It is not known whether Coleridge turned to the writing of drama with the intention of bringing about any dramatic reform, or revolution as some of the Romantics, like Lord Byron, Joanna Baillie, and John Keats wanted to do. It may be believed that Coleridge had no definite dramatic aim and programme to follow in his dramatic exercises. Like Wordsworth and Scott, and many other minor poets of the Romantic era, Coleridge seems to have had a sort of vague ambition for being a dramatist. George Watson goes to the extent of saying, that Coleridge, like other Romantics went to the composition of drama chiefly from financial consideration. As far as we know, he was not much of a play-goer; his connection with the living theatre was limited, and there is doubt, if he really had that genuine interest and urge that always make a practical dramatist. Coleridge had much of a theoretician in him; he had an inborn interest in the abstract side of a thing, and it is, perhaps, this general attitude and inclination of his mind that stood, to a great 

1Watson, George, Coleridge The Poet, 1966, p.54. Watson's comment, though not justified in respect of Byron, Shelley, and Keats, may have some truth as far as Coleridge is concerned.
extent, on his way to learning the practical knowledge of the stage. Despite his stupendous talent and high degree of general intellect, Coleridge could not make much impression as a playwright; but how strange it is, that the same Coleridge displayed his superb talent as a dramatic critic! The reason is, perhaps, that in the latter field his theoretical bent of mind found a natural scope to show his talent and intellectual sensibility.

Coleridge, however, tried his hand at play-writing, and employed himself in a task in which his general bent of mind obviously could not help him. The Fall of Robespierre (1794), which is the maiden attempt of Coleridge was composed in collaboration with Robert Southey, when the poet was only twenty-one. It is an historical tragedy in three acts, of which the first act was written by Coleridge, and the last two acts were written by Southey. Though the title-page and the letter of dedication do not show the evidence of joint authorship, yet Coleridge's letter to Southey contains the hint.² This drama treats of history of France in the Reign of Terror following the French Revolution; and the authors seem to have tried, through this attempt, to write a drama with Shakespeare's Julius Caesar in mind.

There are apparently some similarities between Robespierre and Julius Caesar, especially, in regard to the plot and the speeches. What Caesar is to Brutus and his comrades, Robespierre is to Tallien and his followers. The

²Coleridge's Letters, I. (To Southey, dt. Sept. 19, 1794)
fall of Robespierre is, therefore, an imperative necessity for the interest of the country, and Tallien, like Brutus stands as his country's deliverer.

Tallien. — ............... I invoke thy shade,
   Immortal Brutus! I too wear a dagger;
   And if the representatives of France,
   Through fear or favour, should delay the sword
   Of justice, Tallien emulates thy virtues;
   Tallien, like Brutus, lifts the avenging arm;
   Tallien shall save his country.

(II. 272-78.)

This impassioned speech of Tallien, the leader of the conspirators wins public support and applause, and Robespierre with his close associates is taken prisoner and sent to guillotine. St. Just harrangues the mob like Antony and wins them for a time in the interest of Robespierre, but ultimately fails to realize his end.

The plot of Robespierre is very simple: The conspiracy of a number of members of the Convention succeeds in effecting the fall of the tyranny and despotism of Robespierre with his and his followers' death by guillotine. But the dramatists seem to have laboured hard to re-create a Caesar situation in the plot, and in doing so, they have been guided more by Shakespeare than by their own artistic imagination. But they failed to reach the depth of that tragic conception from which Shakespeare has been able to create the
tragic world of *Julius Caesar*. In *Robespierre* there is little conflict, and little action. The fall of the tyrant which might constitute a very fruitful dramatic action has not been either shown or utilized for dramatic purposes. This lack of physical action is a common defect noticed in the dramas of the Romantics in general. The dialogue of *The Fall of Robespierre* has more of poetic than dramatic qualities. The poetic fancy at every step interrupts the dramatists aim and intention. The blank-verse style is adopted, and the speeches are loaded with fine poetic imagery and sustained with genuine poetic fancy. For examples -

And love and friendship on his coward heart
Shine like the powerless sun on polar ice;

(I. 30-1.)

or,

Music, my love? O breathe again that air!
Soft nurse of pain, it soothes the weary soul
Of care, sweet as the whispered breeze of evening
That plays around the sick man's throbbing temples.

(I. 209-12.)

