian poets were individualistic by
temperament, their dramas show broad similarities and thus
fall into groups. It is necessary to appreciate these resem-
blances as well as contrasts because the most of them occur
in different dramas. Thus, Browning's five political plays-
straford, King Victor and King Charles, The Return of the
Druses, Lurie and A Soul's Tragedy contain many comparable
tendencies. His three love plays - A Blot in the Scutcheon,
Coleridge's Birthday and In a Balcony follow almost same
pattern different from that of the political plays; Rasselas
is unparalleled in construction and characterization.
Tennyson's four historical plays - Queen Mary, Harold, Becket
and The Foresters, revealing the different phases of British
History, betray various similarities in technique and in the
treatment of history. His three romantic plays - The Cup, The Falcon, and The Project of Hay - contain some resemblances different from those in his historical plays. Swinburne's five important verse-tragedies can also be grouped in the same way. His Atalante in Calydon and Erechtheus follow the Greek pattern while his historical trilogy - Chesterfield, Bothwell and Mary Stuart reveals the three phases of Queen Mary of Scott's life with considerable resemblances in their texture. My aim has always been to discover these similarities and contrasts which reveal the distinctive features of these playwrights' dramatic art in their true perspectives. While evaluating main tendencies, I have considered these poets' poetry and the chief characteristics of the age and I have examined the individual worth of these plays wherever necessary. I have divided the thesis into chapters according to the principal elements of dramatic technique - plot, characters and form.

In 1837, under the tutelage of Macready, who acted Knowles, Talfourd and Bulwer, Browning started his dramatic career and continued to write plays up to 1855. He wrote five political plays, three love plays and Pippa Passes. Although some of his earlier plays were staged, yet his dramatic works, by and large, failed in the theatre and he gave up writing plays. Strangely enough, the plays of Talfourd and Lytton had attained considerable popularity in the same theatre during the early half of the century. In the later half of the century, major contributions were made by Tennyson and Swinburne, Tennyson's plays achieved theatrical success on account of his personal influence and the excellent acting of Irving and the
Kendall. Swinburne's plays were never staged with the exception of Locrine and Atalanta. The plays of other verse-dramatists—Wells, Reddyes, Alma and others—also never went before the footlights. This thesis makes an attempt to study these authors and their works chronologically. The first chapter is a quick survey of contemporary theatrical and dramatic conditions in which poetic dramatists worked. The next four chapters are devoted to an examination of Browning's plays. Then, five chapters deal with Tennyson's drama. The eleventh chapter surveys some other important verse-dramatists. The concluding chapter embodies my estimate of Victorian verse-drama and its relation to modern poetic drama.

CHAPTER I

The Victorian Scene in Drama - A Broad Survey

The state of drama in any language at any given point of time is necessarily linked up with the contemporary stage; the stage is the physical medium of drama. In 19th century England, however, an extraordinary situation obtained in which that drama which was composed with serious literary intent steered clear of the stage and came to be known as closet-drama while the theatres were content with works of virtually no literary merit. Such a divorce between literature and the theatre was beneficial to neither party. While the theatre needed the literary imagination, dramatic writings equally needed their natural art medium; viz., theatrical productions. In spite of the low opinion which historians (of English drama and theatre) have generally held about the Victorian theatre and drama, we can discern a forward movement fraught with possibilities which indeed flowered forth in the naturalistic theatre of later decades of the century. The Victorian theatre was essentially a theatre of a period of transition. As we study the history of the theatre, we can discern three significant trends- (1) Spectacularizing drama by perfecting mechanical devices, acts, stage-perspectives and the like. (2) Producing historical or local exactness in costuming, setting and dialogue by naturalizing this theatrical realism. (3) Adapting this naturalness to the requirements of the production of the plays with realistic acting and mounting.

Both the theatres - Covent Garden and Drury Lane,
remodelled in 1912, achieved the increased capacity of holding an audience of 3000 each by internal arrangement as well as by over-all dimensions. Fashionable clients, driven out by the uncultured masses from the pit to the boxes left the playhouse altogether and favoured the opera-house and fiction rather than the play. Mob-rule was dominant in swiftly growing industrial areas also where factory workers craved for amusement. The licentious and debased spectators in larger theatres and the vulgar, unruly and physically obnoxious audience in minor playhouses subordinated the true appreciation of the play to rough and stupid remarks, to the shouts of a drunken bully and to the silly solicitations of immoral women. The popularity of melodrama full of travesties and burlesques, indicate the comparative simplicity of the average onlooker. Victorian morality, negative in effect, suppressed free expression rather than created something entirely new. It made playwrights to avoid offending public taste and to please the audience by inculcating a peculiar morality, the mixture of the vulgarity of ordinary playhouse and tawdry following after fashion.

These theatres suffered from bad management and defective architecture; hence a part of the audience failed to observe the countenance of performers without the aid of a pocket telescope and to listen to anything except "the rented speech". The evils of these large houses were increased

when the gradual disappearance of the apron-stage forced
the actor farther and farther within the scene and when
lighting was not so brilliant as that now. Naturally,
the actors had to coarsen their methods of performance
in order to produce greater and greater spectacular effects;
they were often chosen for their acrobatic rather than the
histrionic gifts. The invention of gas led to new light-
ning devices and continued to hold the stage till the
introduction of electricity. Scenic designs too were
brought to perfection. Scenic art, mostly conventional
and inconsistent, was produced through various stage-inven-
tions such as two-floored set-ups, anticipating those in
modern theatre. Many plays were composed only for the new
schools of scenic tricks in costuming and designing. These
conditions made the mechanist, the actor and the director
superior to the playwright.

Developments in staging and realism led to the presenta-
tion of spectacular drama. New realism and popular
spectacle working hand in hand in the contemporary mind made
everything on the stage ostentatious, decorous and archae-
ologically correct. Even Shakespeare had to yield to show
and spectacle and underrated by Aristotle long ago. Old
conventions yielded place to the "spectacular" and histori-
cally "accurate" setting for tragedies and to realistic
interiors for modern comedy. A new sort of historical
realism was created by detailed accuracy in which even the
botany of the scene was historically correct. Accurate
costuming too, enriching scenic art was employed for spect-
acle, splendour and realism at the expense of historical
aim and the unity of impression. This movement towards the
spectacular and the historically accurate considerably influenced tragedy, melodrama and tableau. "Vampire" traps, "Corsican" traps and "star" traps, replacing old stage traps, contributed to the effect of spectacular drama, pantomime and musical play. The changed qualities of acting in the spectacular drama are seen not so much in tragedy or comedy as in the melodrama which demanded of its performers a unique blend of athleticism and bravado and which was instinctive rather than interpretative. This acting was to rouse emotions without troubling the mind and as such was admirably designed to attract the Victorian audience. The play-wrights often composed plays with one-star actor in mind, the Macready, the Kean, the Irving; ordinary actors moved round the stars of greater magnitude. These systems led to dramatic decline and to the spate of farces, extravaganza and melodramas.

Such theatrical conditions discouraged the English poets of the nineteenth century; sensitive writers as well as intelligent spectators were driven away by the unwholesome conditions of the contemporary playhouse. When these poets wrote a play it was often as 'closest drama' having for its stage the theatre of mind which has no particular need of external paraphernalia. This defiance of the stage is reflected in the form and choice of forbidden themes and in unwieldy lengths of plays. The prolixity of the English verse-play lingers late in the Victorian era with Tennyson's lengthy historical plays and with the 15000 lines of Swinburne's Buthvall. The majority of the poets from Wordsworth to Swinburne refused to come to terms with the theatre.
the contrary, Victorian professional drama was produced by
persons like Sheridan, Knowles, Bulwer-Lytton and W.G. Wills
whose popular plays have long been forgotten. Familiarity
with stage-craft afforded these writers an advantage over
the major Victorian poets who could not, under the prevail-
ing circumstances, rise up to the level of Goethe, Victor
Hugo or Pushkin in contemporary European drama.

The rise of the closet drama coincides with the roman-
tic emphasis on the drama of ideas. In the nineteenth century,
a major rupture between the closet and the theatre took
place and the closet-drama broke out like an epidemic. An
earlier example of the closet-drama can be found in Byron's
Acquitaine. Like the verse-dramatists of the nineteenth
century, Milton rebelled against the contemporary stage and
endeavoured to maintain the pristine glory of dramatic art
by imitating the memorable achievements of Greek drama. Like
the Victorian poets he composed with somewhat reformist
zeal and his dramatic attempt indicates on the whole the
fervid voice of a rebel. In the early nineteenth century,
the social and political movements, the theatrical conditions
and the impact of the Romantic temper—all combined to accen-
tuate external rivalry between Literature and the Stage.
Poetic drama, thus having relinquished its axis, the theatre,
emerged as "closet-drama" mystically and amorphous like Shelley's
Demogorgon:

"...ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline....."
(Prometheus Unbound)
II, IV 5-6

Yet it fully illustrated also Panthea's description of
"Yet we feel it is

A Living Spirit. (Prometheus Unbound, II, II, IV 6-7).

Closet drama continued to flourish in the Victorian era in the works of the authors like T.E. Talfourd, R.H. Horne, George Barley, Beddoes and Browning whose plays are more literary than theatrical. Even afterwards, plays almost all the principal poets and some novelists in England, such as Tennyson, Arnold, Swinburne, Dickens, Hardy, Meredith, and Henry James carried on the tradition of the closet drama. Theatrical monopoly was abolished in 1843, but the actual movement for the building of small play-houses, which saved the modern age from a huge spate of closet drama came much later. Diverse experiments made in the modern theatre have contributed to the rise of the poetic, symbolic, psychological and philosophical plays. The dramatic compositions of the authors like Yeats, Eliot, Spencer, Auden, Isherwood and Fry in England and of Strindberg, Maeterlink, Claudel and others in Europe are conspicuously an instance of "the significant attempts to reclaim drama for literature," if not always of the movement of literature away from the commercial theatres. It seems that the spirit of the Victorian closet play is still with us, though the drama has undergone a "sea-change" and in this context the dramatic attempts of the Victorians acquire an added significance.

Generally speaking, closet dramas have been under-valued and we have been too often told of their obvious

3 - David Daiches, The Present Age, p.149.
deficiencies, too seldom reminded of their imaginative power. Arnold’s Homer, Swinburne’s Atalanta, Shelley’s Prometheus Unbound and above all Browning’s Pippa Passes are admirable poetry. For the weakness of Victorian drama, we should rather decry the degenerate stage than the dramatists. Closet drama in verse only exaggerates a trait which in its proper dimensions indicates health and normality. The ancient critics mostly judged drama as a branch of poetry incorporating all creative forms of literature. According to Aristotle, “The power for tragedy is felt even apart from representation and actors,” for it “reveals its power by mere reading.” Here he hinted at the “dramatic” quality which moves us in reading a play as much as in seeing it. When the ancient Sanskrit critics regarded drama as Drishya Kavya it did not cease to be poetry out of the realm of drama both in its wider and narrower sense. Sheridan and Shaw are as much poets as Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot. Though widely diverse, these definitions of drama have at least one thing in common; they do not confine the dramatic within the four walls of the play-house for “there remains much in life that is essentially dramatic but which is excluded from the enactment on the stage.”


5- Literally the word means "visible poetry." With a few exceptions, Sanskrit drama never repudiated the highest type of literature for the sake of stage-craft and in the words of A.F. Keith, "The Sanskrit drama may legitimately be regarded as the highest product of Indian poetry and as rising up in itself the final conception of literary art achieved by the very self-conscious creators of Indian literature."


This essentially dramatic quality can be revealed in any branch of literature of even in our daily lives. Thus we talk not only about "a dramatic novel" or "a dramatic poem" but also about dramatic disclosure or turns of fortune. A thorough acquaintance with the stage conditions alone, has never produced plays of the highest type. The basic problem of the drama is to harmonize the inward with the outward, the ephemeral with the eternal and the theatrical with the literary. So only when the excellence of great literature enters into drama it "survives its own age and takes on some aspect of immortality." 7 J. B. Spingarn, therefore, remarks that "for aesthetic criticism, the theatre simply does not exist." 8 Even when Shaw says, "A theatre to me is a place where two or three gathered together" 9 he seems to agree with this aspect. Stage-production, thus is often a corollary to good drama and mere stage-worthiness, evanescent by its very nature, is a very uncertain, relative and at least the partial test of the merit of the play. The traditional concept of the theatre are fast losing their significance today. Cinematography with its miracles of scientific devices can present almost any scene or situation. Through the radio play and the television play, even acted drama has approximated to the qualities of closet-drama. Good drama not only delights

9 - G. B. Shaw, Dramatic Opinions and Essays (New York, 1928), p. XXIII.
a crowd in an auditorium but also touches the deepest chords in the heart of a sensitive reader in the closet. A play aspiring for excellence and immortality, has to be a literary piece as well as a good theatre-play.

In the Victorian era, the failure of verse-drama in the play-house led to the revival of other forms of plays which can be contrasted with the former. The birth of melodrama at the commencement of the nineteenth century was the direct outcome of the cleavage between the stage and drama. Unlike most poetic plays, melodrama freely utilise music and action proceeds to the accompaniment of instrumental orchestration; this adherence to action which increases as the decades pass, differentiates melodrama from verse-plays. The themes of melodrama are of varying character, but excitement, exaltation of virtue and poetic justice appear in all to captivate the attention of the audience. Unlike poetic plays, melodrama constantly adapted themselves to meet the needs of the stage. During this period, farce, like melodrama, was the characteristic and the popular form of play. Unlike serious drama, it contained a world of hearty laughter and carried on the tradition of merriment which can be traced back to the Elizabethan days. The tendency to search new forms in the early nineteenth century can be traced in tragi-comedies, interludes, burlettas, comic-operas, burlesques, extravaganzas and the like which ousted regular tragedy and comedies from the boards.

In the second half of the century, prose dramatists especially Robertson, Jones and Pinero rebelled against the

traditional school of poetic drama. They were considerably influenced by continental dramatists especially Ibsen who felt that drama should adapt itself to the needs of the present and be a mirror of the age and who accordingly discarded antique conventions of poetic drama. Likewise Robertson was an innovator, yet his work found its basis in the efforts of his predecessors, the melodramatists; his themes were related to the contemporary society which was a good deal different from the background of literary dramas. In Castile (1867), Robertson re-introduced individually conceived characters in contrast with idealized types in most poetic plays. As his dramas, unlike verse-plays, presented a view of the complete society of the time, he is regarded as a fore-runner of modern drama. The language of his plays is also free and natural. Henry Arthur Jones was much influenced by Robertson and contemporary melodrama. Jones's attempt to produce plays in which an idea plays a dominant role, helped the theatre in freeing itself from farces. By discovering the fields of dramatic interest long left barren, he has a generous share of credit for restoring the drama in England to its rightful position. The plays of Sir Arthur Pinero reveal further advancement in this direction. His farces like Dandy-Dick reveal the fine building of plot and appropriate stage-speech. Unlike verse-dramas, they mirrored life naturally and their importance is definitely theatrical. In The Second Mom, Tranquility (1893), English drama discovered itself at the close of the nineteenth century. The drama of Robertson, Jones and Pinero thus laid the foundation of modern drama.

The theatrical decline of poetic drama led the poets to
device diverse kinds of dramatic poems especially dramatic monologues, which could satisfy both the poetic and the dramatic urges of these poets. Browning's interest in the psychological analysis of motives often unrelated to concrete action doomed his dramas to failure on the boards although the dramas split themselves up into excellent monologues.

The same is true of Tennyson and some lesser writers such as Augusta Webster and Lord de Tabley. In the absence of any corresponding evolution of drama to challenge it, the dramatic monologue was fully exploited by the talented poets especially Browning and Tennyson whose plays have a close resemblance to their monologues in form. It was in the hands of these Victorians that the transition from the earlier forms of dramatic soliloquy, dramatic lyric or dramatic narrative to that of dramatic monologue became perfect. These poets mingled these allied dramatic forms into a new amalgam and produced a hybrid structure in which perception of character in a dramatic setting and through self-revelation became the key-stone. In other words, the new form acquired a prestige that drama had failed to enjoy. Moreover it was independent of the stage and all physical representation. Since the focus of attention all the time was upon the inner workings of a single speaker, all that was needed to enjoy it as good dramatic literature, was perfect sympathy with the speaker.

In the second half of the century, a change came with a notable theatrical event, the Act of 1843, abolishing the monopoly of the two patent houses and allowing the new houses to raise their heads. The changed audience of the middle classes sober, honest and quiet, rejoiced to see the new artistic efforts and dramatic styles in the play-houses. The
new respectability in the play-house arose partly from the surprising alliance between the Stage and the Church. The Church and Stage Guilds were established to develop religious and social sympathy between the members of the Stage and the Church which itself faced public controversy for reform. Such an imposition of the stricter and more formal morality in the drama can be discerned chiefly in Tennyson's verse-plays.11

Tennyson under the influence of the Oxford Movement raised controversy between the true and corrupt Church and religion in his chronicle plays. The sympathy of the Church was immensely valuable to the theatre and made the audience truly representative of the community. Public interest in dramatic criticism can be seen in the numerous newspapers and journals of the time. Common mortals also probed Parnasian controversies.

In theatre and drama, naturalism continued to be the most determined and the most persistent tendency; it revealed itself both in historical and contemporary themes. "I may safely assert" Charles Kean said in 1859, "that in no single instance have I ever permitted historical truth to be sacrificed to theatrical effect."12 Even the verse dramatists, showing artistic dissatisfaction with naturalistic method and a desire to escape from the sordid present, could not give up realism. In drama, realism led to the revival of historical verse-tragedies and prose-plays. The reaction to romantic tales of fancy and the consequent emphasis on actual facts stimulated the people

to a keen interest in British history and the age indeed produced notable historians like Macaulay, Buckle, Proude and others. If one had to classify history after 1830, one would place it among the branches of knowledge like science, philosophy and sociology in which guiding spirit was a desire for rational truth. Like historians, the poets also tried their hands at unfolding the picturesque panorama of the past in their unwieldy verse-dramas; e.g., Tennyson and Swinburne whose historical plays are notable for prevalence of accurate details at the expense of stage-craft. The spirit of realism and the concentration on details pursued by historians, stimulated verse-dramatists also to write plays with the same exactitude without revealing central purpose and the unity of impression. With their deep study of the contemporary and the ancient historians, both Tennyson and Swinburne wished to be judged as historians and dramatists and dramatized British history accurately with elaborate details which sometimes went against clarity of stage effect. These historical dramas are different from most of similar Elizabethan and modern dramas in which historical factors are subservient to dramatic effect. Swinburne remarked "There are two ways in which a poet may treat a historical subject: one that of Marlowe and Shakespeare in the fashion of a dramatic chronicle; one that of the greatest of all later dramatists (Hugo), who seizes upon some point of historical tradition, some character or event proper or possible to the time chosen, be it actual or ideal and starting from this point takes his way at his will and from this seed or kernel develops as it were by evolution the whole fabric of his poem." Similarly, the realistic tendencies aiming at the...
search for truth and psychological analysis of motives traceable in contemporary fiction is to be discerned in poetic dramas also chiefly in those of Browning, Tennyson and Swinburne. 14

The latter half of the nineteenth century is also marked for the revival of patriotism in the nation. About the middle of the century, the prosperity of the nation grew through industrial revolution and expansion of the British Empire and caused thus the English poets to a patriotic consciousness which was at the bottom of most of verse-tragedies. Tennyson who developed his patriotic orthodoxy in the last phase of his poetic career, revealed it also in his historical plays. Swinburne dealt with the vicissitudes of the Queen Mary of Scots whose topic fascinated him from his childhood, 15 though in his trilogy, patriotism is subservient to his overwhelming fascination for Queen Mary's character. Not satisfied even with the dramatisation of histories, these poets selected the ancient legends and myths of Britain which had already been tried by the earlier poets. While Tennyson remoulded King Arthur's legend in Idylls of the King, 16 composed verse-tragedies- Locrine, Marua, Palermo and Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards, the themes of which were mishandled by previous dramatists. 17

14—Arthur E.Bu Dinho writes, "The materials of the historical play, in fact, become so vast in amount and significance for Tennyson or Landor that to embody these trilogies, instead of single plays, had to be written. Heroes are exhibited as victims, not merely of their own wills but of a hundred behav-ourizing influences like circumstances, heritage, local conditions, movements of ideas (toward democracy as in Tenny-son's trilogy) which have to be elaborated descriptively." See his article "Robert Browning, Dramatist" in Studies in Philology p.628 (Vol. XXIII, October, 1935).

15—See the chapter "Tragedies" in Swinburne by S.C. Chew, London (1931).

16—See the chapter "Idylls of the King" in Tennyson, His A

and Relation of Modern Life, 1929, by S.A. Brooks.

Along with these historical and legendary dramas, the earlier revival of Hellenic led Talfourd to write his two plays — Ion and The Athenian Captive with Greek themes and subsequently Arnold to compose Herone, a dramatic poem in Greek form containing a Greek story in which the latter experimented with chorus to reveal its potentialities for the new verse drama.

It was followed by Swinburne’s attempts in Greek form in Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus which are based on traditional Greek themes and which use the chorus. Again, contemporary realistic tendencies are perceptible in these experiments too, as the use of the chorus by these poets strictly follows antique models with strophe, antistrophe and epode usually pursued in Greek tragedies. The form of these plays which are purely academic and which were never staged with the exception of Atalanta and Locria is too rigid to answer the new theatrical needs of the time. As their literary excellence is greater than their stage-craft, these Greek verse-dramas also fell flat in the theatre like the tragedies of the “Elizabethan Revival”. As a contrast, in modern times, the experimentalists like Eliot Auden and Fry evolved a new choric form to suit the contemporary theatre and they have been more successful in this attempt than these Victorians.

Serious drama in the Victorian age falls into three classes.

The first group consists of unacted poetic plays; e.g., G.W. Wells’

16 “But it cannot be denied that the Greek forms, although not the only possible tragic forms, satisfy in the most perfect manner some of the most urgent demands of the human spirit.”

19 Ibid., p. 284.


Joseph and His Brethren and Arnold's Memoir. The second group contains verse-plays like those of Talfourd and Tennyson which were staged while the third group includes melodramas and naturalistic plays. Showing the same spirit at times, the two kinds - poetic plays acted and unacted and melodramas - often, come nearer to one another. The early half-century reveals the immense popularity of melodrama as a formal type, the treatment of some new themes and the revival of the verse-drama of a purely 'poetic' kind most of which never saw foot-lights. These literary plays falling into different groups according to their forms, should be examined in their chronological order. In the Romantic period, the Wordsworth-Coleridge-Scott group was succeeded by the Shelley-Byron-Keats group; in the Victorian era, the Browning-Tennyson set was followed by the Arnold-Swinburne group. This school shows two characteristics - a desire to contribute novelty to dramatic literature but an incompetence to develop theatrical insight. The literary men sought to substitute melodrama, the chief cause of dramatic decline as well as the expression of the new forces within the theatre, with the legitimate tragic drama by echoing the Elizabethans and the Greeks in style and by inserting a good deal of their poetry and philosophic conceptions. Thus the lack of stage-craft in the drama from Baillie to Browning and from Wordsworth to Tennyson is partly due to the great prestige of the Elizabethans which prevented critics and playwrights from

22 See Reddocks's advice to the contemporary dramatists. "With the greatest reverence for all the antiquities of the drama, I still think, that we had better begot than revive - attempt to give the literature of this age an idiosyncrasy and spirit of its own and only raise a ghost to gaze on not to live with - just now the drama is a haunted ruin." The Complete Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes (Panfrolic Press, 1923), I, p.29.
the necessity of thinking of immediate requirements of English drama.

Shakespeare worship has always been a persistent characteristic of English drama and every age has tried to pay its homage to the Bard in its characteristic fashion. In the nineteenth century, the charm of play for the study led the poets to the dramatic pasture of Elizabethan drama where they were drawn as much on account of their own tastes and temperament as of the drabness of the age. Shakespeare in particular, provided for these poets, an encouragement to attempt drama, for he represented the perfection of poetic activity by being both a poet and a dramatist. But by an irony of fate, the Victorian writers were too absorbed in the poetry, characterisation and philosophy of Shakespeare to study his craft usefully. By the immensity and height of his achievements, Shakespeare overshadowed most of the poetic playwrights who crawled like Lilliputians about the feet of his colossal image which they had formed in their own minds. Shakespeare's plays, too, like those of the Greek, German and French playwrights, were for many poets essentially "closet dramas" and unwittingly beckoned them to a path from which Shakespeare himself would have turned back in confusion.

Yet it is characteristic of Shakespeare's excellence that it has not contributed a rigid traditionalism to English drama. Since the Elizabethan age, the playwrights have been neo-classicists, romanticists, Victorians and realists in spite of the fact that they constantly borrowed from Shakespeare. Shakespearean drama throws a perpetual challenge to the play-
wrights of all times and climes to explore new forms for changing situations within the tradition of English drama. Even Shaw measures himself by Shakespeare. But an era is not less distinctive than another or a dramatist less individual or less representative of the time just because the age or the author is Shakespeare conscious. The twentieth century admires Shakespeare as much as any other age but has still found it possible to strike out new paths in the composition and production of plays. There was nothing really to prevent the Victorians from transmuting their admiration for Shakespeare into original and creative drama.

Victorian verse-drama contained typical plays showing "signs" of tragi-comedy and betraying a transition between the romantic and the realistic plays. It continued to be "a live product" of its times and revealed itself chiefly in three currents unhindered by Shakespearean influence. The three genres, which are not mutually exclusive, conjointly contributed to the growth of new poetic drama. First, anticipating the realistic authors of modern times, Swinburne, Tennyson and particularly Browning produced ironic plays containing the conflict between the complicated personal and social motives and approximating the sarcastic or comic point of view. Echoing Julius Caesar, Browning's Strafford, for example, represents different principles in a conflict of personal and social motives and thus foreshadows Galsworthy's Strife with Roberts and Anthony resembling Pym and Strafford. The Romantic Movement of the early nineteenth century combines within itself the seeds of creative idealism and of social realism; on the one hand, it escapes into the realm of unreal and imaginative wonder and on the other, it takes interest in the life immediately around it. Secondly a new historical
drama, a genre cultivated sooner or later by all Victorian poets, stimulated curiosity in the social determinants which needed accurate staging, costuming and acting. The playwrights, unlike the Elizabethans, were obsessed with social materials so thoroughly that they devised trilogies to furnish their plays with historical realism. These historical plays mostly aimed at making the dramatic persons neither black nor white but spotted and in course of time dispensed with off-colour persons. Farces also revealed these realistic tendencies. Lastly, Shakespeare played a minor role in the evolution of domestic drama, the staple fare of nineteenth-century verse-drama, pursued persistently by Jerrold, Knowles, Browning, Talfourd and Lytton. The domestic drama reveals sentiments rather than characters or ideas in conflict and brings about denouement by means of tricks like the sudden death or discovery of long-lost relatives or lovers. These dramas often achieved significance because they humanised romantic heroes and heroines by introducing homelier passions—love for the parents, for the lover, for the people, tribe or country. These plays often ended inconclusively as they portrayed the conflict of sentiments which could not be violated without shocking the audience.
CHAPTER II

PLOT CONSTRUCTION IN BROWNING'S PLAYS

Browning began his dramatic career in 1837 with Strafford composed at the instance of Macready after finishing his long poems - Pauline, and Parasigles. His pursuit of drama for eighteen years constituted an important stage in the development of his total poetic personality and helped the growth of his characteristic creative talent which expressed itself in his plays and monologues. The composition of his plays was a departure in his poetic career when, seized with a great desire to reform the stage, he experimented in the form with a spirit of challenge. Already in his early poems, he had given evidence of radical notions about poetry; now he tried to carry these experiments over to the realm of drama too. In spite of the poor response from the theatre, Browning struggled hard with his experiments by writing closet plays up to 1855. His plays, partly traditional and partly forward-looking are among the most important plays written in the nineteenth century. With the emphasis on human psychology, realistic character-portraiture and irony, they have contributed to the development of the realistic drama.

Browning's dramas with the exception of Pippa Passes revolve around a single theme of either politics in which usually a defective leadership is exposed or love in which an individual attains moral victory over base passions. Among his five political dramas, Strafford is based on the story of Strafford's loyalty to the king ending with his downfall. King Victor and King Charles has for its theme, King Victor's willing abdication in favour of his son, Charles; the play ends in Victor's defeat and death when he
foolishly attempts to recapture the Crown by force. The
Return of the Druses turns round the victorious struggle
of the Druses conducted by Djabal against the oppressing
Christians. The theme of Lurie is the hero's resistance
to the Pisan army and his treacherous masters and the play
ends in his suicide. A Soul's Tragedy tells of the hypo-
cracy of Chiappino, a lost leader whose selfishness and
false pretensions are exposed eventually. Of the four
romantic plays, A Blot in the Scutcheon has the theme of
sinful love; Colomba's Birthday deals with the Duchess
Colomba's sacrifice of her Duchy for the sake of true love.
"In a Balcony" is the tale of Norbert's submission to true
love in spite of temptations and threats. In Pippa Passes,
however, there are four similar but separate themes connected
together by Pippa's songs; it consists of a quartette of
separate scenes linked by the fleeting figure of Pippa.

The revelation of the characters' soul through an
inner conflict of moral values, is the ultimate objective
of the story in everyday play. In Browning's five political
plays, almost every prominent character is torn between two
or more antagonistic emotions with the result that an internal
ordeal develops in him along with external struggle, the
former being more powerful than the latter. In Strafford,
a play "one of Action in character, rather than character
in action," the hero struggles between two powerful rival
feelings - his love for the country and his blind faithfulness
for Charles, which is at times, shaken by the King's weaknesses.

1- See original preface of Strafford discarded later by
Browning and quoted in A Browning Handbook by W.C. De-Vane,
p.58.
"Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man
To represent the multitude, receive
All love in right of them — supplant them so,
Until you love the man and not the King—
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes
Which sent me forth."

— (Strafford, Act. II)

(Scene II, The Poetical Works of Robert Browning, p.79)

Like Brutus, Pym, Strafford's rival too is torn by the conflict between loyalties — his love for Strafford and his more powerful attachment to his country by the sacrifice of his friend.

Pym — "Have I done well? Spain England! whose sole sake
I still have laboured for with disregard
To my own heart — for whom was made
Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up
Her sacrifice — this friend, this Wentworth here."

(Ibid., p.96).

In King Victor and King Charles, King Victor offers his Crown to his reluctant son, Charles, but subsequently, he wants to take it back; King Charles struggles between his loyalty towards his father and his duty to his people. In The Return of the Druids, Djabal's pose as Hakim throws him in a conflict between his love of Annel and his resolve to liberate the Druids on the one hand and his fraudulent method of fulfilling the resolve on the other.

"Djabal— That a strong man should think himself a God;

I — Hakeem? To have wandered through the world
Sown falsehood and thence reaped now scorn now faith; for my one chant with many a change, my tale of outrage, any my prayer for vengeance - this Required, forsooth, no were man's faculty, Nought less, than Hakim's?"


Amiel, Djebel's beloved, dies under the great stress of two rival passions in her heart - her love for Djebel, the saviour of her tribe and her utter abhorrence for his deception. Loys, Djebel's friend loves him for his service to his tribe, but hates him for being an impostor. In Luxia, the hero's loyalty is in conflict with the desire for revenge created in his mind by his treacherous masters. He escapes this internal agony by taking poison. In A Soul's Tragedy, Chiappino's overpowering selfishness and greed for material gain constantly clash with his good aspirations and incite him ultimately to repudiate the same principles for which he once stood.

Intense emotional crisis is the basis of Browning's love plays also. In Pippa Passes, at the opening of each scene, all the prominent characters are at the height of their spiritual conflict except Pippa. It is her song which saves the adulterous Ottina and her paramour Sebald from moral disaster; Julia who doubts whether to accept or reject his newly wedded wife; the patriotic Luigi who is about to succumb to his mother's allurements, and lastly the bishop who yields to the Intendant's criminal temptations. The event sequences, symbolical in character form a heterogeneous pattern, betraying Browning's conception of life. With these four loose scenes or rather four segments, the
poet weaves a unified pattern of life based on multiplicity.

Like a sharp-edged knife cutting a section through a solid
substance, Pippa passes by singing her innocent songs at the
climax of each of the four tense situations. In the other
plays of love, the plot turns round love in conflict with the
antagonistic emotions of the characters. In A Blot Trencham
is torn between his regard for his family prestige and an
ardent love for his younger sister; Mildred has two contend-
ing feelings - her affection for her elder brother and her
love for Mertoun with whom she has sinned. Mertoun expresses
two rival feelings - his guilty love for Mildred and his
regret for the blot he has brought upon Trencham's family
honour. In Colombe's Birthday, the Duchess Colombe has to
make a choice between the two contradictory courses: she
has either to marry the cold and selfish Prince Berthold
and thus save her Duchy or to wed Valence, her sincere lover
by sacrificing her Duchy. "In a Balcony" describes Norbert
in struggling desires - his loyalty to the Queen, but his
devotion to Constance; Constance loves Norbert sincerely, but
she hesitates for her lover's material good. Ultimately, she
submits to him.

"You were mine, now I give myself to you."

This struggle ends, invariably in the triumph of the
nobler desire and often leads to the downfall of the wicked
and the victory of the good. In the plays on the political
themes, this nobler desire is often for public welfare and
in the romantic themes, it is for the purity of emotions.
Strafford's efforts to strengthen a weak monarch at the
expense of the English people fall before the higher aim of
Pym who sacrifices everything for public welfare. In King
Victor and King Charles, the vain ambition of Victor who strives to regain the Crown has to yield to his popular son's determination to serve his people. (In The Return of the Druses, Djabal's two noble desires - the deliverance of his tribe from the tyranny and his love for Amael - are fulfilled, but his pretentious claim to be the Hakim, is exposed. Djabal succeeds in the fulfillment of the divine mission of liberating the Druses, but he fails as an individual to win the heart of Amael; he achieves her love too late as a man when he fails as a God.

"A third and the better nature rises up

My mere man's nature and I yield to its
I love thee, I, who did not love before."

(Act V, Works, p.271). In Amael's inner struggle between her devotion to Djabal, and her disgust for his imposture, the former, the nobler one wins. She becomes exalted only when her love for the man triumphs over her love for the God. In Luria, the hero wrestles between two inconsistent desires - either to be loyal to the state or to take revenge on his treacherous masters by using his power; he chooses the former noble course.

"This was my happy triumph morning; Florence
Is saved: I drink this, and ere, nights- die! Strange."

(Act IV, Works, p.380).

2 - Regarding the theme of 'The Return of the Druses,' Browning wrote to Miss Newirth: "I want a subject of the most wild and passionate love, to contrast with the one I mean to have ready in a short time (King Victor). I have many half-conceptions, floating fancies; give me your notion of a thorough self-devotion, self-forgetting, should it be a woman who loves thus, or a man? What circumstances will best draw out, set forth this feeling?" Quoted in A Browning Handbook by E.C. De Vere, p.119.
In *A Soul’s Tragedy*, Chiappino who villainously owns his friends’ noble acts, succumbs to Oguben’s superior intellect morally and materially; but Luizolfo, his virtuous friend, becomes victorious. The triumph of a noble purpose is the invariable close of all the romantic plays. In *Pippa Passes* the chief characters oscillating between criminal intentions and the dictates of conscience, are assisted by Pippa’s songs to win moral victory at last; in the remaining romantic plays, the purity of affection is achieved by the characters after their bitter struggle between love and other base emotion.

External conflict plays a minor role in Browning’s
dramas. Unlike that in Tennyson’s plays, the main interest,
here, lies in emotional crisis and meagre external struggle
subservient to it. In some of Browning’s plays, outer con-
flict helps to make primarily proper background while some
of his plays are completely devoid of it; e.g., *Pippa Passes*, and
*A Blot*. In the former, it is the main characters in the
episodes - Ottina, Gebald, Jules, Luigi and the Bishop who
experience internal struggle only. In *A Blot* all the promi-
inent characters who fail to resist externally do what no man
of common sense would have done. In spite of the hints given
by his sister, over-sentimental Trebham, unlike Guardolen,
fails to understand that Mildred’s lover and betrothed are
the same; Mildred fails to reveal her lover’s identity to
her angry brother. Hartoun who could have explained the
fact to a happy end, is unsuccessful in doing so and allows

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3- Cf., the statement of Sordello who composed songs like
Eglamor to please the Beligne, but who later on switched
over to the deeper aspects of human interest.
"Man’s most life shall have yet freer play
Once more I cast external things away." (Sordello, V, 617-18)
himself to be killed by Treason. The play lacks sufficient external situations and the element of fate which have made Shakespeare's striking parallel Romeo and Juliet natural. Colombe's Birthday contains a little external conflict between Duchess Colombe and Valence on the one hand and Prince Berthold with his associates on the other; the Prince offers to marry Colombe in order to secure the Duchy without resistance. This situation is subordinate to the enigma in Colombe and Valence's souls. In "In a Balcony", the outer conflict between Horbert and the disappointed Queen who sends the guards to torture the lovers is insignificant before the inner crisis in their souls.

In the political plays, Browning has attempted to fuse the political and individual lives of his dramatic personae; but eventually the political crisis yields to the spiritual conflict of the characters. Strafford shows the outward strife between two groups - one led by Strafford and the other guided by Pym. All the historical battles between Strafford's armies and the rebels supported by the Republicans and even Strafford's sensational trial, have been narrated and not dramatized. The struggle between the Royalist party and the Republican party follows historical facts, but it is subordinated to the inner conflict of Strafford and Pym, conflicts of which there are no historical evidences. In the first

A good artist will

... Leave the mere rude
Explicit details! 'tis but brother's speech
We need, speech where an accent's change gives each
The other's soul. (Ibid., V, 634-37)

4 - For the detailed comparison between the two plays see A Browning Handbook by De Vane who argues that while Shakespeare's play is well-motivated, Browning's is not. p.128.

half of King Victor and King Charles, the political events leading to King Victor’s willing abdication in favour of his son, are insignificantly narrated; the main interest lies in the enigmatic action of Victor, in offering his crown to his apparently weak son. In the second half of the play, Victor’s conspiracy to regain his crown is not staged; the principal interest centres on the spiritual crisis of King Charles and his disillusioned father.

"My soul it will drop from me. See you not?
A crown’s unlike a sword to give away
That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give.
But crowns should slip from paled brows to heads
Young as this head......

(1731, Pt. II, Works, p.206)

The unconventional structure of the drama is one of several indications that Browning was reluctant to be bound to a tradition, sanctioned by the use of Shakespeare and all the Elizabethans. The play with only four divisions, falls into titled chapters rather than Acts. These chapters are sub-divided into parts thus : (A) First Year, 1730 - King Victor; Part I, Part II; (B) Second Year, 1731 - King Charles; Part I, Part II.

The Return of the Druses, and improvement in structure shows an excellent blend of inner and exterior strife. Along with internal crisis, the play contains the impressive scenes of outer struggles after the Prefect’s murder by Anael. The last scene of Djabal’s trial for imposture, the most heart-rending scene that Browning ever wrote, shows the clashes between the Druses and the Christians along with the inner conflicts of the principal characters. Djabal is
ultimately successful in his sacred mission but in the process he ruins himself and his sweetheart. He speaks poignantly to the dead woman:

"What remains

But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?

That I exalt myself, set free my soul."

(Act V, Works, p. 272)

The Return of the Druses, is entitled a tragedy in which owing to the complications of motives, the ideal and the real, the personal and the impersonal are fused; the play resembles a tragic-comedy in its ironic conclusion, the destruction of the hero but the unheeding survival of the Druses. In Lurio, the regular war between the Florentine forces led by Lurio and the Pisan armies conducted by Tiburzio loses its interest before the moral enigma in Lurio's soul; the hero adopts the noblest course. In A Soul's Tragedy, the revolt of the citizens of Faenza against the ruling authorities of Rome yields in importance to the gradual moral downfall of Chiappino. Like King Victor, this play also contains unconventional plot. The whole play is divided into only two Acts. Act First being what was called the poetry of Chiappino's life opens inside Luitolfo's house. The Second Act "its prose" opens in the market place.

At times, melodramatic improbabilities arise partly from emotional intensity and partly from the dearth of external background. They echo the domestic drama of sentiment written by Knowles, Talfourd and Bulwer. Such situations spoil the natural action of the play and account for much of
the loose plot-construction. In Strafford, Lady Carlisle's affection for Strafford, wholly Browning's own invention is over-sentimental and fails to reach the level of true love. Strafford is unsuccessful in appreciating the devotion to Lady Carlisle who supplies him with the secrets of the King's court and who stands by him when he is forsaken by everybody.

**Strafford** - That voice of hers -

You'd think she had a heart sometimes!

His voice is soft too......

*(Act II, Sc.II, Waver , p. 79)*

Receiving no response to her true feelings, Lady Carlisle feels naturally disappointed.

**Lady Carlisle:**

The King—Ever the King:

He thought of one beside, whose little word Unveils the king to him - one word from me, Which yet I do not breathe!*

*(Act III, Sc.II, Ibid., p. 84)*

In the last scene of **King Victor and King Charles**, King Charles, overwhelmed with grief to see his arrested father, ignores his wife's advice.

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6- Browning writes in the original preface to Strafford discarded later by him: "My Carlisle, however, is purely imaginary. I at first sketched her singular likeness roughly in, as suggested by Matthews and the memoir-writers - but it was too artificial and the substituted outline is exclusively from Voiture and Waller."

*See - A Browning Handbook*

*By W.C. De Vane, p. 59.*
"Duty! there's man's one moment; this is yours"

He immediately surrenders the Crown to his father who realizes his folly and returns it at once.

"My son! it will drop from me, see you not?"

A crown's unlike a sword to give away -

That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give!

But crowns should slip from paleied brows to young heads as this head: yet mine is weak enough,

even weaker than I knew:


All these incidents unfolding quick variations in the emotions of Victor and Charles and ending abruptly in Victor's death are contrary to historical facts. These incidents have been invented by Browning to hasten the catastrophe through a sentimental course.