Coleridge, it is clear, has laid all his emphasis on the verbal part of this work, and it was a part of his sole aim;\(^3\) but the other part of his aim namely, "to develop the

characters of the chief actors on a vast stage of horrors. The characterization of Robespierre is very poor. The characters have failed to develop through action and speech, and remained mostly undefined.

In his dedicatory letter to H. Martin, Coleridge calls The Fall of Robespierre a "Dramatic Poem," and this is indicative of how this drama appears to the poet himself; Coleridge, it seems, was aware of the play's poetic character and dramatic demerits. As regards the plot, Coleridge says, that "intricacy of plot could not have been attempted without a gross violation of recent facts," but one is likely to think, that as an excuse, it is lame. He, it appears, was unwilling to deviate from the historical facts, and if it was actually a fact, then we must say, that Coleridge was not right. For nobody expects historicity and historian's fidelity to facts of a dramatist who may enjoy unlimited liberty even in dealing with historical material. The only thing he is expected to work for is the dramatic effect; and he must look for the way how best he can achieve it. The Fall of Robespierre fails to create proper tragic atmosphere and the grave beauty of a tragedy, and is not dramatically interesting.'

But Coleridge's choice of the theme shows his interest in and awareness of the political conditions then prevailing in France and his subjective reaction to it. The

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
fall of the tyrant "whose great bad actions have cast a disastrous lustre on his name" was, no doubt, interesting to young Coleridge, who, like Wordsworth, had once hailed the Revolution in France, but stood disillusioned later, when the original aim behind it was found to have been painfully frustrated with the setting in of the Reign of Terror. But this disillusionment could not put Coleridge into a state of depression, as it precipitated a deep moral crisis for Wordsworth at a time when he wrote his Margaret, The Borderers, Guilt and Sorrow, and the like. The Fall of Robespierre is certainly not a pessimist's work, and essentially so unlike The Borderers. A firm belief in the ultimate victory of the spirit of liberty manifests itself through this tragedy of Coleridge - a belief, that France shall rise and

She shall wield

The thunder-bolt of vengeance - she shall blast

The despot's pride, and liberate the world!

(III.211-13)

is born of an optimistic mind; it shows how the happenings in France affected the two young brother poets - Wordsworth and Coleridge so differently. Imperfect though it is as a drama, The Fall of Robespierre may still be considered an interesting record of its authors' mind and thought in relation to the affairs in the contemporary France.

Coleridge's next attempt at drama is Osorio (1797), a tragedy in five acts, written all by himself at the request
of R.B. Sheridan, and rejected by the Drury Lane on the ground of its obscurity. Osorio is a psychological study of guilt and remorse.

Osorio planned to have his elder brother, Albert, murdered in order to win Albert's mistress, Maria - an orphan brought up by his father, Velez. When Albert was on the sea, Osorio set an assassin, Ferdinand, to murder him. But Ferdinand's mind changed on the eve of murder; he could not execute the task entrusted to him. This happened before the action of Osorio begins three years after.

Albert returns but remains disguised. Osorio, thinking that his mission is successful, now wants to marry Maria on the plea, that Albert is dead by some accident, and there is no hope of his return. Maria is not convinced; she repulses Osorio's advances. She resolves to remain faithful her lover and wait for him. Osorio now plans to present some proofs of Albert's death, and for this purpose he meets Ferdinand and asks again for his help. But Ferdinand refuses to help; he tells Osorio that a strange wizard who lives in a nearby jungle may be of some practical help. The wizard is Albert in disguise. When Osorio meets the wizard, the latter agrees to help him. Now before Velez and Osorio and Maria the wizard plays his tricks, but in doing so, he seeks to rouse remorse in Osorio, and places on the altar a picture (made by himself) of his attempted assassination. This rouses suspicion in Velez and Maria; Osorio also emotionally reacts to the wizard's performance, and his
reaction intensifies Maria's suspicion against him. His purpose is totally frustrated. But Osorio does not stop. He manages to put the wizard into the dungeon, and craftily kills Ferdinand for having exposed him (Osorio) through the wizard. He then attempts to poison the wizard to death in the dungeon. But Albert, throwing his disguise off, stands before Osorio, and offers to embrace him. At this, Osorio is ashamed and moved to remorse. This time Ferdinand's wife - Alhadra enters the dungeon with her followers to take revenge upon her husband's murderer. She asks her followers to bear Osorio off, lest an innocent lady, like Maria should witness the bloodshed. This is the outline of the plot of Osorio.

This drama of Coleridge has a lengthy plot, and "this long story, which yet is necessary to the complete understanding of the play, is not half told."6 Despite its length, the action and motivation of the characters are not clearly presented; the vagueness and obscurity are all about the play, and the poet himself is struck by this defect. Structurally this play of Coleridge is very loose and weak. It has unity of time and place, so to say, but no unity of action. Towards the end, our attention is divided between the motives and actions of Osorio and those of Alhadra who virtually presides over the affairs in the closing

6Preface to the MS. of Osorio. (Vide Coleridge's Works, II. p. 1114.)
scenes of the play. She rises like a destiny to punish the wrong-doer, and becomes instrumental to the execution of poetic justice intended by the dramatist. The play's ingredients are Shakespearean culled from many of his plays; but it shows close affinity with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Osorio, the villain-hero has much of Claudius in him.

Wizard's attempt at rousing remorse in Osorio and confirming his villainy (III.i.) reminds us of Hamlet spying upon Claudius to observe the reactions created by *The Murder of Gonzago*. The basic motive-force driving Osorio to plot against his brother's life has strong similarity with that of Claudius. Besides, one may also find something of *Measure for Measure* in the plot of Osorio, but it is very indistinct. The scene between Maria and her foster-mother (IV) has little relevance to the central theme of the play, and is boring to the readers. Moreover, the presence of Lord Velez at the time when Albert in the guise of the wizard is seized (III) is meaningless; for though Francesco addresses Lord Velez to give him the key to the dungeon, Velez seems to have nothing to say, or to do; he remains absolutely silent. This passivity of Velez is not natural when he himself has already smelt something foul and mysterious about the matter when the wizard has fixed his look on Osorio and addressed his speeches from the altar:

Velez. ............. I have not yet discovered,
At least, not wholly, what his speeches meant.
Pride and hypocrisy, guilt and cunning -
Then when he fix'd his obstinate eye on you,
And you pretended to look strange and tremble.

*(III. 172-76.)*
And again,

Velez. ............................

I have lived too long in the world.
His speech about the corse and stabs and murderers,
Had reference to the assassins in the picture:
That I made out.

(III. 180-83.)

These speeches of Lord Velez to Osorio indicate that the former has sensed something mysterious about the whole thing, and as against this, the passivity of Velez in the scene is unnatural, and therefore, not convincing. In a word, Coleridge has failed to build a strong plot for Osorio, and his imperfect construction has not only made the play uninteresting, but it also provokes readers' questionings about the action and behaviour of the characters. It is primarily for the same reason, that there is obscurity about the action and motivation of the characters. The story of Osorio has very little interest to the readers; it only displays Coleridge's psychological curiosity about a theme of guilt and remorse. George Watson is quite correct when he remarks - "Its plot which is sent in sixteenth-century Spain, offers no more than the interest of a story of senseless injury which, like the Ancient Mariner's, is followed by repentance." 7

As in plot-construction, so also in characterization Coleridge's failure is evident. The main character on which

7Watson, George, op. cit. p.55.
the poet has concentrated his attention is Osorio. Osorio is the villain-hero. Other characters of the play seem to have their existence only to help the development of Osorio's character through action and speech. But Osorio, after all, has little development. It is only in the closing scene in the dungeon (Act V), that he shows himself remorseful and agonized.

Osorio (fiercely recollecting himself). Let the eternal Justice Prepare my punishment in the obscure world.

I will not bear to live - to live! O agony!

(V. 263-65.)

Except this, there is no psychological conflict in this character. Coleridge himself is also aware of his failure in creating Osorio's character according to his original conception. "Worse than all," says Coleridge, "the growth of Osorio's character is nowhere explained - and yet I had most clear and psychologically accurate ideas of the whole of it. .......... In short the thing is but an embryo......

It is quite obvious now, that Coleridge's dramatic skill was not equal to the task he had on hand when he composed Osorio; the artist in him was too weak to render matching expression to his abstract thought as far as the character of Osorio is concerned. The character of Maria is the centre of dramatic conflict and also of action. It is

8Preface to the MS. of Osorio. (Vide Coleridge's Works, II. p. 1114.)
for Maria, that Osorio plots against his brother's life, brings the wizard (Albert in disguise) to prove Albert's death, kills Ferdinand when his plan fails and wizard's demonstration bears opposite result, seeks to kill the wizard in the dungeon and is ultimately revenged by Alhadra. Maria's love is the actual centre of interest to Osorio. Maria stands as a symbol of purity and constancy of love, and resembles, in so far as her virtues are concerned, Shakespeare's Imogen. The character of Alhadra is interesting and full of vigour and vitality. She offers a sharp contrast to Maria who is passive. Alhadra plays the part of Osorio's destiny. Through the agency of this character Coleridge seems to have shown the decree of Poetic Justice worked out in the last act of the play. The character of Albert has no more interest as a man than as one seeking to effect the change of heart of the evil through the Christian virtue of penitence.