_A Plot_, displays many events of improbable incidents and utter lack of common sense. All the leading characters swayed by a fit of passion, do what a man would have ordinarily avoided; they immediately repent their hasty actions.

"Tressure - Mertoun, haste"

And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you

Should tell me for a novelty you're young,

Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.

But your pardon ample as my own!"


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7- For the change, see _The Browning Cyclopædia_ by E. Berdoe (1949), p. 241.
Hildred: Ah, Thorold! was't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me - whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were aying him?


At the fall of the curtain, the bloody tragedy of the noble
members of a reputed family created a sense of unnecessary
waste and suffering. In Luria, the hero's death is unconvincing. Unlike Strafford, it does not grow out of the situation of the play. Browning seems to have Othello in mind, but while the Moor's self-destruction is natural, Luria's is not. The unexpected repenting in Luria's adversaries who are employed like scaffold to build his noble character, has made external conflict insignificant.

Luria, Browning writes to Miss Barrett, "is a Moor of Othello's country and, devotes himself to something he thinks Florence, and the old fortune follows - all in my brain yet, but the bright weather helps and I will soon loosen my Braccio and Fuccio (a pale discontented man), and Tiberisco (the Pisan, good true fellow, this one), and Domizia the Lady - loosen all these on dear foolish (ravishing must his folly be), golden hearted Luria, all these with their worldly-wisdom and Tuscan shrewd ways; and for me the misfortune is, I sympathise just as much with these as with him - so there can no good come of keeping this wild company any longer...."

Browning's dramas as a rule conform to the classical unities. Five plays out of nine adhere to the unities of time, place and action, while the others achieve a near approach of either one or another unity. In the former, the action starts at the end of the story, a practice usually followed in Greek plays. Thus the locale of Pippa Passes, in all through an Asolo. The poem consists of four acts of action, each apparently unrelated to another but a little observation brings home to us the cleverly wrought unity and integrity of the acts of action. The unity arises from the personality of Pippa, from the same fundamental moral idea with which the four stories have been charged; from the same notion of the impact of purity and innocence on sophistry and criminality; and from the clever suggestions in course of the gradual unfolding of the play, that the various incidents intersect one another. The play, as a whole, therefore, achieves the unities of time, place and action.

The next play, remarkable for the observance of the unities is The Return of the Drums, the masterpiece of Browning in conciseness; nowhere in his dramas have the unities been so well observed as here. The place of action is throughout a Hall in the Prefect's palace. The ideal of time-unity is reached in the almost complete correspondence of stage-time with the time of the story; the action in every subsequent scene starts just after that of the former. The main action opening at the close of the story, takes about three hours, almost the actual time in the story. The different actions in the same scene could have been advantageously divided into separate scenes without any detriment to the principal action. The unity of action
consists in Djabal's efforts to liberate the Druze from the tyranny of the Christians by posing himself to be their God. The unities add to the highly pitched environment in which the various conflicts of the play have been skilfully interwoven.

In Colombe's Birthday, the unity of place is achieved by restricting the complete action of the play to the different chambers of the Colombe's palace. The whole action is concentrated within a day. The unity of action lies in Colombe's final choice in marrying Valence, her sincere lover, by sacrificing her Duchy on her birthday. The action of Luzia takes place in Luzia's camp between Florence and Pisa and requires no more than a single day. The unity of action consists in Luzia's struggle against the Pisan army and in his moral revolt against the masters. "In a Balcony", following completely the unities, resembles the modern one-act play. The whole scene is enacted in a balcony full of marry-making in the beginning but catastrophe in the end. The unity of action is achieved by Norbert's ignoring the Queen's threats and facing disaster with his beloved in the stage time corresponding with actual time.

The dearth of external action in Browning's plays, evidently results from his poetic theory which enunciates the doctrine that the poet should aim at portraying the soul of the characters with least physical actions. For Browning, drama is a form of subjective poetry. Widely different from the current notion of it, it is not so much a representation of outward action as a careful analysis of the inner workings of the human soul. The playwright's aim
is to

"...unveil the last of mysteries...

Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play."

(Sordello, V. 616-17)

Like Browning, Sordello sought to touch the springs of
man's inner life and anatomized the deepest and emotions,
rather than describe external objects. He thinks that
'thought is the soul of act' and that poet will finally
"unveil the last of mysteries in man's life" and external
details will be introduced in as to the extent, they throw
light on the inner springs of action. Like Browning,
Sordello was ridiculed by the people who could not appre-
ciate his art.

Aprile believed that an inspired poet will be parti-
cularly interested in the human soul.

"Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man
Would I express and clothe it in its right form
Or blend with others struggling in form
Or show repressed by an ungainly form."

(Paroslaus, II, 433-36)

Like Browning, Sordello, the poet composes plays with the
same technique, but fails. However, Browning struck a new
note in dramatic form by concentrating on inner conflicts
and prepared the ground for the new approach in ironic
drama. He paved the way for the modern playwrights
delineating chiefly the sub-conscious mind of the characters

9- See Sordello, Book II 487-92 and 570-79)
10-Ironic drama is "a type, specializing in conflicting
motives, centred commonly in an individual but often
with the minimum of action. Further, inspired by Shelley in his youth, Browning, an analyst of human motives, was a humanist too. His plays, dramatic lyrics or monodramas revealed the humanitarian criticism of life and like tragic-comedies rejected the mysterious explanations of conduct.

In his dramas, Browning embraced humanity as it is more than the contemporary domestic dramatists who abstained from the delineation of the realistic picture of man.

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Involving more external conflicts between the personal and social motives or between purely social principles.” Galsworthy’s plays represent this type, while Shaw’s represent tragico-comedy. Cf., A.K. Du Bois “Robert Browning, Dramatist.” Studies in Philology (Vol.33, October, 1936), p.626.
CHAPTER III

CHARACTERS IN BROWNING'S PLAYS

Browning's dramatic personae testify to his skill in characterisation. Compared to Tennyson's and Swinburne's, Browning's characterisation shows admirable variety and wide range.

"And thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who chronicled the stages of all life."

(Pauline, II, 853-64).

Fully to appreciate Browning's mastery in the art of characterisation, one must consider all the characters of his plays, classify them (as far as it is possible to herd together highly individualised characters) and examine them singly and collectively in the light of their actions as well as motives. The main characters in Browning's five political plays can be broadly divided into three groups—the tragic heroes, their foils and the intriguers. Browning's tragic heroes are complex personalities having an admixture of both vice and virtue. Like Byron's Werner and Sardanapalus, they are neither ideal nor didactic. They create a sense of pity, fear and waste at their downfall and conform to Aristotle's definition of the tragic hero. Browning believed that the poet should probe the innermost springs of the human heart and bring to light its hidden and unrecognized truth. He will not differentiate between an idiot and a saint, for truth abides within human heart. The mixture of opposite and different quali-

ties in the character comes out in various ways. With their individual life more charming than their political career, the tragic heroes possess some common traits. In Strafford, Strafford's devotion to King Charles creates admiration, but he neglects the people's cause and suffers tragic fate on account of serving a betraying monarch. In King Victor and King Charles, King Victor abdicates his kingship in favour of his son but presently wishes to regain his old status and thus becomes involved in a series of criminal acts which essentially lead to his downfall. In The Return of the Druses, Djabal's devotion to the cause of the tribe and to Anael is mixed up with his imposture. In 1840, three years before the publication of The Return of the Druses, Browning painted a similar character in Sordello. Being devoted to the service of their aggrieved tribe, Sordello and Djabal are infatuated by women - Sordello by Palma and Djabal by Anael; they suffer from acute spiritual crisis from this conflict of love and politics. Both of them perish owing to some inherent defect in them. In Luria, Luria's fidelity to Florence unshaken by many suspicions and temptations combines his sensitiveness which leads him to suicide. In A Soul's Tragedy, Chiappino's patriotism is mixed up with his overpowering greed for wealth and power responsible for his moral and material downfall.

These protagonists blindly adhere to a political cause and develop a certain abnormality; they employ fair ways or foul to achieve their aim. Though, at times, they become conscious that the motive or the method of their struggle is not just yet they persist and hasten towards
their irresistible draw. While their passionate loyalty to the cause is praiseworthy for their sincerity and incessant efforts, its aim may be low or its means improper. Strangely enough, disillusioned by unforeseen events, these heroes realize the futility of their course, but then it is too late for them to retrace their steps and the drift of their nature and circumstances force them to stick to the tragic path. The struggle of good and evil in these tragic heroes becomes the cause of their spiritual agony. Browning fails to delineate the different traits of his characters in changing circumstances; their limited features are painted in static situations only. Villains, who often contribute to external conflicts in drama, are missing from Browning's plays.

Straafford, the first hero of this type, knows that he is bound to be ruined by serving an unworthy monarch who signs his death warrant; still he clings to him throughout in spite of the warnings given by his well-wishers.

"Vane! ...It is indeed too better that one man, any one man's presence, should suspend
England's combined endeavour; little need to name him! ........
Not the King beckons, and beside him stands
The same bad man once more, with the same smile
And the same gesture......"

(Works, pp.66-67)

Straafford realizes his folly only when his fate is already sealed in prison and he uses words reminiscent of Cardinal
Vulcan's pathetic observations at the time of his fall.

"Stradford: - Put not your trust
    In princes neither in the sons of men,
    In whom is not salvation."

(Ibid., p. 94).

Still the last wish before Strafford's execution is the pardon for his master.

"Stradford: ...I trust the King now wholly to you Pym!
And yet, I know not: I shall not be there:
Friends fail if he have any. And he's weak,
And loves the Queen, and ...Oh, my fate
in nothing.

Nothing: But not that awful head—not that."

(Ibid., p. 96).

The next tragic character, Victor, yearning for his lost monarchy, disposes his son by his criminal attempts to regain his throne and presently dies in misery. Just before his death, Victor understands his folly:

"Victor: - My son it will drop from me, See you not?
But Crown's unlike a sword to give away -
That ist a strong hand to a weak hand give.
But crowns should slip from palied brows to heads
Young as this head: yet nine is weak enough,
E'en weaker than I know."

(Ibid., p. 206)

Though Djabel, the liberator of his tribe, knows that his lofty mission may be jeopardised by his imposture, yet he sticks to the same deceptive method half-unwillingly. About
two years after The Return of the Druses, Browning wrote a
defence of an impostor in the form of a lengthy review in
prose which appeared as "Article VIII" in The Foreign
Quarterly Review for July, 1842. In this essay, Browning
was discussing a new technique of his own - the method of
special pleading, which he was to bring to perfection much
later in Bishop Blougram's "apology". The method aims at
bringing to light hitherto unexplored truths about the men
who had suffered neglect at the hands of the people. 2 Djabal
falls into an ambiguous and ironic situation by partly em-
ploying his divinity for his end and by partly wishing he
were only a man for Amiel's love. His personal and
altruistic motives remain irreconcilable throughout.

Despite the obvious danger, situations urge him to
adopt the same course which brings about his catastrophe.

"Djabal: ......'Tis now--

This day-hour-minute. 'Tis as here I stand
On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
That I am found deceiving and deceived:
And now what do I? hasten to the few
Deceived, are they deceive the many-shout
As I professed, I did believe myself!"

(Ibid., pp. 253-54)

Ignoring his friend's sincere advice from the very beginning,
Lucas, like Strafford, realizes the folly of serving his
treachorous masters too late.

2 For the studies in imposture, see D. Smalley's Edition of
Browning's Essay on Chatterton, Ch. III, pp. 54-77.)
"Lucio: Ah brave me? And is this indeed the way
To gain your good word and sincere esteem?
As I the baited animal that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their praise?
Obedience is mistake then? Be it so!"

(Ibid., p. 374).

Even then, unsophisticated general’s fidelity remains unbroken throughout.

"Lucio: If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, who to me stands for mankind
If that break up and, disimprisoning
From the abyss - Ah Friend, it cannot be."

(Ibid., p. 370).

Chiappino, deliberately employs friendship, love and his political principles for his ignoble end. He grows aware of his mistake only when he is completely caught in Ogriben’s trap.

Chiappino: Do you begin to throw off the mask?
To jest with me, having got me effectually
Into your trap."

(Ibid., p. 395)

In these political plays, Browning introduces another set of characters who can be paralleled and contrasted with the tragic heroes in respect of their approach to the same political problem; they serve as foils to the heroes and are sometimes orally in conflict with them. Being sincere friends of the heroes in private life, most of them are forced reluctantly to become their political rivals; although their friendship continues throughout. They radically differ from the tragic heroes in their personal attributes
and their contradictory approaches to the same political end. Pym’s patriotism is set sharply against Strafford’s royalism; the popular King Charles, against the undemocratic King Victor and noble loy, against the impostor Djabal. Husain’s common nature is opposed to that of his sensitive friend, Luria and sincere Luotlo’s, to that of the pretentious Chiappino. The spiritual crisis of the foils is less acute than that of the protagonists who are torn, generally between noble and ignoble sentiments; loya, Husain and Luotlo confident in their aims and actions, suffer no mental agony. The antagonists are more just and definite in their approach to political problems than the tragic heroes whose aim is either defective or abnormal. These loyal men are free from the indiscriminate blindness of the heroes. Their noble and rational devotion to the cause testifies to their restrained efforts; their political approach is wider in appeal, nobler in sentiment, and more feasible in execution than that of the protagonists. The centre of their actions is frequently the welfare of the people and their means to that noble end is also fair. The antagonists are more impressive and admirable figures than the heroes. Ultimately, these foils succeed in their political enterprises while the protagonists fail wholly or partially.

Failing to win over Strafford by persuasions, Pym, like Brutus in Julius Caesar subordinates his friendly love to his patriotism and fairly brings about Strafford’s downfall. His approach to his noble cause is more rational than Strafford’s who

“Was set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power, power without law, power and blood to
(Worke, p.67)."
ing Charles tries to persuade his ambitious father to
exist from the unlawful acts and gets him arrested after-
wards; his political actions, are more judicious than his
father's. Loys' fair efforts to liberate the Druses betray
a sharp contrast with Djabal's deceptive methods because
he former gets the tyrant prefect dismissed rather than
ordered. Being a christian knight, he opposes the mis-
lead of his co-religionists; his political actions are more
generous than his scheming friend's. Loys' idealization of
Djabal and his sympathy for the Druses conflict with his
loyalty to his Christian order; his good intentions are
defeated at every step due to the complete disillusionment
in his faith by Djabal's imposture. Unlike Luria, Hussain
suspects the Florentines' actions from the very beginning
and advises his friend to retaliate in order to correct
his enemies after the revelation of plot against Luria.

Hussain. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating men.
They see thee."

(Ibid., p.368)

Hussain. Both arms against Florence!
Take revenge!
Wide, deep-to live upon, in feeling now,-
And after live, in memory, year by year—
And, with the dear conviction, die at last."

(Ibid., 378).

Hussain is more natural than the sensitive Luria who is
"too good for human nature's daily food" and who commits
suicide as a remedy for all these evils. Luizolfo, genuine
in his political principles and friendship is noble than Chiappino, the hypocritical lost leader.

Through this technique of parallelism and contrast, Browning indirectly reveals his conception of benevolent leadership. The rebellion of the protagonist, Bjabal who is willing to dimp his soul completely by posing that he is Rezin in order to rescue his aggrieved tribe from the European yoke connects The Return of the Druses with Strafford: Sordello, King Victor, Colombe's Birthday and A Soul's Tragedy, as a link in the evolution of Browning's political thought. Browning's studies of Strafford mark the beginning of the author's political views. In Sordello, Browning presented the case of the people against the great nobles; in King Victor and King Charles this humanitarianism was the guiding principle of the Young King Charles. The action in The Return of the Druses depends upon this motivating force. It is the main spring of the actions of Luigi in Pippa Passes (Pt. III) and of Valence in Colombe's Birthday. Its perversity lies exposed in A Soul's Tragedy. The Lost Leader (1843) also reveals feebly this humanitarianism.

A third group of intriguers plays a conspicuous role in entrapping the tragic heroes towards their downfall. Strafford is an exception. These persons are contrasted with the tragic heroes and the foils who have loyalties with slight variations are troubled by no emotional fidelity and their actions are inspired by little passion. They are more resourceful than other characters and testify to the playwright's skill in characterization. With their superior ingenuity, they are successful in thwarting the evil designs of the heroes. Clever D'Ormes who knows King Victor's nature
more than his son, suspects Victor's sincerity from the very beginning.

"D'Ormea - You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent?"

Keeping strict watch over Victor's activity in exile, he successfully persuades his credulous master to do his duty by arresting his ambitious father; thus Victor's plot is foiled by D'Ormea's superior intellect. The resourceful old Runcio cleverly struggles with the great schemer, Djabel, when the former is caught unaware in a desperate situation. In order to prove Djabel's fraud, he presents the great's beloved who too has temporarily lost faith in the swindler. He asks the pretending Hakim to exalt himself; finally he is successful in unmasking Djabel's imposture by bringing about his suicide. Braccio, the cunning commissary of the Republic, achieves his purpose in keeping all the persons in the camp in ignorance regarding Luria's trial. Ogniben, the most skilful of all Browning's intriguers among the plays, tactfully handles pretentious Chianmo and induces him to confess his selfish leadership before his followers by his crisp repartees and flattering talks. This clever old priest, a spectator and a humorist quells the popular uprising by creating the people's distrust in their own leader and says, "I have known four and twenty leaders of revolt." Ogniben foreshadowing Sir Henry H. Feil in Eliot's Cocktail Party is instrumental in deflecting the course of life round about him; Pippa, too, unconsciously plays a similar role with reference to her surroundings. It has
been suggested that in Ogniben, Browning projects a symbolic device. To the present writer, it seems an unwarranted subtlety of criticism to discover in the handling of Ogniben any symbolic device characteristic of 20th century experimental drama; Browning’s play on the contrary, is built of clear issues and well-knit devices.

These schemers suffer no spiritual crisis. They are definite in their political aims and act without doubts; they have the presence of mind to deal with a political crisis effectively. While the heroes mostly waver about the propriety of an action, these persons immediately take the bull by the horns and become triumphant. These characters face the political problems objectively and stand in sharp contrast with others.

In his three love plays — A Plot, Columba’s Birthday and "In a Balcony", Browning introduces a new design of characterization different from that in his political plays. As in the "she-tragedies" of the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century, the central figure in these plays is a woman. Here, the prominent characters, fewer than those in political plays, can be broadly divided and

3. In the Essay "Robert Browning & the Experimental Drama" (PMLA, Vol. 68, 1953), James Paton Mc Cormick says, "The Papal Legato Ogniben, is merely a part of the personality of the leading actor Chiappino: "I help men carry out their own principles, that is all." Most of the conversation between him and Chiappino is not dialogue in the usual sense. It is Chiappino arguing with himself. Ogniben is a visual representation of Chiappino’s conscience. He (Ogniben) objectifies the breakdown of the protagonist’s mind and Chiappino feels more and more guilty over betraying his ideals." See also Elizabethan Serrots’s interesting comments on Ogniben and Soul’s Tragedy in Letters, 11, 16, 54, 44, 77.

into three groups. The first set consists of the noble heroines; the second includes the true lovers who strive for union with their beloved. The third consists of the obstructers. The plot of these romantic plays hinges on the love and pathos of the heroines with whom Anael, the most powerful woman in Browning's political plays, has certain features in common. These women — Anael, Mildred, Colombe and Constance — are distinguished for the purity and warmth of affection for their lovers; they sacrifice everything — their life, kingdom and wealth for their love. These heroines unlike those of Tennyson, become the victims of conflict between love and inferior emotions.

This mental agony which shows the hard test of their love and which, frequently, ends fatally, is the most fascinating feature of their character. They are not simply passive sufferers like Tennyson's heroines; they are often, ingenious in action. Resolved to marry only the liberator of her tribe, Anael loves Djebal whom she thinks to be Makim and desires to exalt by being his bride.

"Anael — Djebal, he seems is absorbed!

And for love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride? One way!"

(Works, p. 259).

Her love confronts this rival emotion — an adoration for his godhead which impedes the realization of true love and which, at times, creates doubts in her mind. She does not know whether she loves the god or the man in Djebal; she precipitates her tragedy by killing the "retired" prefect unnecessarily.
"Amael— For never seem— shall I speak the truth?—

Never a God to me! 'The Man's hand, 
Eye, voice. Oh do you veil these to our people 
Or but to me? To them, I think, to them:
And brightness is their veil, shadow - my truth!"

(Ibid., p.257).

Djabal, too, feels that his divinity stands in the way of 
their love.

Djabal— It seemed love, but it was not love:
How could I love while thou adoredst me?"

(Ibid., p.271).

After Djabal's confessions, her worship is immediately 
changed into abhorrence which temporarily shakes her faith 
in him.

Amael— Hakim would save me. Thou art Djabal

Crouch!

Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud—
.....falls prone."

(Ibid., p.264).

She unexpectedly reveals the impostor's conspiracy to the 
Nuncio and becomes a witness in his trial before her tribe. 
Meanwhile her revived devotion triumphs over the rival 
sentiment.

Amael: .....O, best of all I love thee!
Shame with the man, no triumph with the God!
Be mine! Comel!

(Ibid., p.264)

She utters a sacred lie like Desdemona and calls him Hakim 
to save him from humiliating death; she herself perishes.
instantly under emotional stress. In Andrea, as in Palma of Oddello, Browning delineates severe spiritual struggle in a gentlewoman's soul.

In Mildred's devotion to Mortson, the playwright introduces the consciousness of guilt committed in her ignorance. Mildred— I— I was so young!

Beside, I loved him, Thorold— and I had

No mother, God forgot me— so I fell."

(Ibid., p.284)

Charles Dickens praised these lines in his letter dated Nov.25, 1842. "...I knew nothing that is so affecting, nothing in any book I have ever read, as Mildred's recurrence to that "I was so young — I had no mother."

I know no love like it, no passion like it, no moulding of a splendid thing after its conception like it. This guilty conscience reflected in Mildred's recurring and moving words is a stumbling block to the ideal union with her lover and prevents her from confessing that her betrothed and the lover are the same. The psychological conflict she goes through, keeps Thorold in constant ignorance of the situation and leads to the death of all. In Colombe's desire to marry a true lover there is also an inferior ambition to serve her Duchy. She is tempted to marry Prince Berthold to save the Duchy at the expense of true affection. In this conflict between love and material gain, almost throughout the play, the dramatist portrays the most captivating feature of her character. Constance's devotion to Berthold is self-denying. It hampers her sincere attachment and urges her, at times, to sacrifice her lover for his material advantage.

5- See John Forster, Life of Dickens, 1875 II, p.25 and De Vane, Browning Handbook, p.125.
"Constance - Not till now!
You were mine. Now I give myself to you."

(Ibid., p.485).

The inner struggle invariably ends in the victory of pure love over rival passions. Though these ladies are ruined materially, they triumph in their love; the value of their devotion is enhanced by worldly loss. Rejoicing in their moral conquest, they either die or are ruined.

In the love plays, the dramatist introduces true lovers—Hartoun, Valence and Horbert, who are more firm and definite in their aims than the heroines and who play a uniform role in revealing the different facets of their beloved's devotion. Overcoming trials and tribulations in their way, they successfully stand the test of love and unite with their beloved in spiritual victory; they suffer from no such enigma as may be found in the heroines. Guilty Hartoun is more constant in his love than his beloved, Mildred. Valence is more resolute in his genuine affection than Duchess Colombe. Horbert is more deeply rooted in his love for self-denying Constance than the latter for him. The lovers help the heroines to remove their base desires and to achieve the victory of pure love. Sharing their beloved's fate, they rejoice at the ideal union with their beloved. Hartoun is successful in removing the consciousness of guilt from the heart of Mildred who dies to meet him in heaven after his supreme sacrifice. Valence succeeds in awakening the true conscience of Colombe who rejects material gain for warm love. By his sincere love, Horbert purges his beloved of her gross desire of his worldly prosperity.
In contrast with these lovers, Browning presents the third group of the obstructionists who hamper the union of heroines and their lovers directly and indirectly. Their actions testing true love play a conspicuous part in developing the plot and in revealing the different phases of love in the romantic play. Thorold, Prince Berthold and the Queen fail to understand genuine affection; they neither possess it in themselves nor can they realize it in lovers. They undervalue pure affection which they subordinate to worldly things. Sentimental Thorold realises the worth of his master's guilty love only too late after the assassination of Hertoun.

**Preacher**—I saw through

The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immoveable,
Had I but glanced where all seemed turbidest
Had gazed some inlet to the calm beneath."

*(Works, p. 250)*

For him, family honour is greater than his sister; his affection for Mildred is inferior to Hertoun's devotion to her.

**Mildred.** Ah! Thorold! Was't not rashly done

To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me—whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him."

*(Ibid., p. 290)*

Prince Berthold, greedy for the Duchy, underrates true love; his love is much inferior to that of self-sacrificing Valance.
"Berthold—Affections all repelled by circumstance?
Enough to these no credit I attach—
To what you own, find nothing to object."

(Ibid., p.315).

The proud Queen cannot realize Berthold's attachment to Constance, her rival in love.

"Queen— I am not generous like him—like you!"

Disappointed in love, she puts the lovers to death and acts contrary to true love. These characters possess some vehement passion which prevents them from realizing true love and dominates their actions. This ignoble desire urges them to resort to undesirable means to impede true love. The obstructors fail to stop the ideal union of the true lovers and their beloved; they lose in love, though they may have worldly advantage.

Love is in the Centre of Browning's philosophy of both life and art. In the beginning of his career, he emphasizes the transcendental aspects of love, but later on, he regularly dwells upon its earthly phase. Love in Browning sometimes is a love for a lofty spiritual idea as in Pauline, and Christmas Eve and Easter Day. Sometimes, love is correlated to the personal life of the artist; almost the personal love of the artist is discoverable in Pippa Passes, (Part II), "Youth and Art" and "Andrea Del Sarto". The last form consists in broad human sympathies and can be noticed in Paracelma and Sordello. In Browning's plays, love is a transcendental passion which vanquishes antagonistic emotions and attains its maturity finally.

Valance—You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates,
All other passions to itself." (Colombe's Birthday.)
Unlike that in Tennyson, love, here, is not ideal at the outset; Browning's heroines and their lovers have to resist a great deal to achieve their ideal union. Its aim is emotional satisfaction without any mental reservation.

Valence — ....because bold confidence,
Open superiority, free pride —
Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned:
Because where reason, even finds no flaw,
Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

(Ibid., p.310)

Browning undervalues the physical union of marriage and conjugal life; her heroines, unlike those of Tennyson, do not dream of

"Love for the maiden, crowned with marriage,
No regret for aught that has been
Household happiness, gracious children,
Debtless competence, golden mean."

(Tennyson)

Pipps Passes shows a different scheme of character-
ization. The chief characters can be divided into three groups — the spiritual victims, the tempters and the saviour, Pipps. The spiritual victims — Sebald, Jules, Luigi and the Bishop — have the inner conflict between noble and ignoble sentiments. They are neither ideal nor villainous. The tempters try to bring about their moral downfall and the victim would have succumbed to their wicked intrigues but
for Pipps's songs. They lose materially but triumph
spiritually. Then, there is the group of the tempters—
Ottisa, Pheas, Luigi's mother and the Intendant in whom mean
passions are predominant and whose chief purpose is to aid the spiritual victims' ignoble sentiments. Just on the brink of their success, tempters' efforts fail before the chief characters' conscience strengthened by Pippa's song. Some of them, like Ottina and Phene shrink from their misdeeds when they are unsuccessful in their attempts. Pippa, the personification of spiritual service, is the awakened pure conscience reflecting God's voice and directing men to the proper path. Like Balaamian in Balaamian's Adventure (1871) and Aristophanes' Apology (1875), Pippa incites the wavering persons to subdue their weaknesses and to prepare for noble deeds by her inspiring music. Pippa also symbolizes true urge for moral quest which innocently tries to seek happiness in corrupt worldly things;

"Pippa—Try now! Take Apollo's Four Happiest ones." (Works, p.166)

She realizes, ultimately, that happiness does not lie in the hollow glamour of the world. It consists in rendering moral service to men and in keeping them to overcome their ignoble passions. This ethical duty is perfect bliss and greatest service to the Almighty.

"All service ranks the same with God—
With God, whose, puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first." (Works, p.185)

In his characterization, Browning uses various devices. The first is the confessional method used in two ways. Either it is confession to another character who, like the interlocutor, helps the chief characters to unveil their
nature or it is a self-confession taking the form of soliloquy. In the
confession of the first type, the real motives of the
characters' actions are known. Such confessions are employed
in unmasking the character of Clappis in A Soul's Tragedy.
In the first scene, his hypocrisy and selfishness are exposed
in his talks with Emilia and in the second, his traits are
gradually unfolded in his talks with Ogniben. The inner
conflict of the heroines is generally shown in this way.

Ansel admits to Manni, her friend, the confusion in her mind
regarding the divinity of Djebal. Mildred confesses the
secret of her love to Guendinan. Colome and Constance reveal
conflicting emotions in their talks with their lovers. The
method of soliloquy has been used effectively to show the
soul of the tragic heroes. Here the inner springs of characters'
actions are clearly unfolded. The real nature of the tragic
heroes - Strafford, Victor, Djebal and Loria is known from
their long soliloquies rather than actions. Finna Passe
reveals the unique blend of these two methods. The spiritual
victims - Gebald, Jules, Luigi and the Bishop, are delineated
through their confessional conversation with the tempters
while Finna is portrayed through her long soliloquies.

Another technique is the introduction of the hero given
by others before the entrance of the hero. Such a description
acquaints the audience with the chief trait of the hero, his
relation to others and to the present circumstances. Either
the entire first scene or its major part is devoted to such a
device in the beginning of the political plays. In Strafford,
the first scene contains the English people's description of
Strafford's indiscriminate loyalty to his master. In King
Victor and King Charles, the tête-a-tête between Charles and
Polyxena throws light on King Victor's villainy; the little
tattle among the Druses informs about Djabal, the 'Hakim'
and the Druses' response to his divine mission. In Lurie
the introductory talk of Florentines throws light upon
the courage and nobility of the hero and the conspiracy of
the Florentines against him.

The subsequent descriptions of the hero are given by
foes as well as friends whose praise or blame are supple-
mentary and conjointly help to understand the nature of
the hero. The real assessment is made only after we have
heard both the sides. Djabal is God for the Druses but
an impostor for the Christians. Strafford is a loyal servant
to the King and his friends but a traitor to his countrymen.
Frequently, the fair judgment of the tragic heroes is given
by their foils and contrivers.

Browning reveals the character of minor figures through
action. In the political plays, the foils and the contri-
vers are deficient in introspection and their actions and
reactions lead to the real appraisal of tragic hero's
characters. In the love-plays too, the true lovers are
portrayed through action. The chief characters act only
towards the end of the plays. Lastly, the technique of
parallelism shows the folly of one character and the excele-
lience of another. Every hero is opposed by his foil who
reveals the conflict of personalities and approaches. The
foils together with the contrivers are able to expose the
defective leadership. Through this method, Browning's
views about right leadership are inferred.

Browning's characters delineated in restricted circum-
stances only fail, as a rule, to be dynamic. The lack of
changing background in most of his plays retards the proper
evolution of his characters. He can delineate his persons excellently in fixed moments alone. Thus, Browning's dramatic persons, though diverse in nature, are mostly static. Almost every play contains a typical sentimental character like Ion in Talfourd's Ion. Browning, partly influenced by the contemporary domestic drama dedicated Strafford to Macready, Pinna Passe to Talfourd and Colasbe's Birthday to Barry Cornwall, persons who had close association with the school of domestic drama. Further, the loss of the individual, at times, furnishes the ironic aspect of life, the basis of tragi-comedies in which the group or race somehow survives the individual for better or worse.
CHAPTER IV
FORM AND TECHNIQUE IN BROWNING'S PLAYS

Browning's interest in the complication of human motives together with realism in character-portraiture is an important feature of his plays. His humanism is best mirrored through the dramatic form, which is not of conventional type. This new drama contrives to delineate the inner workings of the human soul with the minimum external action. Like Cordello, Browning desires to

"Leave the mere rude

Explicit details: 'tis but brother's speech

We need, speech where an accent's change gives each

The other's soul."

(Cordello, V, 634 -37)

Browning's characteristic poetry is built on this introspective content with a corresponding stress on the objective method. The commendable function of this indirect method of presentation is to enable the author to convey his message without recourse to self-display and to embrace all the aspects of life; whereas didactic composition often leads to controversy and criticism. The dramatic monologue reveals the practical counterpart of this new theory which Browning follows also in his plays.

We have noticed that dialogues in Browning's plays show internal crisis more than external conflict. The characters dissect their emotions rather than reveal outward circumstances responsible for that internal struggle. They are delineated through their long dialogues and soliloquies
in which action is subordinated to their reminiscences and meditations before the audience eager for action. Browning's tendency is to analyse the situation rather than provide the characters with sufficient motivation. Most of the dialogues and soliloquies concentrate upon past and present situations and portray a ruminating soul at a given fixed moment; these dialogues do not possess the forward look of drama. The 'asides' mostly neither reveal the characters' incentive to action nor solve any intricacy of plot-construction. There is the author's intense preoccupation with the deeper undercurrents of personality, "the soul's self" - the noble wrestling of a tormented soul, though one need not credit him with any technique of "psycho-analysis", as yet unknown. Browning remarks in the Preface to Boccaccio:

"The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul, little else is worth study."

(The Poetical Works of H. Browning, p.97)

The evolution of the plot is considerably retarded at places by such dialogues and soliloquies as ought to have suggested sufficient action along with the characters' introspection. Djebel's long soliloquy of sixty-two lines in The Return of the Druses shows his meditation.

"Djebel - That a strong man should think himself a God! I - Bakem? To have wandered through the world Sown falsehood, and thence raped now Scorn, now faith... Here Djebel - not..."

(Works, Act II, p.253-54)

Browning's valuble characters are fond of uttering long soliloquies and speeches. The soliloquies of Victor (Ibid., p.199) and Luria (Ibid., p.379) contain eighty-two lines each.
The introductory and concluding scenes of *Pippa Passes* consist entirely of Pippa's long soliloquies (pp. 165-68 and pp. 184-85). The speeches of Bracio (p. 364-65) and of Victor (pp. 189-90) having eighty-two and thirty-five lines respectively are a few other examples.

Motivated action or movement is the essential basis of drama. Complete immobility or stillness cannot make a play; its earliest form was full of spectacle and action in which the deed came before the word, the dance before dialogue and the movement of the body before the play of the mind. Action or movement of some sort will always be the sovereign law and the essential demand of the stage. Aristotle realized it long ago and modern drama is no exception to this characteristic of the form.

Browning, of course, does not really dispense with physical action, which Prof. Nicoll considers indispensable for success in the theatre; but he tends to subordinate it to play of thought and feeling. He directs his attention to psychological conflict, as in tragi-comedies and the scope of dramatic action is extended to include mainly the expression of sub-conscious ideas and latent feelings. Overt action is sometimes arbitrarily manipulated to throw light on emotional conflicts and the actionless dialogue of the dramatic personae impart a brisk movement to his plays on the intellectual level only. In Browning's plays, we sometimes find that action is *motivated* and *self-analysis* predominant. In *Strafford*, a play "one of action in character, rather than character in action"2 the reasons of Strafford's blind loyalty

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1- *The Theory of Drama*, p. 72.
2- Browning's remark in the original preface to *Strafford*. 
to his master, are inadequate; his unconvincing faithfulness, does not inspire the audience as that does of Kent, King Lear's devoted servant. When he realizes his master's treachery, Strafford's character becomes more and more introspective and reveals the fine exposition of his conflicting feelings.

"Strafford—....Did I make Kings? set up, the first, a man
to represent the multitude, receive
All love in right of them—supplant them so
Until you love the man and not the king—
The man with the wild voice and mournful eyes
Which send me forth."

(Act II, Sc. II. Works, p.79)

Pym's character is properly motivated, but unlike that of Brutus, it reveals minute heart searching rather than his spontaneous patriotism. His last long speech before doomed Strafford presents a fine analysis of his struggling emotions.

"Pym. Have I done well, Speak England! Whose sole sake,
I still have laboured for, with disregard
To my heart, — for whom my youth was made
Barren, my manhood wastes, to offer up
Her sacrifice — this friend, this Wentworth here.

(Abid., p.95)

Browning omits the background of outward conflict between the Royalists and the Republicans to concentrate on the inner drama of the chief characters.

In King Victor and King Charles, most of Victor's dialogues and soliloquies offer a close-up view of his moods in similar moments. His mental crisis all through is projected through his emotional harangues and his two long soliloquies—
the first of thirty-five lines and in the beginning of Part II, First Year 1730 and the second of about eighty lines in the middle of Part I of Second year 1731. Scenes of outward conflicts providing any external background are missing. King Charles who is more attractive than his father is similarly presented through his self-analyzing speeches. The major part of the last two scenes is devoted to the minute examination of his emotions.

"Charles (Facing the room), and why
Does Victor come? To undo all that's done,
Restore the past, prevent the future, cease
His Mistress in your seat and place in mine...I saw."

(Fbid., p.205)

In The Return of the Druses, an improvement upon the previous plays, the characters are inspired by a lofty motive, the liberation of the tribe from tyranny. The hero's introspection alone dominates the first half of the play. His numerous colloquies generally incompatible with outward actions, show his confused mind. Anaël, too, mostly unveils herself through self-analysis.

"Anaël. Yes, I am calm now; just one way remains -
One, to attest my faith in him: for, see,
I were quite lost else; Loyà, Djabal stand
On, either side- two men! I balance looks
And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed!
And for a love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride? One way!"

(Werka, p.259).
Her vacillations overshadow her deeds and often prevent her from a fixed plan of action. She fails to become a moving character in the first half of the play. After the Prefect's murder in Act IV, action proceeds briskly to the catastrophe. The last scene of Jhabal's trial is the most thrilling and captivating in Browning's dramas. Its strength lies in the harmonious correlation of the dramatic personae's inner conflict to their external actions leading to the tragedy of the impostor and his beloved and the survival of the Druze.

In his last plays, Browning switches on more and more to his favourite technique, that of concentrating on inner drama with the minimum external paraphernalia, the stock-in-trade of his dramatic monologue. External action is sublimated to the intellectual and emotional plane with the least stage bustle. In Luria, the scenes of war are missing. Almost all the important dialogues and soliloquies suggest Luria's introspective nature. His romantic love for Florence is gradually turned into disillusionment and disappointment. We can mark four distinct stages in the evolution of his emotions. The first Act reveals the unflinching faith of Luria, spell-bound by Florence—its people, its beauty and its art; the second Act, his loss of faith because he comes to know of the conspiracy against him; the third Act, his revenge temporarily eclipsing his allegiance to the state and the fourth Act, his revived loyalty triumphing over his base desire of retaliation.

*Luria-* Florence at peace, and the calm studious head
Come out again, the penetrating eye;
As if a spell broke, all's resumed, each art
You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile,
'O slept the glad heaven, O'er the white palace-front
The interrupted scaffold climbs again;
The walls are peopled by the painter's brush
The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.

(Act I, Ibid., p.366).

Luria- If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, who to me stands for mankind,
-If that break up and disprisoning
From the abyss -- Ah, friend, it cannot be!...

(Act II, Ibid., p.370).

Luria- Florence withstands me? I will punish her,
At night my sentence will arrive, you say.
Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel.
-Unauthorized to lay my office down,
Retaining my full power to will and do;
After- it is to see...."

(Act III, Ibid., p.376)

Luria- My Florentines? The notable revenge I meditated...
I ruin Florence, teach her friend mistrust,
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
And when she finds one day, as find she must,
The strange mistake and how my heart was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Florentines
Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise.
Who took me with such frankness, praised me so
At the glad outset?.....

This was my happy triumph-morning: Florence
Is saved; I drink this, and ere night, - die!
Strange."

(Act IV, Ibid., pp. 379-80)

Luria presents a fine development of a faithful public
servant's soul in similar circumstances, but the play fails
to become a moving drama. While the suicide of the sentiment-
al and introspective Luria is inadequately motivated that of
the brave but misguided Othello is convincing.

In The Soul's Tragedy, Chiappino is mainly portrayed
through his reminiscent dialogues with Fulalia. The first
part of the play is dominated by his long conversations which
unmask his hypocrisy and jealousy.

"Chiappino: I was born here, so was Luitolfo; both

At one time, much with the same circumstance
Of rank and wealth; and both, unto this night
Of parting company, have side by side
Still fared, he in the sunshine - I, the shadow."

(Act I, Ibid., p. 385)

Browning casts all the scenes of Chiappino and Luitolfo's
conflict with the ruling authority. In the next scene too,
the previous events connecting it with the first scene are
narrated by the tittle-tattle between disguised Luitolfo

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3 - While some critics praised Luria for "grave Elizabethanism" many others criticised the play for the length of speeches and paucity of action. Miss Barrett, too, had misgivings for Luria's unheroic and insufficiently motivated suicide. The play was never staged.
and the bystanders; its major part describes the consecutive spiritual downfall of Chiappino through his self-confessional utterances to Ogniben.

The love plays betray the same tendency. In Pippa Passes, the main characters reveal their emotions in concentrated situations without sufficient action. Browning experiments with the retrospective technique to evoke the deep perspective of the past which contributes to a psychological present by conversational reference. In Ibsen's hands, this device is remarkable; less so with others who have employed it. Thus, in the first episode which reminds us of the scene of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Sebald and Ottina unfold their inner turmoil by their tete-a-tete after the crime.

"Sebald - Why must you, lean across till our Cheeks touched?
Could he do less than make pretence to strike?
'Tis not the crime's sake- I'd commit ten crimes Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!
And you - O how feel you? Feel you for me?"

(Ibid., p.170)

All the circumstances which would have been excellent scenes of external background have been conveyed through the reminiscient dialogues between Ottina and Sebald. Again in the next episode, the previous incidents have been reported in the conversation of the students and not presented. The main scene consists of Jules and Phene's long dialogues showing the subtle analysis of their emotions. The two characters

are portrayed through their emotional speeches rather than actions. In the third episode Luigi's introspection overshadows his patriotism.