Albert. ............................

    I pray'd for the punishment that cleanses hearts,
    (I. 328.)

And it is this "punishment that cleanses hearts," that Albert is out to design for Osorio; and his pursuit of actions to this effect has turned him more into a personified principle than as a man with heat and passion of blood. In a word, the characters of Osorio are, on the whole, hazy and half-drawn, and Coleridge has failed to create living characters with distinct mark of individuality, emitting spark of life.
Coleridge calls Osorio a tragedy, but one will find very little of those qualities in it, which are present in a tragedy. Neither Albert, nor Osorio is the hero worth the name. When the drama ends, Albert wins a spiritual victory; he unites with his beloved, Maria as well. Coleridge, therefore, seems to have created Osorio as the hero of his tragedy. But Osorio's final defeat and implied death threatened by Alhadra cannot move us to pity and sympathy; rather we think, that Osorio has got just what he deserves. A tragic hero, especially in the Aristotelean conception, does not incite such feeling in the readers.

Coleridge himself realized the many artistic defects of Osorio. In a letter to William Lisle Bowles, he writes on October 16, 1797 -

"In truth, I have fagged so long at the work, & see so many imperfections in the original & main plot, that I feel an indescribable disgust, a sickness of the very heart, at the mention of the Tragedy. If there be anything with which I am at all satisfied, it's - the style."\(^9\)

By "the style" Coleridge obviously means the verbal part in which he has used the blank verse and, on occasions, fine poetic imagery. Coleridge is probably right; the verbal part of Osorio has enough of literary merit and poetic beauty, but as a drama, the play is a hopeless failure. Let us give

\(^9\)Coleridge's Letters, I.
a few examples of its poetic quality.

Maria. ........................

My Albert's sire! if this be wretchedness
That eats away the life, what were it, think you,
If in a most assur'd reality
He should return, and see a brother's infant
Smile at him from my arms?

(II. 46-50.)

or,

Maria. There are woes
Ill-barter'd for the garishness of joy!

(I. 18-9.)

or,

Osorio. ........................

Forgive me, Albert! - Curse me with forgiveness!

(V. 252.)

In regard to "the style," Osorio shows an improvement of what is found in Robespierre. There is more clarity in expression, more concrete imagery, more thoughtful statement enriched by the maturer experiences of life, and more lucidity of the verse. But with all these, "the style" can hardly be thought dramatically perfect.

The failure of Osorio as a drama led Coleridge to revise it sixteen years after, in 1813 with the help of the
then manager of Drury Lane. The result of this revision is *Remorse* - a play of better performance, on the whole. The story of *Remorse* is the same as that of *Ossorio*, but its structure is stronger, actions and motives of the characters are clearer, and its characters are more defined and more well drawn. The poet has made some alterations and adjustments in the plot, the total result of which now goes to the credit of the dramatist. These alterations and adjustments consist mostly of re-naming the characters, re-arrangement of the scenes and actions with expansion and compression whenever necessary for the sake of spectacular actions and theatrical effect. In Act IV, scene ii, the entrance of the peasant delivering a letter to Lord Valdez, and in Act V, scene i, the stabbing of Ordonio by Alhadra and the death of the former - are obvious additions. Coloride now tries his best to remove vagueness and incongruities from the play, and show more spectacular actions on the stage. The ending of *Remorse* is more spectacular and more interesting than that of *Ossorio*. But despite these changes, one may find the dramatist still as tactless as before. The principal motive of Alvar is declared at the very outset (I.i); Alvar also declares his programme of action (III.i.) in regard to the revealing of Ordonio's secret guilt.

Alvar. The more behoves it I should arise within him

Remorse! that I should save him from himself.

(I.i.13-9.)

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10 Matson, George, op. cit., p. 55.
And again, 

Alvar. I swear to thee
I will uncover all concealed guilt.

(III.i. 33-4.)