"Luigi - ...You smile at me?

'T is true
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness and as quaintly
As round about the antique altar breathe
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls."

(Ibid., p.179)

His character is a fine portrait at a fixed moment; it does not evolve with changing situations. The last episode too, reveals the nature of the bishop in static circumstances mostly through his dialogue with the tempter. Pippa is the only moving and symbolical character which reveals a unique harmony of meditation and action. Both the outset and at the end of the play, her two long soliloquies reveal her soul in search of internal bliss.

"All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
Make general plenty sure particular dearth,
Get more joy one way, if another, less.

Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven,-
What were all earth else, with a heel of heaven,
Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!

Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones-

(Ibid., p.166)

She tries to discover the inner contentment in the Great Four of the city, but she renders service by rescuing them.
unexpectedly from their spiritual dilemma and directing them to the right path. In the tangle of passion and plot, Pippa’s lyric soul pours forth its soul—seed inadvertently in a song—she resolves the problems and averts the catastrophe by becoming the unconscious due of a machine.

In A Plot, the guiding motive is the prestige of an ancient family of repute. At certain crucial moments in the play, the characters betray irresolution and infirmity of purpose, when the situation demands actions from them. Mildred, preoccupied with the internal agony of remorse, vacillates in suggesting that her lover and the betrothed are the same; any other woman of bold love, might have done to save the ugly situation.

Mildred - Thorold, do you device

Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be: ‘Tis ought to say that I’ll endure
And bless you, — that my spirit yearns to purge
Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire;
But do not plunge me into other guilt
Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name."

(Ibid., p.283)

When Thorold and disguised Hartoun stand face to face, sentimentalism dominates the situation. The behaviour of Hartoun who could explain his conduct only after the fatal blow is insufficiently motivated. His long dialogue which is full of considerably heart-searching, would have served the tragedy if it were uttered earlier.
Hertoun - Ah, Trasham, say I not "You'll hear me now!"

And what procures a man the right to speak.
In his defence before his fellowmen,
But - I suppose - the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?"

(Ibid., p.267).

Monomania Thorold, upset by his sister's guilt feels
repentant soon after the assassination of Mildred's betrothed
lover. His speeches are mostly melodramatic and self-analytical.

Trasham - Hertoun, haste
And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you
Should tell me for a novelty you're young,
Thoughtless, unable to recall the past:
Be but your pardon ample as my own!"

(Ibid., p.267)

trasham's unconscious burlesque "Ah, - I had forgotten: I am
dying" weakens tragic climax and illustrates Browning's lack
of the unerring sureness of a great dramatist at the crucial
moments of action.

In Colombe's Birthday, external action is subordinated
to the introspective portrait of a woman who, gradually
overcomes her base desires and finally accepts true love
by protracted heart-searching in similar circumstances. The
analytical element, almost, eclipses Colombe's voluntary
love and reveals her intellectual side rather than her spon-
taneous emotions.

The Duchess - Nay here -
False, I will never rash, I would not be!
This is indeed my birthday - soul and body,
Its hours have done on me the work of years.
You hold the requisition: Ponder it!...Choose you.

(Act III, "Worke", p.306)

Some of Valence's dialogues, too contain dissertation on
love rather than his natural feelings.

"Valence-Prince, how fortunate you are
Wedding her as you will, in spite of noise
To show belief in love! Let her but love you,
All else you disregard! what else can be?
You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood - purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself."

(Ibid., p.316)

The action of "In a Balcony", the last of Browning's
plays is elevated to the emotional plane and furnishes the
necessary background by reminiscent dialogues; in its intensive
concentration and economy, it closely resembles the monologue.
The speeches present fine analysis of the rival emotions in
a concentrated situation. The real motive of Constance'
self-denying conduct is not comprehensible hence the obscurity
of her character. Her concealment of Norbert's true love to
misguide the queen and to test her lover, arises from jealousy
rather than from self-sacrifice.

Browning states clearly his aim of drama in the original
preface to Strafford, "The represented play is one of action
in character, rather than character in action." It should
be particularly noted that though Browning composed these 
plays for the stage, his intention was not to conform to 
strictly conventional drama. Browning experimented with 
techniques of tragicomedy partly because temperamentally 
he would not follow the line set by others and partly 
because he desired to reform and to turn up the public 
taste that had been debased by swash-buckling melodramatic 
plays like The Slave Hunt, The Wandering Tribe, The Mystery 
of the Abbey, or The Blood Red Night. James P. Mc Cormick 
writes, "It was an accident that Browning appeared in the 
théatre at a time when there was no one capable of interpre-
ting his plays or encouraging what was really original 
and vital and realistic. The life situations had changed 
and when Knowles or Lytton or Talfourd attempted to energise 
a contemporary story in terms of the old conventions of 
character and action, it also never came alive. Shakespearean 
language degenerated into bombast because the emotions rep-
resented the way men had once felt rather than how they 
actually responded in the nineteenth century." When 
Browning wrote his earlier plays, the consciousness of the 
stage was in his mind but when he found the audience unres-
ponsive, he decided to tread freely and fearlessly his chosen 
path of monodrama working in the theatre of the mind. Renounc-
ing all hopes of gaining a pitiful of audience, Browning proceeded 
with a surer and firmer step in his last plays in the direction 
of monologue where the poet could display his poetic strength. 

Most of the dialogues and soliloquies in Browning's plays 
resemble his dramatic monologues which unfold a character's 

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inner soul in a concentrated situation, chiefly through introspective reminiscences. The monologue requires "a certain critical moment in one person's life and by permitting the individual to speak his character, the whole course of his existence and sometimes, the spirit of an entire period in the world's history are revealed in a brilliant search-light." It is a series of remarks usually confessional, addressed either orally or in an epistolary form to another person or to a group of listeners. Browning was highly skilful in revealing characters in states of fixed moments, but he could not endow them with traits that would sufficiently explain their later destiny. Tennyson's inherent idealism prevented him from becoming objective enough in his plays, in Browning the tendency was his preoccupation with the psychological present delineated through retrospection rather than actions.

Browning's pre-occupation with the inwardness of his characters leads to constriction and involution in his diction at places. Some passages are so tortuous that the reader has to pause in order to follow the minute analysis of emotions. He introduces too many side-issues so that the dialogue often runs to a length which weakens impression in place of strengthening it. Tennyson's long soliloquy of eighty-two lines at the end of Act IV fails to reveal clearly his motives of suicide. Often Browning leaves his sentence half-finished and his meaning half-expressed. In the main idea, three or four side-meditations connected with it slip into his mind and instead of


8- About Browning's obscurity, Tennyson said, "as for his obscurity in his great imaginative analyses, I believe it is a mistake to explain poetry too much. People have really a pleasure in discovering their own interpretations." (Tennyson, A Memoir, p.657)
using them in another place, he frequently inserts them into the middle of a sentence in a series of parentheses and then finishes the original sentence. The parenthetical phrases underlined in the following sentences produce a vagueness which cannot pass muster on the stage.

"Chissipino— I, now—the_ho.meless_friendless_penniless
Proribbled_and_exiled_wretch_who_speak_to_you—
Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
(The_thing_that_tears_me_most)_help_speaking_lies
About your friendship and Lutolfo's courage,
And all our_townfolk's_earnestness—
Through sheer_incompetence_to_rid_myself
Of_the_old_miserable_lying_trick
Caught_from_the_liars_I_have_lived_with,—God
Did I not turn to thee!"

(A soul's Tragedy, p.385)

Luria—

Perchance

A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
At having brought successfully to bear
"Caipat Florence" self her own especial arms,—
Her_craftiness_impaied_by_fiercer_strength
From Moorish blood then feeds the Northern wit—
But after — once the easy vengeance willed,
Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
—(Not_in_her_domes_and_towers_and_palaces,
Not_even_in_a_dream_that_outrage)!—low,
As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
Low, for the rival cities round the laugh,
Conquered and pardoned by a hirelling Moor."

(Works, p.379).
Pippa—Oh Day, if I squander a wavelet of these
A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(De they grant they are bound to or gifts above measure)
One of the choices or one of thy chances
(De they take God imposed thee of freaks at thy pleasure)
By Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

(Ibid., p.165).

Browning often follows same style in his poems too. Observe the following stanzas in "Bishop Blougram's Apology."

"In our common primal element
Of unbelief (We can't believe, you know—
Where still at that admission, recollect!)
Where do you find - apart from, towering o'er

The secondary temporary aim
Which satisfy the gross taste you despise—
Where do you find his star?

(Ibid., p.442)

The underlined parentheses break one simple sentence,
"In our common primal element of unbelief where do you find his star?"

"But you, - you're just as little those as I—
You Gigadibs, who thirty years of age,
Write stately for Blackwood's Magazine,
Believe you see two points in Samlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet - which view you'll print-
Mew and the beast you have to show being still
That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens - What's its name?"

(Ibid., p.447)
Browning loved the clashing syllabics and explosives as
Tennyson the labial; the former's vocabulary conveys these
jostlings and impacts to the ear with monosyllabic force.

Stratford—To breast the bloody sea

That sweeps before me, with one star for guide
Nigh has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

(Ibid., p. 79).

Sebald (Sings)—Let the watching lids wink!

Day's a-blaze with eyes, think!

Deep into the night drink."

(Ibid., p. 168)

Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
Whose savage strewble thus could pad the dark
Soil to plash?

(Ibid., p. 361)

Through his irony, Browning can create grotesque effects
to heighten tragedy as well as romance. Upon the lovers
of "In a Balcony" evening comes "intense with you first
trembling star." In Stratford, Lady Carlyle is 'the
lingering streak (a golden one) in' Stratford's "good
fortune's eve" (p. 79). In Pippa Passes, Sebald says,
"Morning? It seemed to me a night with a sun added.
Where's dew, where's freshness?" (p. 168). Browning's
habitant imagery is fetched partly from nature but partly
from common things of human life such as ships, ships,
chess-boards, lamps, swords etc. His language is noticeably
sweet in the lyric loveliness of his Pippas and Pompilias.
"But let the sun shine! wherefore repine?  
With thee to load me, O Day of mine,  
Down the grass path grey with dew  
Under the pine wood, blind with boughs,  
Where the swallow never flew  
Nor yet cicada dared carouse—  
Bo, dared carouse!"

(Pippa Passes. Ibid., p.168)

"All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee."

Browning's excessive use of "asides" is often un-theatrical. Most of the soliloquies spoken by single characters are very long and tax the patience of the audience. The long soliloquies of Victor and Luria in the third scene of King Victor and King Charles and at the end of Act IV of Luria respectively contain eighty-two lines. Djabal's opening "aside" in Act II of The Return of the Druses contains sixty-two lines. The introductory and concluding scenes of Pippa Passes consist entirely of Pippa's long soliloquies. Another group contains those soliloquies which the characters utter along with other dialogues. Frequently, these two types of speeches are so closely jumbled up that it becomes difficult for the audience to distinguish between a dialogue and an "aside". In addition to Djabal's long opening soliloquy of sixty-two lines, Act II of The Return of the Druses contains his nine smaller "asides", intermixed with his conversations with Khalil and Anael. The former unmask the real motive in the impostor's soul only for the audience, while the latter betray his pretensions. A greater difficulty arises where half of the same dialogue is the "aside" and
the other half, conversation with the characters.

"Lora—

Him.

You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay

(Aside) Yet wherefore stay? who does this but myself?

Had I apprised her that I come to do

Just this, what more could she acknowledge? No

she sees into my heart's core! What is it


Fed up either cheek with red, as June some rose?

Why turns she from me? Ah fool, overfond

To dream I could call up.........

..........what never dream

Yet feigned! 'tis love! (Loudly) Oh Anael,

Speak to me!

Djabal—

( Ibid., p. 258).

Further, most of the soliloquies unveil the soul of man
through reminiscences. If these firms "asidee" are taken
out of dramas, they resemble his monodramas, like "Andrea Del
Sarto" and "The Bishop Orders His Tomb." Regarding soliloquy,
Browning remarks:

"In a soliloquy a man makes the most of his good
intentions and sees great excuse in them — far
beyond what our optics discover." 9

Even the colloquial and dramatic style generally adopted by
the poet in his monologues has been frequently employed in
these long soliloquies. In the latter, the character though
alone, argues with himself in questions and answers, while
in the former, he reasons with and talks to one or more
interlocutors in a similar colloquy.

9—Letters, Edited by Hood, p. 152
"Lurio—My fault, it must have been,—for, what

gain they?

Why risk the danger? So, what I could dot

And my fault, wherefore, visit upon them,

My Florentines? The notable revenge

I meditated!

(1bid., p.379)

"Pippa—Worship whom else? For as I not, this day,

What'er I please? What shall I please to-day?

My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?

Tomorrow, I must be Pippa who winds silk,

The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:...

Notice the same conversational style in the poems:

"Somebody remarks

Here's a line there is wrongly traced,

His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,

Nightly traced and well ordered, what of that?

Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what's a heaven for?"

(“Andrea Del Sarto”, Ibid., p.433)

"Let us but love each other, Must you go?

That Cousin here again? he waits outside?

Must see you— you, and not with me? Those loans?

More gaming debts to pay? You smiled for that?

Well, let miles buy me? have you more to spend?"

(“Andrea Del Sarto”, Ibid., p.434).
"Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleat our years!
Man goes to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say besant for my elab., sors? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! Now else
Shall ye contract my frieze to come beneath?"

(The Bishop Orders His Tomb" Vol. p. 436).

At such places, Browning experiments with the actual ideas and rhythms of the day-to-day speech and thus he anticipates the technique of modern drama. In the structural and accentual aspects of the language he tries to reproduce the conversational idiom, even the syntax and the natural rhythm, without, however, sacrificing the aesthetic values of art.

Browning uses prose mainly in two plays - *Pippa Passes* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. When the dramatist is desirous of giving information to connect the two scenes, he, like Thos. Hardy, uses prose dialogues among minor characters. Thus in *Pippa Passes*, the prose dialogues among the students before the episode of Jules and Phene furnish us with preliminary details, that between Bluphocks and the Policemen, apprises us of the succeeding scene of Luigi and the suitor. In the second Act of *A Soul's Tragedy*, the little-tattle in prose between disguised Luitolfo and the bystanders acquaints us with the affairs of Ogibene and Chiappino together with other details connecting Act I and Act II. Sometimes, Browning employs prose-dialogues, at places where usually a tempter endeavours to besooey a man. Such a scene in *Pippa Passes* is that of the bishop and the Intendant, here the latter strives to entice the fickle bishop to his moral disaster. In *A Soul's Tragedy* there is another interesting scene in which Ogibene, through his witty talks, is successful in
exposing Chiappino's selfishnes. In marked contrast with other passages full of emotional intensity, these humorous prose dialogues indicate briskness and jest in the characters. Browning reveals great skill in handling these crisp repartees and the continual flashing of verbal rapier - thrusts of the dramatic personae for the dramatic action; e.g.,

"Osmahan- You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principles; if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten."

(Ibid., p.393)

Browning, the pioneer in psychological plays, could not evolve a suitable form as he had little theatrical experience. He stuck to the technique and diction of his poetry in his experiments with drama. Unlike Dickens, he did not improve with experience in the theatre; his last plays are not written for it. His work is consistently dramatic, but he was unable to write a great tragedy on account of sheer carelessness as a stage dramatist. He never disciplined himself in the theatre because his purpose as an artist was served chiefly by dramatic lyric or monodrama and little by professional and actable drama. First, some of his plays have meagre situations with vague motivation of the dramatic personae and reach the level of sentimental drama; e.g., Luria, A Plot, and "In a Balcony". The characters are frequently, portrayed through long utterances like those in his monologues. Secondly Browning's excessive reliance upon long soliloquies

10- Cf., Elizabeth Barrett's exhortation for Browning: "A great dramatic power may develop itself otherwise than in the formal drama; and I have been guilty of wishing - that you
for the exposition of inner conflict was based on the worn-out
tradition of the Romantic drama. 11 Barring a few exceptions
there is a tendency in modern drama both in prose and in
verse to abandon this old fashioned technique. 12 The play-
wright of today prefers to unfold the sub-conscious mind chiefly
through the character's dialogues and actions rather than
"asides". Thirdly, though, Browning introduced a few innova-
tions in respect of language, he could not evolve a sufficiently
effective verse-medium for the stage. He started experiments
with contemporary speech, but his diction could not express
the current sensibilities adequately in the theatre. On the
other hand, the modern "experimentalists" base their blank
verse completely on spoken language and convey the immediate
emotion of our time. Innovations and prolixities explain why
Browning failed to write a great tragedy. His lack of an
incisive style is at the root of his failure to produce a
really good play. The plays are enjoyable in the library but
are awkward on the stage. Yet Browning's interest in human

would give the public a poem unassociated directly or
indirectly with the stage, for trial on the popular heart."  
(Browning Love Letters, p.9)

11 - "If for the exposition or for display of inner conflicts
or for other effects, he (the dramatist) relies too largely
on colloquies or asides, he shirks the dramatists' main
technical obligations." C.Brooke and R.B. Neilman: Under-
standing Drama, p.488.

12 - Priscilla Thouless writes, "The naturalistic technique, so
welcome after the heart-shaking colloquies of the sentiments
school, limited the expression of personality...The solilo-
quy was dead and no fitting substitute for it had been
found, so the man could not speak at will as an individual,
but was forced to speak with decent reticence as he would
amongst strangers." Modern Poetic Drama, p.8. For the
rejection of colloquies by Ibsen and other playwrights,
see Nicoll's remark in British Drama, p.341
psychology in his plays contributed to one of the most
conspicuous features of modern tragi-comedy - a complex of
human motivation to action. It was responsible for realism
in character portraiture in which while the individual perishes,
society continues. At places, this approach involves the
criticisms of the conflicting sentiments which is a step in the
direction of realism. His plays breathe an atmosphere of
irony which contains the partial adoption of a satiric attitude
towards society and which is another important feature
of tragi-comedy.

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CHAPTER V

The Place of Browning's Dramatic Career in the Total Context of His Poetic Works:

Browning's dramatic career started with the publication of Strafford in 1837 and ended with "In a Balcony" which was included in Men and Women, Vol. II in 1855. Little theatrical response to his plays led him gradually to lose interest in composing notable plays for the stage and to shift more and more towards writing monologues, as he admitted in a letter written to Elizabeth Barrett. His two long poems, Pauline and Paracelsum appeared before Strafford, Sordello was composed just after his first play. Then came out his dramatic lyrics, Dramatic Romances and Men and Women in 1842, 1845 and 1855 respectively. The study of Browning's drama is incomplete until we examine relation between his plays and his poems. Both the kinds of composition, produced by the same creative mind, have several features in common. These closet plays, somewhat untheatrical, reveal certain merits found in his poetry and lead to the better appraisal of his literary contribution.

In Browning's plays, the chief interest of the plot lies in the revelation of the souls of the main characters caught in crises. The external background meagrely noticeable in the earlier plays almost disappears in the later. Colomba's Birthday, Luria and "In a Balcony" unveil chiefly the mind of the dramatic personae in similar situations. This technique is in conformity with the practice followed by the

poet in the first stage of his literary career ending with Sordello (1833-1840). "Soul" was the cardinal preoccupation from the very start of Browning's poetic career. Pauline contains the confession of a subtle psychologist who is content to unlock the tumultuous story of his "soul" instead of offering his lyric language of love. Mill's criticism of the poem led to the poet to resolve that never again would he reveal his "soul" so crudely and that he would make his poetry "dramatic in principle and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons not mine." Browning seems to agree with one of the speakers in T.S. Eliot's "A Dialogue in Dramatic Poetry" who says, "The human soul in intense emotion, strives to express itself in verse." Another character says, "All poetry tends towards drama and all drama towards poetry." The next poem Paracelsus with a series of quasi-dramatic scenes showed the promise of a dramatic temper.

Having all the semblance of drama, with its regular interaction of character and event, Paracelsus attains the poet's ideal of objective and dramatic presentation greater than Pauline, vague and incoherent in form for lack of background action. But Paracelsus also suggested that the author's capacity was

2 - As regards the phases of Browning's literary career, I am following Duffin's Agnus Domini: A Reconsideration of Browning, 1956, pp. 286-289.

3 - See the poet's remark to Mme Barrett: "I know myself surely and always have done so, for is there not somewhere the little book I first printed when a boy, with John Mill, the metaphysical head, his marginal note that "the writer possesses a deeper self-consciousness that I ever knew in a commonplace human being." Browning's Love Letters, I, p. 29.

4 - Cf. The Poet's Introduction to Pauline, 1868.

not purely dramatic and that some other medium than drama could sufficiently contribute to the full growth of his most original and splendid endowments. The writer of *Paracelsus* subordinated action to the delineation of character, his primary concern. At places, the poet's vigorous temperament urged him to portray character in action but his imaginative strength drove him into the region of thought and accordingly he indicated his inexhaustible command over those techniques of expression which analyze character rather than those which reveal it. "*Paracelsus* is not a drama and although generally in form of a dialogue, in spirit a monologue, the other speakers being introduced as subservient to the delineation by Paracelsus himself, of the several states of his mental being, which in their succession make up the history of his character both in its individuality and as the symbolic representations of human nature." In order to bring innovations, the poet makes the soul, the stage and moods and thoughts, characters. The meagre external paraphernalia aims at portraying inner drama in Paracelsus and *Aprile* who illustrate the contending forces of knowledge and love respectively in man's mind. In the original preface to the poem, afterwards discarded, Browning says that the poem is an attempt "to reverse the method usually adopted by writers whose aim is to set forth any phenomenon of the mind or the passions by the operation of persons and events; and -- instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crises I desire to produce, I have returned to display somewhat minutely the

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mood itself, in its rise and progress, and have suffered the agency by which it is influenced and determined to be generally discernible in its effects alone....7

In Sordello, Browning's next long poem, the outward struggle between the Guelfs and Ghibellines serves as a background to the spiritual crisis in the hero. Sordello's life, his development as an individual and his death are represented with his mental struggle as the nucleus of the story. The poet remarks, "The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul; little else is worth study."8 In this portrayal of the soul history in a few form, almost all the dramatic excellences of Parnaceus are abandoned. Here Browning gradually outgrew his usual method before he became "eager to freshen a faded mind by diverting it to the healthy natures of a grand epoch"9 in his plays.

The six years of the next stage in Browning's career (1841-46) are marked with the creative inspiration of a gay troubadour. The eight volumes of Pelléas and Mélisande contain Pippa Passes, the other six plays and two volumes of short poems. Browning's dramatic genius reached its culmination in the third period (1846-64) of happy married life; his poetic achievement is reflected in the six volumes.

7- W.C. De Yorke - A Browning Handbook, p.52
8- "In the Poem, Sordello, Browning seems to reveal his own case. He tried his hand in dramatic like Sordello; but the public kept at arm's length his more secret inspiration which aimed at portraying the inner struggle in the hero's soul as against the outward action (See Sordello, II 487-92 and 570-79)."
9- Preface to the first edition of Strafford (subsequently omitted).
poems contained in the two original volumes of *Men and Women* and *Dramatic Personae*, which include thirty-four love poems with an increase from one-four in the earlier volumes to one-two now. Browning's chief preoccupation with his soul is here reflected in the continued play of an eager intellect and animated senses upon life and in the diverse ways of concrete experience which the poet's method vivifies and transfigures to the eyes. In the techniques of the plays, dramatic lyrics and romances composed during the forties and the fifties, Browning's poetic occupation is different from that in *Paracelsus* and the early books of *Sordello*.

He unveil the soul in three ways. First by disclosing its sunny as well as dark sides, the poet portrays the minutest changes of the soul in its multiplicity. Secondly, for its delineation, Browning uses a multitude of sordid, grotesque and commonplace facts. Lastly, in the clash and tangle of plot, Browning portrays thoughts and passions reflected in the tide of human affairs. Those poems are dramatic because the narrators express their own ideas and sentiments rather than the poet's and because they are as it were, part and parcel of the living organism of drama, all the ingredients of which are reflected in the speaker's self-revelation. It might have been supposed that Browning, skilful in such composition would have discovered in drama his natural medium of expression. But his fascination for the slow continuities of actual events, which stress a particular moment under recollections imposed by it, is satisfied by dramatic speech or monologue rather than drama. The former imitates action as focussed into a given mind.
while the latter directly imitates action. Browning might have been inspired by the technique of Landor whom he called "a great dramatic poet" in the dedication of Jovita to his (The Poetical Works of Robert Browning, p.302). Browning's own theory and practice were considerably shaped by Landor's Imaginary Conversations (1824-29) in which the author chooses to describe crucial moments in the lives of his characters when their souls are in a state of crisis. Landor believes that the function of the artist is to give

"To one brief moment caught from fleeting time
The appropriate calm of blest Eternity."

According to Browning too, the poet must describe the creation of life only and in practice follows what he believes.10

The composition of the dramas and the monodramas indicates broad similarities between his poetic technique and dramatic technique so that the appreciation of one is linked up with the appreciation of the other. The dramas as well as the poems reflect the poet's experiments embodying his literary conceptions which he had been gradually evolving from the very start of his poetic career and which gripped his imagination till the end of his life. Let us examine a few popular dramatic monologues composed after the plays. Not only do these poems present studies of individual men as they breathed and spoke but they also reveal their intelligence, character, temper of mind and spiritual aspirations and record the tricks of their body and face. Like chief characters, all the figures introduced to fill up the background in these works, are in a

harmony with the whole and are painted with as true and vigorous brush as main figures. Like the plays, the dramatic lyrics contain characters portrayed with brief but apt details which provide additional flavour and vitality to the representation. These works are dramatic because the minds of personages are never the mind of Browning himself. By shaping the living portraits of these diverse men and women, Browning achieves some dim approach to Shakespeare and no where closer than in these works.\textsuperscript{11}

In "Andrea del Sarto", the nucleus of the poem is the revelation of the soul of Andrea struggling among antagonistic passions. There is no systematic growth of Andrea's life story; the few outward events describing his entire life in flashes, have been narrated to delineate the mind of the painter tethered to his soulless mate. In "Fra Lippo Lippi", the external details of the narrator's entire life intensify his crisis between the old religion and the new one, not of monastary, but of daily common life.

"And so they are better, painted, better to us
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out."

\textsuperscript{11} In his "Introduction to the Letters of Shelley", 1852, Browning accepts Shakespeare and Shelley as his ideals for "objective" and the "subjective" poetry respectively. In "At a Narmad" (1876) he believes that Shakespeare is the completely dramatic poet because he never reveals his own mind but always that of his characters. In 'House' (1876) too, inspired with the same idea, the poet objects strongly to the wordsworth's dictum in "Sonnet Not the Sonnet" that "with the same key (the sonnet) Shakespeare unlocked his heart." (Works, p. 530).

According to Browning, the highest art is impersonal and Shakespeare's greatness lies in the fact that he seldom
In "An Epistle, Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karashish, The Arab Physician", all details in the beginning form the background to the narrator's experience which occurs when he deals with Lazarus. The latter's, he thinks, is not a case of the body but of the soul. Karashish discovers the limitation of science and the value of the highest truths in the divine love of the Almighty preached by Christ. The poem shows the mental struggle in the physician between the intellect and the intuitive faith.

In 'Cleon', the entire emphasis is on the poet's consciousness that while his art is imperishable, he himself is mortal; the tension of the poem lies in this paradox. Is it not dreadful to think that after his death, thinks Cleon, the people will be singing songs that he composed while a little urn will contain his moral remains?

"When all my works wherein I prove my worth
Being present still to cock me in men's mouths.
Alive still, in the praise of such as thou,
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so ever much,
Sleep in my urn."

(Works, p.452)

The dramatic poems and plays resemble one another too, in the revelation of the multiplicity of the persons and betray the poet's deep love for humanity. The extent of their range is remarkable. Browning takes all mankind diverse in nature reveals himself. He replies to the presumption that Shakespeare unlocked his heart with a secret key in the concluding line of "Husa":

"Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he."
within his fold. Browning seems to agree with modern psychologists who lay stress upon the complexity of the human mind and who, accordingly, refuse to divide mankind into exclusive types on some broad principle of generalisation. However, Browning's broad classification resembles Jung's division of men into two types - the extroverts and the introverts.\(^{12}\) The dramatic personae in the plays chiefly the heroes are neither ideal nor villainous. In his poems, too, Browning portrays mostly complex and intricate characters with vices and virtues. A number of them betray some tragic flaw which partially or totally blurs their judgment. It creates an abnormal irresistibility in their nature and drives most of them to their downfall. Their calamity produces a sense of pity and waste in our hearts in the same way as the calamity of Browning's tragic heroes does. Andrea's character and art are soulless. He wastes all the nobility in his character, art and money, he earns to please an immoral woman. The dying bishop in 'The Bishop Orders His Tomb' struggles between Heaven and Earth. He reveals his love for paganism rather than his faith in Christianity. Sordello is a man of ideas rather than actions and like Djebel reveres to abstract speculation when action is demanded of him. Along with these infirm characters, Browning painted a few noble persons chiefly in their spiritual crisis - leaders like Fyn and King Charles, physicians like Warshish and Paracelsus and artists like Cleon. Lastly, we discover some cunning manipulators often full of wit and humour but without any passionate

\(^{12}\) Cf., S.W. Holmes, "Browning and Jung", PMLA, Vol. LVI, 1941, pp 780-82.
loyalty - Ogilby, Bishop Elougam and Mr. Sludge "The Medium", Browning is expert in delineating wit which shows the intellectual side of the characters rather than in showing humour. The poet believes that we must work within the limits of natural imperfection because we are all made imperfect. We shall, hereafter, attain perfection for which we should try ceaselessly on earth.13

"What is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days?"

("Abt Vogler")

All service ranks the same, with God -

With God, whose puppets, best and worst

Are we; there is no last nor first.14

("Pippa Passes", Works, p.185)

The dramas and the lyrics illustrate the poet's root-ideas that peace does not lie in the repression of passions but in letting them loose in full freedom to pursue noble aims.

13- "Rephan" (1888) contains the expression of Browning's conclusion-

"When the trouble grew in my pregnant breast
A voice said "So wouldst thou strive, not rest."
(Works, p.686)

14- Cf. "Wortouc- Dii Mildred! Leave
Their honourable world to them! For God
We're good enough, though, the world casts us out." (A_Blot, p.288)

"Mildred- As I dare approach that Heaven Which has not bade a living thing despair Which reads no code to keep its arena from stain, But bids the vilest wrong that turns on it Desist and be forgiven."

(Ibid., p.290)
The wisdom of life consists not in restraint but in the
conscious impietuosity of soul towards the higher realities.
Even Browning's villains and imposters like Djabel, Soulgran
and Sludge have their own cases to plead. In the poems, there
is a domination of a single character who is lost in his fixed
reverie at a single touch from outside. On the other hand,
in dramas, Browning endeavours to portray characters in motion.
The interplay of the dramatic personae and the contrast of
the character with identical purpose are, nowhere, so skilfully
delineated as those in the plays. The poet's love of humanity
is revealed in the actions and reactions of various political
personages who devote themselves to the service of the people
and who offer contrasting approaches to the same noble aim.
The interplay of the emotions of the lovers in numerous though
similar situations are, nowhere better revealed as in his
romantic plays. No character is bereft of Browning's sympathy
and love irrespective of his vices and virtues.

The period between 1841 and 1864 is remarkable for
Browning's creation of some immortal women closely interlinked
through identical conception in his dramatic and poetical
compositions. He paints ladies of a great variety and a great
individuality; these integral characteristics were dear to the
poet's imagination. During this period, he achieves mostly the
simpler elements of womanhood, but delights to paint the
complex, the impulsive and the ephemeral among the ladies
singled of good and evil and of good to conquer evil. These
works mostly contain the critical moments in which a step to
the right and left settles instantly the basis of the soul in
the life of these women and decides all their after-life.
In the plays, the prominent heroines suffer internal struggle
because of some base passion which hinders them in their love. Subsequently, these women—neither ideal nor villainous—overcome that ignoble emotion and achieve the victory of pure love. In the poems too, chiefly the lyrics such complex women of unfulfilled love are involved in the similar orima in which their true love struggles with adverse emotion. Most of Browning's women combine at once good and bad emotions, they are in sharp contrast with Tennyson's ladies mostly ideal in their love. Palma, Sordello's beloved, is the woman of this type in the first stage of Browning's poetry. In this political women love and ambition, softness and strength and emotion and intellect march together. She has, often, left love behind and enticed Sordello into her schemes. A few of monologues composed by Browning afterwards reveal such complex women of thwarted love resembling those in the plays. The difference between the heroines of the plays and these complex women is that in the former the noble passion of love, ultimately triumphs through the succession of events, while in the latter, the base passion seems to have the upperhand throughout in the fixed crisis. The keynote of 'Laboratory' is the worst type of envy and a distorted love of frenzy that impels the woman to the rival's extinction.

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do; they believe my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fling to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them! I am here."

(Works, p.212)

The antithesis emphasizing the internal agony of the woman is reflected by several sets of conflicting ideas - "he" is
opposed to "her", "tears" to "laughter", "me" to "them" and "the church" to the "laboratory". The jealous woman's words and actions compress her whole soul. Every line echoes her emotion and voice subdued yet full of energy. The poem delineates a charming picture of a complex woman whose jealousy for her rival almost eclipses the genuine devotion to her lover. In "The Alter View" containing thirty verses, Browning unmasks a complex woman's soul which lies beneath the woman of the world. She marries where she cannot love and the man whom she loves chooses a lover ideally; the four souls are in jeopardy without their life's chance of the eternity of love—

"The devil laughed at you in his sleeve,
You knew not? That I well believe;
Or you had saved two souls: may, four."

(Works, p.477).

In "James Lee's Wife", we see a married woman contesting between love and self-denial. The analysis of her thinking is more interesting than the woman herself. She had reached the moment when the striving for love wearies out love itself; her departure is owing to her tired love for him more than on account of self-sacrifice. This complex character closely resembles Constance in Browning's last play "In a Balcony".

In "Any Wife to Any Husband" a dying woman struggles between her true love and jealousy. She believes in her husband's love for her, but she suspects that his nature will be drawn

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towards other women when she expires. The woman seems to
speak through jealousy and the desire to claim all for one's
self. The poem portrays a fine picture of a suspicious woman
who creates pity rather than admiration.

In poems, Browning has sketched with the same dexterity
a few perfect women. The poet's wife, a woman of genius who
had a considerable knowledge of her own sex in herself and
in other women, probably equipped her husband with the vast
acquaintance with womankind. The virtuous ladies are created
out of his own ideal of womanhood and they are built up partly
from all he knew and admired in his wife and partly from the
dreams of his heart. Their complex thinking is subordinated
to rapturous simplicity and tenderness which make them charming.
These perfect ladies, the products of high honour and affection,
contribute to noble womanhood like Tennyson's heroines. They
are an abiding source of inspiration in which healing powers
will be discovered in future by those who value sympathy and
wisdom. Such a woman in his plays is Pippa, while in the poems,
the important ones are Pompilia in The Ring and the Book
(1868-9) and Balsanion in Balsanion's Adventure (1871)
and Aristophanes' Aposy (1875) produced after his happy
married life. These ladies possess a few common traits.
Born in a low family, both Pippa and Pompilia are placed in
corrupt circumstances. Their story shows a regular strife
between their noble character and vicious environment. While
Pippa rescues the people from moral dilemma, Pompilia perishes
against overwhelming evil situations. Similarly, Pippa and
Balsanion, the two singing girls are nobly inspired for the
service of humanity the former, by moral quest and latter

16 In poet after poet, we find Browning's faith in the service
of humanity. In Pippa Passes (1841), Pippa says "all service
by her love of poetry. Pippa's songs spiritually redeem the souls of four persons succumbing to spiritual disaster; Delaunay, "the wild pomegranate flower of a girl" thrills the despairing into action. When the Spartans decide to raze Athens to the ground, she inspires her husband with the famous lines of Euripides.

The technique adopted by the poet in the construction of the plays is a part of his total experiments in poetry. Often the central theme of many of his poems expresses directly, indirectly or casually Browning's views on poetry, which matured with the advance of his age and genius. His unabashed realism, included the grotesque, the bizarre and the commonplace aspects of life, and gave birth to his theory of the content and language in poetry and drama. In order to widen literature in his own way, Browning sought to discover the intense "immortal moments" which unified a lifetime of awareness. The innovations followed up by him in his dramas and dramatic monologues testify to his incessant striving to delineate that "interior landscape wherein the simultaneous multiplicity of the "objective correlative" is kept intact even though the pericopes are always in the centre of the picture. The fusion of objective and subjective faculties has been revealed to a remarkable degree by Donne, Hopkins and T.S. Eliot.

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17—See the poet's obiter dicta regarding the nature of poetry in Pauline, Sardello (Book III, Part II), Christmas Eve, and Easter Day, and The Ring and the Book (Books I and II). ---

E.g. also Browning's two prose documents—The Essay on Chatterton and The Essay on Shelley and love Letters.
Browning's excessive devotion to abstract thinking and intellectual analysis was the outcome of his insufficient care as an artist. Browning subordinates the formal aspect of art to vision and as such cares little for form like his contemporaries. Accordingly, most of Browning's plays have the predominance of self-analysis over action and at certain crises, when the audience expects definite action from characters, they become verbose and introspective. This method seems to be the direct offshoot of his poetic conception which became part and parcel of his poetic and dramatic compositions; here the poet's inclination is for portraying the characters mainly through introspective reminiscences. A few illustrations from the poems will serve our purpose. *Pauline* contains no plot or action; it is just a fragment of a confession from a young man to a young woman whom he loves. It concerns *Pauline* very little. The poem reveals not the deeds but the recollections of mood and the seething turmoil of emotions without a sufficient *terrestris*, a background of events. The technique is the soul of his dramas and dramatic monologues. In the absence of a definite background action, the emotions of the hero fail to be dramatic. The poet aims "to look on real life" and "to chronicle the stages of life", but owing to his inability to experience his reaction to the outside world, the poet becomes introspective. Browning's principal monologues delineate the soul of the persons to an interlocutor in concentrated situations chiefly by their reminiscences without the forward look of drama. In these dramatic lyrics, a few deft touches - a line here, a stroke there enable the poet to unveil successfully both the spirit of time and the mood of the characters he studies. He employs the medium
of soliloquy\textsuperscript{18} which mainly through retrospection transcribes faithfully all the nuances in the interplay of feelings and attitudes with the aid of strictly relevant factual data. "My Last Duchess" is an example of the poet's retrospective poem in which a proud Duke shows the gallery of pictures to a count whose daughter he is going to marry. In that fixed moment replete with his recollections, the vicious Duke unveils the motives of jealousy that led to the murder of the fair duchess of Ferrara. "The Flight of the Duchess" is another retrospective monologue in which a huntsman narrates the story of a noble duchess through a mysterious reminiscence rooted in the mind of the narrator who was an eye-witness of the entire incident and who sympathised with the fugitive duchess. In "Count Disera" an innocent woman falsely accused of adultery was rescued by her present husband and entire emphasis is upon the narrator's retrospection rather than action. It was convenient for Browning to restrict himself in a static moment of monologue which does not require any fluid and shifting situation and character and in which the speaker more reminiscent than forward looking weaves a pattern of his moods and thoughts. In a dramatic lyric, the concentrated situation contrived mainly through introspective recollections invigorates the atmosphere, emotion and the individuality of the character, but it tends to weaken drama which aims at developing dynamic and complex situations and characters towards the

\textsuperscript{18} Cf., the poet's epigram, "In a soliloquy a man makes the most of his good intentions and sees great excuse in them far beyond that our optics discover." \textit{Letters}\ ed. Hood. p.157.
plotted end.

The Ring and the Book marks the zenith of the poet’s genius in the domain of introspective monologues; here nine personages reveal their souls by casting concentric but contradictory reflections on the same sets of events with the poet speaking in person at the opening and the close. The purpose and the design of the epic have been explained by the poet in the first and the last books which are like the prologue and the epilogue of a full-fledged drama. The poem illustrates how the tendencies responsible for the flaws in Browning’s plays contributed to strengths in the succession of soliloquies which conjointly constituted a mighty and unique drama for the study of human souls and in which the greatest issues of good and evil take human shapes. There is a singular harmony in a ten-fold soliloquy dexieriously integrated into drama revealing the single celebration of a woman’s innocence and her redemptive purity from the mingled ore and alloy of the brutal forest tale shaped into a ring.

Browning, the specialist in the studies of human motives, explored all sorts of incongruities chiefly between the real and the ideal motives and the beginning and the end of ambition concerned with specific cases. His case studies like Fra Lippo Lippi, Bishop Blaugram or even Ogniben in A Soul’s Tragedy are static and end with themselves; in most of them the poet strives to reach the higher level of irony mixed with laughter beyond laughter. But he could not rise above irony when he assayed to group a variety of people together involving all of society beyond the individual. In the dramas, he could not laugh at the ideal and the real and in a serious attempt to combine the two aspects, he sometimes makes artificial, domestic heroes or heroines. The specific case studies are, frequently, floc...
of humour, but in the comprehensive cases, Browning's art
is at times overshadowed by domesticity or irony: Colombe's
love for Valence triumphs over her care for her people, duchy
and heroism; Strafford's attachment to the person of the King,
over his love for monarchy and the man Dijabel, over his love
for the Brusse and consequently for the godly Dijabel.

Yet these closet plays, somewhat feeble in form, constitute
an integral part of his literary compositions. First, the
dramas form a distinct stage in the flowering of Browning's
dramatic genius which commenced in his early poems and which
attained perfection in his lyrics and plays between 1841-64.