This kind of declaration of purpose and programme of action is undramatic in the sense, that it limits the scope of dramatic suspense and surprise, and makes the rest of dramatic action a foregone conclusion; the curiosity of readers and audiences as to what follows next is marred, whereas, the aim of a dramatist should be to rouse playgoers' curiosity and maintain it up to the last.

Moreover, Alvar's attitude to his guilty brother has actually narrowed the scope of Ordonio's tragedy; Alvar seeks, all through, to "save him from himself"(I.i.19) by purifying his soul through the process of penitential tears and resolving his mental conflict into a reconcilement.

Alvar. .........................

Let me recall him to his nobler nature,
That he may wake as from dream of murder!
O let me reconcile him to himself,
Open the sacred source of penitent tears,
And be once more his beloved Alvar.

(V.i. 94-8.)

In this context we cannot expect Ordonio's action to be tragic at all. What is expected at length is a comic ending -
a reconciliation that we find in Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona. Accordingly, Remorse should have a comic ending. But Coleridge has called it a tragedy, and to justify it, he might have felt that the death of Ordonio was a necessity. Alhadra is an instrument to the poet to serve this purpose. But the question is - is this death alone sufficient to prove that Remorse is a tragedy? We wonder how a writer, like Coleridge who made a close study, especially of the dramas of Shakespeare, and displayed his critical talent through a series of lectures on Shakespearean dramas has been able to call Remorse a tragedy. Remorse may be regarded, neither as a comedy, nor as a tragedy. It may be argued, that Isidore's death (IV.i.) by Ordonio has created a condition in which Isidore's wife, Alhadra has sufficient cause to take revenge upon Ordonio, and as such, Ordonio's death is a natural result. But it may, as well, be said that Coleridge could have averted Ordonio's death by avoiding the death of Isidore; for as the plot stands, Isidore's death is not logically inevitable; rather, this is only necessary for the poet in order to prepare a background for Ordonio's death by Alhadra. Remorse, as a matter of fact, approaches more naturally a comic ending. Let us see how Alvar receives his guilty brother (V.i) -

Alvar. ........................

But chiefly, chiefly, brother,
My anguish for thy guilt! Ordonio - Brother!
Nay, nay, thou shalt embrace me.

(V.i. 201-03.)
and Ordonio says -

    My brother ! I will kneel to you, my brother ! (Kneeling)
    .
    Forgive me, Alvar! - Curse me with forgiveness!

(V.i. 213-14.)

When everything is moving towards a comic resolution, Alhadra appears on the scene to avenge her husband's death and stabs Ordonio to death. Remorse thus has not ended comically. But one may think, that this drama of Coleridge is more a comedy without comic ending. than a tragedy.

G. Wilson Knight calls Alvar the play's hero.11 But it is hard to accept Knight's views if the play is taken as a tragedy; and although Knight has not raised the question whether Remorse is a tragedy, or comedy, he seems to have made the remark just quoted taking the play's sub-title (A tragedy in Five Acts) without any question. Alvar may stand as a hero only when Remorse is accepted as a comedy, which is also not possible. Actually speaking, Remorse has no hero at all. Ordonio is the villain. Wilson Knight also seems to have regarded him as a villain, and has chosen Alvar as the hero. "He (Ordonio) is no simple Machiavellian (in the popular sense)," says he, "no Iago. Bosola is, perhaps, his nearest relative:"12 Hero, or no hero, this play of Coleridge is actually a melodrama - a type quite different from a pure tragedy, or a pure comedy.

11Knight, G. Wilson, The Starlit Dome, p. 156.
Besides, there are some other defects too in the plot. The continuance of Alvar's disguise until the dungeon-scene (V.i.) is not only unnecessary, but also highly illogical. An unknown reviewer of the play rightly says -

"But after this misapprehension is removed, the continuance of the disguise (of Alvar) is altogether inexplicable by any of the motives that influence ordinary humanity; and the exposure both of his own happiness and that of an innocent, inflicted, and beloved woman to the most imminent hazard for the romantic object of awakening remorse in the mind of his brother, may perhaps find some parallel in the extravagant and unnatural sentiment of a German theatre,..........."\(^1\)

Alvar's disguise unnecessarily complicates the whole thing, and creates some artistic problems, which Coleridge could not satisfactorily solve in *Remorse*.

The play bears most of the external features of a Gothic melodrama, and in writing it Coleridge seems to have pandered his artistic and critical considerations to the prevailing taste of the average theatre-goers. It is probably for the same reason, that Coleridge was able to achieve a

temporary success in getting the play staged in Drury Lane, where it ran for twenty nights.