In the earlier works, that talent is reflected only in flashes
but in lyrical/dramatic compositions, its maturity is perceptible
in the multiplicity of mind and in the tortuosities and dark
abysses of a character involved in the clash and tangle of
plot. In the delineation of a single character in a static
situation, Browning's dramatic power achieved miraculous
success but his genius could not sufficiently grapple with the
group of characters moving in the shifting situations inter-
woven with the catastrophe. Secondly, the plays form an
inalienable part of the manifold experiments started by the
poet in pursuance of his conceptions regarding the contents and
forms of art especially poetry. Temperamentally, Browning was
unable to toe the line of the ancients and incessantly tried to
rejuvenate poetry as well as drama by exploring new techniques
and devices. 19 It is unwise to isolate his plays from his

19- Cf. Elizabeth Barrett's advice in an early letter to
Browning:-
"I am inclined to think we want new forms as well as thought...
The old gods are dethroned. Why should we go back to the
antique moulds, classical moulds, as they are so improperly
called? Let us all aspire rather to life and let the dead
bury their dead..." Letters of E.B. and E.B.B., I, 45-6
poems: the two forms are complements in the total development of the same creative mind. The comprehensive appraisal of Browning's innovations in his dramatic lyrics can be viewed thoroughly acquired in the context of his simultaneous experiments in drama and vice versa.

Lastly, the plays are the offshoots of Browning's theory of human life embracing within its sympathetic fold the noble and the beautiful as well as the imperfect and grotesque aspects of life. Browning believes that in order to perceive the truth of a case, it is indispensable to listen to all sides of a question and to every one's point of view. Justice is a mystery as in a dispute everyone is right to a certain extent. In order to understand the truth about human drama we should not treat the villain as a rogue but as the pure and disinterested gentleman that most villains freely believe themselves to be. Representing the heterogeneous elements of humanity, Browning's dramatic personae resemble the characters in the poems. The poet's immortal women in the plays form the inextricable portion in his multifarious womanhood of strong individualities. Pippa, Angélique, Mildred, Colombe and Constance are composed of the same stuff of which the other noble ladies are made. Like the poems, the plays present concentrated situations in which the author picturesquely unmask hidden motives in the spiritual crises of the dramatic personae.
CHAPTER VI

PLOT CONSTRUCTION IN TENNYSON'S PLAYS

Tennyson's dramatic career started with Queen Mary in 1875, twenty years after the publication of Browning's last play and ended with The Foresters in 1892. Tennyson made his debut into an area where no major English poet had ever ventured so persistently with plots and characters from English history.¹ He appeared in new habiliments by dramatizing great periods of British history omitted in Shakespeare's chronicle plays² during the third and fourth periods³ of Tennyson's poetic career when his passion for didacticism, idealism and patriotism had become somewhat rigid. Concerned with exploring the causes of historical and social movements, the Poet-Laureate engaged himself in analysing human motives and characters. He attempted to reverse the unfair judgments made by the historians in his dramas which he had not touched since he finished The Devil and the Lady fifty years before.

The climate of the age, seemed propitious for the composition of the historical plays. The works of Carlyle,

1- Hallam Tennyson writes, "For a time he (Tennyson) had thought of "William, the Silent" but he said that our own history was so great, and that he liked English subjects best and knew most about them and that consequently he should do Queen Mary," H. Tennyson, A Memoir, 1906, p. 547.

2- Cf., "He had, however, always taken the liveliest interest in the theatre, and he bestowed infinite trouble on his dramas, choosing these three great periods of Harold, Becket and Mary, so as to complete the line of Shakespeare's English chronicle plays which end with the commencement of the Reformation", ibid., p. 562.

J.R. Greene and Proude infused a new spirit in history which was becoming more and more realistic and dramatists, inspired by this new trend, were constantly probing it for their themes. Wills produced Charles I and Mary Stuart and Tom Taylor, Tennyson’s friend, tried his hand successfully at historical plays especially Axe and Crown, Jeannet, and Anne Boleyn composed between 1870 and 1875. Keeping himself well abreast of these developments in historical study, the Poet-Laureate turned to English history for the subject of his first experiments in dramatic writing. The plays of Tennyson, idyllic or lyric poet, sought an attempt to escape from the naturalistic developments of prose plays in the late nineteenth century. The Princess, Maud, the Idylls and a large number of the poems written since 1842 revealed the dramatic bent of Tennyson who felt that his full powers could be achieved only when he exerted them arduously in the field of poetic drama. Convinced that his adventure was the right one from the point of view of his poetic development, he decided to incur the risk involved in the departure from his established practice in his sixty-fifth year. Tennyson supplied in his plays what Browning lacked, external action, an indispensable element of drama, but he was deficient in what Browning skilfully portrayed—the inner conflict in the soul of the dramatic personae. Thus we perceive a marked contrast in the dramatic approaches of these major

4 "Written by Henry Taylor, Shelley, Landor, Tennyson, Browning and innumerable others, sometimes for the same effect as pageant drama, historical plays required increasingly accurate staging, costuming and acting. Affecting the play itself, zeal for historicity required that human beings be exhibited as in life they were." A.E. Du Bois "Shakespeare and 19th Century Drama in R.I.R. Sept. 1934, p. 174."
Victorians, the two supplementing each other's techniques
in their plays as well as in their poems.

Tennyson's plays in respect of their themes fall into
two groups - historical plays and plays of love. The his-
torical plays are the three earlier plays, *Queen Mary* (1875)
*Harold* (1876) and *Becket* (1884) which form a historical
trilogy and along with which the last historical comedy,
*The Foresters* (1892) may also conveniently be studied. The
second group contains the two romantic tragedies - *The Cup*
(1881) and *The Promise of May* (1882) and the one-scene comedy,
*The Falcon* (1879).

The nature of the external conflict in the trilogy which
"portrays the making of England" is broadly the same. The
emphasis of the struggle reflected in these plays unlike that
in the plays of Browning, is on external situation rather
than on the inner life of characters. The plays deal with
political ferment similar to those in his long narrative poem
*Idylle of the King* (1862) making the theme of these plays
different from that of his romantic dramas. Tennyson confined
himself to the medieval struggle for power and Throne of
England. In *Queen Mary*, the source of the conflict is Queen
Mary's marriage with the Spanish King, Philip, a Roman Catholic;
its political implications are more conspicuous than the
marriage itself. When some prominent people of England fearing
the domination of Spain and the Roman Catholic Church, rise

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5 - His son writes, "Queen Mary," the first play of what my father
called his 'historical trilogy' (Harold, Becket and Queen Mary)
was published in 1875." Tennyson, a Memoir, p.562.

6 - *Idiad*, p.562.

7 - See Chapter X.
in rebellion, the Queen crushes them. She, with Cardinal Pole, the Papal Legate, suppresses the protestants, considering them to be the enemies of the Throne. Nemesis follows when Philip leaves the Queen for good because his two ambitions—the capture of the English Throne and the birth of his heir—apparent from Queen Mary are frustrated; when the Queen loses Calais she dies broken-hearted. Reginald Pole faces the doom when he is accused of heresy by the succeeding Pope. In Harold, the same struggle for power is discernible when the people of England and the dying King Edward choose Harold to be his successor in accordance with English custom. In the battle of Stamfordbridge, Harold vanquishes his opponent, the ambitious brother, Tostig. The second and more formidable claimant to the English Throne is the cruel and power-mad Count William of Normandy. When shipwrecked Harold takes shelter in his kingdom, the Count forces him to take an oath in the name of the pious bones of Roman saints to help him to grab the English Throne after King Edward’s death. As Harold breaks his oath, the Count slaughters Harold and the English army with the assistance of all Christendom. In Becket, the same battle of power between the Crown and the Church results in conflict between King Henry and Archbishop Becket. The King desires to impose his own laws and customs on the Church; but Becket refuses to sign those bills and customs which supersede the rights of the Church. The Archbishop enlists the support of the King of France, excommunicates all the erring bishops of England, the followers of King Henry and saves Rosamund. Becket is assassinated for these acts.

In his trilogy, the Church is often in conflict with
the Throne. We see two groups of clergy — the good priests
and the vicious ones. The former group consists of spiritually
invincible people who obey the dictates of their conscience
only and who repose a firm faith in God; to this group belong
Becket, Thomas Cranmer, Thomas Thirlby, Stigand, Herbert of
Bohun and John of Salisbury. The second group includes those
priests who are hypocrites, weather-cocks and adherents to
earthly power and wealth; they support the Crown for their
own selfish designs but neglect the cause of the Church. They
help the monarchs in oppressing the good ecclesiastics with
whom they often come into conflict; frequently there is an
eventual downfall of these clergymen. Cardinal Pole, Roper,
Father Cole, Villa Garcia, Hugh Marget, Poliet, Roger, Hillary
and others form this group. The Church is dominated by the
Pope who influences the struggle for power directly or indirect-
ly. In Queen Mary, the Protestant Church opposes Queen Mary
who suppresses it with the help of Spain and Cardinal Pole,
the Pope's agent. Count William in Harold is assisted by the
Pope in his war against Harold, the oath-breaker, while the
Church of England sides Harold in maintaining his hold over
the Throne. In Becket, Henry makes the Church, the handmaid
of the Crown as it often goes against the King's whim; therefore,
Becket takes the assistance of the King of France and the
Pope. Generally, the Pope colludes with the immoral churchmen
and even Becket relies upon his own faith rather than upon the
support of the Pope. He says,

'Tis not the King who is guilty of mine exile,

But Rome, Rome, Rome

(Works, p.674).
The dramatist inserts the rivalries in love which also give impetus to the main political conflict by aggravating the already tense struggle for power and which are in some way connected with that turmoil. The love and the consequent matrimony between Queen Mary and King Philip, lead to the political struggle; the bifurcation of the country into two groups of people - the first conceding to the wedlock and the second opposing it - heightens the main conflict. The antagonism between Aldwyth and Edith incites Aldwyth to raise the Northumbrians against Harold who has to sacrifice Edith and to wed Aldwyth reluctantly to secure the alliance of the people against the invaders. Queen Eleanor grows jealous on account of the love between Henry and Rosamund; the latter rescued from the murderous assault of the Queen by Becket, relinquishes her love intrigues with the King. The distorted version of this event submitted by the Queen to the King brings the conflict between Henry and Becket to the climax and leads to the murder of the Archbishop. 

In unfolding this vista of British history, Tennyson adheres to historical facts faithfully. Regarding Tennyson's conception of a chronicle play, Hallam writes,

"He (Tennyson) said they (the critics) did not consider that the conditions of dramatic art are much more complex than they were, and that to be a first-rate historical playwright means much more work than formerly, seeing that 'exact history' has taken the place of the chance chronicle, and that a dramatist is expected to be cognizant of the newest phases of contemporary drama."8

8 - Tennyson, A Memoir, p.564.
Though determined to portray 'exact history' of England, Tennyson was deficient in the power of sifting and winnowing the available mass of events for the central purpose. His plays mostly tend to become historical photographs in which the individuality of the dramatic personae is submerged into factual terra-time and the narrative element, somewhat overshadowing the dramatic art, produces untheatrical effects at places with too many scenes and characters. Further, the shift towards the faithful portrayal of historical facts has made these plays symbolic and has frequently subordinated human nature to a particular institution, creed or principle. The impact of these tragedies is not circumscribed to individual characters and their associates; it is perceived throughout the nation. The concept of Tennyson's trilogy fundamentally differs from that of his love plays in which the turmoil shakes the individuals only. The struggle between Queen Mary and her adversaries is virtually the crisis between the Roman Catholic

9. Tennyson's ardent desire to portray 'exact history' is shown in his unpublished sonnet addressed to "Old Ghosts" and written originally as a preface to Becket:

"Ye know that history is half-dream-say even
The Men's life in the letters of the man-
- - - - - - - - - - - - - And on me

Frown not, old ghosts, if I be one of those
Who make you utter things, you did not say
And would you all sway and war your worth;
For whatsoever knows us truly, know

That none can truly write his single day
And none can write it for him upon earth."

(Preface to Tennyson: A Memoir, p. VII)

10. "Sometimes, the playwright became dominated by his material so thoroughly that five acts were not enough. Landor and Tennyson required trilogies just as Calverley required a "saga" instead of a single novel. - Historical plays white-washed off-colour persons, the effect being to make humanity neither black nor white, but spotted, so much good being in the worst of us". A.I.S. Du Bois, "Shakespeare and the 19th Century Drama" in H.M.I., Sept.1934, p.174.
Church and the Protestantism in which the whole country is in
chaos. Harold symbolizes the democratic and patriotic spirit
of England temporarily eclipsed by the foreign invasions and
international wars; the destiny of the hero controls the fate of
the country. Becket stands for the Church, the people's
'tower of strength, their bulwark against throne and barony',11
and the protector of the poor and the downtrodden; the struggle
between Becket and King Henry is partly the medieval strife
between the Church and the Crown and partly the conflict between
the common man and the tyrant monarch.

In this trilogy, Tennyson introduces situations of love
as subsidiary to the main political theme. Even in Queen Mary,
the political repercussions of the love between Queen Mary and
Philip are more conspicuous than love itself. The love of
Harold, Edith and Aldwyth in Harold and of Rosamund and Henry
in Becket form only sub-plots intensifying the charm and
intricacy of the main story. In those circumstances, the woman
sacrifices her material interests for the sake of the person
she adores. Queen Mary offers everything to Philip although
unfortunately, she receives no affectionate response from him.
Edith relinquishes ever her marriage with Harold in order to
save him and England from the curse of the Norman saints.
Rosamund's love for Henry remains immutable till the end; even
when she has given up her love, she pleads with Becket against
the excommunication of the King. These episodes end in
despair and the loving woman is victimized through the force
of the external events. The political situations incite selfish
Philip to abandon England and the disappointed Queen for good.

11- Tennyson, A Memoir, p.581.
The curses of the Norman saints and Alvyth's political intrigues impede the marriage between Edith and Harold and rivalry between noble Rosamund and jealous Queen Eleanor ends in the former's renouncing her passion for King Henry and leading a pious life in the Church. These passions are like soft flowers in the thorny bushes of the conflict and strife of the main plot and thus provide some relief to the audience.

Emerging after the intense political upheavals, situations of love contain exquisite lyrics, and the fine sense of nature, witty dialogues and the assuaging atmosphere of the diverse phases of love. Some of the sub-plots are full of humorous characters; e.g., Geoffrey and Margery in the love-episode of Backet.

(When we study the plays in this trilogy in their chronological order, we can discern the different stages in the evolution of Tennyson's dramatic art.) In Queen Mary, Tennyson "reclaimed one section of English history from wilderness" when violent religious changes, a doubtful succession to the Crown and foreign marriages had spread terror, suspicion and discord throughout Great Britain and when fermentation of conspiracies, rebellions and persecutions were generated by a mixture of religion and politics. Revealing political interest rather than personal, the manifold characters play their historical roles through declarations full of concise and characteristic expression. (The play, novel in form, betrayed a poetical analysis rather than the gradually developing tension essential to theatrical success.) The poet employed the full use of soliloquy and dramatic narration to give vent to his poetic genius. The only un-

attractive love-theme concerned the half mystical passion
of the neurotic middle-aged Queen for her cold and cynical
Spanish husband. (The dramatic form of the play testifies
to Tennyson's compromise between stage play and a reading
play which is really a panorama of an age. The play, loose
in structure, lacks a sharp main plot in which all the subse-
diary incidents should be merged smoothly. It has forty
characters, the five acts are divided into twenty-four scenes
and entire play is substantially longer than the uncut Hamlet.)
It is historical sketch rather than drama where so many
incidents and characters of Queen Mary's short reign have
been brought together that the unity of impression has been
lost. In its original form, the play is too long for presenta-
tion for the Victorian stage which expected elaborate scenic
display and insisted upon the addition of a 'curtain raiser'.
Even the first rate genius might lack the power to incorporate
all these parts into dramatic unity and to evolve an imagi-
native plot out of the mass of historical terra firma. The
historical playwright feels himself convenient in a distant
half-familiar age or anywhere else rather than in his own
country because he is mostly circumscribed to the facts
owing to the precise knowledge of men and events and this
necessity of being accurate impairs the illusion. Such scenic
precision rather distracts us from the Universality which is as
as it were the quintessence of great drama.

After Queen Mary, which is an epilogue to the historical
cycle, the poet chose in Harold a subject to form the prologue
and to provide the first act of the long national struggle
against the Papacy for the support which the Pope gave to
William's claim to the English Throne. The disastrous reign
of Mary marked the culmination of the long struggle of which Harold seemed to Tennyson the first leader. (With only eighteen characters as against forty and eleven scenes as against twenty-four, Harold contains much more concise plot than that of Queen Mary, a more human interest by introducing a sympathetic love-story with a story of a woman's jealousy and a more definitely dramatic progression leading up to a climax; so the play offers a more compact unity of impression and was better adapted to stage production than Queen Mary. Escaping from the bonds of exactitude, Tennyson became more lyrical because in this play, history, still blended with romance, could offer the dramatist to let loose the reins of his imaginations and to fashion his dramatic personae at pleasure within the broad outlines of tradition.) Without impairing historical probabilities in his delineation of character and situation, the playwright gave vent to the contemporary sentiments through the language of the personages belonging to a distant age. (Harold contains the main theme in the scenes of combat, Harold's shipwreck and capture, the oath, Edward's curse and death, the wedding and coronation of Harold and Aethelfla and the great battle of ‘Angels.’ The subsidiary plot dealing with the rivalry of Edith and Aethelfla for Harold's love, partly gives relief from tense situations and partly heightens the main conflict.) Echoing the voice of the past, the play is imbued with freshness, beauty and a heroic strength. Harmonizing an epic spirit with its dramatic form, the drama is saturated with a sort of Aeschylean vigour belonging to the characters, actions, passions and diction; this vitality increases to the end and sums itself up in that grand battle-scene with its Latin
'choruses' constituting the chief part of the fifth Act.

The battle-scene itself is most dramatically managed
through Stignad's excited narration interrupted by the
yells of the two armies and the Latin hymns. The chants
of the masons and the visions which pass through Harold's
dream before the battle of Sanguelas and which have an
obvious precedent in Shakespeare's Richard III, are skil-
fully managed to enhance the impression of the crisis.

(In Becket, Tennyson surprisingly reverted to the
panoramic methods of Queen Mary, but, as in Harold,
endeavoured to appeal to popular emotion by introducing
a theme of romantic love and jealousy in the love-triangle
of Henry II, Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamund. These rival
women are better portrayed than Edith and Aldwyth but the
blending of the love-plot with political history is in-
congruous as the scenes of love are inharmonious with the
real drama of the political conflict between Becket and
Henry.) The scenes are dramatically more powerful than
those in Queen Mary, but the play is not so impressive as
a piece of work on account of the improbable character of
Becket with its apparent inconsistencies. (Becket, Tennyson's
most thrilling play mainly concentrates upon one theme
representing the conflict between Henry and his new Arch-
bishop, Thomas Becket and ending in the assassination of
the latter. In the main plot, the selection of scenes of
and incidents which are noted for the accuracy of "representa-
tion of personages and time" is such that the spirit of
outward conflict is felt throughout. The play is "a series
of animated historic scenes, beautifully written, staged
and acted." The prologue to the play with great finesse.

14- William Archer, Theatrical World (1894), p.209
...and chance unfolds the synopsis of the whole future action.

The game of chess symbolises the impending conflict between the King and the New Archbishop and the defeat of the former, while infuriated Henry's kicking anticipates the cowardly assassination of the Archbishop by the vanquished King. Contrary to Henry's expectation, Becket refuses to submit to the King, saves Rosamund from his intrigues and punishes the erring bishops, the King's friends. These incidents incite Henry to assassinate Becket who remains firm to the last. Being full of strength, beauty and delicacy, the play offers a fine picture both of Henry and of Thomas, their relation to each other and the delineation of the influence on Thomas of the conception of the Church blending it with his own haughty spirit and sanctifying it to his own conscience. (The play reveals the central fact of the earlier Middle Ages when the Church exerted a sort of power on her ministers and when "the spiritual power" clothed in earthly panoply appeared to the majority of the people to be the embodiment of the Divine Power.) Becket contains lofty emotions and far-reaching influences found in a 'passion play' with its moments of passion and pathos, the drama is full of sublime feeling and beautiful scenes which are dramatically very effective.

(The sub-plot of Rosamund and Eleanor presents secret love and feminine vindictiveness and varies the harsh-disputing and the inter-change of threats and curses among the priests and barons. The germ of this love tale which attracted him long ago, can be traced in a little song.

15- See Irving's letter to Tennyson in 'Tennyson, A Memoir', p.583.)
written before 1842. 16) As a contrast, *Murder in the Cathedral* avoids all these external clashes, its strength lies in the inner conflict of the martyrred saint. A comparison of the two reveals the gulf indicating the passage of an eventful half-century between Tennyson's Imperial England and Eliot's period of sub-conscious conflict. In Eliot's play incidental details are avoided and the characters are reduced to a bare minimum, while the attention is focused on the episode and the chosen figure who is to undergo the 'passion'. (There is no distraction from this emotion in the introduction of King Henry II, and the side-tracking romance of Rosamund and Henry, and there is no cheapening of the tension by the crudities of Fizurse who pursues Rosamund to gratify his lust or those of Eleanor.) (In form, Tennyson follows the usual Elizabethan pattern of five acts with the main action of political strife interlinked with Rosamund's conflict with Eleanor; on the contrary, Eliot's play employs a compact design, the pivot of which is not personality but the event and pattern.

The last drama, *The Foresters* resembles the historical play and deals with that phase of British history when the barons and the earls sided with the common people. Its length and the number of characters are also in keeping with other historical plays, but the plot is different. It is a historical romance in which the love-story of Robinhood constitutes the main theme and the secondary plot is formed by Robin's conflict with Prince John, the Sheriff of Nottingham and the Abbot of St. Mary's for Marian's hand. The episode

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For the treatment of this love episode by George Darley and Swinburne, see Chapter XI.
of little John and Kate is firmly connected with it. This
play in which Tennyson intended to sketch 'the state of
people in another great transition period of the making of
England', has the advantage of keeping well outside authen-
tic history. Fortunately reverting to his practice in the
Idylls, he painted in The Foresters, the famous figures of
the popular tradition handed down by minstrels and rhymers
in the new and live habiliments. A background much more
favourable to romantic drama than authentic history is woven
by these legends in which the emotions and sympathies of the
English people are stirred up in a period when the great midland
forests sheltered the bands of daring men, defying the Norman
law and keeping up a sort of guerrilla war against foreign yoke.
All the important scenes are set in picturesque panorama of
wood, haunted by chivalrous foresters indulging in marry-
making and robbing the rich and wrong-doers to help the poor.
Though a few in number some of the scenes are very long. The
play saturated with sensuous lyricism, merry dances and the
wise sayings about life, echoes the atmosphere of As you like
it. The songs, ten in number reveal ecstatic love in the
care-free locales of the forest life. The introduction of
Titania with his fairies, probably an imitation of A Mid-
summer Night's Dream is a somewhat tenuous device
because Tennyson's verse was neither light enough nor his
playfulness sufficiently volatile to create pure magical touch.
The poet's particular features of picturesque suggestion and
reverie presented in the dreamy melodic lines that drop
the curtain on a vision of primitive romance, echo exquisite
snatches of old songs and ballads and the rich humour of

17- Tennyson, A Memoir, p. 567.
dialogues from *Maid Marian*, a novel of Thomas Love Peacock (1822).

After *Rocket*, Tennyson wrote three love plays — *The Cup*, *The Falcon* and *The Promise of May*, the first and the third being romantic tragedies, while the second is a comedy and a precursor of the modern one-act play. In structure and theme, they are different from chronicle plays. They show Tennyson's skill in the brevity of plot-construction, concentration and conciseness because, here, the number of scenes and characters is fewer than those in the poet's historical plays; only main events have been delineated and the minor ones have been conveyed through retrospective narration. In the selection of incidents and scenes, the dramatist's hands are not fettered by historical data and he can mould the story to suit the dramatic purpose. On the other hand, in his historical plays, the poet is so much overwhelmed with historical facts that frequently he fails to make a fair selection of the situations and destroys the unity of impression and the central purpose, e.g., *Queen Mary*. Unlike chronicle plays, these love dramas betray the predominance of the theme of love over other themes and dispense with numerous sub-plots and episodes interlinked with the main story; they contain only one plot which adds to the brevity of construction. Thus from the point of view of plot-construction, these later plays have a superior unity of action. With the exception of *The Cup*, Tennyson's most pathetic play, these romantic dramas abound in the flashes of humour shown mostly by poor and minor characters. In *The Falcon*, the Count's nurse Elisabetta and his foster-brother, Filippo and in *The Promise of May*, the farm labourers and the servants weave a lively
atmosphere by their quips and cranks.

The Cup, which is very economically and vigorously designed, is rather an outline of a tragedy than a full-fledged tragic drama rich in movement, lyrical charm and powerful effect. The political upheaval in a province just vanquished by Rome furnishes an appropriate environment to the action and gives it verisimilitude; the dramatic personae are plainly delineated act and their deep emotions are poetically expressed. The Cup, the story of which commended itself to Tennyson from Plutarch in a paragraph by Lecky in his History of European Morals

contains only one plot, two acts, four scenes and four main characters—Synorix, Sinnatus, Carma and Antonius. The first Act containing three scenes describes Synorix's conspiracy to capture Sinnatus's Tetrachy and his wife's love with the help of the Romans. Sinnatus who rescues her from Synorix's clutches is fatally stabbed by him. In the second Act containing only one thrilling scene in the temple of Artemis, Carma seems to submit to Synorix's temptations to marry him; she asks Synorix to drink wine off the cup presented to her by him at the time of marriage. Both of them drink the poisoned wine and die.

The Falcon, a metrical drama in one scene, contains the story narrated in the Decameron of Boccaccio and subsequently employed by La Fontaine. Containing a medieval love-theme "belonging to the class of ingenious fabliaux."
the story resembles one of A. de Musset's light pieces, such as Leer Caprices de Marianna, without, however, his sparkling wit. The Falcon, Tennyson's shortest drama, is the precursor of the modern one-act play. The play observes the three unities, the bane of the one-act play. The dialogues between the Count and the nurse retrospectively convey the background of incidents necessary to understand the play. Nothing is missing except the previous incidents of wrath and the Count's early love for Lady Giovanni. If instead of being narrated, they had been shown in a separate scene, their dramatic effect would have been greater. The climax reaches when we learn that the Count has killed his most precious treasure, the falcon for the lady's breakfast and that the latter has accepted his love. As in the modern one-act play, The Falcon has few characters—two major characters, the Count Federigo and Lady Giovanni, in the main event and the two minor ones—Elizabetha and Felippo for humour.

The Promise of May, the last and the longest of the romantic plays, is a pastoral tragedy divided into three acts, each Act containing one scene only. The single plot describes the ruin of two rustic girls who have a fancy for marrying a "gentleman"; a lively country background is presented by singing and dancing farmers and their labourers. Like The Foresters, the play contains fine lyrics and its theme echoes domestic tragedies. 21 In this play, the poet,}

21—Regarding domestic dramas, A.C. Du Bois writes "these dramas of conflict between sentiments were important because in their devotion to the homelier passions (love for parents, for country, for lover, for Christians) they humanized romantic heroes and heroines, because since they deal with conflicts between sentiments and
endeavoured "to bring the true drama of character and life back again - to give the public one leaf out of the great book of truth and nature." Inspired with "a message for the world" the poet, like Milton "did but prompt the age to quit their cloths" "by casting pearls to hogs." The rural scenery filled with both pathos and humour and the brisk and amusing dialogues of the peasants and yokels betray Tennyson's genuine knowledge of country life. Through the composition of this village tragedy, the people's poet sought to introduce to the audience a new form of poetry by bringing the verse-drama from history, legends and myths into the very heart of the contemporary England. However, the didactic strain and the travesty of moral philosophy are incompatible with the pastoral. The Promise of May, in which a complete conviction and a strong moral purpose partly blurred Tennyson's critical faculty, betrays a few improbabilities of the story, a little crudity in characterisation especially in the delineation of Edgar and a somewhat old fashioned technique. This drama harps upon a well-worn theme - the tragedy of a peasant's pretty daughter allured by the polished manners and the pretentious talk of a young man belonging to the class of gentle folk - and the recurrent conviction that scientific knowledge saps and annihilates the basis of morality and lets loose all the

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22 - Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, p.465.
23 - Ibid., p.465.
the turbulent impulses of sinful men. An incongruous
figure and an evolutionist who has been brought to be
betrayed, harangues among the bamboozled peasants and
ploughmen and occasionally produces comic effect. Evant-
tually, the materialist proves to be a double-dyed villain
and gets off too cheaply.

In his dramas, full of political conflicts, religious
controversies and rivalries in love, Tennyson gives prefer-
ence to the external conflicts over the inner drama of human
souls portrayed in every play of Browning. We can discern
the contrast between the approaches of Tennyson and Browning,
if we compare Harold and Strafford, their two historical
tragedies in respect of plot construction. While the former
reveals Harold chiefly in the outward political struggle
against the invaders, the latter portrays the tragedy of
an individual, Strafford with the emphasis over his spiritual
crisis. Throughout the play, Harold struggles against over-
whelming circumstances; on the contrary, Strafford is mainly
involved in the inward enigmas between his indiscriminate
loyalty and the disgust for his master.
CHAPTER VII
CHARACTERS IN Tennyson's Plays

In Tennyson's historical trilogy, the principal characters fall broadly into two groups - villains and noble-minded persons. The first group is led by unscrupulous monarchs who are distinguished by some common features. Being ambitious of unlimited power these despots take the strongest measures against their opponents and they include Queen Mary, Count William of Normandy, Toetig and King Henry with their associates. There are protests and revolts against these autocrats. The repercussions produced among the English people by Queen Mary's actions lead to the abortive revolt of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Thomas Strafford with the result that many harmless persons specially the Protestants, are burnt alive; Queen Mary's greatest barbarity being the burning of Archbishop Cranmer inclined to recant.

"Howard- He has recanted, Madam.

Mary- The better for him.

He burns in Purgatory, not in Hell."

Queen Mary, Act IV, Sc. 1.

Her unscrupulous deed results in the loss of Philip, Calais and the sympathy of the English people. (Count William, the embodiment of brutality compels ship-wrecked Harold to swear reluctantly to assist him to secure English throne. The following dialogue indicates his savagery:-

"Officer- We have the man that railed against thy birth.

William- Tear out his tongue.

Officer - He will not rail again

He said that he should see confusion fall
On thee and on thine house.

William—Tear out his eyes

And plunge him into prison.

Officer—It shall be done.”

_Hereafter, Act II, Sc.II_

Actuated by a similar villany, King Henry in Becket, misconceives Becket’s character, encroaches upon the rights of the Church and provides inadequate protection to Rosamund. His tyranny is revealed in his oppression of the poor and in the assassination of Becket in his cathedral.

These ambitious monarchs are assisted in their vicious designs by wicked ecclesiastics whose deeds emerge from their amor proprie. Corruption was rampant in the Roman Catholic Church which aimed at encouraging lust for power and gold rather than spiritual elevation of the people. Even Becket hints at such a moral depravity:

“Why should this Rome, this Rome,

Still choose Barabbas rather than the Christ,

Absolve the left hand thief and damn the right?

Take fees of tyranny, wink at sacrilege,

Which even Peter had not dared? Condemn

The blameless exile?”

_Becket, Act II, Sc.II_

Queen Mary is aided in her atrocious machinations by Reginald Pole, the Papal Legate and other degenerate Papists. Because Harold refuses to honour the immoral oath administered to him forcibly, Count William is assisted by
the combined forces of Christendom when under the Pope's instructions, he invades England. The corrupt bishops of England, Becket's antagonists help King Henry in his villainous purposes. Neither do these despotic monarchs and profligate priests possess any sense of respect for the urges of the common people nor do they appreciate the moral revolt of the English people against the corruptions and the superstitions of the Roman Church. Their brutality in punishing their victims is characteristically medieval.

In his historical plays, Tennyson introduces another group in conflict with this vicious concurrence of monarchs and priests; this class consists of noble characters including those clergymen who withstand the corruptions of the Church. These persons with Princess Elizabeth, Harold and Becket as the leaders of these groups stand as a contrast to the villains. Tennyson who is not objective as Browning, conceives these characters primarily as the mouthpieces of a certain point of views rather than as natural dramatic personae. Democratic in outlook, they command the just aspirations of the English people. Unlike Queen Mary, Princess Elizabeth sympathises with the British people and their Protestantism and suffers throughout for the popular cause. Harold breaks his undemocratic oath, thinking, "He who vows a vow to strangle his own mother is guiltier keeping this than breaking it." He becomes the King, sacrifices his beloved and marries Aldyth to bring about harmony among the English people; he resists Tostig,

and William, the wrongful claimants to the English Throne, Becket and his friends serve the poor and the miserable and come into conflict with the Crown. These characters, free from the passions and ambitions of the villains, follow the light of reason against overwhelming forces. Their power lies in their own character, strengthened by their faith in God rather than in external support; they seem to echo the words of Sir Galahad.

"My strength is the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure." ²

Representing the true spirit of religion, based upon the teachings of Christ and the Bible, they revolt against the corruptions of the Church.

Among the characters, the poet-Laureate incorporates

the same ideals of manhood, kingship, heroism, love and religion, as are found in his poems. They are tolerant, patient and loving; they adhere to "suaea mediocris", the maxim despised by the riyals - fools and fanatics.

Their devotion to God and to ancient ideals of the Church have led them to believe that the service of the people is

\[\text{"Sir Galahad" Alfred Tennyson, Poetical Works, C. U. P. p. 102.}\]

Such an ideal character is King Arthur in 'Idylls of the King' about which the poet remarked - "I am old and I may be wrong, for this generation has assuredly some spirit of chivalry. We saw it in the acts of heroism by land and sea, in fights against the slave-trade, in our Arctic voyages, in philanthropy etc. The truth is that the wave advances and recedes. I tried in my Idylls to teach men these things and the need of the ideal." (Tennyson, A Memoir, p.701). Tennyson radically changed the ancient legend of Britain to make this flawless character.

Similarly Ulysses like Harold and King Arthur possesses

"One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will,
To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield."

\[\text{Ulysses.}\]
the greatest good; they symbolise the ideas of the major
Victorians like Carlyle, Ruskin and Browning. They are
never rash and unscrupulous in their deeds and they act
after proper consideration and conviction. The lives of
these noble persons become tragic for two reasons. First,
the ambitious kings and corrupt priests weave an irrepress-
ible web of hostility against them. Secondly, some of
them have a moral conviction that they will serve their
cause better by death than life. They prefer to die as
martyrs to their cause. Such are Archbishop Cranmer and
Archbishop Becket. The only noble character victorious in
the end, is Princess Elizabeth but even she develops a
stoical attitude towards life.

In the historical trilogy, Tennyson introduces women
in love who are marked with some uniform traits. They
dall like men into two groups - the virtuous ladies and
the wicked women: Princess Elizabeth, Edith and Rosemunda
forming the first group and Queen Mary, Queen Alswyth
and Queen Eleanor, the second. The first type of women
suffer, because they are simple, devoted as lovers and
are politically down-trodden. The second group includes
ambitious, wicked and intriguing women and when the gentle
women come in their way, they try to crush them. Rivalry

4 - Pippa says in Eliza Passes:

"All service ranks the same with God
With God, those puppets, best and worst,
Are we, there is no last nor first."
whether in love or politics is at the root of this antagonism. In Queen Mary where the Queen erroneously suspects Elizabeth to be her enemy, the conflict between the two is mainly political. In the two succeeding plays, the cause of the struggle is rivalry in love. Aldwyth incites her brothers to stir up the Thanes against him and the only way to get their cooperation is by sacrificing his beloved, Edith and by marrying Aldwyth. Madly jealous Queen Eleanor tries to kill Rosamund whom her husband loves.

Tolerance is the prominent feature of the gentle women who suffer and bear everything patiently and firmly. The female villains are jealous of their rivals, accordingly, the good women can be best studied in contrast with the wicked. The politeness, love and kindness of Elizabeth are fully appreciated when we contrast them with Queen Mary's pride, fanaticism and unscrupulousness. The self-seeking and intriguing love of jealous Aldwyth is inferior to the patient, silent and self-sacrificing love of Edith in whose company Harold discovers a few moments of bliss. Rosamund's humility, devotion and sincerity for Henry are markedly at variance with his Queen's jealousy, pride and love for power.

The gentlewomen provide relief not only to the principal characters, but also to the terror-stricken audience among tense situations in the plays. In the midst of acute political upheavals and bitter ecclesiastical controversies, their deeds create an atmosphere of love and kindness.
"The women sang

Between the rougher voices of the men,

Like lines in the pauses of the wind."

These women can be classed with noble ladies in the poems among whom Tennyson betrays an aptitude to delineate the ideal character of love and feminine virtue; e.g., Dora, Gemma, Maud, Elaine and Enid. On the contrary, the villainous women, mainly dominated by rancour and jealousy are mixed up with the political conflict. This struggle between the noble and the wicked ladies terminates in the victory of the wicked and the misery of the virtuous. The antagonism between Edith and Aldwych ends in the wedlock of Aldwych and Harold much against the aspirations of both Harold and Edith. The rivalry between Queen Eleanor and Rosamund leads to the assassination of Becket and to Rosamund's relinquishing of worldly life for the convent. The disaster of Queen Mary's marriage incites Elizabeth never to marry, though she accepts the Throne of England.

If we study the historical plays in their chronological order we discern the different stages in characterisation. In Queen Mary, the number of characters is forty-four such a crowd that Tennyson could not sufficiently work on any full-length portraits. Some of the persons are historical photographs without flesh and blood and do not play any special role attached to them; they appear because they have been mentioned in history. A few characters, Queen Mary,

5—Tennyson, A Memoir, p. 209.
Elizabeth, her half-sister, Reginald Pole and Cranmer—
have been fully portrayed. The central figure is villainous
Queen Mary whose political career is dominated by two attrib-
utes—her boldness and her barbarous treatment of the rebels
and the Protestants. Her personal life contains one passion—
her blind attachment to her Spanish husband leading to her
submission to his will fair or foul and ending in frustration
when Philip does not respond to it. The character was diffi-
cult for the theatre because the protagonist of the piece,
neither heroic nor miserably pathetic, is a bitterly dis-
heartened lady who is defended for massacres; yet, Tennyson
thought that Queen Mary, was the most remarkable of his
plays from the point of view of character-painting. 6

Tennyson was drawn towards the subject by a desire to paint
Queen Mary as he had imagined to be. Tennyson expresses his
sympathy for the Queen's courage when she blurts out rejoic-
ingly after he accession and the triumph over revolt.

"My foes are at my feet and Philip King.

Queen Mary, Act I., Sc.IV, pp. 561.

The poet makes Mary a dignified character. By adding a
fierce glow to her gloomy fanaticism and by investing her
with much more vigour of speech and action than she could
have actually possessed, Tennyson on the whole, does more
than justice to Mary. The chief problem was to furnish
sufficient relief to the intense sadness in the situations
when Mary's devotion is repelled by Philip's coldness and

6—Tennyson, A Memoir, p. 565.
mainly in the last scene when Mary falls upon the ground
rocking herself to and fro in a severe mental agony.7

Another prominent character is Elizabeth, Mary's half-

sister whose fortune declines as the Catholic Queen's

heightens and rises to the zenith again as Mary's falls.

Elizabeth, like Mary, is the royal impersonation of a

political party and the Princess of the Tudor blood with

the inherent courage to rise to emergencies, but while

attuned

Elizabeth is attended to the spirit of the English people,

the Catholic Queen suffers from the foreign strain of

bigotry. The picture of Elizabeth is dramatic and life-

like, though it is slight as compared with that of Mary.

Reginald Pole, the fair-weather Papal Legate is equally

afraid of being persecuted and of persecuting and is en-

trapped into the latter policy under fear of the former.

His adherence to Papacy and his abortive efforts to maintain

it testify to his religious fanaticism. The most attractive

character is that of Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury

tortured for his Protestantism and the old animosity with

Queen Mary. He prepares for public recantation, but at

the appointed time, he becomes as firm an Becket, adheres to

his old faith and denounces himself for having broken his

7- For the Acting edition Tennyson added a tragic close

of Queen Mary, it was never printed but left as a note.

In that situation, Queen Mary expired most tragically

before Elizabeth and offers her Crown saying these words,

"It stings the touch! It is not gold but thorns."

Tennyson, A Momir, p.567 and Queen Mary and Harold.
(The Eversley Edition 1908) annotated by the poet, pp340-41.}
firm faith previously. He was burnt publicly. Cramer with his somewhat questionable faith and courage from the historical point of view is delineated more firm and resolute in Tennyson's hands; saturated with humility, penitence and sweetness, he is the most thrilling figure of the piece. All the remaining dramatic persons, however, slightly touched, are clearly defined and drawn with a firm hand and a delicate touch. The Churchmen, politicians and martyrs painted in clear relief weave an atmosphere of intrigues and clashing politics of an age when the balance seems to hang even between the old faith and the new on account of the Spanish marriage which was adding a heavy weight to the side of Rome. For statesmen like Page, Howard, Wyatt and Bagshah, religion was a question of politics while for the ecclesiastics like Pole, Bonar and Gardiner, the political power was an institution for the enforcement of religious conformity.

In Harold, the number of characters is fewer - twenty two in all including two prominent men - Harold and Count William and two principal women - Edith and Aldwyth. We have characters in contrast as we do not have in Queen Mary. Idealistic Harold can be contrasted with villainous William, as noble Edith with jealous Aldwyth. Harold's versatile character, the nucleus of the drama, represents immaculate kingship like that of King Arthur and Ulysses who have

"One equal temper of heroic hearts,
    Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield."

8- "Ulysses" in Works, p.90.
Harold rises to the occasion every time and faces the adverse situations against him resolutely till he falls a victim to the overwhelming Norman forces. The protagonist combines all the traits to create dramatic effect—his military and civil talents, his faithful and doubtless defense of his country against foreign invasions, his generous and frank deportment and his heroism blended with his tall and comely personality and physical strength. His nobility and sense of duty are unshaken even when the circumstances are against him. What established the unity between the various parts of the play is the oath taken by Harold, the oath in the name of Norman saints which Harold wishes to break as soon as he takes it. He could have said in the sense of Euripides, "My tongue has sworn but my soul has not sworn." Beyond the foreboding of the doom of the defiled, he craves for justice which is the reward of the pure in spirit.

Harold, another Lancelot whom 'faith unfaithful kept falsely true' suffers from the Greek element of Fate, a powerful adjunct to the play. Tennyson called the drama his "Tragedy of Doom" and stressed on that motif throughout the play. The playwright has made Harold an...

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9- The poet eulogizes Harold in his sonnet, "Show-Day at Battle Abbey, 1076."

> "Here fought, here fell, our Norman-slander'd king.
> O Garden blossoming out of English blood!
> O strange hate-healer Time! we stroll and stare
> Where might made right eight hundred years ago;
> Might right? oy, good, by all things make for good—
> But be and be, if soul be soul, are where
> Each stands full face with all he did below."

(Works, p. 607)

10- Tennyson, A Memoir, p. 575.
Ideal hero without concealing the apparent inconsistencies in his character. Tennyson's rigid adherence to historical truth somewhat weakens our sympathy for the hero especially his bigamous marriage revealed startlingly through a fine melodramatic surprise in the last scene.

In contrast with him, Count William of Normandy, with Christian justice as well as strength on his side, desires to extend his empire by hook or by crook and administers an immoral oath to the reluctant Harold. Even with the help of the Pope and all Christendom, he would have lost the battle against Harold but for the treachery of Aldwyth's brothers. Edith, a sweet shadowy figure acts the highest example of affection by relinquishing her marriage with Harold, while in contrast Aldwyth, fascinated by Harold's power compels him to marry her by stirring up the Northumbrians; inspite of a certain melodramatic force, the story of Aldwyth's love and treachery is not convincing.

Becket Tennyson's highest achievement in the art of characterization, was even fewer characters than Harold. The devices of contrast and symbolization have been more effectively employed here than in Harold. Becket representing the ideal of the Church can be contrasted with the irresolute and immoral Henry; similarly Rosamund's sincere devotion and humility are opposed to Queen Eleanor's pride and jealousy. Different from Queen Mary and Harold the main centre of attraction in Becket shifts to one character only - the towering personality of the Archbishop Becket who with invincible courage symbolizes the medieval struggle of ecclesiastical power against worldly power. The ecclesiastical hero overtops all the dramatic persons,
marking the central line of action throughout and supplying a fitting tragic ending to the play in his violent death. In the plays, Becket is the most powerful of Tennyson's characters and perhaps, one of the most saintly ones in English dramatic literature. He does not conform to the Aristotelian description of the tragic hero- one who suffers from a flaw. Becket's pride which is not for his own self, emerges when a devotee repays his absolute confidence in God and refuses to submit to any evil whatsoever on earth. A similar character, martyred for his own faith is Archbishop Cranmer in Queen Mary. Becket is a man far above the ordinary level - "too good for human nature's daily food." A minor imperfection in him seems to be that he cannot pardon his enemies; rather he can forgive his enemies, not God's. 

John of Salisbury: A policy of wise pardon wins here as Well as there. To bless thine enemies By mine, not Heaven's." (Becket, Act V, Sc.1)

His last act, pardon for all his murderers, is Christ-like. 11- However, most of the critics ancient and modern hold the view that perfect characters are not suitable for drama because they fail to create pity in us to the same extent as they should. According to Aristotle, the proper tragic hero is "a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity but by some error..." The proper effect is not produced by "the spectacle of a virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity" nor by "that of a bad man passing from adversity to prosperity" nor by "the downfall of the utter villain." (Butcher's translation).

Nicolai remarks, "Of tragic drama in which the hero is utterly flawless there are but few examples and such as exist seem to show that Aristotle was right in recognizing this character as unsuitable for tragedy. None,
"I know well thou hast but half a heart
To bathe this sacred pavement with my blood.
God pardon thee and there."

(Ibid., Act V, Sc. III)

Becket, "great and impulsive man" firmly adhered to the sense of duty as the Head of the Church, the common man's "tower of strength, their bulwark against throne and baronage." His dominant acts were the outcome of this conception with which he completely identified himself and which often led to his spiritual ecstasy. Rosamund's reverential devotion to Becket springs from his perennial love and compassion for the poor, the weak and the unprotected.

In contrast, King Henry is a man of weak resolve and morality who does not hesitate to do cruel and unscrupulous deeds when he loses his temper. Being defeated by Becket, he gets him assassinated in his cathedral. He wedds Eleanor, the divorced wife of Louis of France in order to grab her Aquitaine, but he secretly loves Rosamund. In the delineation of the traits of his two principal personages - Becket and Henry II, the poet has perhaps belongs to this genre.... The truth really is that in Romeo and Juliet we seem to have a pure tragedy of fortune and we accordingly fail to experience the passions called forth by a Hamlet or an Othello." The Theory of Drama, p. 151.

C. Brockes says, "Perhaps we may say that tragedy grows out of the nature of man, out of conflict of good and evil in which he is always engaged." Understanding Drama, p. 498.

12 - See Tennyson's remark about Becket, Tennyson, A Memoir, p. 581.

13 - Ibid., p. 581.
embroidered upon the historic canvas with force and fidelity. Rosamund, "the king's wife by a left-handed marriage" has a genuine and unselfish devotion and even after abandoning her love she prays for him and pleads with Becket not to excommunicate him. On the contrary, Queen Eleanor, proud and selfish, lacks the purity of love for Henry. The absence of true attachment between them incites Henry to seek it in Rosamund's bower and hence the conflict between the two. The rivalry of Rosamund and Eleanor containing the romantic element of secret love and feminine vindictiveness, softens the harsh discords among the priests and barons. It also reveals the playwright's skill in seizing and working upon these points of vantage to produce theatrical effect.

The Foresters, poor in characterisation, contains only two prominent characters—Robin and Marian. Robin's character reveals his chivalrous bravery and affection for Marian and reminds us of Orlando in As You Like It; but the former lacks the vitality and vigour of the latter. Marian's static character shows only one feature—her love for Robin but it fails to reveal the intellect, resourcefulness and charm of Rosalind, her prototype. The rest of the minor characters do not play any significant role attached to them; they appear because they have been mentioned in history. They fall into two categories. The function of villains like Prince John and Sheriff of Nottingham is to make abortive attempts to impede the glorious enterprizes and happy marriage between Robin and

14—See the footnote in Tenryson, A Memoir, p.562.
Marion. Noble persons like the foresters and King Richard assist Robin in resisting enemies and in executing his noble designs. They also weave an atmosphere of love, merry-making and unsophisticated nature in forest life. These minor characters lack individuality and there is an absence of contrasting characters.

The love plays, The Cup, The Falcon and The Promise of May, with some common features in characterisation among them, indicate a landmark in Tennyson’s dramatic art. These one-man or one-woman plays reveal only one special trait in the principal character and the actions of all the dramatic persons assist in portraying that trait through either conflict or collaboration. Thus The Cup chiefly aims at manifesting the loyalty of Garma, the most powerful and charming heroine among Tennyson’s plays, for her husband. Like Deirdre in Deirdre of the Sorrows by J.M. Synge (1910), she remains faithful after the death of her husband and rejecting Synorix’s temptations, kills herself. In The Falcon, the Count, the chief character, shows his life-long love for lady Giovanna; he is ultimately successful in his attempt by his sacrifices. In The Promise of May, the dramatist shows the futility of the theories of Philip Edgar, “a surface man of theories, true to none”, who is responsible for the tragedies of the two village-girls. The protagonist, who exists never again to resume his libertine existence but to make amends for the monstrous wickedness of past with his life-long contrition is neither “a free thinker, drawn into crime by his commutistic theories” nor “even an honest Radical nor a sincere follower of
Schopenhaur. He is spiritually annihilated by the torture of his repentance created by the forgiveness of his victims. In these romantic plays, there are no villainous women as those in the historical plays; here all the idealistic and generous women, faithful to their husbands or lovers, sacrifice everything for them. Accordingly, we do not discern the conflict between the good and the wicked ladies described in the historical trilogy. The nature of the conflict in which the noble women are involved is different from that in the historical plays. In the love plays, it is between the right woman and the treacherous man, while in the latter, it is between the good and the wicked ladies. Here is the complete absence of rivalry in love or politics pervading the historical trilogy. The gentle woman, who is always in the right is fatally credulous and is entrapped by the wicked man; she believes him in good faith and falls a victim to him; e.g., Camilla, Eva and Dora. Here the villains Synoris and Philip Edgar, responsible for the tragedy of gentlewomen, have some common traits; they are polished and attractive in their talks and manners. They are intriguing, treacherous and contemptuous of married life; passion and not genuine love dominates their love-affairs.

Tennyson, often inserts into his plays both historical and romantic, some minor characters in groups; e.g., the beggars in Becket and the farm labourers and the servants.

16- According to Tennyson, Synoris "is a subtle blend of human refinement and intellectual, the barbarian self-satisfied sensuality." Tennyson, A Memoir, p.623.
in *The Promise of May*. Their function seems to be threefold. First, when the dramatist wants to convey some information to the audience by narration rather than by presentation, the utterances of these gossiping characters serve as a connecting link between the two parts of the story furnishing us with some useful information indispensable to comprehension of the theme. The same technique has been frequently employed by Thomas Hardy in his novels. Secondly, since these humorous characters mitigate tense situations, Tennyson provides dramatic relief while Browning does not.

In *Becket* the scene where the beggars dine at the feast of the Archbishop, appears after the high-pitched conflict between the Archbishop and the King. As Becket's life is in jeopardy, these dining beggars actually misguide the four knights with their funny freaks. In *The Promise of May*, the rustic weaves a lively mise-en-scene to dispel the gloom of the story; even the one-scene play *The Falcon* contains two minor characters - the nurse, Elizabetta and the Count's foster-brother, Filippo, both of whom appear to us more than the noble and villainous characters. Representing the common nature of man, they are neither very wicked nor very noble, simplicity being their common characteristic. Thus Joan and Tri in *Queen Mary*, the fishermen in *Harold*, Margery, Geoffrey and beggars in *Becket*, Elizabetta and Filippo in *The Falcon*, the farm labourers and the servants
in The Promise of May, the foresters, the beggars and the peasants in The Foresters create the simple and lively episode contrasted with the main tense themes.

Tennyson uses a few devices of characterisation skilfully. The most effective of his devices is the symbolisation of his chief characters. He builds his dramatic personae out of his idea to represent vice, virtue or institution. The historical figures, lacking individuality and complexity, reveal poet's favourite conceptions for didactic purpose. Often the poet's favour or prejudice against a particular character is clearly seen. The noble ecclesiastics stand for the ideals and independence of the Church. Queen Mary, William and King Henry represent corrupt monarchy. The noble women show feminine virtues, while the wicked ones, feminine vice.

Unlike Browning, Tennyson employs action extensively to reveal his characters who, untroubled by inner conflicts, act with full confidence. At the outset, action reveals the main traits which dominate the characters throughout. As action advances, it reveals little characteristics but the succession of events full of considerable stage-bustle and external conflicts. Sometimes symbolic action is used to describe the character or coming events. The game of chess in Becket throws light on the character of Becket, Henry and on coming events. William's order for the removal of the prisoner's eyes and ears reveal his cruelty. The dreams and visions of King Edward and Harold reflect their character and portend the coming catastrophe.

Tennyson uses contrasting devices very effectively. He tries to idealize a few characters by contrasts and
often portray the excellence and the victory of the good and the villainy and the downfall of the wicked. Every ideal character is confronted with a villain who tries to test the worth of the noble character; every virtuous woman is opposed by a villain. (The contrast broadly divides the characters into virtuous and villainous ones and betrays Tennyson's views on politics, religion and love.)

In Tennyson's dramas, the prominent characters lack sufficient inwardness, the chief merit of Browning's plays; they are rather statically portrayed in their external conflict only. The Poet-Laureate delineates mostly the clearly demarcated virtuous and the vicious characters in his plays as in his Idylls, to present his deep-rooted beliefs in politics, religion and love and to convey his message to the Victorian torn between old and new ideals. Unlike Browning, Tennyson fails to portray adequately the complex and diverse traits in his dramatic personas; his characters lack individuality. Without unfolding the inner soul in its manifold phases and characteristics, these extroverts are frequently flat according to E.M. Forster's classification. Tennyson, a conservative in his outlook, developed certain firm notions at the end of his poetic career when he essayed the dramatic art; they is to the limited portrayal of human nature. His ideas become

CHAPTER VIII

MAJOR THEMES IN TENNYSON’S PLAYS

In Tennyson’s plays, the predominance of external conflict and the mechanical contraposition of good and bad characters result from his conceptions of politics, religion and love. These conceptions have considerably influenced Tennyson’s dramatic art and are the direct outcome of the Victorian clash between the old and new values. The political ideals current in the Victorian era are occasionally reflected in Tennyson’s historical plays. He is against absolute monarchy detesting any rule that does not represent the wishes and the free voice of the English people directly or indirectly. The problem of personal liberty for English men is a respectable and characteristic theme of the trilogy. Harold says, again and again, that the free voice of the English people makes the King of England. The poet has expressed the same sentiment elsewhere.

"That sober freedom out of which there springs Our loyal passion for our temperate Kings."

("Ode on the death of the Duke of Wellington").

From middle age onwards, Tennyson began to be critical about the English democratic system; but his firm faith in the English people was never shaken. He remarked, "I do not least mind, if England, when the people are less ignorant and more experienced in self-government, eventually becomes a democracy. But violent, selfish, unreasoning democracy would bring expensive bureaucracy,"
and the iron rule of Cromwell— The world would grow into the wickedest of worlds should all this babble and gabble ever succeed in impressing on the people that the obligation of contract is mere tyranny and that law is nothing but coercion.\(^1\) It was not the people of England who were at fault, according to him. They were sound enough especially the agricultural population about whom he wrote in 'Plowmen' in 1886—

> "Plowmen, Shepherds have I found, and more than once, and still could find,
> Sons of God, and kings of men in utter Robes of Mind."

("Locksley Hall, Thirty Years after").

> "When he (Tennyson) was asked what politics he had had, he answered characteristically, "I am of the same politics as Shakespeare, Bacon and every sane man", and he might not have objected to be classed theologically among those who restrict their confession of faith to the declaration that they hold the religion of all sensible men.\(^2\) In his plays too, Tennyson sympathises with the upholders of the welfare of the people. The unscrupulous monarchs should submit to the wishes of the people even in their private affairs, if their acts lead to some serious political repercussions in the country. A similar advice he gives on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee—

1- Tennyson, A Memoir, p.702.
"You, that wanton in affluence
Share not now to be beautiful
Call your poor to regale with you
See the lowly, the destitute...
Let the weary be comforted
Let the needy be banqueted
Let the maimed in his heart rejoice."

("On the Jubilee of Queen Victoria")

The dictatorial monarchs in his plays, are despised and
disgraced by the people and sometimes they perish too.
Harold is the only noble King, who, despite of the fact
that he is crowned by the English people, faces a
tragic death. It was impossible for the poet to go
against the unpleasant historical facts, but, here too,
his sympathies are with Harold rather than with the
ambitious and drunk William of Normandy. Further it is
silly and tyrannical on the part of the monarchs to
enforce their own creed upon the reluctant masses be-
cause their motive is frequently the maintenance of
their hold upon the country, a thing which should be
resisted at any cost. The Poet-Laureate delineated his
theme in these three dramas from a political rather
than a religious point of view and showed clearly his
sympathies for the protestant cause. In fact, Protest-
antism planted so firmly on the English soil, symbolises
the free thoughts of the English people in the domain
of religion. When the dying Protestant, Archbishop
Cranmer declares publicly,
"As for the Pope I count him Antichrist
With all his devil's doctrines, and refuse,
Reject him and abhor him."

-Queen Mary, Act IV, Sc. III.

He gives vent to the general feeling of his country supported even by papist, Becket-

"Why should this Rome, thin Rome
Still choose Barabbas rather than the Christ,
Absolve the left hand thief and doom the right?"

-Becket, Act II, Sc. II

The welfare and the service of the people, especially the poor and the down-trodden, are the greatest aim of true religion. If a person violates these fundamental rules of Christianity he cannot be called a religious man in the true sense. Throughout her short reign, Queen Mary suppresses this Protestantism with the help of her associates; but she is unsuccessful. Noble Harold is forced to take an oath on the pious bones of the Norman saints, but he breaks it because it will fetter the free choice of the English people.

"Cleave heaven and send thy saints that I may say,
Even to their faces, "if ye side with William
Ye are not noble."

-Harold, Act II, Sc. II

Convinced that the Church should protect the poor and the down-trodden people against the arbitrary conduct of the sovereigns, Becket upholds the welfare of the people above the interest of the Crown saying-
"When kings but hold by crowns,  
The crowd that hungers for a crown in Heaven  
Is my true king."

- {HOGSETT. ACT II, SC. II

His last act of saving Rosamund, the wronged woman,  
becomes the main cause of his murder. Robin thinks  
that he is not committing any sin by robbing the corrupt  
and morally weak abbots and friars and by distributing  
their ill-earned wealth among the poor.

Unlike those of Swinburne, almost all Tennyson's  
historical plays abound in patriotic references. Tennyson's  
deep rooted love for England and the English people  
led to the composition of these plays in the Elizabethan  
form after the Shakespearean pattern. In the plays when  
the country is involved in some outer conflict, the  
patriotism of the English people grows to the highest  
pitch. King Harold, a noble example of patriotism, says  
to Margot, an agent of the Count,

"Should they not know free England crowns herself?  
But know that he nor I had power to promise?"

- {HAROLD, ACT V, SC. I

3 - For a comparison and contrast between Tennyson's trilogy  
and Swinburne's trilogy on the life of Queen Mary of Scots  
see Chapter VI.

4 - Regarding true patriotism, the poet remarks—

"The love of country, which makes a man defend his  
landmark, that we all have and the Anglo-Saxon more  
than most other races; but the patriotism that declines  
to link itself with the small fry of the passing hour  
for political advantage— that is rare, I say."

- {TENNYSON, A HUSBAND, P. 711.

5 - See Works, p. 204, and pp. 60-62 for his tribute to England  
and the English people.
Even the English villains possess this passion. Queen Mary surrendering all the interest of her country to a foreign husband, is not devoid of this love.

"Mary - There is no king, not were he ten times King,

Ten times our husband, but must lower his flag

To that of England in the signs of England.

"Philip - Is that your answer?

"Mary - Being Queen of England,

I have no other."

- Queen Mary, Act V, Sc.I

Sometimes in his plays, Tennyson's poetry reveals his patriotic orthodoxy,

"There is no land like England,

Where'er the light of day be;

There are no hearts like English hearts,

Such hearts of oak as they be..."

-The Foresters, Act II, Sc.I

In religion too, the trilogy suggests the contemporary situation as the age-long controversy between England and the Roman Church reached a new phase after the emancipation of the Catholics in 1829. The rise of the Tractarian movement introduced a new phase of this religious struggle in England and the seething excitement created by these events aroused Tennyson's interest in this historical struggle and its dramatic possibilities. Though Tennyson described its true historical perspective in a detached spirit, his sympathies were clearly for the Protestants and a violent tirade against the cruelty and obscurantism of the Roman Church. He was impressed by the poignant bitters
of the long struggle which reached its climax at the time of the Reformation and which probably led to his attempt at a poetical play on the life of Queen Mary. The trilogy offers a wonderful scope for dealing with the fiercest crisis of this religious struggle. The Victorian era is marked by an interest in religious questions, seriousness of purpose and discipline of character. For long, England was Church and Chapel conscious rather than class-conscious. In this Age of Reforms, public opinion began to demand that an ecclesiastic should do the work for which he was paid. As a consequence of this public criticism and the parliamentary reform, there was a rapid revival of the religious activity among the clergy themselves and the Church of England became the body literally receptive to many different ways of life and thought.

The religious ferment of the Victorian era which caused reforms in the Church, is reflected in the spiritual unrest in Tennyson's plays. Religion, without morality and reason which are based upon the free thoughts of men and which oppose superstitions loses its foundation. The conscience of the common man revolts against this corruption. Protestantism as shown in Queen Mary, is the inevitable moral reaction of the English people to the corruptions of Rome. Rahn Religious restlessness is represented by the tussle between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants; it is aggravated by the merciless and wicked Queen and her associates with the assistance from Rome. In Harold, the moral revolt against existing religious order is reflected by Harold's action in refusing to honour his immoral oath administered
to his forcibly. Harold prophesies a constant struggle between England and corrupt Rome, an ally of the Count.

———"And this to England
May legacy of war against the Pope
From child to child, from Pope to Pope, from age to age,
Till the sea wash her level with her shores,
or till the Pope be Christ's."

(Harold, Act V, Sc. I)

In Becket, spiritual unrest is manifest in Becket whose religious resistance is against two authorities - the King and the Pope. He admits the corruption of Rome.

"I would have done my most to keep Rome holy,
I would have made Rome know she still is Rome -
Who stands aghast at her eternal self
And shakes at mortal kings - her vicissitude
Avarice, craft, - O God, how many an innocent
Has left his bones upon the way to Rome
Unwept, uncared for, yes —— Rome.

(—Becket, Act II, Sc. II)

Showing same spiritual unrest, Robin considers it to be a virtue to rob the morally degraded clergy and to distribute their wealth among the poor from whom they extracted it. "Then the Church and the law have forgotten God's music, they shall dance to the music of the wild wood."

This restless-sense results in the emergence of true religion which was embodied in the ancient ideals of the Christian Church indicated by Christ's teachings and which was also the basis of the Church reform known as the Oxford Movement. In the Victorian era, Its indispensable foundation is morality and the service of the poor and the downtrodden; religion isolated from sound reason and ethics and
exploited for the accumulation of wealth and power turns into superstition and corruption and must be opposed with full force. Tennyson's plays display this resistance against false religion for which Philip Edgar expresses his contempt in *The Promise of May*.

"Child, read a little history, you will find

The common brotherhood of man has been
wrongs by the cruelties of his religions,
More than could ever have happened thro' the want
Of any or all of them."

—Act III.

The strongest basis of religion is the firm faith in God that elevates the conduct of man and prevents him from going astray by the selfless service of the people; this is pointed out by Dora in her retort to Philip Harold in the same play.

"If thro' the want of any (religion)— I mean the true one
And pardon me for saying it — you should ever
Be tempted into doing what might not altogether worthy of you—"

—Act III.

--- A soul with no religion

My mother used to say that such a one
Was without rudder, anchor, compass— might be
Blown every way with very gust and wreck

On any rock. — (The Promise of May, Act III, Works, p. 744)

The Promise of May aimed at an attack on the new trend of materialism during the 1870s and 1880s and on the
new revolutionary creeds of "Utopian idioscories"—communism, Nihilism and Anarchism.

"Strangle each other, die and make the soil
For Caesars, Cromwells and Napoleons,
To root their power in."

The villain of the piece expresses Tennyson's opinion which aroused bitter antagonism of the left-wing Radicals.

A cynical and hedonistic atheist convinced by the writings of Huxley, J.S. Mill and Alexander Bain believes that man is actuated entirely by a series of automatic sensations without any independent will power. Man must not strain to make himself better than nature. Government, religion, conventions like marriage are all restraints upon nature. Socialism, communism and Nihilism will shake off these restraints. The vice of one age is the virtue of the next. Subsequently, the villain experiences a feeling of remorse entirely inconsistent with the theories of life which he has hitherto accepted. He discovers that he has destroyed his own happiness as well as that of his victims.

This craving for true religion aiming at the moral uplift of man's character, occupies a prominent place among Tennyson's plays and it was essentially a contemporary urge.

Love situations holding a distinct position in Tennyson's plays, and possessing some common traits offer the conception of true love. The Devil and the Lady, an unpublished play reveals how certain ideas and convictions were already germinating in the mind of the poet at fifteen. He thought "Omnipotent Love" as the ruler of the universe and the "vast link of the creation"; this idea completely fundamental to all poet's thought was continued
repeated throughout his long life from the Preface to "In Memoriam" to the cannet, "Doubt and Prayer" published posthumously in "The Death of Genove". Secondly, the spiritual being is the only reality and matter, an illusion. In these two ideas, the people can discover a countercharm to the terrible scientific theories of the insignificance of humanity in the face of the imitable nature. He derived his reflections mostly from literature while his observation of external nature—Universe and man's relation to it—was apt to be made through the eye of others. Among the love situations of the plays, the character of the suffering women, presents the great ideal of feminine love which reflects Victorian morality. These noble women have an absolute faith in the sanctity of marriage connecting the husband and his wife with the permanent ties and accordingly, they aspire that their genuine affection should end in their happy wedding. Throughout his life, Tennyson retained his instinctive preference for married life and as a matter of fact, it was painful for him to contemplate even the possibility of any relation between man and woman other than the conjugal. He had an almost feminine sympathy for the tender delicacies of home.

"Love for the maiden, crowned with marriage,
No regrets for aught that has been
Household Happiness, gracious children, debtless
Competence, golden mean.

The representative Victorian wife for Tennyson appears to be

6—Cf., Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, pp.38-45.
the Lord of Burleigh's consort who

"Shaped her heart with woman's weakness,
To all duties of rank.
And a gentle consort made he
And her gentle mind was such
That she grew a noble lady
And the people loved her much."

(The Lord of Burleigh)

All the noble heroines in Tennyson's works aspire to
marrige with their lovers as the reward and the consumma-
tion of their love in whom they have the absolute faith.

In Harold, Edith, an exception shows nobler love for
relinquishing her marriage with Harold for the welfare
of her lover and the country. This ideal of conjugal life
has been intimated by this speech of Dora in The Promise
of May:

"And yet I had once a vision of a pure and
perfect marriage, where the man and the
woman, only differing as the stronger and
the weaker, should walk hand in hand to-
gether down this valley of tears, as they
call it so truly to the grave at the
bottom and be down there together in the
darkness which would seem but for a moment
to be weakened again together by the light
of the resurrection and no more partings
for ever and ever."

(Act III).

person, who violates the convention of marriage
and permits his passion to shift from one person to another, cannot feel satisfied in this world. In *The Promise of May*, Philip Edgar, who deprecates the old tradition of marriage and who thinks that "then the man and woman, following their best affinities, will each bid their old bond farewell with smiles, not tears" discovers only loneliness in every other sensual course.

"Since I left her (Eva)

Here, weeping, I have ranged the world and set

Thro' every sensual course of that full feast

That leaves but emptiness."

(Act II.)

The persons who desecrate marriage in his plays are either disgraced finally or killed; e.g., Symonix and Philip Edgar among men and Eleanor and Aldwyth among women.

A comparative study of Tennyson's Historical Trilogy with Shakespeare's Historical Plays

"Tennyson", writes Hallaz in his *A Memoir*, "chase these three great periods of Harold, Becket and Queen Mary so as to complete the line of Shakespeare's English chronicle plays, which end with the commencement of the Reformation." Therefore, it is necessary to compare Tennyson's historical plays with those of Shakespeare in order to assess their real value, their source of inspiration and the artistic achievement. Both Shakespeare and Tennyson were considerably inspired by the contemporary patriotism which made them keenly interested in the dramatisation of the past British history. The spirit of

7- *Tennyson, A Memoir*, p. 562.
Renaissance and Reformation marked by the ardour of adventure in the nation, the emergence of England as a great sea-power and the over-throw of the Spanish Armada and Decisive stirred up Shakespeare’s patriotism. The expansion of the British empire as a consequence of the victory of the English forces in India, Europe and Africa, the industrial Revolution and the consequent prosperity of England roused Tennyson’s latent love for Britain and her people largely reflected in his poems and plays.

It was inevitable for Shakespeare, as an Elizabethan to accept monarchy as an integral part of society, although he was thoroughly alive to the blemishes of royal persons. He concentrates upon the portrayal of the virtues and vices of the English Monarchs with reference to their practical achievements. Ignoring the aspect of their life in relation to the common man of England, the dramatist is concerned with delineating the personal nature of kings. Like a detached and an objective artist, he does not pronounce any verdict over absolute monarchical system and he does not uphold the right of the English common man to have a voice in the administration. Shakespeare, who ignores the opinions of the populace, had some contempt for it whom he sometimes identified with the groundlings; it is clearly felt in the presentation of the slickle mob in Julius Cæsar and the common characters in Henry IV and Coriolanus. Even the ideal monarch, Henry V, who considers the welfare of England as his supreme duty, does not show much inclination towards democratic ideals embodied in the representation of the people’s voice in administration.
On the other hand, being inspired by the Victorian democratic form of government, in which the Parliament occupied a prominent place in the administration of the country, Tennyson seems to approve of that monarchy in which the opinions of the people have due weight. In his plays, the people rebel against the tyrant monarchs, noble Harold being the only sovereign who is made king according to the wishes of the people and who enjoys their confidence. Harold, an ideal king, admits the democratic privilege that the voice of the English people makes the King of England. Therefore, he sacrifices all his private wishes including his marriage with his beloved in accordance with the desires of the people. Tennyson never betrays any disregard for the crowd which represents the people of England. They are sufficiently organised and have a common voice; their leaders ready to sacrifice utmost for the people, are the persons of outstanding calibre and integrity; e.g., Thomas Cranmer, Princess Elizabeth, Sir Thomas Wyatt, Harold and Becket. Tennyson shows his sympathy for the rights and the privileges of the people, never representing his nob as irresolute as Shakespeare sometimes does; the reason probably is that in Elizabethan times, the common people, little conscious of their democratic rights, were

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8- Cf., Harold's rejoinder to Margaret: 
"Should they not know free England crews himself? 
Not know that he not I had power to promise,..."

9- Cf., Tennyson's remark "I have trust in the reason of the English people (who have an inborn respect for Law), when they have time to reason: I believe in our crown'd republic's crowning common sense."

-Tennyson, A Memoir, p. 702
hardly so organised as to rebel against the established order of monarchy. Therefore, in Tennyson's plays, the democratic conflict symbolising the struggle between the people and their absolute monarchical rulers, plays an important role. In Queen Mary, the English people rebel against the tyrant sovereign, the Queen who wedded King Philip of Spain without fully appreciating its political repercussions over England and who tries to crush Protestantism, an expression of the free religious sentiments of the people. In Harold, under the leadership of Harold, their chosen king, the people of England revolt against the invaders, the wrongful claimants of the English throne. In Backet the conflict between Backet and King Henry possesses democratic significance also because Backet sides with the wronged people of England, giving them the protection of the Church from the tyranny of the Crown. He says—

"When Kings but hold by crowns,

The crowd that hunger for a crown in Heaven is my true King."  

-Backet, Act II, Sc. II.

Religious and even political problems do not much haunt Shakespeare's mind and the Church plays an insubstantial role in his plays. Even in his historical plays, Shakespeare raises inner moral issues, little connected with the external facts, in the weakness or the strength of Kings with reference to their practical achievements; the dramatist aims at delineating permanent human values rather than at discussing controversial political and religious questions. On the contrary, Tennyson's historical plays abound in these political and religious issues constantly; accordingly they are more political and religious
in nature than moral. As the outer world seems to exercise great influence in them they are more external than internal in their appeal. While the success and the failure of Shakespeare's monarchs are owing to their own virtues and vices respectively, Tennyson's heroes fall on account of external overwhelming circumstances against them rather than due to their flaws. Ambition does not lead so much to Queen Mary's tragedy as her husband's constant neglect of her genuine love and the fall of Calais for which she is not responsible. The ideal sovereign, Harold, falls before the overwhelming forces of Chrestendom led by William of Normandy. Becket is elevated to the status of a martyr by King Henry and his nobles because they want to make the Church the handmaid of the Crown.

Shakespeare, seized with the Renaissance spirit embodied in the interest of common nature of man and woman, portrayed his characters with merits and demerits. In the character of Henry V, also, the displays Shakespeare's ideal of manhood for practical success, the playwright has delineated his youthful follies in the two parts of Henry IV. Henry V's heart is full of tenderness for his sad father, to whom he had been able to bring so little happiness.

"Thy due from me
Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,
Which nature, love and filial tenderness,
Shall, O dear father, pay thee plentifully!"


Subsequently, rejecting the company of Falstaff and other evil associates, he enters gravely upon his manhood. On
the other hand, Tennyson's principal characters can be broadly divided into ideal characters and villains. Princess Elizabeth Harold, Becket and their noble companions, forming the first group display the ideals in love, religion and politics, while another group containing ambitious monarchs and their associates show a sharp contrast by their wickedness. Accordingly, Shakespeare, an objective artist, portrays his characters as they are, while Tennyson delineates them as they should be. Tennyson's characters are static, while those of Shakespeare are dynamic, incessantly unfolding their vices and virtues which lead to their downfall or success.

In Tennyson's historical trilogy, every principal character is the representative of some religious or political system and the fate of the characters determines the fall or victory of that political or religious order. Accordingly, these plays are more comprehensive in their appeal and their area is much greater than those of Shakespeare. The fall of Queen Mary with her accomplices reveals the end of the corrupt and cruel Papacy and the victory of the English Protestantism over it for which Princess Elizabeth stands. The defeat of Harold by William indicates the temporary eclipse of the unfettered democratic spirit of England by overwhelming external invasions. The conflict between Archbishop Becket and King Henry symbolises the struggle between the pious and the merciful Church and the unprincipled and cruel kings, existing all over Europe in the Middle Ages. Robin Hood typifies the free spirit of English common man, incessantly revolting against corrupt state laws and degenerate Church. On the other hand, even

10 Cf., The Duchess de la Valliere and Richelieu by E.B. Lytton.
in his historical plays, Shakespeare's approach is individualistic rather than political or religious, his aim being to portray those kings' vices and virtues, which lead to their downfall or victory respectively. In the limited world of the practicable in which these characters are conceived, if they fail or succeed, they with their associates, alone gain or lose. The remaining persons including their own country and its common people have nothing much to do with it. But as these plays delineate the common nature of sovereigns, they have been truly described as a 'mirror for kings' and accordingly, their appeal is universal.

The treatment of women both by Tennyson and Shakespeare in their historical plays, deserves particular attention. In Shakespeare, as the villainous ladies do not play an appreciable role, there is the complete absence of conflict between the good and the wicked women, while in Tennyson, serving its two-fold purpose, this struggle, partly adds to the main political strife in the plays and partly by contrast, it reveals the excellence and the worth of the noble women who set the ideals of self-sacrificing love. As Tennyson's heroines possess the excellence of their love, they also enjoy the confidence of their lovers. They are not confined to their hearth and home merely to satisfy the love or passion of their lovers or husbands; they also share with them the upheavals of their political career playing an important role there too. They are not like Harry Percy's wife meant only

"To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
And talk with you sometimes."

Henry IV, Pt.I
Practically controlling all Queen Mary's political and ecclesiastical policies, even King Philip conceals no wicked design from her except his hatred which also becomes manifest subsequently, when his desires are not fulfilled. Edith enjoys the confidence of her lover, Harold throughout her life, sharing with him the joys and sorrows not only of his love, but also of his political career. Even Rosamund, who knows the political secrets of her husband and who sometimes gives her independent and fearless advice has not been conceived as a "paramour" to satisfy the king's passion. Knowing the King's wicked designs against the noble Basset and his "Poor and miserable folk" she condemns them fearlessly and unequivocally.

"Rosamund—And is that altogether royal?

Henry—Traitress!

Rosamund—A faithful traitress to thy fame."

—Deacon, Act II, Sc.1

On the other hand, the women in Shakespeare's historical plays, do not attain the happiness of women because they are deprived of their object in the unpleasant struggle of interests, of parties and of nations. Some lament the loss of children, some of husbands, some of brothers and all of love. A few, who are the wives of men of action to whom they are dear, live but in sort of limitation in the suburb of their husband's good pleasure. Even the courting of the French Katherine by King Henry V, Shakespeare's ideal king, is businesslike, but by no means the most satisfying to the heart of a sensitive woman.
Thus, the ideas, scattered in his poetical works and rooted in his age, emerge unwittingly in the plays of Tennyson, the most representative poet who could not rise above them to make his dramas sufficiently objective and universal. His idealism in politics, religion and love coupled with didacticism somewhat controls his dramatic art. It has led to the portrayal of types, embodying the poet's conceptions mainly in their external conflicts. In his dramatic compositions, demanding the objective delineation of life, Tennyson could not overcome his ideals which have made his plays subjective in nature. Every great dramatist conveys some moral which wells up from the series of events leading to the plotted end without the deliberate efforts of the playwright. While in Browning's plays, more objective than those of Tennyson, the playwright's conceptions come out indirectly, they occupy a prominent place in Tennyson's plays directly effecting his entire art.
CHAPTER IX
THE FORM IN Tennyson's Plays

We have already observed how in the third period of his literary life, Tennyson developed some deep-rooted convictions. Before he became the Poet-Laureate in 1850, he had passed through a stage of intellectual uncertainty and questioning—no doubt in response to the new trends in scientific and religious thinking. "This is the terrible age of unfaith" he would say, "I hate utter unfaith; I cannot endure that men should sacrifice everything at the cold altar of what with their imperfect knowledge they choose to call truth and reason. One can easily lose all belief, through giving up the continual thought and care for spiritual things." Again, "I tell you the nation without faith is doomed; mere intellectual life, however, advanced or however perfected, will not fill the void."

But from the fifties onwards, his view of life hardened into set beliefs. The impress of this hardening can often be found in the plays which were a product of his creative career in its later phase. Tennyson's penchant for didacticism is writ large on the dramas in which he introduced religious and political themes with an intent, as it were, to read lessons for the Victorian people; this didacticism, as we shall presently see, controls dramatic characterization and construction.

In Tennyson's plays, many dialogues embody the

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1 - Tennyson, A Memoir, p.259.
dramatist's own ideas and most of his characters reveal his pre-conceived ideals. The denunciation of Papacy by Cranmer and Harold indicates Tennyson's own views. In Harold, some speeches of the dying King Edward, which have little to do with action, betray Tennyson's own convictions of the greatness of England and her people and his faith in the divine favour for her. Even William's last speech in which he eulogises England, the English army and Harold whom he vanquished, reveals the dramatist's own patriotism more than that of the villain himself. In Backet, the prologue, which briefly sums up the future course of actions in the play, indicates Tennyson's true dramatic instinct which, if properly pursued, would have made him a good dramatist. The game of chess and the talks among Henry, Backet and Eleanor contain the germ of the coming catastrophe. This prologue resembles the opening scene of Julius Caesar in which the conversation of different characters anticipates the conflict of the play. But while Shakespeare is objective all through, Tennyson's pre-conceived notions dominate his art and Backet often becomes a mouthpiece of the playwright's ideas about the Church, religion, monarchy and morality. Backet's various speeches, denouncing the corrupt Papacy describing the proper relation between the Church and the King, acknowledging the superiority of the poor people over the worldly King, establishing the supremacy of Church over the State, etc. are stamped with the personal views of the playwright found in his dramas and poems. Moreover, the entire conflict between Backet and King Henry has been described after the medieval struggle
between the Church and the monarchy with the playwright's verdict on both. While, *Murder in the Cathedral* by Eliot and *St. Joan* by Shaw show the soul of the martyred saints in their spiritual crises, Tennyson's play reveals mainly his ideas and ideals on various human institutions and agencies like the Church, religion and state. After writing *The Cup* and *The Falcon*, the exceptions to this practice, Tennyson intrudes his personality again in his last two plays, *The Promise of May* and *The Foresters*. The former describes his views on conjugal love and other contemporary ideals political, scientific and religious. The tragic breakdown of Philip Edgar's materialistic theories, his subsequent disillusionment and his reversion to the old ideals indicate the dramatist's contempt for the current materialistic outlook, his faith in the ancient ideals and an attack on Free Thought. Some of the speeches clearly betray Tennyson's own conceptions; e.g., Borso's speeches on *conjugal love and religion* (Act III). Similarly, *The Foresters* is full of the playwright's various political and religious views.

These pre-conceived notions retard the natural evolution of plot. In the historical trilogy many dialogues of the characters, revealing the author's views, often deal with only the past and the present actions and sometimes, the incidents which follow, do not flow out of the dramatic action. In *Queen Mary*, some of the dialogues and actions which do not follow one another in a natural sequence are

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2 - For the reaction of the audience to the play and attack on Free Thought, see *Tennyson, A Memoir*, p. 541, and *Alfred Tennyson*, by C. Tennyson, p. 464.
loosely connected with the main story. Thus the three threads of the story - King Philip's marriage with Queen Mary and his ultimate betrayal, the arrival of Cardinal Pole and the torture of the Protestants, and the battle of France and the loss of Calais - are tied loosely without being knit into an artistically harmonious unity. Again, in *Harold*, Tennyson's mind is obviously obsessed by the ancient glory of England; the character of the hero who personifies the author's ideal of Kingship, has been pre-determined; consequently, the main action is hampered by Harold's denunciation of the Papacy, immoral religion, cruel autocracy, the undemocratic state and his admiration for England, her constitution and her people. Bcket's character, developing in truly dramatic way in the beginning soon becomes the agency of Tennyson's views on cruel and absolute monarchy, the superiority of the church over kings, the corrupt Papacy, true religion and morality. The transition in Bcket's character is abrupt and is not properly brought out through the tangle of events. *The Cup* and *The Falcon*, however, are free from the dramatist's pre-determined convictions and are rich in the natural flow of dialogues and actions which prove that Tennyson's dramatic instinct could sometimes be correct and at other times be encumbered with ideas.

In the *Promise of May*, the sudden and quick change in Philip Edgar's villainous character is based not on changes in the situation but on the author's attempt to justify his theories. Moreover, Tennyson's utter hatred of immoral life prompts him to effect the sudden catastrophe in which Philip Edgar's former beloved dies broken hearted and the
other rejects him. In *The Foresters*, where the dramatist's mind is again filled with the ancient glory of England and her people, the dialogues and the actions, display this splendour alone, and, therefore, Robin Hood, represents Tennyson's views on the free English spirit which resists every church or state law repugnant to justice, morality and the welfare of the people. Thus, Tennyson's major characters, who seem to be dominated by the playwright's personality, fail to grow independently and naturally. Tennyson frequently aims at selecting such situations from the pages of English history or at inventing such circumstances as directly or indirectly justify his own convictions. Situations are employed to provide adequate environment for the disgrace or uplift of characters. The entire plot of *Queen Mary* in which the numerous circumstances and dialogues abound mainly in political and religious problems, proves the unscrupulous and villainous deeds of the ambitious Queen at every step and even the love episode full of selfish political motives, fails to make the universal appeal of love.