The setting of Remorse is in medieval Spain; there are conscience-stricken brother - Ordonio, the concealed and complex relationships, the noble brother - Alvar, a noble maiden - Teresa symbolizing the purity and constancy of love, the dungeon, the Gothic castle, and the like, - all this reminds us of the Gothic melodramatic tradition. "Even some of the stage-fireworks," says George Rowell, "so popular at the time\textsuperscript{14} are also there in it. Let us take an example -

The incense on the altar takes fire suddenly, and an illuminated picture of Alvar's assassination is discovered, and having remained a few seconds is then hidden by ascending flames.

(III.i.)

Rowell also thinks, that Coleridge's surrender to the popular taste contributed to the play's success on the board of Drury Lane. "To its introduction of these fashionable elements," he says "the play probably owed its brief but undoubted success.\textsuperscript{15}

The meteoric success and the applause won by Remorse should not be considered sufficient evidence of Coleridge's positive achievement in and contribution to the field of

\textsuperscript{14}Rowell, George, The Victorian Theatre. 1967. p.34.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
drama. Lord Byron then connected with the management of the Drury Lane theatre wrote to Coleridge:

"We have had nothing to be mentioned in the same breath with 'Remorse' for very many years; and I should think that the reception of that play was sufficient to encourage the highest hopes of author and audience. It is to be hoped that you are proceeding in a career which could not but be successful."\(^{16}\)

The applause as this should be carefully examined. It not only refers to the merit of Remorse, but also to the dearth of good contemporary plays. Remorse was applauded only because the piece was found to possess relative merits as play. Joseph W. Donohue, Jr. looks at the play from a different angle and observes -

"We may nevertheless see in it one of the most ambitious attempts in English drama to give new life to time-worn theatrical traditions by infusing them with the spirit of a fundamental conviction of man's nature, both in its ideal and its regrettably real aspects."\(^{17}\)


\(^{17}\)Donohue, Joseph W., Jr., Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age, 1970. p. 300.
Donohue seems to have said what Lord Byron had suggested when he wrote about the play to Coleridge. But it is to be seen how far Coleridge was able to relate his psychological insight to the creation of his characters in it; in other words, how far this "ambitious" attempt has been given a dramatic shape. It is clear from the plot and characterization of Remorse, that the British drama of the early nineteenth century did not gain much from Coleridge. Remorse is still a work of mediocrity, which, if not worse, is certainly not a better play than The Cenci of Shelley, and Marino Faliero and Sardanapalus of Lord Byron.

Coleridge's psychological curiosity, as evident in Remorse should not make us blind to what may be called, the principal defect of the play. And it is his over-insistence on a single motive and single passion (which we notice in Joanna Baillie) that constitutes this glaring defect of Remorse. Boleslaw Taborski, commenting on the play, also observes -

"The play itself is not free from serious faults, which must be described as typically romantic: overinsistence on motive and single passion, unrelated to the rest of the elements composing human nature, at the expense of external action, which is often suspended in most inappropriate places, while the protagonist declaims his verse."\(^{18}\)

\(^{18}\)Taborski, op. cit. p.5.
And it may be thought, that, on the whole, Coleridge's psychological curiosity shown in Remorse has result far from satisfactory. But the play has other merits. It is stageworthy. Taborski thinks that Remorse is "the most theatrical drama written by a major romantic poet in Britain, with the exception of Byron." Taborski is right. Despite its artistic lapses the play is theatrically successful and can undoubtedly be included in the list of the theatrically successful plays of the Romantics. Remorse was performed not only in the Drury Lane in January, 1813, but also in Bristol in April in the same year.

The play also contains good poetry. It is rich in literary merits. A contemporary reviewer seems to have been struck more by the play's "merits in respect of poetical sentiment and expression" and maintains -

"we think it will always maintain a respectable station on the shelves of a dramatic library, long after it shall have ceased to figure on the boards of a theatre."