In the main, Tennyson's dramas deal with situations that are political, or religious and moral, or of love. In the political situations, he is under too powerful a feeling of patriotism to make any compromise with those persons who ignore the wishes of the English people. His monarchs who restrict the free will of the people are eventually disgraced. In the religious situations, Tennyson's mind is focussed on only one aspect of the Church — the English Church in conflict with despotism, a conflict illustrating the medieaval struggle between the Church and the
monarchy. The limited aspect of the strife, finally confirms Tennyson's convictions—the supremacy of the Church over the sovereigns. It is while dealing with a situation of love pertaining to an intriguing triangular contest that Tennyson is at his happiest, refining the various subtle moods of the passion and his portraiture in such situations of self-sacrificing women give emphatic evidence of his personal belief in wedded love.

The magnificence of diversity of circumstances leads to a delineation of limited human nature. The speeches and actions, too apparently contrived, often reduce the characters to mere puppets moulded by the poet's personal convictions. In this matter, Tennyson, resembles Henry Taylor who in his Preface to Henry Fear (1852) states that he is interested in history for "an exhibition of persons victimized by social, political and religious turmoil": Taylor's heroes "embody social ideals or principles, a manner of making ideas, rather than human beings, actors in the play." As Tennyson has failed to produce situations, which can satisfactorily account for the nobility or the villainy of his characters, these traits often do not develop out of the circumstances; they dominate them throughout. Princess Elizabeth, Harold and Becket are noble from the very start and on the contrary, Queen Mary, William of Normandy and King Henry are ambitious and unscrupulous from the very

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beginning. The main incentive in his drama is to point
either ideal characters or to a lesser degree the villains
in contrast and to avoid, as far as possible the indifferent
and complex characters, the mixture of good and bad qualities.
His noble political characters are dominated by one common
virtue - love for England and her people, while the vicious
ones, by ambition. Similarly his noble priests have one
common characteristic - firm faith in God and the English
Church while all the wicked ones possess one uniform vice-
their love of power and Mammon and their adherence to the
corrupt monarchy and the Papacy. Tennyson is at his best
when he delineates the character of a noble and loving woman
and at such places, innocence, self-sacrifice and even the
revenge by a faithful wife, like Gerda, are successfully
portrayed. As these women conform to his ideal of the true
type of feminine love, he feels pleasure in describing them;
but he is unsuccessful in bringing forth the complexity in
the wicked woman's character. Therefore, while the charac-
ters of the gentle women like Rosamund, Edith, Gerda, Lady
Giovanna, Maria, Eva and Dora are skilfully drawn, the
portraits of Queen Aldwych and Queen Eleanor are devoid of
vitality and vividness.

At this point of our analysis, we may suggest that
while Tennyson's dramatic sense was competent enough for the
composition of dramatic monologues, it failed to rise to the
demands of the much more complex organisation of dialogue
in drama. Even the most anti-Tennysonian reader of poetry
will not find it possible to under-rate the excellence of
"Ulysses", "Tithonus", "Lucrétius" and "Gerona". The mono-
logue does not require any fluid and shifting situation and
character; both character and situations are, as it were, in a state of suspended animation for the duration of the speech and the speaker, more reminiscent than forward looking, weaves a pattern of his moods and thoughts. Tennyson perhaps found it easier to identify himself with the subjective situation of a monologue than to acquire the detachment that is required in the presentation of dialogues in drama where both situation and character are complex and dynamic. In _The Promise of May_, the soliloquies of Edgar before his departure from the village as well as those after his return, form, as it were, a run-on monologue in the sense that the two "Jocksley Hall"'s poems are. Tennyson can offer convincing characters standing by themselves, the Northern Farmer, the Northern Cobbler, the village wife in "The Entail" or Ulysses but he cannot manage a growing and complex character like Marlowe's Edward II or Ben Jonson's Volpone.

The soliloquies in Tennyson's plays, which deserve special and separate attention can be roughly divided into three classes. The first group consists of those exposi-
tory soliloquies, which help us understand the plot and high-light action rather than emotion; but their number is small. The soliloquies of Synorix in _The Cup_ fall under this class. Thus, in the opening scene, Synorix gives us an account of Sinnatus, the present Tetrarch and his beautiful wife Camra, his fascination for her, the relations of Sinnatus with Rome and his designs to entrap her. Similarly in Scene III, his soliloquy before Camra's arrival, exposes his tricks to capture her; the soliloquy after the murder of Sinnatus, reveals his future plans to tempt her. The second group of soliloquies analyses an
emotion at a particular time or a place, without contributing
to the complexities of plot and character. Here, Tennyson’s
characters generally indulge in sad or pleasant retrospection.
Without the soliloquies in Shakespeare’s plays, we may not
understand the plot properly or may inadequately interpret
a character. We lose practically nothing if we take away
these soliloquies from Tennyson’s plays. While in Shakespeare’s
plays, we generally anticipate some action referred to or
hinted at in the soliloquies, we seldom do so in those of
Tennyson’s plays. Many soliloquies in Tennyson’s dramas,
reveal the character at a given point only rather than bring
inevitable parts of a dynamic process, and, therefore, it is
possible to find the same resemblance between Tennyson’s
soliloquies and his lyrical monologues as between his dramatic
dialogues and lyrical monologues. Thus, in Queen Mary, hear-
ing the song full of Robin’s care free life, Princess Eliza-
beth soliloquizes on her shattered dreams and hopes and the
whole soliloquy is a review of the past. In the soliloquy
after his dream of King Edward, Norman saints, Wulfnoth and
Toftig, Harold is confined to the past. Becket’s soliloquy
exposes the conflict of emotions raging at the moment in his
heart, without any hint of future action. Robin’s soliloquy
analyzes the sorry state of England under the tyrannical rule
of Prince John in the absence of King Richard. All these
soliloquies are of the nature of semi-lyrical monologues
revealing the present mood rather than suggest their future
plans. The third group of soliloquies mainly expresses the
playwright’s own notions with the characters as mouthpieces.
In *The Promise of May*, Philip Edgar's colloquies expose the dramatist's own contempt for science and its products—the science and the curse for materialism, his disdain for sensuality and unbridled passion and love for old faiths. Similarly, Dora's colloquy indicates Tennyson's own ideal of conjugal life while the colloquies of Granter before he is burnt reveal the dramatist's scorn for the corrupt Papacy.

In his dramas as in *The Princess* Tennyson often inserts songs which break the flow of the narrative and action and where we discover him in his best poetic form. Whenever the situation in his plays becomes dull or tense, Tennyson introduces some song to provide welcome relief. When ambitious Queen Mary is upset by the desertion of Philip and the loss of Calais, Alice, her attendant sings of love in order to soothe the Queen's sadness and so; too, Edith sings a song when she fails to win Harold for her husband. When the four knights bent on murdering Becket, are misguided by the baggarle, a duet is sung in Rosamund's bower; when Robin loses hope of marrying Marion, the fairies sing a song to him. Some songs sung on the backstage are in contrast with the situation in which a particular character happens to be at the moment; these are connected with the action either by way of contrast or resemblance and deepen the emotion of the situation concerned. In *Queen Mary* the milk-maid's song on Robin's frivolities serves to indicate the contrast between the imprisoned plight of Elizabeth and that of the free life of the foresters; similarly in *The Promise of May*, the chorus

5. Ibid., "And......ever" Ibid., p. 741.
sung by the merry villagers in the rustic dialect in the background with the burden—

"To be true to each other, let happen what may
Till the end of the day
And the last load hom."

provides a sharp contrast to the sensual and infirm love of Philip. On the other hand, in the same play, Dora's song in the background, which has a bearing on the action of the play deals with the joys and the sorrows of the Promise of Day and cautions both Eve and Philip Edgar. The song of Margery in Hecket echoing the sentiments of the scene and carrying the burden "but he knows", seems to warn Rosamund that her love intrigues are known to the world. Though Tennyson brings in many problems in his plays, he introduces songs only when it is a situation of love. These songs describe the joys and the griefs of love. When the lover and his beloved are separated or are unable to meet as in the case of Queen Mary, and Philip or cannot marry as Edith and Harold cannot, there are sweet and sorrowful songs. Other songs like those sung in Rosamund's bower, present the rapture of love in the happy union of the lover and the beloved. It would seem as if in drama, Tennyson's lyrical self had the better of the other self that was concerned with intellectual questions of religion and politics. In his dramatic as well as non-dramatic poetry, Tennyson's self-conscious preoccupation with contemporary problems could never altogether suppress the pure and limpid lyricism that is so elemental a part of his total poetic personality. For instance in **Maud**, A Mapodrama, a series of lyrics and dramatic monologues subordinate the drama to the lyrics. The portrayal of character in action together with excellent
imagery serves Tennyson's lyrical interests more than his thematic and dramatic ones. The songs in the dramas like the songs in *The Princess* testify to his lyricism. In the former, just as in his non-dramatic poetry, Tennyson avoids the harsher gutturals and sibilants as the following passages will show:

"Beauty passes like a breath and love is lost in leaching;
Low, my bite; speak low, my bite, but say the world is nothing — Low, bite low."

(*Queen Mary*, Act V, Sc. II)

"Hey, let him make it his own, let him reign in it — he, it is he,
Love that is born of the deep coming
Up with the sun from the sea."

(*Becket*, Act I, Sc. IV)

We may also note Tennyson's preference for labials in the following song:

"Dead mountain flowers, dead mountain flowers,
Dearer than when you made your mountain gay..."

(*The Falcon*)

And

"O, happy lark, that warblest high
Above thy lowly nest
O brook, that warblest merrily by
Thro' fields that once were blest."

(*The Promise of May*)

The following stanza marks Tennyson's power of transition from the gutturals in the first line to the soft vowels in the subsequent lines and again to gutturals in the last line:

"The Bee buzzed up in the heat, I am faint for your honey my sweet! The flower said 'Take it, my dear, for now is the spring of the year, So come, come! "Now" And the bee buzzed down from the heat."

(The Foresters)
Tennyson’s use of verse and prose in his plays calls for some remarks. Rustics and uneducated characters always speak in rustic prose while the educated persons, whether urban or rustic, talk both in verse and prose. The prose used by the rustics is unpolished, often ungrammatical and reflective of their habits and manners. It is based upon Lincolnshire dialect in which he composed poems like "The Northern Farmer" and "The Northern Cobbler". The style entirely in keeping with rustic character is direct and unambiguous. Serving sometimes as a diversion in Tennyson’s style, this rustic prose, provides some relief amid a tense situation. Their often witty and humorous speeches not only contain the necessary information about a situation but also have an air of lightness and gaiety to relieve the tension. Thus, the dialogue of Joan and Tib⁸ immediately follows after Cranmer has been taken to the stake, the scene of the beggars comes when the conflict between Becket and King Henry reaches the climax and the witty dialogue of the fishermen occur after Harold’s ship is wrecked on the coast of Normandy. The rustics in Tennyson’s dramas play a part and speak a language not far different from the part and the speech of Hardy’s rustics. The educated characters, urban and rural, also use prose when they talk with rustic or other minor characters on subjects that are mainly informative, didactic, humorous and satirical. In Becket, when Herbert comes to King

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⁸ It was written in Berkshire dialect and was corrected for Tennyson by Tom Hughes. The Eversley Edition annotated by the author, p.339, MacMillan (1938).
Henry with the information of the death of Archbishop Theobald and of his dying wish to make Becket his successor and when Queen Eleanor tries to elicit the information about Rosemund's lover from Geoffrey, they speak in prose. Similarly, the prose dialogue giving us the news of the supposed death of Eva occurs between Dora and Dobson in the beginning of Act II of The Promise of May. The best instance of satirical prose is that of Walter Map in Scene II and Scene III of Act III in Becket, in which he speaks sarcastically of the Pope, King Henry and specially the crowning of the Young Henry. For a gay atmosphere, prose is often used; e.g., in the merry talk between Little John and Kate in the opening scene of The Foresters and in the mirthful mood of Marian. An example will be found in the following stylised dialogue between Marian and her father:

"Marian - I mean to go.

Sir Richard - Not if I barred thee up in thy chamber, like a bird in cage.

Marian - Then I would drop from the casement like a spider.

Sir Richard - But I would hoist the draw-bridge like thy master.

Marian - And I would swim the moat, like an otter.

Sir Richard - But I would set my men at arms to oppose thee, like the Lord of the Castle.

Marian - And I would break through them all, like the King of England."

(Works, p. 751)
Another type of prose, has been used in the texture of the
minor characters, especially domestic servants. With
confused ideas, the wrong construction of sentences and
the grammatical mistakes, this prose serves to create
humour and jest in a particular situation and throws
light on these characters; e.g. the prose speech of Margery
in Pocket, those of Elizabeth and Felippo in The Falcon
and that of the minor characters in The Foresters.

Rich in the scenes of nature, Tennyson's plays echo
human emotions, especially the warm affections between
lover and beloved; nature in joyous or sad according to
the variations in the emotions of lovers. Thus, in the
excluded bower in which Rosamund waits for the arrival of
her lover she and King Henry find a few moments of happiness
and relaxation away from the political and religious con-
licts of the country. Similarly, the intrigues of
Philip Edgar, Eva and Dora continue unhempered and un-
noticed in Steer's farm and those of Robin and Marian and
of Little John and Kate in the English forest. Nautre in
this song seems to echo Dora's feelings:

"O happy lark that was warblest high....
And how I long for rest."

(Works, p. 741).

In the following stanza in Queen Mary, the daisies and the
kingcups provide flavour to the love of Robin and milk-
maid:

"Shame upon you, Robin, shame upon you now
Kiss me would you? with my hands miling now?
Daisies grow again, kingcups blow again
And you come and kiss'd me miling the cow."

(Works, p. 577).
In the songs of the tragedies, nature is not only a friend of the lover mourning and rejoicing with him but also forebodes the impending catastrophe. Thus in the last song of Rosamund, the rainbow seems to warn Rosamund of her clash with Queen Eleanor.

"Rainbow—— — Rainbow stay.
But it passes away
Gloom upon gloom
Dark as my dreams,
O, Rainbow stay."

(Works, p. 677)

Implored the moon to bring her husband back, Cunna seems to have a hint at the murder of her husband in the song.

"Moon——
Moon bring him home, bring him home
Safe from the dark and the cold."

(Works, p. 701)

Similarly, the song sung twice by Dora in the beginning of The Promise of May describing the joys and the sorrows of the Promise of May seems to give Edgar and Eva warning of the calamity arising from their amour.

When Tennyson observes with the eyes of not only a poet but also of a naturalist, the description of nature in his songs, is full of scenic accuracy, a special characteristic of Tennyson's poetry; the following stanzas present concentrated details of the bright and dark sides of May.

"The town lay still in the low sunlight,
The hen clucked late by the white farm gate,
The maid to her dairy came in from the cow,
The stock-dove coo'd at the fall of night,
The blossom had open'd on every bow.

"But a red fire woke in the heart of the town
And a fox from the glen ran away with hen,
And a cat to the crow, and a rat to the cheese;
And the cock dave coo'd till a kite drop't down,
And a salt wind burnt the blossoming trees."

(Works, pp. 724-25).

Nature reveals the simple, innocent and unsophisticated life of the country side, as against the ambitious and intriguing city life. With their artless and direct ways but strengthened by their moral and spiritual sincerity, the persons living in the country side like Rosamund, Eva and Dora seem to throw a challenge to immoral and intriguing city life and can even influence villains like King Henry and Philip Edgar.
TENNYSON'S DRAMAS IN THE TOTAL CONTEXT OF HIS POETICAL WORKS

Now that we have examined the several dramas of Tennyson, it becomes necessary to consider them in the context of his non-dramatic works. Whether we study the poems or the plays, we are in contact with the same indivisible creative mind; we watch the evolution of the same mind and art. It may be possible to consider Tennyson's poems just by themselves, without reference to the plays, because, as has been recognised by all students of Tennyson (and recognised by the poet himself) his creative energy developed principally through the poetic form. But to isolate the dramas from the poems, to ignore their links with the poems, would be indulge in an unbalanced and distorted view of the artistic evolution. Even a study of the poems should take account of the dramas and indeed it is one of the aims of the present dissertation to argue in favour of the integral relationship between the poems and the dramas. In much of Tennyson's poetry, there is a dramatic element, while his dramas are charged with poetic qualities. A preponderance of poetry may not be a very healthy feature of drama even though we may be dealing with poetic drama; but the fact remains that Tennyson's dramas are frankly and inevitably the dramas of a poet.

To begin with, we have to remember that the dramas were composed in the third phase of the poet's career, from 1875 onwards, when he had just completed the arduous and ambitious project of the *Idylls of the King*, an allegorical work containing his most mature thoughts on
human life and ethics and when also some of his dramatic 
lyrics and monologues had started appearing. It is 
possible to discern a number of resemblances between the 
Idylls and the historical plays. It would seem as if, 
not content with his treatment of the British legend in 
the Idylls, the poet continued his occupation with 
history in historical plays choosing those phases in the 
making of England which had been omitted in Shakespeare's 
chronicle plays. The plays are idyllic rather than dramatic 
in nature. Like the Idylls, the trilogy describes the 
external political conflicts in which monarchs and their 
subjects are involved. Moreover, in the Idylls, Tennyson 
introduces the Church for the first time in an allegorical 
form in the Lady of the Lake who gives the Excalibur, the 
sword of the invincible spirit to King Arthur; in the 
trilogy, the same Church becomes the source of conflict 
between the noble priests and the kings on the one hand, 
and the villainous sovereigns assisted by the corrupt 
priesthood and Papacy on the other.

In the Idylls, and the historical trilogy, the epi-
isodes of love, beautiful in themselves, are, from the point 
of view of the plot construction, subordinate to the main

1. For the dramatic element in the Idylls, see Tennyson 
by A. Lyall (E.M.I. Series) pp. 103-105.

2. Cf., Tennyson's lines: "History is half-dream—by even 

"The man's life" in the letters of the mem 

(University Library of Bath).
political struggles. The clandestine love between Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot, is one of the principal causes of the disintegration of Arthur's Kingdom while the episodes of the wicked women like Vivien and Ettarre and those of noble ladies like Enid and Elaine are also linked, although rather loosely, with the main story. In the poem, Tennyson wove a connecting thread through the diverse episodes and with an excellent art he arranged them and made them to illustrate the main theme of the rise and fall of the Round Table. In the trilogy, the episodes of love, that of Queen Mary and Philip in Queen Mary, that of Harold, Edith and Aldwyth in Harold, and that of King Henry, Queen Eleanor and Rosamund in Becket, are woven into the main political stories so as to add to the conflict of the situations. In the love stories of these works the intriguing and vicious women exist together with virtuous and gentle ladies who love genuinely and suffer in consequence. In the Idylle the guilty women are Queen Guinevere, Vivien, and Ettarre and the pure ladies are Enid and Elaine. In the trilogy, conspiring ones are Queen Mary, Queen Aldwyth and Queen Eleanor and the gentle ones, Princess Elizabeth, Edith and Rosamund. In both kinds of compositions, the end of these episodes is, generally, calamitous. In the Idylle, all the grande passions fail - those between King Arthur and his Queen, between Queen Guinevere and Lancelot, between Elaine and Lancelot, between Merlin and Vivian and between Pelleas and

Ettarre. Similarly, the trilogy, too, shows love as ending in despair. Tennyson's historical plays, like his epic, terminate in the same tragic catastrophe. All the efforts of King Arthur, unsuccessful both in his politics and love, meet with failure in the end; his kingdom is destroyed by corruption and war. Likewise, the trilogy closes with the death of all the heroes and heroines.

Tennyson's preoccupation with history in the trilogy leads to a notable consequence—a large number of characters. Thus, the earliest play, *Squah Mary*, has as many as forty-four characters although most of them are of minor significance; and in the latter plays, the number is smaller—about twenty-four in each of *Harold* and *Becket* and fifteen in the *Faroesters*—but nevertheless, all these historical plays are more or less crowded with characters. The total length of the trilogy would be about the same as that of *Idylls* which too has almost an equally crowded group of characters, fifteen major and a host of lesser figures. It would seem that while Tennyson was inspired by historical situations, he did not possess or develop enough sense of concrete stage-effect to be able to understand that a multiplicity of characters blurs issues and renders most characters shadowy and sketchy. While in the *Idylls*, it was not necessary to lay much emphasis on characterization—the poet could concentrate on sentiments and atmosphere—in the drama's characterization is of major significance and to crowd the stage with forty characters or even with twenty-five makes clear outlines difficult.

Like Tennyson's romantic plays, his long narrative love poems mostly have one striking similarity—adherence to the
single theme of love without any sub-plot. **The Princess** contains one long narrative only—Princess Ida's revolt against man and her ultimate submission to love; **Haud** depicts the single story of a mad young man, who disappointed in love and ambition, seeks its remedy in war against evil society. **Enoch Arden** describes one theme of the sacrifice of a wrecked fisherman, who dies without breaking the wave of his return to his dear wife married to another man. In his romantic plays too, Tennyson inserts one main story of love. These romantic works have fewer characters with the greater attention paid to characterization. **The Cup** contains only three prominent characters—Cymon, Einnatus and Synorix; **The Falcon** two—The Court and Lady Giovanna; **The Promise of May**, three—Phillip Edgar, Eva and Dora and **The Foresters**, two—Marian and Robin.

Similarly, among Tennyson's long romantic poems **The Princess** contains only two prominent characters—Princess Ida and the Prince; **Haud**, three—The Younger, Haud and her brother and **Enoch Arden**—three—Enoch, Annie and Philip.

Among political situations, there is a marked tendency to present an ideal character symbolising some virtue; that character is only a type without complexity. Revealing the common traits of ideal kingship, King Harold in his dramas and King Arthur in the **Idylls** are perfect sovereigns who symbolise the ancient glory of England and who aim at the welfare of the people and the country. Though both are sincere, their political plans are sabotaged by external factors; both are deceived in their love. While King Arthur's designs are destroyed mainly by the corruptions in his Round

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4. "I tried in my Idylls to teach men the need of the ideal", he said thirty years later, and he made his purpose perfectly clear when he added the Epilogue to the Queen.
Table, Harold's plans are foiled chiefly by the intrigues of Queen Aldwyth and by the outside invasion. These works hint at the revival of English glory after a temporary eclipse. The angel's vision dreamed by dying King Edward in Harold, hints at the future greatness of England after the temporary setback. Even the Idylls suggests that Arthur symbolising human soul will return to fill his mission.

"From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

Among Tennyson's religious characters, we notice the same inclination to idealize them. Becket and Thomas Grammar, the ideal religious characters in his plays, represent the superiority of the Church over the worldly monarchs and resemble Sir Galahad, a pure Christian who is successful in the quest of Holy Grail in the Idylls. Those flawless persons repose their faith in true Christianity above all the dogmas of the Church. They risk their lives for some religious cause and courageously try to overcome the impediments on the way. While Sir Galahad wins his purpose after a great suffering, Becket and Grammar perish. They embody the essence of all the religions subsequently mentioned by Tennyson in "Akbar's dream."

In his themes of love, noble women testify to the poet's great skill in their delineation. A study can be

1872, for he then described the Idylls of the King as an imperfect tale, new old and shadowing sense and war with soul, rather than the gray king, whose name, a ghost, streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak, and cleaves to earth and crumbles still." C. Tennyson, Six Tennyson Essays (1920), p. 94, and Tennyson, A Memoir.

For the innovations and the allegorical significance in the "Idylls, by Tennyson see S. A. Brooke, Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life, 1928, pp. 246-56.
made of those gentle but wronged ladies who arouse a sense of pity in our hearts. Most of Tennyson's dramas contain such women, the victims of either the rivalry in love or the lust of villains. Lady Giovanni in *The Falcon* and Marian in *The Foresters* have to struggle hard for their success. Some of them like Edith, Rosamund and Evangeline are too gentle to resist while others like Emma and Dora rebel in their own ways. Bold and ambitious Queen Mary, too, fails miserably in love. Tennyson's poems contain such unhappy but noble women. Dora, an ever serviceable but suffering village girl fails to marry her cousin, William in spite of the threat of the latter's father, but after William's death, she helps his widow and his son throughout her life. Gaora, whose tale has been described both in *Gorna* and *The Death of Gaora*, one of his last poems, is another lady wronged by her faithless lover whom she loves passionately. Though she forsakes him angrily, yet, after his death, she burns herself on his funeral pyre. 

"......and Crying

"Husband she leapt upon the funeral pile
And mixt herself with his and past in fire."

(Works, p. 816).

Another pitiable woman is Maud, loved by the young man, who hates her family in Tennyson's loveliest poem, *Maud*. In the young man's shattered and morbid life, Maud comes like a fresh morning. Tragedy comes when Maud's lover flees away leaving her in despair in the wilderness near her brother slain in the duel. Thus the lady faces her doom in spite of her nobility.
In the *Idyll* two much unhappy women, Erid and Elaine, arouse compassion in our souls. Elaine, the trust of womanhood among Tennyson's ladies, is the heroine of his early poem, "The Lady of Shallot". Observing Lancelot in her father's house, she instantly falls a victim to love at first sight. She late reluctant Lancelot see her warm affection; she is prepared to be anything to him, if not his wife, to follow him as servant:

"No, no", she cried, "I care not to be wife,

But to be with you still, to see your face,

To serve you and to follow you through the world."

(Workn, p.382).

Finally, imploring the people to sail with her corpse and the dying message to Lancelot she says many beautiful things of trust and expires. Thus Elaine presents the ideal of feminine devotion by her fair life and death.

Similar woman in Erid, the victim of her husband's suspicion. Her subservience produces detectable conditions of mind out of which Erid's husband, being good at heart, is shocked back again into self-knowledge and repentance. With the same strength and gentleness, she was successful in winning back her husband's confidence.

In his dramas, Tennyson showed no skill in delineating villainous characters. In the historical plays, roguish men reveal chiefly the worth of perfect characters by contrast. In the romantic plays, they did the principal action by entrapping the virtuous but credulous ladies into their lusty intrigues. Almost all the poems too have a few important wicked characters, his inherent incentive
is to portray noble characters out of the circumstances. Only in the Idylls, the wicked characters, often in conflict with the ideal ones, show the latter's superiority. Jealous Geraint, who doubts the honesty of his wife baselessly at every step, can be contrasted with magnificent King Arthur, who discovers his wife's love with Lancelot too late. Old Merlin's passion for Vivien is opposed to Lancelot's sincere but remorseful love for Queen Guinevere. Tennyson's capacity for painting wicked women is even less than that revealed in delineating villainous men. In his works we hardly find any vicious women except in the Idylls and the plays where they are portrayed in contrast with gentle ladies. In his dramae, Queen Mary, the only villainous woman painted by Tennyson independently, is opposed to submissive and popular princess Elizabeth; Queen Aldwyth, to Edith; and Queen Eleanor, to Rosamund. Likewise, in the Idylls, vicious Vivien and Litarre are in contrast with the forgiving but wronged women Enid and Elaine.

Tennyson's tendency to guide the age divided his characters broadly into two groups in his entire works—the ideal characters and the villains. The latter are frequently devoid of strong individualities. Such an

5--Tennyson's idea of the prophetic power of the poet is seen in "The Poet's Song" of 1862 volume—"For he sings of what the world will be When the years have died away." (Works, p.116). A traditionalist to the core, Tennyson accords high rank to the poet as the disseminator of truths. In "The Poet" of the 1830 Volume, he says that poetic truth is untainted by sophism and here, gifted with deep penetrating insight, the poet sees through life and death, good and evil, through his own soul. (Works, p.13).
inclination to portray one's own conception into powerful
types is often a handicap in drama, the most objective form
of art. In his plays, Tennyson's preference of his concep-
tions to the delineation of his characters has shifted the
interest from characterization to ideas. His static persons
are without complexity, the chief charm of Browning's
dramatic personae, Tennyson's historical characters without
inwardness, are involved in external struggles. They
generally represent some virtue, vice or institution and
accordingly, the fall or the victory of those characters
coincides with the fall or the virtues, vice or institution.
The limited features of these characters do not grow
naturally from changing circumstances; they seem to possess
them throughout. Happily the static and minor characters
pointed mostly in nature, are free from the author's personal
idealism. They are good portraits of unsophisticated human
nature. With their freaks and follies, and the purity of
their emotions, they appeal to us more than the virtuous
or villainous characters. It is while dealing with them
only that Tennyson can successfully present humour. Such
lively minor characters are the merry villagers in The
Promise of May, the happy foresters in The Foresters,
Elizabetta and Felippo in The Falcon and the Beagles and
Margery in Pecket. In his poems some of these are the
Northern Farmer, the Northern Cobbler, the second Northern
farmer and the woman in The Village Wife or The Entail.

The noble monarchs - King Arthur, Harold, King Richard
and Princess Elizabeth - express the dramatist's faith in
monarchy aiming at the welfare of the people. A monarch

The objection to perfect characters is not that their
misfortunes are, as Aristotle says, unbearable, but that
acting contrary to the wishes of the English people
cannot derive sympathy from Tennyson.

All of his ideal and heroic sovereigns are devoted
to justice and fair play and sacrifice the wishes and
even their lives for the sake of the country.

"And because right is right, to follow right
were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

"Genius", Works, p.40.

Tennyson's religious ideas were influenced by the Oxford
Movement. Earlier, in In Memoriam his faith in God, and
religion was temporarily shaken by the penetration of the
new scientific thoughts.-

"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope
And gather dust and chaff, and call
And what I feel is Lord of all
And faintly trust the larger hope."

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

Section XCVI In Memoriam.

Subsequently, his doubts almost disappeared and his
faith in God and religion was restored. We have already
observed how he began to associate gradually science
with materialism and immorality in his plays. Finally
Tennyson reposed his trust in the essence of all the

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they are apt themselves to be so. Angels make poor dramatic
personae; it is human beings that we need. In the words of
the Queen of the blameless Arthur

"He is all fault, who has no fault at all
For who loves me, must have some touch of earth;
The low sun makes the colour."

F. i. Lucas Tragedy, p.111.

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3- See Chapter VIII.
religions which he has described as the Divine Faith in "Akbar's Dream". The poet died keeping his absolute faith in God mentioned as Pilgrim in his last poem, "Crossing the Bar."

"I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the Bar."

(Works, p. 351)

The poem is the moving utterance of a great soul in the face of death and the poet's last statement of his firm belief in the Divine guidance of the universe. The poet introduced the English Church for the first time in the Ilayla. In the historical plays, it plays a conspicuous role in the crusade against the unholy alliance of ambitious monarchy and corrupt priests for material gain. The ideal Christians are Archbishop Becket and Archbishop Cranmer who struggle in this world for the cause true to the religion and the people.

The noble ladies in Tennyson's works show his conceptions of true love. Their attachment is based upon their own convictions and not upon any selfishness, physical beauty or desire of power and money; they are unhappy owing to the cause for which they are least responsible. They possess the intensity and firmness of love from the very beginning. These submissive and often credulous women

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8- Cf. "O God, every temple I see people that see thee and in every language, I hear spoken people praise thee. Polytheism and Islam feel after thee. Each religion says, "Thou art one! without equal" If it be mosque people murmur the holy prayer and if it be a Christian Church, people ring the bell from love to Thee" (An inscription by Abd al-Fazl quoted in 'Akbar's Dream', Works, p. 381).
are passive even to tyranny, beset by suspicions and doubts. With its spiritual side more important than its physical aspect, this love is not passionate outburst and hardly crosses the boundary of decency and traditions.

The poet's preference for wedded love is clear in his famous lines:

"Love for the maiden, crowned with marriage,
No regret for aught that has been
Household happiness, gracious children,
Debtless competence, golden mean."

Gennyson applauds domesticity in his treatment of love everywhere; almost all his ideal heroines aspire after marriage as the reward and consummation of their love. In the Idylls, sensuality shown in the illicit love between Lancelot and Queen Guinevere and the other types of debased love is the chief cause of the ruin of the Round Table and the collapse of King Arthur's plans. In his dramas, the persons violating the sanctity of wedded life are either killed or disgraced. The permanent bond of conjugal love is not snipped even by death and it persists in heaven leading to ever-lasting happiness. Dora says in The Promise of May:

"And yet I had once a vision of a pure and perfect marriage where the man and the woman, only differing as the stronger and the weaker should walk hand in hand together down this valley of tears, as they call it so truly to the grave at the bottom and lie down there together in the darkness which would seem but for a moment to be wakened again together by the light of the resurrection, and no more partings for ever and for ever."
If there is no ideal union in the loving couple in this world, it is possible to happen in heaven without any bar to prevent it. Goneril, burns herself on the R.C. funeral pyre of her adulterous husband whose call she hears—

"Come to me,
Goneril I can wrong thee now no more."
"Goneril, my goneril."

(Faith, p. 815).

King Arthur, reluctant to touch his adulterous but repentant Queen, hopes to meet her purified of sin in heaven. In his plays, such ideal unions after death are between Edith and Harold and between Goneril and Simeon:

Songs in the plays play the same part as that in Tennyson's poem especially The Princess. They grow out of a situation of love and are marked by a certain ease and calmness. See the sad note in the following songs in The Princess and Queen Mary respectively:

"Ah, sad, and strange as in dark summer dawns,
The earliest pipe half-awakened eyes,
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square,
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more."

(Works, p. 173).

"Hopeless doom of woman happy in betrothing.
Beauties pass as like a breath and love is lost in loathing,
Low my lute, speak low, my lute, but say the world
is nothing
Low, lute, Low."

(Queen Mary, Works, p. 599).
In the songs, the sentiment underlying the lyric resembles that prevailing in the situation. The sentiment of the following songs from *The Princess* and *Packet* respectively is connected with the main story:

"Sweet and low, sweet and low,  
Wing of the western sea,  
Low, low, breathe and blow  
Wing of the western sea.  
Over the rolling waters go.  
Came from the dying moon, and blow  
Blow him again to me;  
While my little one, while my pretty one sleeps."

*-The Princess, Works*, p.167

"Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear  
in the pine overhead?  
No, but the voice of the deep as it hollows the  
cliffs of the land.  
Is there a voice coming up with the voice  
of the deep from the strand  
One coming up with a song in the flush of  
the glimmering red?"


The songs, everywhere, abound in different figures of speech  
especially onomatopoeia, epanaphora and alliteration. Notice  
the noise of birds and insects in these lines:

"The moan of doves in immemorial elms  
And murmuring of innumerable bees."

"x"
"Babble in bower. Under the rose
Dee mustn't buzz whosep but he knows."

Nature in some of Tennyson's plays resembles nature in his early poems. In "The May Queen" and in "The Miller's Daughter", nature and human affection are woven together. "The Gardener's Daughter" is another instance where Nature and human heart have been blended.

"Or as once we met
Unheedful, tho', beneath a whispering rain
Right slid down one long stream of sighing wind,
And in her bosom bore the baby, sleep."

(Works, p. 72).

The plays frequently contain the concentrated description of nature, a special characteristic of Tennyson's poetry; e.g., the following songs in The Prisoner of May and in "The May Queen" respectively.

"The town lay still in the low sunlight
The hen clucked late by the white farm gate,
The maid to her dairy came in from the cow,
The stock dove coo'd at the fall of night,
The blossom had open'd on every bough..."

(Works, p. 724)

"When the flowers come again, mother beneath the waning light.
You will never see me more in the long gray fields at night,
When from the dry dark veld the summer airm blow cool,"
On the oat-grass and the sword grass, and
the bulrush in the pool.”

(Words, p. 49)

In the dramas, persons in nature are like those in his earlier poems. Rosemond, Margery, Eva, Dora and the foresters resemble Dora, the Miller’s daughter, the gardener’s daughter and the girl in “The May Queen”.

All of them are innocent, unsophisticated and sincere in love. While describing animals Tennyson generally gives preference to singing birds with the use of onomatopoeia. Here are a few examples from his plays and poems:

“Hobble in bower” (Packet) “Bee mustn’t buzz” (Packet).
 “Tit on the tree” (Packet) “The hen cluck” (The Promise of May), “The stock dove coo’d” (The Promise of May)
 “But he fluttered his wings with a sweet little cry.” (The Foresters).

“The building rock’ll saw from the windy tall elm-tree,
And the tufted plover pine along the fallow lea,
And the swallow’ll come back again with the summer
Over the wave...”

“”The May Queen”(Works), p. 48/8Andrew

“The sparrow’s chitter in the roof
The slow clock ticking, and the sound
Which to the wind it eloof,
The popular ends......”

“Mariana”, (Works), p. 7
It cannot be gainsaid that Tennyson was indisputably a lyrical poet and that the lyrical impulse has to be suppressed or carefully controlled in dramatic composition. However, the versatility of Tennyson's power lies in the restraint imposed upon his natural propensities. While plays are the severest and the strenuous presentation of real life and well-known events. They are neither the poems arbitrarily arranged in a dramatic form like Swinburne's Bothwell nor poetic romances cut up into dialogue. Tennyson's mind could brood intensely and profoundly over the simple traits of a single character rather than on the brief and characteristic touches of complex dramatic personae in a crowded canvas. He showed this talent not only in his serious poems, but also in the numerous rustic figures whose very soul he had laid bare. He lacked sufficient vivacity and the minuteness which can throw itself with instinctive rapidity into the swift give-and-take of dramatic situations; but in the monologue, a form indisputably suggested by Browning, he displays a great ease and a fine talent for rapid effect. Tennyson deserves due credit and sympathy for the balance of judgment, for his analytical subtlety, for his assimilative power and for the rich accessories of his artistic details. His dramas charged with high interest, with fine literary tact and with the intellectual and lyrical force not an example for romantic drama of Stephen Phillips, Yeats, Auden and Bottomley.

The period devoted to the dramatic composition left its indelible mark upon the nobler and the more virile poetry of his later life. In drama the poet equally lost and discovered himself. Out of the apparent failure, there blossomed a remarkable success, the more remarkable,
perhaps, because unexpected. The Ballad of 1880, betrayed a vigour, a breadth and a movement surpassing any previous volume. These poems, devoid of all the graces of daintiness and superfluity, are saturated with the pulse of action, the spirit of true dramatic art and the music breathing a nobler air and moving to earlier measures.

Tennyson's studies in drama probably led to his heightened power in dealing with such situations as those in "The Wreck", "The Flight" and "Despair", perhaps the most tragic of Tennyson's poems. "The Revenge" and "The Defence of Lucknow" contain ballads comparable with any in English; "Columbus", a moving power of passion and passion-matching language; the dialect poems "The Northern Cobbler" and "The Village Wife", a stirring realism and "De Profundis" an impressive philosophy. "The Death of Corine", "St. Telemaeus" and "Akbar's Dream" contain blank verse of closing life, developed in the dramatic period; it is stronger, less ornate but no less musical than that of "Morte d'Arthur" and The Princess. Under the impact of dramas, Ballads and other poems of 1880, herald the advent of the gorgeous Indian summer which was to bestow its golden splendour upon the rest of the poet's career.

Tennyson's dramas form an inalienable part of his total
poetic personality; they are an indispensable link between the early and the last phases of his genius and substantially contribute to the flowering of his poetic qualities. The study of the plays leads to a full appraisal of his entire lyrical and pastoral poetry and to the virile, brisk and dramatic blank verse of the last phase. The plays alone indicate the poet's panoramic handling of the British history and suggest the culmination of his patriotism, growing steadily since 1850 and reaching its maturity in The Idylls. The plays also help in the better appreciation of the poet's treatment of humanity especially womanhood and his views on current topics.

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And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shattered
navy of Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by the island crags
to be lost evermore in the main."

*Works*, p.472.
CHAPTER XI

SOME OTHER VERSE-DRAMATISTS IN THE VICTORIAN ERA

No part of modern English literature is so full of failure and half-failure euphemistically called a “Success "p’astime" as the nineteenth century poetic drama. Almost all the leading poets from Wordsworth to Swinburne wished to shine in the theatre; failing in the attempt, they called their works dramas for the library or ‘closet plays’. The majority of the plays, echoing the drama of the Elizabethans and the Greeks contain the richness of poetry at the expense of stagecraft. The present chapter surveys some important verse-dramas of the period outside the plays of Browning and Tennyson.

Victorian poetic drama can be broadly divided into two periods. The first period from 1830 to 1850 contains the notable and unactable plays of Browning, Wells, Beddoes, Talfourd, Lytton and others. The triumph of Macready’s performances at Covent Garden and the consequent renewal of public interest in the serious drama inspired enthusiasts to give a new life to undying poetic drama by rescuing it from the depths of dullness. The poetic play could stand only by blending the truly dramatic with the truly poetic. The dramatist required was a man of letters who should harmonize with the poetic instinct a knowledge of the resources of stage effect as well as a man of world whose work should so faithfully incorporate the constant traits of human nature as to elicit the sympathies of his audience. However, the verse-plays of this
period resemble the closet dramas of the Romantic Revival as a whole and the Byronic dramas in particular in their stress upon psychological delineation, their comparative disregard for the stage and their unconscious preference for modern techniques and developments. These poets regarded dramas much in the way as Milton did when he wrote Samson Agonistes. Though the impress of Shakespeare was visible in most plays, yet the nineteenth century poetic drama usually poured new materials into its plot and produced a kind of play which did not derive much from Shakespeare but from the peculiarly transitional nature of the period. The plays in the early half of the century were less significant as contributing to the Elizabethan revival than they were for being harmonious with the non-dramatic works of these authors, recognizable as either Romantic or Victorian. The heroic drama of the Restoration was also in part an Elizabethan Revival.

The second half of the nineteenth century marked a transition in the theatrical and dramatic conditions among which the verse-drama betrayed a regular reaction to contemporary realism. Above all this drama encountered a challenge from a new quarter-realistic plays which were swaying the stage under the influence of Ibsen and Zola and which had their predecessors in the dramatic compositions of Robertson, Jones and Pirero. The reversion from these humdrum plays on current problems drove the poets to older drama. Even the alliance of the Church and the stage could not bridge the gulf between the realistic
theatre and the literary drama which distinctly reflected three trends. First, with the dwindling of Shakespearean influence, there was the movement of the revival of Greek plays. Swinburne wrote:-

"The fusion of lyric with dramatic form gives the highest type of poetry I know, and I always feel the Greek history and mythology (in its deeper sense and wider bearing) much nearer to us even yet than those of the Jews alien from us in blood and character."¹

Poets like Arnold and Swinburne who were imbued with Hellenism through and through tried with the themes and forms derived from Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.


"They (Greeks) can help to cure us of what is, it seems to us, the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in morals, merely that it is fanatic and wants sanity."

Preface to *Hesperides on Etna and Other Poems*, p. 178.

"But it cannot be denied that the Greek tragic forms, although not the only possible tragic forms, satisfy in the most perfect manner some of the most urgent demands of the human spirit."

The rigidity of Arnold's attempt was succeeded by the flexibility of Swinburne's experiments, but none could devise as T.S. Eliot did such innovations in the choral songs as would suit the contemporary stage. The second movement was reflected in the plays on Roman stories, myths and legends. Though frequently, the motif behind these compositions was the revivification of old themes treated in the past, yet these plays could not escape contemporary tendencies.

The last was a powerful movement in historical verse-tragedies, the result of patriotic interest in British history. However, in spite of the playwrights' efforts to escape into antiquity, realism entered into their compositions too. These writers were so preoccupied with the historical details of their subjects that they failed adequately to portray human nature; their rendering of history was different from that in the chronicle plays of the Elizabethans. In order to furnish faithful vistas of history, Tennyson and Swinburne, like Landor resorted to historical trilogies that blend lyricism, romance and historical realism. "There are," remarked Swinburne, "two ways in which a poet may treat a historical subject: one that of Marlowe and Shakespeare in the fashion of a dramatic chronicle; one that of the greatest of all later dramatists (Hugo), who seizes upon some point of historical tradition, some character or event proper and possible to the time chosen, be it actual or ideal and starting from this point takes his way at his will, and from this seed
or kernel develops as it were by evolution the whole fabric of his poem. It would be hard to say which method of treatment requires the higher and the rarer faculty; to throw into poetic form and imbue with dramatic spirit the whole body of an age, the whole character of a great event or epoch, by continuous reproduction of historical circumstances or exposition of the recorded argument scene by scene; or to carve out the huge block of history or chronicle some detached group of ideal figures and give them such form or colour of imaginative life as may best seem to you.\(^2\)

*Joseph and His Brethren*, a dramatic poem by C.J. Wells, was first published under the pseudonym, "R.L. Howard" in 1824; a later revised edition with an introduction by Swinburne appeared in 1876. In Elizabethan style, Wells treated this Biblical story which attracts the modern reader on account of its high sounding Marlowesque and Shakespearean verse. The play contains three main characters - Joseph, Jacob, his father and Potiphar, his master's jealous wife. The clear and vigorous sketch of Jacob, the loving father dominates the early part of the play and avoids all excess of weakness and the baser aspect of age and fondness. Again the character of Joseph, his god-fearing and loving child who has been mercilessly tortured and sold by his cruel brothers and who comes to their rescue in famine, is skilfully

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2 - Quoted in *Swinburne*, By S.C. Chew(London), 1931, p.225.
portrayed. But the crowning triumph of the poem is the character, the kernel of the whole story, and it echoes that of Medea, Clytemnestra and Cleopatra.

In Cleopatra of Shakespeare and in Phraaxanor who vainly tries to seduce Joseph, there is the same imperious power of supreme beauty and strength of will, the same subtle sweetness of speech and the same delicate effect of word and gesture. Both the Egyptian women possess the same evidence of luxurious pleasure found in all things sensually pleasant, the same capacity of bitter shame and wrath, dormant until the insult of resistance has been offered. The manner of Phraaxanor's entrance is a noble and most dramatic introduction worthy of Shakespeare's own art.

"Phraaxanor:- Ha - ha - ha:
I check my laughter; doest thou notice it?
Can't tell me why?

Joseph:- Medam I have not thought.

Phraaxanor:- Wert thou to guess on the left side of me
Thou'dat wake the knowledge.

Joseph:- How so? - I do not see

Phraaxanor: Because my heart doth grow on the left side
My birth was of my head, not of my heart
And mock'd my patience."

(Act II, Sc. II)

3- Rossetti remarks, "Velle has not tempered with the scripture narrative, but has given us a portrait of a lecanious woman, perfectly unique—perfectly astounding for vigour. You will find that she makes a pretty successful villainess." See the article, "Rossetti and Charles Velle" by Theodore Watts—Denton in Joseph and His Brethren (The World Classics), 1824, p.XXIV.
The poet caught with amazing skill Shakespeare's way of writing blank verse. Equally remarkable was his manner of catching Shakespeare's knack of blending metaphor and music perfectly. Even in the beginning there are lines which might naturally be mistaken for the work of the young Shakespeare. There is something in the description of Rachel, Joseph's mother which recalls the luxury and exuberance of Marlowe's fiery raptures. Again, there are touches of weighty thought and keen perception with the continuous effusion of verbal luxury worthy of Shakespeare.

"Phœnixo. - I have a mind
You shall at once walk with those honest limbs into your grave.

Joseph. - Are you a lady, madam?
Phœnixo. - I was so, but I am a dragon now:
My nostrils are stuff'd full of sensitive fire
My tongue is turned into a furious sting
With which I'll strike you - Ha! be sure I will.

Act II, Sc. II

4. See the description of the setting sceni-
"The sun while sinking from his daily round
Had star'd the heavens like a fury flaw...
A god gigantic habited in gold,
Stepping from off a mound into the sea..."
(Act I, Prologue p. 6).

5. See the description of dawn in Hamlet-
"But look, the morn in russet mantle clad
Walks over the dew of yon high eastern hill."
(Act I, Sc. I)

5. See the beauty of Rachel.
Earlier, Phæaxanor reasons of love in two magnificent passages of prolonged and subtle rhetoric, as fine piece of conscious and imperious sophistry. The first is a panegyric on the potency of love and mastery of woman while the second is deeper in thought and more intricate in writing. The play abounds in the picturesque scenes of nature seen in the two prologues, the sweet pastoral life of the patriarch and his family and the picture of the old Egypt of the Pharaohs. Memphis and the banks of the sacred Nile are brought before us by suggestion, and the atmosphere seems to surround us and be one with us. At many places, the poem shows that the author of Joseph and His Brethren was really a devotee of nature. As a closet play, the drama deserves more praise than it got in its author's life time. But this play, poetic rather than dramatic, could never be a model for the stage.

Beddoes completed only two plays - The Bride's Tragedy and Death's Jest Book. His first play, an

"Simson: Her full dark eye, whose brightness glistened through The naiad lashes soft as Camel hair; his head -
Her slanting head, curv'd like the maiden moon
And hung with hair luxuriant as a vine
And blacker than a storm; her rounded ear
Turn'd like a shell upon some golden shore!"

Compare with the charm of Helen in Dr. Faustus

"O thou art fairer than the evening's air, 
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars,
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter,
When he appear'd to hapless Bernice,
More lovely than the Monarch of the sky,
In Canton Arethusa's azure arms,
And none but thou shalt be my Paramour..."

6. "Phæaxanor: What warlike prince did off his laurel yet...
   And say that it is well...." (Act II, Sc. II, p. 105)
immature work, had been published in 1822; but the latter appeared after his death with two unfinished plays and other fragments chiefly dramatic in 1850. In poetical endowments, he is most afflueint; but in drama he becomes ineffectual and un-theatrical in spite of his desire to the contrary. "You are, I think," he wrote to Kelsall, "disinclined to the stage; now I confess that I think this is the highest aim of the dramatic art and should be very desirous to get on it. To look down on it as a piece of impertinence as long as one chooses to write in the form of play and is generally the result of one's own inability to produce anything striking and affecting in that way." As a dramatist, Beddoes dwells in abstract regions without the sublimary endowments in the development of plot and character. The Bride's Tragedy, the first play, combines striking poetical merits with the dramatic faults. The management of the plot is artificial and unskilful and the dialogue is often inappropriate to the situation of the speaker; but as a poet, it is of a degree of originality and beauty, running over with poetry of the most charming fancy. The drama combines a visionary boldness of the imagination with a marked love for Elizabethan patterns of diction and phrasing; e.g., a vision of Venus and Cupid in Act I, Sc.1.

Phrases: "Our feeling doth resemble the king's coin... Man's reasoning imagination, - still is compromised in our material sex."(Act II, Sc. III, p.108-109)

7 - See Donner's introduction to The Plays and the Poems of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, p.XXVII.
9 - "Floribela: Beneath them swarmed a bustling mob of Loves Of fickleness and woe and mad despair." The Plays and Poems of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, p.7.
In 'Death's Jest Book', too, the author tried to pour a mass of admirable poetry in dialogue. In the complicated and confused plot the characters seem to decline into the void and none answers the others. There is no individualization; it was all the author's own drama, his own wrestling with the problems of spirit and problems unsolved. His idea remains at variance with the action of the play; his elaborate plot baffles with the unity of impression. He could neither conceive a coherent plot, nor develop a credible situation. He had no grasp of human nature, no conception of what character might be in men and women and no faculty of expressing emotion convincingly. Frequently, we find the most beautiful poetry where it hampers action. All Beddoes' characters speak precisely the same language, express the same desire and all in the same way startle us by their ghostly remoteness from flesh and blood. Beddoes's conception of drama was something wildly impracticable and as a writer of the theatrical poetic drama, he cannot be considered successful. Yet the drama is a masterpiece of poetry and a perfect study of style for a young poet. Beddoes' genius was essentially lyrical; he had imagination, the gift of style, the mastery of rhythm, a strange choice and curiosity of phrase. The play is radiant with passion, fancy and thought set in a most opposite and exquisite language. He writes less of what he sees than of his thoughts in seeing it and so a great part of both his strength and his sweetness will be found stored in metaphors and similes. The plot and
all its action is of course only a pretext for its poetry
in which the central image is

"that Life's a single pilgrim

Fighting unarmed amongst a thousand soldiers."...

In the song, their inmost essence is expressed and in
the blank verse of his play he found the true objective

\[ \text{correlative of his thought; the poetical dialogue embodied} \]

the struggles of his mind oscillating between life and

deadth, time and eternity. The play though untheatrical,

\[ \text{is magnificent in diction, various and beautiful in} \]

modulations, displaying imaginative thoughts of the highest

reach and sweeping the chords of passion.

Thus, all that Beddoes produced was The Bride's

\[ \text{Tragedy, an immature drama echoing the Elizabethans and} \]

Death's Jest Book, a spectral dramatic fantasy under

\[ \text{the influence of Webster, Tournour and other macabre} \]

playwrights of the early seventeenth century. It is

\[ \text{strange that this poet whose dramas are reminiscent of} \]

Elizabethans, gave the best advice to his age concerning
dramatic necessity. In 1825 he wrote to a friend:-

"I am convinced that the man who is to awaken the
drama must be a bold trampling fellow - no crapper into

worm-holes - no reviser even - however good. These revi-

\[ \text{mations are Vampire cold such ghosts as Marlowe-} \]

Webster etc. are better dramatists, better poets, I dare

\[ \text{say, than any contemporary of ours but they are ghosts-} \]

\[ \text{the worm is in their pages and we want to see something} \]

\[ \text{that our great grandsires did not know. With the greatest} \]

\[ \text{reverence for all the antiquities of the drama, I still} \]

\[ \text{think that we had better begat than revive - attempt to give} \]
The entire plot in these two plays is focused upon the Grecian people's revolt against the tyrant and autocratic authority, the kings Adrastus in Ion and Creon in The Athenian Captive and their ultimate success in destroying them. Strangely enough, in both the plays "Sohrab and Rustem" situations are created; the monarch's own lost sons like Oedipus unwittingly play the main role in the assassination of their fathers. Subsequently, being partly shocked by parricide, they commit suicide. In the former Ion, the leader of the oppressed and pestilence-infected people, triumph in exterminating the oppressor, King Adrastus and his race including himself. In the next play, Those, the noble and brave Athenian captive suddenly discovers himself to be the son of Ixion and Creon after unknowingly killing his father according to the vicious intrigues of the Queen, his mother. Both these dramas betray the predominance of the priests, exercising a lot of moral influence upon the persons and playing distinct roles in the evolution of the plot. Both the plays show the Grecian people's inherent faith in oracles, gods and goddesses. In these plays, the undisputed sway of fate and chance governing human efforts leads to tragic catastrophe. Some sudden and sad disclosures result in unhappy startling revelation of the lives of the two noble heroes - Ion and Those.

12- Cf., "Hence, has, therefore, been had, not only to the old Grecian notion of Destiny apart from all moral agencies and to a prophecy indicating its purport in reference to the individuals involved in its chain, but to the idea of fascination, as an engine by which Fate may work its purposes on the innocent mind, and force it into terrible action most unconscious to itself but necessary to the issue." Ibid., p.8.
Ton pledging to root out the entire race of the despot
knows accidently that he is his son and commits suicide
according to the solemn promise. Thos, guilty of patri-
cide unknowingly falls a prey to his foul mother's intrigues
and moves to his destined end inspite of his illustrious
nature.

The third tragedy, Glencoe, based on Sir Walter
Scott's History of Scotland portrays the historical
massacre of the Scottish clan of Macdonalds residing
in Glencoe by the English army, their guests at night.

Against this sub-plot, Talfourd has invented the main theme
of the warring brothers - patriotic but visionary Halbred and
practical and traitorous Henry. Finally, both the
plots merge together as Henry betrays his clan, seeks the
English Commander's succour to rescue his beloved from Halbred and
adds to the bloody tragedy of innocent Macdonalds.

In the Greek Plays, dominated by single personages, tragic heroes are magnificent persons who meet their calamitous end in spite of their lofty character. In the circumstances, mainly restrained by fate and chance, characterization is static without unfolding the complexity and diversity in traits. The heroes are chiefly delineated with reference to external actions and helplessly fall a victim to their inevitable doom. In Glencoe, the centre of interest shifts from one character to two- Halbred, the hero and Henry, his rival in love and politics. The

13 - For the sources of the play, see the author's Preface to Glencoe, Ibid., pp.IX-XIII.
14 - "The character of Halbert Macdonald and the incidents of history and conduct are entirely fictitious." The Author's Preface to Glencoe, Ibid., p.XII.
drama indicates a fine contrast of the two brothers' personalities; Halbred in politics is patriotic but sentimental while Henry is practical but treacherous. While Halbred is magnanimous and self-delving like Ion and Those, Henry is revengeful and responsible for the massacre of his race. In love, too, Henry is more realistic than his brother and succeeds in capturing Helen's heart more easily than idealistic Halbred.

Halbred... "Alas- I am rude
And moody: he is gay and quick in spirit
And light of heart."


Echoing Elizabethan forms Talfourd's comprehensible poetic diction is a distinct improvement upon that of Browning. The unintelligibility of ideas and language coupled with long soliloquies might be one of the leading factors of Browning's failure; Talfourd's clarity of diction and contents mixed with the lucidity of style is one of the main causes of his triumph on the Victorian stage. Notice the following typical extracts from Talfourd's three plays:

Igor: Prithae no more. Argives- I have a boon of To crave you; whenever I shall rejoin in death the father from whose heart in life stern fate divided me, think gently of him; for ye, who saw him in his full blown pride, knew little of affections crush'd within, and wrongs which frenzied him; yet never more let the great interests of the state depend upon the thousand chances that may sway a piece of human frailty! (Igor, Act V, Sc. III)
Thomas—If thy speech is true,
And I have something in me which responds
To its high tiding, I am doom'd to bear
A heavier woe than I believed the gods
Would ever pay on mortals; I have stood,
Unwittingly upon a skiey height,
By ponderous gloom encircled—thou hast shown
The mountain summit mournfully reversed
In the black mirror of a lurid lake,
Whose waters soon shall cover me; I have stared
A freeman's nature; thou hast shown it sprung
From gods and heroes, and would it have me proud
Of the foul sacrilege.

—The Athenian Captive
Act IV, Sc. III

Hallett: You have seen me chafed
By passion worse than aimless in a soul
Whose destinies are fashioned by a Power
Wise, bountiful, resistless; and the words
Such frenzy dashes with its foam night seem
To urge that one unlike my self must prove
Unfit for my affection. Hear me now,
When calmer reason governs me! There stands
One near to me in blood; a soldier, valiant
And raised above all baseness, in the bloom
And gladness of his youth, who loves you not
Perchance I do— but who loves you well—
You are a soldier's child—your noble heart
May from most natural impulse turn to one
Endowed and graced as he is — if I read
Your wish aright; I'll join this hand with
His as freely as I would relinquish life
To succour yours.

—Glencoe, Act V, Sc. I

Telfourd cast his plays in the familiar and obso-
lescent mold and revived classicism both in spirit
and form. Love of Greece led the playwright to present
the antique themes in his first two plays with true
and vivid Greek background and culture. In Glencoe,
"romance domesticated" the dramatist displayed the new
currents in the contemporary drama by portraying the
inner conflict of the characters. As the exponent of
classical tragedy, he represents the last flicker of
the old inspiration and the first spark of the new and
contributed towards the regeneration of the national
drama. Telfourd reveals theatrical sense ignored in
most of the plays of Browning and other poets. Adapting
himself to the new requirements, Telfourd evolved a form
which though conventional revealed sufficient stage-
craft. Therefore, with his mediocre plays, he could
achieve success on the stage upon which most of the
romantic poets with their superior plays failed. Yet,
these dramas lack any depth of human nature and univer-
sality of appeal and, accordingly they have been for-
gotten. Telfourd could not sufficiently reveal the human

in E.H., September 1934, p.191.

16—E.B. Lytton's dedication of "The Lady of Lyons" to
Telfourd, Bulwer Lytton's Dramatic Works (London), 1863,
p.106.
soul, the nucleus of all external drama. Therefore, he could not create sufficiently dynamic and growing characters who have become, generally, puppets in the hands of fate and chance. The versification has become prosaic at many places and some of the excitably scenes are very dull; e.g., those of the love-episodes in Ion and The Athenian Captive.

Lord Lytton, the novelist and the poet began his dramatic career with The Duchess de la Vallière staged in 1837. This was followed by a series of other plays among which The Lady of Lyons, Richelieu and Money, a prose play are the most important. In the first three plays, Lytton designedly chose the three periods which his plays illustrate as the representatives of three of the most remarkable epochs in the history of France. This author like Knowles, was groping darkly towards something new as his The Lady of Lyons, his most famous play possesses something of a genuine, as opposed to a spurious dramatic note. He is the sole instance of the nineteenth century verse-dramatists whose work with fifty years of praise and blame continued to hold the Victorian stage.

The Duchess de la Vallière, published in 1836, failed as a stage play. It was found too long and without dramatic interest. It was the work of an experienced man of letters but an inexperienced playwright. Want of proportion and lack of incident are its chief faults. Several interesting

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17—"It was further necessary in order to involve such a character in circumstances which might excite terror, grief or joy to introduce other machinery (fate) than that of passions working naturally within or events arising from ordinary and probable motives without, as its own elements would not supply the contents of tragic emotion, nor would its sufferings, however, accumulated present a varied and impressive picture." Author's Preface to Ion in Tragedies, 1840.

18—See Lytton's Preface to The Lady of Lyons, p. 105. In
characters pass across the stage without grouping themselves in a manner sufficiently striking to maintain dramatic effect. Though some have considerable individuality, all appear upon the same level; the perspective is not correct and the picture misses its effect.

Lytton considers this play "the most polished in diction and the highest in point of character."19 Regarding la Valliere, Lytton says, "Perhaps few subjects can be found more adapted to the skill of the dramatic poet than the love and the repentance, the fall and the atonement of Madame de la Valliere."20 He seems to have been even more interested in the character of Bragelone than in that of La Valliere owing to the glamour of chivalry which surrounds Bragelone's character. He says, "I have endeavoured, however, feebly, to shadow forth in the Bragelone of la Valliere, the highest and the completest delineation of ideal character which, I have yet accomplished either in drama or romance."21 But Bragelone, inspite of his romance, is conventional. The character is too well-worn to make, even in this elaborate setting, the impression it ought.

His character does not appeal to our sympathies and perhaps Lytton felt something of this when he wrote of it as an ideal. But from the literary point of view, it contains

Bulwer Lytton's Dramatic Works (London), 1863.
19- The Lady of Lyons and other Plays by Lord Lytton,
   Edited by R. Farquharson Sharp (1890), p.XI.
20- Ibid., p.XI.
21- Ibid., p.XI
all its action is of course only a pretext for its poetry
in which the central image is

"that Life's a single pilgrim
Fighting unarmed amongst a thousand soldiers"...

In the songs, their innermost essence is expressed and in
the blank verse of his play he found the true objective

 correlative of his thought; the poetical dialogue embodied
the struggles of his mind oscillating between life and
death, time and eternity. The play though untheatrical,
is magnificent in diction, various and beautiful in
modulations, displaying imaginative thoughts of the highest
reach and sweeping the chords of passion.

Thus, all that Beddoes produced was The Bride's
Tragedy as an immature drama echoing the Elizabethans and
Death's Jest-Book, a spectral dramatic fantasy under
the influence of Webster, Tournour and other notable
playwrights of the early seventeenth century. It is
strange that this poet whose dramas are reminiscent of
Elizabethans, gave the best advice to his age concerning
dramatic necessity. In 1825 he wrote to a friend:-

"I am convinced that the man who is to awaken the
drama must be a bold trampling fellow-no creaser into
worm-holes—no reviser even—however good. These recom-
nimations are vampire-cold—such ghosts as Marlowe—
Webster etc. are better dramatists, better poets, I dare
say, than any contemporary of ours but they are ghosts—
the worm is in their pages and we want to see something
that our great grand sires did not know. With the greatest
reverence for all the antiquities of the drama, I still
think that we had better beget than revive-attempt to give
better work than either its more popular successors. It may be that the poet's strength was the dramatist's weakness; the poetry has at any rate a true effect. Lytton described, The Duchess de la Vallier as the most polished in point of diction; e.g., the fourth scene of Act I in which every line tells.

Lytton's next play, The Lady of Lyons, published in 1839, enjoyed extraordinary popularity on the Victorian stage for more than half a century. It includes two good parts of equal importance. The story tells how Renusserant and Clavius, rejected by Pauline, disguise the poor Claude Helnotte as a prince and get her married to him. When she discovers the cheat, she is stung with shame, but afterwards she comes to love the gardener's son and discovers a new humanity in her love. Here the dramatist attempts "the problem of caste or the world-well-lost-for love play." To attain the art of dramatic construction and theatrical effect the author directed his chief attention to "the development of the plot and arrangement of incidents" and subordinated poetry to "the construction of the story, the creation of the characters and the spirit of the pervading sentiments." Its popularity with the audience springs, undoubtedly, from the fact that it is constructed upon simple lines and appeals to simple emotions. The author undoubtedly intended to reflect the manners of a certain period and the characters to represent types more

22- Ibid., p.x.
24- Author's Preface, Bulwer lytton's Dramatic Works (London) 1863, p. 106.
or less historical. But Melnotte and Pauline much more obviously represent phases of that imperfect yet lovable human nature which was the same before and after the revolution. The misfortune of snobbish Pauline married to the Gardener's son whose rejected suitor disguises as the Prince of Com was seen entirely convincing to the Victorian audience steeped in "the radical sentiments of the decade of the Reform Bill." 25 The people still under the sway of melodrama would rejoice to see Melnotte return to claim Pauline's hand and heart. Moreover, here, the Republican clap-traps and the modern account of the new French style of play-writing together with the easy construction, the natural dialogue and the general atmosphere of the play, indicate Lytton's true dramatic power. Even where the language most lacks restraint, it exhibits a designed effect and the work of a man of artistic feelings. "The Lady of Lyons was written with a rare knowledge of what the stage requires, for not one word was cut out nor one scene re-arranged or altered after the first representation." 26

Richelieu, published in 1839, betrays the same want of proportion that mars The Duchess de la Vallière weakened by the almost equal distribution of interest among several characters. Richelieu, reveals the subordination of dramatic coherency to the desire to elaborate the central figure; the loves of Julie and De Hauprat do not fill us with any particular interest, nor do the small intrigues which are perpetually cropping up. Richelieu's personality being allowed to overshadow everything, we have a sense

26 Helen Faucit's statement in The Lady Lyons and other Plays by Lord Lytton, p.X
of insufficiency in what remains in his absence. The
genial effect is of a disjointed whole, lacking some
continuous interest to bind it together. In this play,
Lytton desired to produce a living picture of the great 27
Cardinal, "a curious compound of Iago and Cardinal Wolg-
sey." He excelled in portraying his character in such
clear and clever strokes that it seemed to possess
reality and an individuality; the rest of the dramatic
persons are mere puppets. The dramatist's error was
in imagining that unexpected situations and skilful
climaxes could supply the place of dramatic interest.
The isolated scenes of great dramatic excellence and
passages written in a poignant style merely accentuate
the character of the Cardinal, "a man of two characters"—
the dictator as well as benefactor. 28

Lytton's poetic plays have two good qualities. They
do not offend our literary susceptibilities and they
often affect sympathetically by their fidelity to human
nature. These merits lie at the root of the vitality
of The Lady of Lyons and Richelieu—especially the former.
Lytton describes the ideal poetic drama as the result of
a combination of the 'simple' with the 'magnificent'; if
it means that magnificence of rhetoric or circumstance
must not be allowed to draw the dramatist's attention
away from simple human passions which give life to the
characters of a drama. 29 Lytton for whom "the mightiest

27- Ibid., p. IX
28- Author's Preface, Bulver Lytton's Dramatic Works (London)
1863, p. 179.
29- Cf., his advice-
"if from the life his shapes the poet draws,
critic in the public voice was much more modern than his contemporaries; he knew that a drama to command lasting success must in its essentials be true to all time and not to a historical period. His leaning was a little towards the 'magnificent' in his dramas written for a large theatre and in a style at times unduly inflected. It must be remembered that the public taste still inclined to bombast.

E.H. Horne wrote a series of plays among which Cosmo de Medici published in 1837 was the most popular. Here all the characters except the Duke are insignificant and even the conflict between the two warring brothers - Giovanni and Garcia - does not adequately bring out their complex traits. The women play an inappreciable role and love between Ippolita and Giovanni ending into a catastrophe does not grow into a full-fledged sub-plot to furnish an assuaging element in the terror-stricken play. The character of the Duke is noble, magnanimous and hence inspiring; but it is static and melodramatic. We anticipate from the very beginning his firm determination and devotion to justice, the excess of which often makes him monomaniac. His error in refusing to believe

In man's deep breast lie all the critic's laws... while Nature's sympathies are Art's best laws—

-Prologue to the Duchesse de la Valliere, Ibid., p.4

30- Ibid., p.4.

31- Lytton remarks, "Not then by pondering over inapplicable rules - not by recurring to past models - not by casting hackneyed images, but by a bold and masterly adaptation of modern materials to modern taste, will an author revive the glories of the drama." E.H. Lytton England and English, 1874 (New York) Edition, p.775.
the just arguments of his only surviving son and his
prompt execution, smack of improbabilities; his over-
sentimental and melo-dramatic action, the main cause of
the tragedy of all, does not convince us much. The
play contains many scenes of high-pitched tensions without
any mitigating factor.

The dramatist like Browning selected the soul of
the hero as the chief object of his portrayal. \textit{Compo
da Medici} contains no group rivalry, class conflict or
villain or antagonist; it only concentrates over the
spiritual crisis of the tragic hero in conflict with
duty and love and thus echoes the sentimental drama. But
Horne's delineation of the Duke's character is in a marked
contrast with Browning's analytical, but untheatrical
penetration of his dramatic personae. Horne shows the
stage of transition from the traditional to the fresh
techniques. The play abounds in fine poetic passages,
full of metaphor and similes and resembles other literary
plays of the period. It can be classed with the simple
and lucid plays of Talfourd and Tennyson; e.g.,

"My lofty and firm motives that once held
United as the Alpe, are changed in the eating
To martyr'd ashes - staked humanity;
This world's a bubble soon where now it bursts,
And men and things fly off; and melt in air!
You spheres are temporal, and a yawn will end
The Ptolemaic dream! our brain's mere dust,
Moisten'd and moved by rays and dews from heaven
\checkmark Soon dark-dry-void-Creation's final lord-
\checkmark Oblivion crown'd with infinite blank stars-
Inherits all! I've a hydra wrong!"
Now with its monstrous constellation blazon

My deed till heaven dissolve!

—Act V, Sc. V.

Horace realizes fully well that a language full of subtle and incomprehensible thoughts cannot be properly appreciated. The clarity of ideas and diction is one of the chief merits of the play.

Arnold made experiments in the verse-play during the later half of the nineteenth century. His earlier dramatic attempt, "Empedocles on Etna" (1852) never had any semblance of theatrical purpose because his aim was mainly "to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists to prevail." Like Byron's Manfred, Empedocles is a man of sombre character who has dealings with the powers of evil and who is concerned with "the mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark" and with contempt for "the clay, that clogs the ethereal essence."

"It is but for a moment?

Ahi boil up, ye vapours!
Leap and roar, thou sea of fire!
My soul glows to meet you
Ere it flag, ere the mists
Of despondency and gloom
Rush over it again
Receive me! save me!

Act II, 408-415, p.124.

32 The Author's preface to Empedocles on Etna and other
Just as Manfred was a representation of Byron's own lofty tortured soul so also Empedocles, of Arnold's agonised feelings pondering over the decline of moral values in a society in which Philistinism dominated. This dramatic poem expresses the longing of the philosopher to master his own soul and his discontent to leave the mass of contentious and blindly struggling men to their own fate. From solitude in the cool beauty of the mountain glens Empedocles returns to the hot and dusty cities of the plain from a sense of duty; but once again disgust drives him out to his own airy meditations. It is Arnold's own philosophy that emerges in the concluding stanzas of Empedocles' chant.

Empedocles, a poem thrown into a dramatic form, is not dramatic enough and we must share Arnold's own criticism of it; but it contains beautiful lyrics, some fine blank verse. It is a stage in Arnold's development of the poetic career. In the songs of Callicles, there echo the choruses of the Attic tragedians with which Arnold made a bold experiment in its original form in *Herone.* This dramatic poem concludes with the much quoted hymn of Callicles:

"First hymn they the Father
Of all things; and then
The rest of immortals,
The action of men.

32 - *The Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1840-1865 with An Introduction by Sir A.T. Quiller Couch (London), 1918*

33 - Ibid., p. 3
The day in his hotness
The strife with the palm
The night in her silence,
The stars in the calm."

—Act II, 461-468.

During the Victorian era, nothing is more interesting
in the field of poetical drama than Arnold's attempt to
evolve a form based on the critical knowledge of the
Greek play\(^\text{34}\) in \textit{Herome}. He was fully conscious of his
work as an exercise in reviving an immortal, so indecis-
structible and so consummate a form as the Greek play.\(^\text{35}\)

Being a consummate scholar, Arnold was aware of the
treatment of the myth of \textit{Herome} by various dramatic poets
from Euripides's \textit{Cresphontes} to Voltaire's \textit{Herome}. The
study of the treatment of the same theme by various poets
at different periods, produced a sense of traditional
support and "the feeling that he is treading on solid
ground."\(^\text{36}\)

In \textit{Herome} too, a dramatic poem like \textit{Euphues},
Arnold had no theatrical purpose. The poem contains
only one big scene in which the entire story of twenty
years has been condensed. All the previous incidents
necessary to understand the past history have been commu-
nicated to the reader through the dialogues of the

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p.13 and 17.

\(^{35}\) The Preface to \textit{Herome}, Arnold says—
"I desired to try, therefore, how much of the effective-
ness of the Greek poetical forms I could retain in an
English poem constructed under the conditions of those
forms; of these forms, too, in their severest and the
most definite expression, in their application to dramatic
poetry."

\(^{36}\) The Preface to \textit{Herome}.
characters and the choric odes so adroitly that there is no difficulty in comprehending the plot. The play, a sequel to the events that occupied twenty years, opens when Aspytus, the only surviving son of Merope and Cresphontes, comes with his uncle to take revenge upon Polyphantes for murdering his father and two brothers. The climax arrives when Merope, mistaking her grown up and disguised sleeping son to be the assassin, would have killed him with an axe but for the timely intervention of an old servant.

But Merope containing 2039 lines, is too long and its plot too large for the concentrated event necessary for a one-act play. It cannot be called a new attempt contributing to the evolution of the modern one-act plays like Tennyson's The Falcon and Browning's "In a Balcony." Like the bigger five-act Elizabethan and Greek plays, Merope also contains five detectable stages of development in the action of the play. The initial conversation between Aspytus and Lais, his uncle, indicates Protagon or exposition giving the entire retrospective background of the theme. At the second stage, Epitasis or growth, the principal characters Merope, Polyphantes, Chorus and Arcas, the old servant are introduced. Peripeteia or the climax comes when Merope thinking Aspytus wrongly to be the murderer of her only surviving son makes an attempt on his life with an axe, but is stopped by the old servant. At the fourth stage, Catastasis or denouement, the messenger informs Merope

"The tradition is a great matter to a poet; it is an unspeakable support; it gives him the feeling that he is treading on solid ground. Aristotle tells the tragic poet that he must not destroy the received stories." Ibid., p.298.
that her wrongs have been redressed by the revenge taken
by her son and brother on Polyphontes. In the end, the
victorious son comes and goes for coronation.

In composing *Meropes*, Arnold was fulfilling all the
requirements of a great poetical play—selecting a great
myth, adopting a proper verse form and structure for the
play and visualizing the type of imagery appropriate to the
theme. Arnold's principal contribution to this play rests
in experimenting very dexterously and rigidly with chorus,
a powerful ingredient in Greek tragedy. Its potentialities
were realized by him for it serves a conspicuous purpose in
the evolution of the action. Like that in Greek drama, it
fulfills three distinct aims in *Meropes*. First, the chorus
formed by the Messenian women who have come in the company
of Meropes to assist her in offering oblations at her assassi-
nated husband's tomb, furnishes lyrical songs, sweet music
and exquisite melodies in order to alleviate the painful
excitement created by the tense situations. Thus it serves
the purpose of buffoonery of the Elizabethan drama by pro-
viding the assuaging atmosphere. Second, it comments,
gives suggestions to the characters on the stage and supplies
all the indispensable information of the plot which others
cannot do; it seems to be the sympathetic adviser of all
characters, the impartial observer and confidant of each

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57—Cf., Arnold's remark in the Preface to *Meropes*.

"Coleridge observes that Shakespeare, after one of
his greatest scenes, often plunges, as if to relax and
relieve himself, into a scene of buffoonery. After
tragic situations of the greatest intensity, a desire
for relief and relaxation is no doubt natural, both to
the poet and to the spectator; but the finer feeling
of the Greek found this relief, not in buffoonery but
in lyrical song." The Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1849-1867,
p.306.
conflicting group. Its role is similar to that of simple minor characters who supply the requisite information through their unsophisticated talk in the modern plays and novels. Thirdly, like that in Greek tragedies, the chorus remains fixed on the stage till the close of the play while other characters enter and go out. It helps to maintain the three classical unities of time, place and action.

In *Helen*, Arnold wanted to revive the Greek form with its distinctive feature, the choric odes, the function of which, he realized, was "to combine and harmonize and to deepen for the spectator the feelings naturally excited in him by the sight of what was passing upon the stage—this is one great effect produced by the chorus in Greek tragedy." He has sought to revive, the same form of choric dialogues as is found in Greek plays with strophe, antistrophe, and epode. Moreover, in his anxiety to experiment with all the several elements of the Greek play, Arnold did not omit the Stichomythia or the line by line dialogue or the Peripeteia which usually ends the play.

The chorus of the Messenian women first appears along with Helen to pay homage to Cressphontes at his tomb with

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39—The author's Preface to *Helen*.

According to Arnold, the Greek form consists in "the regular correspondence of part with part, the antithesis in answering stanzas of thought to thought, feeling to feeling, with the balance of the whole struck in one independent final stanza or epode," and "something of the peculiar distinctiveness and symmetry, which constitute the vital force of the Greek tragic forms." —*Ibid.*, 307.
oblations; in their odes, the most interesting feature
is the way Arnold has worked the balance in providing
 correspondence of thought to thought, Strophe, Anti-
Strophe and finally the whole composition comes to an
end in the Epide. 40.

The whole play has been constructed between the two-
elements— the choric odes and Stichomythia or the line by
line dialogue, the former to explain and comment and the
latter to provide for the movement of the plot. Follow-
ing the usual practice in the Greek form, the play takes
for dramatic representation only that part of the myth,
when the story is about to end, leaving the rest of the
previous history to be given through the choric dialogues
and leading to compression without the diffuseness of the
five act Elizabethan form.

But Arnold's work has remained purely of academic
interest without contributing to the revival of a new
form for the poetical play, though it was undoubtedly,
Arnold's desire that Greek form should be effectively
tried for the modern stage 41 and it was towards this end
that he himself had this careful experiment. Such an
attempt as Arnold's was a pointer to the efforts of the
later poets like Eliot who conclude that the Greek form
should only be used to furnish useful elements which
could be incorporated into a play suited to contemporary
conditions and that the rigid reproduction of the Greek

form will only appear quite incongruous.

After composing some unfinished and unknown dramatic fragments in his boyhood, Swinburne experimented with the verse-drama for forty-eight years (1860-1908) till the end of his poetic career and wrote twelve tragedies. Among them the most popular are the two Greek tragedies Atalanta in Calydon (1865) and Erechtheus (1876) and the historical trilogy showing the vicissitudes of Mary Stuart's life: Chesterfield (1865), Bothwell (1874) and Mary Stuart (1881). His Greek dramas reveal little originality of form. Atalanta in Calydon, an imitation of Greek drama, has remained the best known, but it does not conform so closely to the model as does Erechtheus. The former could have been written only in an age of Romanticism owing to the exuberance of its form and the angry fatalism. This fact is one of its chief merits as Swinburne was not content to compose a mere imitation, mere pastiche like Arnold's Merope. Into the old Greek form, he poured the new modern thought. The Hellenism provides an exotic flavour and a sense of detachment from the issues of the mid-nineteenth century.

His virginal chorus reveals terrific denunciation of God.

"Because thou art cruel and soft are pitiful
And our hands labour and thine hand scattereth;
Lo with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,
Lo with ephemeral lips and casual breath,

12-S.C. Chew mentions at least three fragments in Swinburne, p.187.
14-The source of Atalanta lies in Ovid suggested by an allusion to Atalanta in As You Like It. H. Nicolson, Swinburne, (Macmillan). p.74.
At least we witness of thee ere we die
That these things are not otherwise, but thus;
That each man in his heart singeth and saith,
That all men even as I,
All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high."

In *Atalanta*, the lyrical passages display the startling
originality of the poet's metre in the most pleasing shape.
The recitative is composed in lucid and musical blank verse.
After *Prometheus Unbound* of Shelley, not a single drama
on the model of Greek antiquity could be compared with the
new play. The excellent economy which Swinburne re-
introduced was a protest against the shapelessness of the
"spectacular" types of untheatrical drama.

It is interesting to compare *Atalanta* with *Erech-
theus* (1876) which contains first great chorus of the
Athenian Elders, and which resembles "songs before sunrise."
(1871). The metrical resourcefulness reappears unabated
though not quite so fresh. *Erechtheus* is less romantic
and purer in its hellenism than *Atalanta* and contains
no abuse of the Gods. The former in its grim bare outlines
is more Hellenic than *tremulous*, *Atalanta* and as a
literary pastiche, *Erechtheus* is the more scholarly
achievement. Technically perfect, *Erechtheus* is in
several respects the most organic of Swinburne's writings. Here
he rises in an altitude of moral emotion to an atmos-
phere which few modern poets have attempted to breathe.
It is the most Greek of all the compositions of Swinburne;
it is passionately Athenian, and Athens is considered, the
living symbol of the virtue of a citizenship. *Erechtheus*

45- "I am writing a Greek Tragedy which I mean to be more
46- See next page (Footnote)
may in this respect be considered in relation to the ode entitled "Athena" written by Swinburne in 1881. The play is classical in its admission of but two actors at one time upon the stage and in its introduction of the powers of earth and sea. A difficulty is the lack of concentration in the dramatic interest of the story; it is never wholly clear whether Athena is to be destroyed by the Thracians or by the sea and whether central theme is the sacrifice of Cithonia, or the heroism of his mother. The final holocaust of Eros and his remaining daughters is treated in a manner wholly unconvincingly and almost incidentally. Its high competence as a literary reconstruction reveals that Swinburne could write with cool and impersonal precision.

The two Greek plays can be compared with Matthew Arnold's *Herone* in form. In *Atalanta* the use of chorus is a little flexible, but in *Eros* it becomes rigid and strictly follows the Greek structure with Strophe, Anti-strophe and Epode; Swinburne's experiments with chorus in the latter closely resemble those of Arnold's in *Herone* with the same Greek elements. Like Arnold's play, Swinburne's drama has been constructed between the two elements - the choral odes and Stichomythia or the line by line dialogue, the former to explain and comment and the latter to provide for the movement of the plot. In all of them, following

\[10-\text{the tragic derlvo® ite murm ftm H» outline of E»ripld©e*«.}

\[16-\text{The tragedy derives its source from the outline of Euripides's last play on Eros which is preserved by Lycurgus, the orator.} \]

S.S. Chow Swinburne, pp.127-135.
the Greek pattern, the chorus furnishes lyricism, advises
the characters sympathetically and remains fixed on the
stage throughout. According to the Greek example, only
that part of the myth when the story is about to end, is
taken for dramatic representation; the drama leaves the
rest of the previous history to be given through choric
dialogues and leads to compression without the diffuse-
ness of the five-act Elizabethan form. Thus, Swinburne's
use of chorus closely resembles that in Arnold's earlier
drama, Mary in its rigidity and inflexibility. In
modern drama, T.S. Eliot, one of the experimentalists,
evolved a new form of choric dialogues in his plays
especially, Murder in the Cathedral and The Family Reunion
to suit the contemporary new theatrical conditions. 47

Swinburne, like Tennyson, tried his hand in the chronicle
drama and wrote the historical trilogy—Chesterfield 1865,
Bothwell 1874 and Mary Stuart 1881—describing the three
phases of Mary Stuart's life. Chesterfield was the earliest
study of Mary Queen of Scots whose clear eyes of "a Sword
Blade's Blush" infatuated so many hearts and reigned like
stars in the firmament of Swinburne's imagination. 48 The
central figure of the drama was the young poet who expla-
ted his error of infatuation on the scaffold. Chesterfield
was entirely a conventional specimen of his age, as Mary
was an exceptional one. The figure of Mary in Chesterfield
is a brilliant sketch, marvellously fresh and bright.