The comparative success of Remorse and Lord Byron's praise especially encouraged Coleridge to write more for the stage. In a letter dated October 17, 1815, Coleridge promised

\[1^9\text{Ibid.}\]
\[2^0\text{Ibid.}\]

\[2^1\text{Critical Review, 4th ser. III (April, 1813). Vide Romantic Bards, p. 138.}\]
to Byron that he would complete a drama before the third
week of December, in which he had "endeavoured to avoid the
faults and deficiencies, of the Remorse, by a better
sub-ordination of the characters, by avoiding a duplicity of
Interest, by a greater clearness of the Plot, and by a deeper
Pathos."\textsuperscript{22} Coleridge also writes in the same letter -

"Above all, I have laboured to render the Poem at
once tragic and dramatic."\textsuperscript{23} 

and the play which he completed is \textit{Zapolya} (1815) on a theme -
'A tyrant fallen, a patriotic Chief restored,' (Part II, Act IV.
316).

The plot of Zapolya is based on a story that relates
the rising of a usurping monarch and his ultimate fall.
Usurpation is a temporary phase in monarchy, which ultimately
gives in to rightful inheritance. In the Advertisement, it is
explicitly mentioned by Coleridge that the drama has been
written in imitation of Shakespeare's \textit{Winter's Tale}, but it
is not hard to find some resemblances of the play to
\textit{The Tempest}, \textit{Winter's Tale}, and \textit{Hamlet} as well. In \textit{Zapolya},
as in \textit{Hamlet} and \textit{The Tempest}, the younger brother of the
rightful king manages to usurp his brother's throne.

Before his death Andreas, King of Illyria, appointed
Raab Kluprili - a noble and patriotic Chiefstain, the queen
Zapolya, and his younger brother - Emerick the guardians of

\textsuperscript{22}PMLA, XLV (1930), pp. 1085-97.
\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
his infant son and the kingdom. But when the king is in his death-bed, Emerick manages to usurp the throne of Illyria. Zapolya with the royal infant on her arms escapes from the palace, especially for the safety of her son. Raab Kiuprili, who is under arrest also escapes from the prison with the help of one Chef Ragozzi - a military commander much favoured by the former. It is for the safety of the royal infant, that the queen entrusts her son to an old hunter - Bathory in the wood, where Kiuprili also joins her later. The royal infant thus grows in the house of Bathory who protects the child, and brings him up as his own son, and names him Bethlen Bathory. Thus the seed of the rightful royalty is preserved against the interest of the usurper. The queen and Kiuprili live in disguise in the wood with extreme hardship and agony.

Kiuprili's son - Casimir who once supported and helped Emerick's cause and became his right hand, but bore on his head his father's curse, is now annoyed with the usurping king, and revolts. Emerick employs an assassin - Pestalutz to kill Casimir; but Emerick's purpose is frustrated, and the assassin himself is killed. In the wood, Zapolya and her son (now Bethlen Bathory) meet when the latter is a youth of twenty, and so also meet Kiuprili and Casimir. Casimir now promises to his father to do justice to his father's will which is always bent upon uprooting the usurper's rule from Illyria. When Emerick appears in the wood following a hunt, Casimir comes forward saying -
Casimir. (Coming forward). Yes, thou ingrate Emerick!
'Tis Pestalutz! 'tis thy trusty murderer!
To quell thee more, see Raab Kiuprili's sword!

(Part II.IV.i.294-96)

They fight, and Emerick falls and dies. The usurper fallen, the rightful prince Andreas ascends his father's throne amidst the rejoicings of the Illyrians.

Zapolya is in two parts. The Part I, the prelude entitled 'The Usurper's Fortune' is in one scene only; the Part II, the sequel entitled 'The Usurper's Fate' consists of four Acts. The actions in Part I are separated by an interval of twenty years from those of the Part II. There is a good deal of difference between the two parts of the play; the scene in the first part is placed in front, or neighbourhood of the royal palace, but those of the second part (except the scene in Act III) lie in the mountains and savage woods; the dramatic actions in part one are more defined and less vague than those in the other. In a word, from dramatic point of view, part one is more important than the part two. In style also a marked difference is noticed between the two.

By writing this play Coleridge could not give us anything better than Remorse. It is, at any rate, certain that he could not work up to the aim, as expressed in his letter to Byron cited earlier in this chapter. What Coleridge aimed and endeavoured to write was a drama artistically more
perfect and dramatically more effective, than Remorse. In other words, Zapolya was to be a sustained work of dramatic art, but in reality, the ultimate result of his endeavour was disappointing, not only to the poet himself, but also to those who were looking forward to welcome it. And its defects as a drama probably led Coleridge to call it a "dramatic poem," and the Committee of Management of the Drury Lane Theatre to reject it for performance in March 1816.