Her character, however, offered some of the most puzzling

47—See The Plays of T.S. Eliot by David B. Jones, London
1960 pp. 47-48 and 52-3 and the Chapters on T.S. Eliot
48—Cf., his poem, "Adieux a Marie Stuart."
and elusive problems, and this was the reason of his slow progress and continued dissatisfaction with her portrait published in *Chesterland*. The author was fascinated early by the evidence of her high spirit, her ready wit and her victorious charm. Swinburne seems to have had already a wide acquaintance with source-materials when he wrote *Chesterland*, yet this first effort gives but a superficial portrait of Queen Mary. *Chesterland* is a sort of glorious libretto of some Italian opera. Two scenes stand out: the mid-night meeting in the Queen's bed-chamber and the wonderful duo in the last act, when the Queen visits him in prison.

The French lyrics reveal Swinburne's incapacity of managing the vowel-sounds of the French language. The English lyrics are of a far higher quality. There is much of the shortening of Browning, the sensuousness of Rossetti and pre-Raphaelite suggestion.

"Seeing always in my sight I had your lips

Curled over red and sweet; and the soft space

Of carven brows, and splendour of great throat

Swayed lily-wise."

The dramatic movement and the curious facility of style in *Chesterland* make it unique in the poetry of the nineteenth century; it has the extra-ordinary merits of speed and lightness and it proceeds on its flowery and fatal course without interruption. Of all Swinburne's dramas, it is easiest to read and love is the body of the tragedy. All relates to it; all sentiments, ties of patriotism, religion and duty wither where it blows.
Bothwell, the second play in the trilogy, published in 1875, was a mounting structure. Swinburne wrote to Morley:

"If ever accomplished, this drama will certainly be a great work in one sense, for except that translation from the Spanish of a comedy in 25 Acts published in 1531, it will be the biggest, I fear in the language. But having made a careful analysis of the historical events from the days of Rizzio's murder to that of Mary's flight into England, I find that to cast into dramatic mould the events of those eighteen months, it is necessary to omit no detail to drop no link in the chain, if the work is to be either dramatically coherent or historically intelligible; while every stage of the action is a tragic drama of itself which cries aloud for representation. I suspected from the first that Shakespeare alone could have grappled with it satisfactorily and wrung the final prize of the tragedy from the clutch of historical fact. But having taken up the enterprise I will not at least the drop it till I have wrestled my best with it." 49

The same Queen Mary, grown older, fiercer and craftier towers over a more turbulent crowd of figures. Yet this dramatic romance rather than a play is little fitted for the stage.

The chronicle of events has certain chapters, rather than acts; Bothwell resembles one of the classic plays of eighteenth-century Japan only to be performed on the successive nights. Swinburne was little concerned in approaching his subject from the point of view of stage convenience. Bothwell is really a chronicle play of epic dimensions and a faithful

series of historical pictures and portraits in which the poet poured all the wine he crushed from the grapes of history. Bothwell is neither an epic nor yet a drama as it is too poetic for narrative and too historical for a play; it lacks concentration and outline. The central and consistent theme is again and again politics. Yet the play contains in profusion, evidences of its author's genius, his gift for creating situations and interpreting character. The language is of a spirited simplicity and the verse fluid. Among the myriad blank verse imitations of the Elizabethans, it is the finest dramatic romance produced in the nineteenth century. It contains many excellent passages and the French and English songs and lyrics are perfectly conceived and executed.

In Mary Stuart published in 1881, Swinburne completed the trilogy. In structure, the play has the negative merit of brevity but it is much less interesting. The measured length is due to the paucity of material rather than to deliberate compression. The motto of Mary Stuart declares that the voice of justice claims the payment of debt for wrong. There was one action of Mary which perhaps Swinburne could not forgive—her consenting to the execution of Chesterland. Mary Batten keeps the fact before the mind of the reader. The last words uttered by Mary Batten, link the fate of Chesterland with that of her who betrayed him.

"I heard that very cry go up
Far off long, since to God, who answers here."


Swinburne's conception of Mary Stuart's character is that
accepted by most modern historians. He had not only care-
fully studied the facts immediately bearing on the fate
of Mary, but had steeped himself in the atmosphere of the
period. In his selection of events, their sequence and
connection he appears to have generally followed Froude.
In all the five acts that compose Mary Stuart, the speeches
of the different characters are for the most part based on
the text of Froude.

Tennyson's historical trilogy can be compared with
that of Swinburne. As regards similarities, the plays of
both the playwrights contain external political strife
intermingled with love episodes which enhance the former.
Thus politics and love dominate their dramas; but while
in Swinburne's plays love seems to have the upperhand, it
is subservient to politics in Tennyson's plays. Both the
dramatists are saturated with the extensive knowledge of
history in the respective periods; they are unable to make
the fair selection of events in their plays. In Tennyson
there is a distinct improvement in his art as in Harold and
Bócket; he tries to make the selection by reducing the number
of incidents, characters and scenes. Swinburne never displays
such an evolution and his prolixity continues throughout.
Accordingly, Tennyson gradually adapted his later plays to
the contemporary theatrical requirements and got success on
the stage; on the contrary due to lack of stagecraft,
Swinburne's historical trilogy never saw foot-lights.50 The
plays of both the dramatists are imbued with the fine song
displaying exquisite lyricism and their poetic excellence.
As regards contrast, the keynote of Tennyson's dramatic
works is the idealism coupled with didacticism, leading to
50- "With the exception of Locrine, Atalanta in Calydon"
the formation of his dramatic personas into types—mainly ideal and villainous. Tennyson had certain firmly rooted convictions in his mind which appear unwittingly in his plays through the speeches and actions of persons. On the contrary, Swinburne's characterisation of Queen Mary, Chesterlaid and others, is chiefly as realistic as he discovered them in history; his characters possess vice and virtue and try to reflect the true spirit of the age.

Tennyson's approach to history was patriotic as he wanted to unfold the picturesque panorama of British history in its three phases omitted in Shakespeare's chronicle plays. On the other hand Swinburne's treatment of British history was realistic and individualistic as he was particularly interested in the vicissitudes of Queen Mary of Scots, "une belle dame sans merci" before whom successively Chesterland, Rizzie, Darnley, Bothwell and Babington lay down their loves. This subject haunted his mind from his very childhood and he wrote poems and articles on this fascinating topic.

Of the eight remaining minor dramas of Swinburne, his two early ones—Rosamund and the Queen Mother, published in 1860—are of a very different merit. The action of Rosamund passes at Woodstock, the characters are Henry II, his fair mistress and his jealous wife, found also in Tennyson's Becket. The play is ineffective in spite of vigorous Elizabethan cadences and the sudden, sharp and

allusive bits of dialogue reminiscent of Browning. King, wife, and mistress move in a dream world, but an elaborate plot could have enabled the poet to vitalize the subject. A comparison of Swinburne's purely sensuous treatment of the theme with the firmer grasp portrayed in George Darley's earlier Thomas a Becket (1840) and Tennyson's later Becket (1864) reveals the fact. The Queen Mother shows the larger application of the principles of dramatic blank verse and of history. The play, an attempt to portray an entire society suffers from the obscurity of motivation, undue attention to subsidiary issues and the great deal of talk. The Pre-Raphaelite influence submits to the Elizabethan. Further there are some signs in The Queen Mother of the influence of Joseph and His Brothers. But more profound is the influence of Beddoes's Death's Last-Book. Cino, the fool is the gnomic commentator on life like Isbrand and the reek of the Medicean French Court echoes the similar atmosphere in Crusoe. In both plays love and death, rivalry and revenge, public motives and private, jostle together. As an ante-chamber to Queen Mary's trilogy, this play prepares the way for the dramas of Queen Mary. There is portrayed the cruel and lustful life of 

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51 - The different versions of the central scene describing the meeting of Rosamund and Eleanor will suggest the contrast among those three tragedies. Darley's play ends in death of Rosamund who is scolded by her rival, the jealous Queen and who after pleading for mercy, drinks the poison. Tennyson follows the probabilities of history rather than the imaginative truth of the legend. Here Becket enters in the nick of time to save Rosamund from Eleanor's dagger and Rosamund is left alive at the conclusion of the drama. Swinburne's queen is more restrained and dignified and his Rosamund more pitiable. King Henry enters the scene after his mistress has taken poison but before she dies.
the court in which Mary Stuart was bred; its author was
furnished with an instrument for the composition of his
most ambitious work in the dramatic form - the trilogy.

Marino Faliero published in 1885, was the product
of anti-Byronism. Swinburne placed the beginning of the
action much earlier and thus reconstructed the play. The
point in the story where Byron's play commences is not
reached in Swinburne's play till the opening of Act III.

What precedes that point in the latter tragedy, we learn
only incidentally in Byron's; Swinburne's attention and
sympathy are concentrated upon Faliero who is more complex
than that in Byron's drama. The qualities which Swinburne
attributes to Faliero, seem to render him less appropriate
protagonist for a drama of liberty than is Byron's noble
hero; but Swinburne's audition is clear. For when the
conspiracy has been discovered and thwarted, the Doge in
prison reasons with himself and justifies the course of
action into which he had been led by passionate resentment
of private wrongs. These self-revelations make clear to
him his own imperfections which had rendered him unworthy to
be the leader of his people towards liberty. Thus, the

Besides these three dramas, I have read two more plays
containing the same story and Becket theme - (1) Thomas
Becket, a Historical Play in Five Acts (in prose) as
played at the Surrey Theatre, by Douglas Jerrold, London,
1829, and (2) Becket, An Historical Tragedy. The Man of
England by an unknown author, London, 1832. I am indebted
to the Librarian, the British Council, New Delhi for supply-
ing the microfilms of all these plays from the British
Museum, London.

52. The author's letter in the Bibliography, Bonchurch Edition
poet in Felice's last long speech regulates his theme into a prophecy of the ideal leader.

His next tragedy Lear (1887), again, reveals Swinburne's ambition to do well what another poet had done badly. About 1895, the myth had been dramatised by an unknown playwright who did not entirely miss the opportunities which the subject offered; in the dedication stanzas Swinburne alludes beautifully to Milton's use of the subject. Swinburne deliberately obscured the subject for the sake of a display of his material skill. The ten scenes are written in nine different and often highly complex stanzaic schemes.

The opening scene is written in couplets; the next in Petrarchian sonnets, the third in a nine-line stanza rhyming a a b, a b a; the fourth in ottava rima; the fifth in what Swinburne called Quarta rima, the sixth in the Chaucerian stanza, the seventh in the stanzas of Venus and Adonis, the eighth in terza rima, the ninth in Shakespearean sonnets, and the last in couplets. This confusing matrical agility breaks all allowable limits of art.

The attempt to coordinate form and substance at the same time results in hopeless confusion.

The sisters (1892) describes the tragedy of a young soldier, Reginald clavering loved by two sisters, one of whom he loves. Another sister takes a hint from the playwright written by Reginald and performed by them together, she poisons the soldier, her sister and herself. Though the play within the play contains the full and heightened style yet the main drama is composed in simple and dull blank verse.

Here he ventures into the field of "realism" and modern life. Swinburne intended his hero to be a self portrait but the piece is of interest only as a curiosity. The play, the
most deplorable failure in the canon of Swinburne's writings, does not reveal even the skill of technique.

Again Swinburne wrote the last tragedy, Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards (1809) as the terrible, barbaric theme had never had justice done to it by earlier dramatists. Dona Lombarda, married to her father's slayer, was forced by her husband to drink from a cup fashioned from her father's skull and with a young warrior's help brought about her husband's death. As a small boy, Swinburne had been fascinated by the tale written in Alfieri's Rosamunde. From the one or two other earlier versions he derived suggestions for his play. His Alboume is a weak creature and his Rosamund a confused conception. The drama is of interest for what the poet seems to have been attempting. He exercises a severe restraint upon his inherent prolixity. The play contains plain versification, bold diction and a swift development of the action to a foreordained catastrophe. The means employed are too literary because the play comes from the library not from life.

In the character of Lucrezia Borgia, probably written near 1882, and edited subsequently by Dr. Hughes in 1942, Swinburne described a story of lechery and crime. The Borgia legend had something in common with Cesare legend. Caesar Borgia by Nat Lee may have prompted Swinburne to attempt a

tragedy on a theme which was spoiled by an earlier English playwright. Swinburne completed only the episodes of The Duke of Gandua, published in 1908. Its brevity is but a partial compensation for its repulsiveness. Perhaps the poet was spoiled by the subject he had undertaken and put it by, though its evil glitter fascinated him.

Thus, while in his Greek plays, Swinburne like Arnold, sticks to the Greek form rigidly, in his historical tragedies, he throws into poetic form the whole body of an age in a huge mass of historical facts. His wide perspective and close grasp of history are characteristically Victorian and suffer from a singular diffuseness and want of power to select from the essential elements in situation. At places the process of selection is generally carried too far to make the situations effective. Swinburne's dramas possess a great central idea which is too often hidden by the elaboration of unrelated side-issues. The basic defect in all the tragedies is chiefly technical incompetence like that in Tennyson's plays. He planned his plays for performance at some Elizabethan theatre, but he forgets the old dramatist's method based upon due regard for the requirements of the contemporary stage. But Swinburne has an understanding of motive and like Browning's dramatic personas, the men and women in his plays dissect and disentangle the reasons for action. The atmosphere of high-wrought emotions of love and patriotism is often convincingly suggested. In drama, Swinburne resembles the 'closet' dramatists of the nineteenth century and shows the end of Romanticism. His plays indicate the culmination of the movement of the Greek and the "Elizabethan Revival"
expressly for dramatic reforms pursued by Darley, Beddoes, Wells and Taylor throughout the nineteenth century. Similarities are discoverable between Swinburne and most of these dramatists.
CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing eleven chapters, we have presented a detailed and careful analysis of all the verse-plays of Browning and Tennyson and some plays of such well-known dramatists as Arnold, Swinburne, Baddesly and Lytton and of less known playwrights such as Wells, Talfourd and Horne. An effort has been made to cover almost every relevant aspect of poetic drama – theme, construction, characters, action, songs, soliloquy, verse and use of prose. At times, I have also attempted a correlation of certain features of Victorian verse-drama to comparable features of Victorian poetry, Elizabethan drama and recent poetic drama. I had also raised a question in the Introduction as to what the contribution of the Victorian age has been to the revival of poetic drama in our age. In raising that question I also referred to some of the usual views on Victorian poetic drama.

On the basis of our examination of the plays and with an awareness of the questions and charges raised, we should now be in a position to collect our ideas and arrive at a systematic conclusion. The majority of Victorian verse-dramatists started their experiments with the express intention of staging the plays. Their contact with the leading theatres and actors of the time encouraged them to combine the dramatic with the theatrical when they began their dramatic career. A few of their plays were actually staged with success. But subsequently, the poets discovered that they could not carry on with their scholarly bias on the boards. They had
either to stop down to the taste of the vulgar and commercial theatre or to develop a literary closet-drama independently of the theatre. Owing to this separation from the current theatre, the verse-dramatists failed to grow sufficient stage-craft which is essentially derived from vulgar contact with the living theatre. Deprived of theatrical experience, these Victorians, unlike the Elizabethans and the moderns, were compelled to renew their experiments in the closet. The poets explored antique forms and, at places, incorporated new trends in their attempts to revive moribund literary drama. There was a constant urge for drama which, failing to obtain due recognition on the stage, helped to evolve new forms like closet-plays and various types of dramatic poetry. So, instead of meriting summary condemnation or fragmentary praise, Victorian verse-dramatists deserve due appreciation of their dramatic efforts.

Browning's debut in poetic drama heralds the ceaseless efforts of Victorian poets to revive poetic drama. His intention was to tone up drama and to renovate its concept by rebelling against existing practice. Despite his incessant efforts and the sincere cooperation of Macready, Browning was unsuccessful in contributing theatrical form to drama; the literary power of his plays overshadows stage-craft. He introduced fresh inwardess in drama and strove to shift the venue of his characters' action from the external plane to the inner workings of the mind. He, therefore, marks the advent of modern psychological drama. Since Shakespeare, no English poet has

1 See the original preface to *Bells and Pomegranates*, series 1, 1841, and his letter to Macready, dated December, 1840. (Letters, ed. Good, p. 5).
given evidence of such a remarkable grasp of human nature in drama and poetry as Browning. But the disappointment he experienced in the theatre forced him to give up the stage with the result that he could not acquire sufficient stagecraft as Yeats and Eliot did. Browning's technique continued to be traditional and remained isolated from the Victorian stage; his use of long 'asides', inadequate external background and his obscure phraseology were unwrastable in changed theatrical conditions. His dramas are chiefly closet-plays, Browning's experiments are embedded in his theory of poetry, and drama, distinctly perceptible in his works. Browning's ideal of drama was very much like Mrs. Browning's intended monodrama: "A sort of novel poem — a poem as completely modern as 'Geraldine's Courtship —— and so, meeting face to face without mask, the humanity of the age," Poems like Cordello, Parmenides, Andrea del Sarto, Finna Passe are illustrations of the poet's ideas of the essential nature of drama and poetry; these ideas can be established from his letters and other biographical evidences. Inspired by these conceptions, Browning showed his dexterity in the composition of his dramatic monologue which was rooted in the inner workings of the soul and which satisfied his dramatic and poetic urges. In an age where melodramas, farces and burlesques suffused the theatre, Browning bravely continued experiments towards a renovated drama. According to Browning, the artist's function is to

2- Cf., His letter to Miss Barrett. (Browning's Love-Letters, pp. 474-75).
3- Browning's Love-Letters— I, 52.
4- See Chapter II.
demonstrate—

"How the soul, empowers
The body to reveal its very mood
Of love and hate, pour forth its plentitude
Of passion."

(Virgil, Eclogues, VI, 1)

The mind is man, the nucleus of all his activities should preponderate over his actions. On account of the emphasis on the inner conflict of the dramatic personae, Browning's dramas may be regarded as the fore-runners of the problem plays of Ibsen, Pirandello, Shaw, Galsworthy and others.

Browning took the entire world within his fold and gave evidence of his interest in humanity in its manifold aspects. His characters, like those in his poetry, represent various shades of life without distinction between prince and peasant. His political plays represent a wide variety of statesmen, kings, generals, diplomats, leaders—spurious or genuine. His love-plays are crowded with complex lovers with their vices and virtues rather than ideal ones. Beneath this wide-spread panorama of life, lies the poet's altruism and sympathy for humanity. The downfall of Browning's protagonists provokes a tragic sense of waste. In Browning's tragedies, chance and accident play a minor role; they are the tragedies of erring individuals drifting towards their doom. Browning broke fresh ground in his latest love for heterogeneous humanity, in the probe of his characters' sub-conscious mind and in the tragic sense of waste.

Tennyson's contribution lies chiefly in reviving historical verse-plays as a reaction to realistic prose-play in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Tennyson's

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treatment of history was quite different from that of Shakespeare whose pattern the Poet-Laureate attempted to emulate. He could unfold with greater force the picturesque past of Britain with accurate details than the individuality of his dramatic personae. His patriotism is the predominant motif in the delineation of history and reveals the poet's favouritism for his country. Tennyson's plays testify to the poet's unique efforts to incorporate his political, religious and love notions with dramatic elements and mark the culmination of historical plays in the late nineteenth century. Tennyson's dramas abound in the richness of poetry, and other elusive contents, which are the main constituents of the poetic play and which differentiate them from contemporary problem plays dealing with society evils. Perhaps no Victorian dramatist possessed so much the gift of lyricism as Tennyson whose songs furnish what the Victorian audience craved - music and dance. Almost all these plays contain picturesque natural scenes with a unique blend of the dramatic with the pastoral and lyrical elements. Yet Tennyson's achievements in poetic drama were jeered on account of his inability to convert historical data to a pattern of unified impression and to evolve proper stagecraft by selecting requisite dramatic material from a mass of chronological events.

In Victorian verse-drama, the contributions of no two poets are so dissimilar as those of Browning and Tennyson; they mostly contrast as well as supplement each other in drama as in poetry. They represent the two phases of poetic in the first and the second halves of the nineteenth century. In the first half, Browning's experiments in continuity with those of the Romantics reveal the playwright's hard struggle
against cheap entertainments in the theatre. In the later half, Tennyson's plays were composed in reaction to the realism of the problem plays describing the repulsive and humdrum society of the Victorian age. In spite of the deficiency in stage-craft, their plays display much literary worth.

In structure, the plays of Browning and Tennyson unfold different facets of dramatic art. Browning is chiefly pre-occupied with the internal operations of human mind, revealing its innermost recesses with minutest details and furnishing minimum factual data to the plays. Browning remarks:

"We look at the object of art in the poetry: we differently. Here is an Idyll about a knight being untrue to his friend and yielding to the temptation of that friend's mistress after having engaged to assist him in his suit. I shall judge the conflict in the knight's soul, the proper subject to describe. Tennyson thinks that he should describe the castle and the effect of the moon on its towers and anything but the soul. The monotonous, however, you must expect if the new is to be a piece with the old."


Browning likewise regards it a fault in Enoch Arden that Enoch should reveal himself to his wife after death, and further on, in a longish comment describes how he would himself have written Enoch Arden. On the other hand, Tennyson's plays are filled through and through with external conflicts and even love shows outward struggle more than its spiritual crisis. An ideal plot in drama is essentially the superb amalgam of the two constituents and the

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unique correlation of the factual data to the evolution of
human soul; deficiency of any of these two ingredients
makes drama weak. Faithful and comprehensive portrayal
of life is the keynote of Browning's characterisation which
focuses light on every sort of person - good, bad and
complex with sympathy. Believing in artistic detachment,
Browning takes delight in presenting humanity without
taking sides. On the contrary, Tennyson's composition is
motivated by idealistic patriotism; his inherent didacti-
cism is responsible for broad division of his characters
into idealistic and villainous groups with the dramatist's
sympathy or antipathy clearly manifest. The Poet's con-
ceptions dominate his characterisation; they frequently
hampers the proper growth of his characters and his deli-
nection of humanity and control his dramatic art. In form,
Tennyson's plays are superior to those of Browning, em-
ploying, as they do, techniques of dance and music, popular
entertainments of the theatre. The plays of Tennyson con-
tain love episodes full of lyrics, pastoral scenes and
humour. Browning's plays are full of seriousness, con-
flits and tensions and are devoid of these relieving con-
tents. Browning's constant employment of soliloquies
containing the emotional outbursts of his dramatic personae
are incongruous with stage-representation; his terse and
obscure diction intermingled with parenthetical side-
meditations, is in sharp contrast with Tennyson's graphic,
lyrical and comprehensive phraseology.

Verse dramas composed between 1830 - 1850 can be
classified into two groups - theatrical plays and closet-
plays; the plays of Talfourd, Lytton, Knowles and others
7 - Cf., Tennyson's remark about Browning's style. "Browning",
form the first group while the dramas of Browning, Wells,
and Beddoes belong to the second category. The closest
plays of the second group were composed in continuation of
Romantic verse-drama especially that of Byron and Shelley.
At the instance of Macready, Browning pursued his efforts
to renovate verse-drama, but he failed in giving theatrical
form to his plays. Wells and Beddoes never aimed at com-
posing actable plays. Their plays are permeated through
and through with poetry which is at once their weakness
as well as strength. Action, the stable fare of the Vic-
torian theatre is constantly impeded by emotional utterances
and prodigal use of figurative speech which frequently
hamper the proper development of plot. Furthermore, these
dramas contain antique forms saturated with long 'asides'
wear-out vocabulary and at places, obscure phraseology and
betray the playwrights' total negligence of stage-craft.
Yet, some of these verse-dramas are much superior to
cheap popular plays in respect of literary excellence and
form inalienable parts of poets' works. Following new
trends, Lytton, Talfourd and Knowles, strove to make their
plays actable. Their plays resemble melodramas in which
action preponderates over emotion, in which the plot moves
in mechanical sympathy and the diction and rhythms are
obvious and explicit. A growth of interest in the past

he said, "never greatly cares about the glory of words or
beauty of form; he has told me that the world must take
as it finds him. As for his obscurity in his great
imaginative analyses, I believe it is a mistake to explain
poetry too much, people have really a pleasure in discover-
ing their own interpretations." Tennyson, a Memoir, p.657.

8- A Miscell. A History of English Drama. 1660 - 1900, Vol.IV,
p.102.
history of England encouraged writers like Tennyson and Swinburne to write plays on historical themes although neither of them succeeded in fully controlling massive facts of history for purposes of dramatic plot. While main incentive in Tennyson's historical plays was patriotism, that in Swinburne, fondness for Queen Mary of Scott's character. Further, Swinburne and Arnold ventured to explore the potentialities of the chorus for the rejuvenation of the verse-play; but their attempts, rigid and inflexible lacked stage-craft too. These experiments have been successfully followed by modern "experimentalists" who have utilized the Greek Chorus to evolve a new theatrical form.

Verse-drama in the Victorian age has been designated by critics as stale imitations of Elizabethan and Greek prototypes. Yet the merit of this drama consists in its rich poetry which is frequently underrated by the critics and which established the supremacy of the poetic drama over mediocre melodramas, farces, burlesques etc. Owing to their literary worth, some of the poetic plays are esteemed highly even today, while most of the cheap popular plays have fallen into oblivion. Poetic plays of the major poets of the epoch are inseparable part of their works. After all, poetry is the differentia of poetic drama, its indispensable constituent. There are an emotional appeal and elusiveness derived from poetry, song and music. These ingredients make verse-drama of the Victorian age superior to

the realistic plays that paint the evils of Victorian society
and never, above humdrum daily life. Verse-drama elevates
the playwright's imagination from realism and topical interests.
Like all arts, drama intrinsically aims at delighting and
inspiring the people with the delineation of human nature
rather than at reforming the society at a particular epoch;
verse-drama with its imaginative richness, fine poetry and
elusiveness, has a greater catholic interest. 10

Being closely allied to poetry, Victorian verse-drama
is correlated to major under-currents of the poetry of the
period. The theatrical debacle of poetic play resulted in
the birth of new forms — dramatic monologues, dramatic lyrics,
dramatic idylls and narrative and dramatic romances which
could satisfy both the dramatic and the lyrical urges of
poets as well as of readers. The plays of Browning, Tennyson
and Swinburne have affinity with their dramatic monologues
with their stress on introspective reminiscences and on the
uniformity of the situation and character. Likewise Hellenism
that pervades Arnold's and Swinburne's poetry influenced their
plays also. Consequently, a study of verse-drama helps us
in making a better assessment of the poetry of the age. It
would be unsound to think that in writing these plays, the
poets were frittering away their energies. In the foregoing
chapters, I have tried to show how the poems and the plays of

10- Cf., "I say that prose-drama is merely a slight by-product
of verse-drama. The human soul in intense emotion,
strives to express itself in verse. The tendency at any
rate of prose drama is to emphasize the ephemeral and
superficial; if we want to get at the permanent and uni-
versal, we tend to express in verse." T.S. Eliot, Chap ter;
"A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry" in Selected Essays, p.46.
Browning and Tennyson are correlated. Likewise, the poetry of Swinburne and Arnold can be thoroughly appraised in the context of their dramatic achievements. Swinburne's portrayal of Mary of Scot's character in his trilogy resembles that in his poems and the essay on her in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Almost all the verse-dramatists wrote poetry which has a considerable inter-relation with their plays.

The early nineteenth century rejected the rigidity of eighteenth century poetry and drama. The Romantics rebelled simultaneously against eighteenth century classical tragedies and cheap contemporary plays with a keen desire to renovate drama; however, their compositions fell flat before unpolished audiences and rough actor-managers. A sympathetic response from the contemporary theatre would have encouraged these poets to pursue their experiments. In the Victorian era, owing to the complete split between the stage and the literary drama, the poets became inclined more and more to produce the new genre - closet plays by confining their dramatic efforts to satisfy the urge of the sensitive reader rather than the vulgar audience. A few who entered the theatre to attain popularity, soon retraced their steps while others like Swinburne and Arnold never thought of the stage-production when they composed their plays. Barring Tennyson, only these playwrights who could stoop down to the low level of the public taste, succeeded in the theatre while the resurgent dramatic impulse of major poets discovered its outlet in the composition of closet plays and diverse sorts of dramatic poems. Their plays chiefly political and satirical, had considerable dramatic contents. Their erudite and traditional phraseology, sounding artificial on the stage
could, however, satisfy the readers who shunned the commercial theatre. Some of the plays, cold-shouldered by unpolished spectators, actors and managers, were acclaimed by the scholars, in their rooms. Joseph and His Brethren, an untheatrical play fallen into oblivion was resuscitated by an admirable tribute of Swinburne and Rossetti to its author. 11 Beddoes' The Bride's Tragedy and Death's JestBook were widely applauded by the critics who hailed the poet as `a scion worthy of the stock from which Shakespeare and Marlowe sprung." 12 Browning's Pippa Passes, Columbus's Birthday and Luria composed without the intention of staging and published in Bells and Pomegranates (1847) were widely read and appreciated. Swinburne's Atalanta, Caterina and Bothwell an unactable play of 15000 lines were warmly welcomed by the erudite public. 13

Hence Victorian verse-drama should be assessed in the context of problems faced by verse-dramatists. Scholarly refinement stood against the theatrical taste and both seemed incompatible with each other. 14 The only course to delight the Victorian audience was to sacrifice the literary ideal. There is little justification in the assertion of those critics who state that the Victorian poets had no desire to reform the stage; the detectable theatrical conditions chilled that ambition and impelled them to retrace their steps and to compose poetic closet-plays. Furthermore, the persons hailing

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11- See the Introduction to Joseph and His Brethren, (The World's Classics).

12- Darley's remark in the London Magazine quoted in the Introduction to the Plays and the Poems of Thomas Lovell Beddoes by E.W. Burner, p.XIX. See also John Forster's remark at the same place.


these experiments, were not common spectators but learned scholars. For a proper appraisal of Victorian poetic drama, we should consider it along with the non-dramatic poetry of the period. Being designed mainly for the theatre of the mind and displaying a considerable literary flavour in its composition, it resembles the dramatic poetry of various types; its scholarly profundity establishes its superiority over other cheap plays both in verse and prose. It is not an isolated phenomenon, but it is imbued with the major under-currents of Victorian literature—the psychological delimation of contemporary fiction, idealism of Victorian prose and Hellenism and Pre-Raphaeliticism of Victorian poetry. Despite the lack of stagecraft, verse-drama in the Victorian age deserves a distinct niche in the edifice of Victorian literature.15

An investigation into the nineteenth century drama especially that in the Victorian age leads to the proper estimate of the renovation in the modern poetic drama. As a matter of fact, the experiments for the revival started in the early nineteenth century with the efforts of the Romantics and a continuity can be traced in such innovations of the nineteenth century and those of modern times. Despite their theatrical collapse, the Romantics' attempts reveal an inherent desire to rejuvenate poetic play. With the deterioration of the stage in the Victorian age, the leading poets almost bade good-bye to it. But the poets' originality

15— Cf. Mrs. Browning's exhortation to her husband, "A great dramatic power may develop itself otherwise than in the formal drama; and I have been guilty of wishing... that you would give the public a poem unassociated directly or indirectly with the stage, for a trial on the popular heart." *Ibid.*, p. 9
was reflected in the composition of the literary closet plays. A few plays destitute of stagecraft suggested certain reforms pursued successfully by the modern playwrights. Browning's attempts in continuity of those of Byron, are the precursors of the modern psychological drama both in prose and verse. Swinburne and Arnold like Milton hinted at experiments in the chorus which were perfected by the modern 'experimentalists'. Tennyson's lyricism suggested to Yeats, Stephen Phillips and Bottomley, the potentialities of song, music and dance for the revival of the poetic play. With advancement in the theatre and audience, modern poets consummated these reforms and made them actable. In order to apprise innovations in the modern verse-drama, it is indispensably to study them in the context of those of the Victorians who hinted at certain reforms to the moderns.

The closet drama in verse, a characteristic of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century became for the Victorian poets a medium of amusement, of experience, and of reform and of revolution. Due credit, however, must be given to the poets for having turned to dramas which became for them a "status-symbol" or an unconscious attempt to realize the object of their imagination with greater clarity and vividness. The poets endeavoured to discover the complex and many-sided literary form of drama in only a few of its facées - philosophy and didacticism, character and psychology, subjectivity and passion, poetry and artificial rhetoric or more mechanical imitation of old models. But on the other hand, even the most poetical and unactable of these dramas have a sound dramatic core. Their merits are generally isolated. In one play, simplicity and realism of language, in another a commendable interest in the depths of Psychology
and character and in the third, the existence of lyrical excellence are largely unaccompanied by other dramatic qualities and are partially neutralized by a hatred for the stage and a desire to produce models for emulation. In most of these plays, the 'literary' and the 'theatrical' merely co-exist without always becoming organically one. Though, the kind, quality and degree of these elements differ from play to play and author to author, yet these dramas are almost throughout charming poetry, often thrilling drama and sometimes, even effective theatre. The spirit of the age had already chilled the poet's practical approach to drama, giving them a disgust, a dismay, a despondency and even a discouragement. The conjunction of treatment received by them with their own imperfect approach to drama furnished their dramatic work with its characteristic features and doomed the age to a bifurcated dramatic achievement—unliterary theatre and literary closet-drama.

The Victorian poetic play is a conspicuous link in the chain of dramatic tradition which connects Shakespeare with Yeats and Eliot. With its purposefulness, its emphasis on psychological analysis and lyricism, its stress on reform and classical simplicity both in its structure and style, its comparative disregard of the stage and its unconscious preferences for modern techniques and developments, this drama emulates Elizabethan excellence as well as fore-
of a study of Victorian literature as also of the works and personalities of their authors, whose most intimate dreams they, sometimes, enshrine. Above all, the verse-drama of the Victorian era was a remarkable challenge with its failures and achievements. It was a brave defiance of the contemporary theatre which haunted managers and actors of vision. It was a momentous challenge, almost the first of its kind, to established dramatic theory itself— the revolt of the higher literary values in drama against the lower and the vulgar. Finally, it is a continuous challenge to future ages including our own. There is no reason why we cannot meet this challenge with our universality of taste, our cultured and intellectual audiences, our experimental stage and small theatres, our cinema with its close-ups and its denial of the impossible, our radio with its emphasis on the spoken word and our ballet with its power of creating a sense of illusion.
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This Bibliography contains two parts. The first part gives a list of dramatic and poetic works and also of the biographical and critical studies of the dramatists concerned. On these books, this study of the verse-drama is primarily based. The second part contains literary histories (chiefly dramatic), critical studies of the period involved and other reference material. They have mainly provided me auxiliary reading on the subject.

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An abstract of the Ph.D. thesis entitled, "Victorian Verse-drama with special reference to the plays of Browning and Tennyson" by V. Sharma.

The thesis aims at estimating the worth of the verse-dramas of Browning and Tennyson in particular and of other Victorians in general from the literary as well as theatrical point of view. It evaluates the Victorian poetic plays - their problems, their relation to contemporary literature and stage conditions and their contribution to the evolution of the poetic drama. In order to assess the literary merit of the plays apart from their theatrical values, the dissertation tries to discover the similarities and contrasts among the poetic and dramatic works of these authors. It takes into consideration the poetical achievements of the poets, the chief characteristics of the age and the individual worth of the plays wherever necessary. By exploring these inter-relations, the thesis attempts to present a better appreciation of the plays and the poems of Browning and Tennyson and other Victorian poets. Thus, the thesis is an effort to fill up some lacunae that still remain in the history of Victorian verse-drama.

A chronological study of the verse-dramas, this thesis presents a detailed and careful analysis of all the verse-plays of Browning and Tennyson and some plays of such well-known playwrights as Arnold, Swinburne, Beddoes and of less known dramatists such as Wells, Talfourd and Horne. The thesis tries to cover almost every aspect of the poetic plays of Browning and Tennyson and other Victorians - construction, characters, theme, action.
use of songs, soliloquies and prose etc. Wherever necessary an effort has been made to explore correlation of certain features of these verse-dramas to the comparable features of the non-dramatic verse of these poets, Elizabethan drama and recent poetic drama. The emphasis in the thesis all through has been on the broad tendencies in the plays rather than on individual plays.

The contents of the thesis fall into the following chapters.

**Introduction.** This refers briefly to the various charges levelled against Victorian verse-drama. I have pointed out the issues that still remain to be studied even after the works of several critics who have worked on this area. I have discussed my approach and the scheme followed in this thesis.

**Chapter I** discusses the Victorian theatrical and dramatic problems which the verse-dramatists had to face. It also describes the various types of trends in poetic and prose dramas and their interrelations with themselves and with the contemporary stage.

**Chapter II** deals with the main tendencies in the plot-construction of Browning's poetical and love plays - the single themes, the emphasis on inner conflict, the victory of good motives in the struggle of antagonistic emotions, traces of sentimentalism and domesticities, observance of the unities etc. Browning's dramas paved the way for the modern psychological drama.
Chapter III: Browning's various types of characters and the devices used in characterisation in Browning's plays. The political plays contain the three categories—the tragic heroes, their foils and the intrigues or contrivers. In the love plays, too, the main characters fall into three groups—the heroines, their true lovers and the obstructionists. Pippa Passes contains a different method of characterisation.

Chapter IV: Browning describes the nature of various forms employed in Browning's plays—action, dialogue, diction, use of soliloquies and prose etc. It also shows how far his dramas resemble his dramatic monologues.

Chapter V: Browning deals with the interrelations among Browning's dramatic and poetic works. It also argues that Browning's dramas form an integral part of his total literary contribution and that they have led to the growth of modern drama.

Chapter VI: Tennyson describes the various devices used by Tennyson in the plots of his historical and love plays. How far are his devices different from those of Browning?

Chapter VII: Tennyson shows Tennyson's delineation of various types of characters—villains, noble characters, vicious women, virtuous ladies etc. How far do these characters show the dramatist's art of characterisation and embody the poet's conceptions?
Chapter VIII: Tennyson examines contemporary themes of politics, religion, and love as reflected in the plays of Tennyson. It also institutes a brief comparison between the historical plays of Shakespeare and those of Tennyson.

Chapter IX: Tennyson deals with techniques in Tennyson's plays, such as action, dialogues, diction, use of songs, soliloquies, and prose etc. What is the relation between his dramas and monologues?

Chapter X: Tennyson traces briefly the resemblances between the poetical and dramatic works of Tennyson. It also shows how far the dramas contributed to the full growth of the poet's genius and what place they occupy in his works.

Chapter XI: makes a broad survey of some other verse plays of Victorian era. The dramas of Wells, Reddooe, Talfourd, Lytton and Horne appear in the first half of the nineteenth century, while those of Arnold and Swinburne were composed in the late nineteenth century.

Chapter XII: embodies my reflections on Victorian verse-drama, its place in Victorian literature and in the history of drama and its relation to modern drama.

Bibliography is divided into two parts. The first part gives a list of the plays of individual authors and important critical works. The second part contains a list of those books on which my relevant reading on the subject has been based.
The thesis claims to offer the following original facts and ideas:

1. It presents as no existing critical study does, a thorough analysis of Browning's and Tennyson's plays from all possible points of view: plot, characters, themes, action, dialogues, diction, use of songs, soliloquies and prose.

2. It examines, as no existing critical study does, inter-relations among the poetical and dramatic works of Browning and Tennyson and assesses the lasting place of the plays in the total literary achievement of these poets.

3. It contains a chronological survey of certain Victorian verse-plays which have been long out of print and which are not available in India.

4. It appraises the merit of Victorian verse-drama and its lasting place in Victorian literature and in English drama.

5. It considers how far the Victorian verse-drama follows traditional drama and how far it marks a transition leading to modern drama.

The main sources of the study of the subject can be classified as follows:

(a) PLAYS IN THE ORIGINAL - I have studied the verse plays of Browning, Tennyson in Tennyson, Poetical Works and Beyle and the Poetical Works of Robert Browning, complete from 1853-1869 in the Oxford Editions of Standard Authors. The Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1840-1864 with an Introduction by Sir A.T. Quiller-Couch (London, 1913).

(b) POEMS - As most of the verse-dramatists were primarily the poets, their poems are the other sources of materials for the subject and they resemble the dramas in different ways. I have particularly tried to discover resemblances between the dramas of Tennyson and Browning and their poems and to deduce the former's poetic worth apart from their theatrical values.

(c) BIOGRAPHIES, REFERENCES, LETTERS ETC. - They also furnish materials relevant to the subject. The authors' views on
drama and sources and circumstances under which the plays were written lead to the proper understanding of their dramas and can be suitably correlated to them. Browning's letters (6 Vols.) and Prefaces to the dramas give his conception of drama. A Browning Handbook, by W.C. De Vane and Browning Cyclopaedia by E. Berdoes provide excellent clues regarding Browning's plays. A Memoir by Hallam Tennyson, the noted biography on Tennyson includes his various views, circumstances and materials to appreciate his plays. Arnold's Prefaces to his plays in The Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1840-1864 contain the author's views on drama. Swinburne's letters and his excellent biography by E. Gosse in the Bonchurch edition (Vol. XIX) assist our understanding of the plays. I have tried to correlate all this relevant matter to the dramas of these poets in order to judge their proper urge and artistic achievement.

(a) HISTORIES AND SURVEYS - For understanding the contemporary theatrical and dramatic conditions, I have mainly depended on A. Nicoll's A History of English Drama (1660-1900) Vol. IV and Vol. V, The Victorian Theatre, A Survey, by George Rowell and Early Victorian Drama (1830-70) by E. Reynolds.