The plot-construction in Zapolya is defective for a number of reasons. Coleridge has given no attention to the unity of time, place and action, and it is mostly for this reason that the play fails to create a totality of impression. In Zapolya the centre of interest is divided, and the dramatist's inability to make parts conform to an idea of the whole is all the more evident. In Part I Emerick is the centre of dramatic action and interest. It is he who is the central active force behind the silent but determined shaping of things in Illyria. The gravity of the situation is pin-pointed by Chef Ragozzi (Part I. 27-9.) -

All things here
Are full of motion: and yet all is silent:
And bad man's hopes infect the good with fears.

and we at once keep our curious eyes fixed on Emerick who is the only shaping force behind this deep ferment in the political

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sphere of Illyria. Our interest and curiosity are further heightened by Emerick's dreadful soliloquy:

The changeful planet, now in her decay,
Dips down at midnight, to be seen no more.
With her shall sink the enemies of Emerick;
Cursed by the last look of the waning moon:
And my bright destiny, with sharpened horns,
Shall greet me fearless in the new-born crescent.

(Part I. 427-32.)

In the Part II the centre of attention is shifted from Emerick to his adversaries — especially, Casimir. In this part, a force of change gathers strength through the union of formerly scattered powers to a single end — the fall of the usurper. It is this force of change that works its way through the actions of the Part II of Zapolva, and engages our attention. In other words, the preparation for bringing about the fall of Emerick is more interesting than Emerick himself. Emerick is no longer an active force — a dramatically interesting character, as he is in the first. Again, the time-gap of two decades separating the actions of the two parts weakens the total impression about the play.

In the last plays of Shakespeare too, the unity of time and place is ignored, but Shakespeare's superb dramatic power has saved his works from falling into parts. In Zapolva, the defects pointed out are glaring. Moreover, some lack of consistency is also noticed in the plot. For example, Casimir
seems to have married Sarolta twenty years back with the help and initiative of Emerick, and we have never been told that Emerick has any weakness for Sarolta's beauty. Twenty years later we find King Emerick mad after Casimir's wife:

Emerick. Has he (Casimir) not like an ingrate robbed my court Of Beauty's star, and kept my heart in darkness?

(Part II.III.i.277-78.)

Like a romantic lover, Emerick makes effusive utterances -

Emerick. ....................... It charms me,

And makes your beauty worth a king's embraces!

(Ibid, 293-94.)

or,

Emerick. Sarolta's love;

And Emerick's power lies prostrate at her feet.

(Ibid, 268-69.)

This romantic madness of the king comes to us as a sudden development, and there is no background against which this may look like natural development of his suppressed emotion toward Sarolta. It seems rather a deliberate attempt of the dramatist to create conflict of interest between the king and Casimir to the interest of the latter's union with the king's enemies. In building the plot of Zapolya, Coleridge has failed to pull the loose ends of the story together, and the result is looseness of construction, obscurity of action and motive and inconsistency in behaviour, especially in the Part II of the play.
In characterization also Coleridge has something to his credit. Of all the characters, Raab Kiuprili, Casimir and Emerick have shown a partial success of the dramatist's power of characterization. Raab Kiuprili is the real hero of Zapolya. G. Wilson Knight thinks that the hero of the play is the young Andreas. But the reading of the play does not give this impression. Wilson Knight seems to have been led to this view by the bravery of his hero. In the main dramatic action - the conflict between the rightful inheritance and the usurping monarchy, Andreas' part is insignificant; he returns to his royal heritage in Illyria not by himself, nor has he co-ordinated different forces to effect the fall of the usurper. In a word, Andreas is not the central figure in so far as the dramatic action of Zapolya is concerned. He is, no doubt, heroic but even then not the hero. Andreas' bravery and heritage, therefore, should not sentimentalize us into an attempt to claim for him the position of the play's hero. It is Raab Kiuprili, who is the central figure governing the dramatic actions of Zapolya. It is Kiuprili's sword that rises against Emerick in Part I; it is the same Kiuprili's sword that deals the death-blow to the usurper and wins in the end (II. Act IV). We must not forget the speech of Kiuprili to Chef Ragozzi -

I shall not misconceive the part thou playest,
Mine is an easier part - to brave the usurper.

(Part I. 123-24.)

Knight, G. Wilson, op. cit. p.164.
This is the only thing - "to brave the usurper," that remains behind every action of Kiuprili all through, and is the central motive that paves the way for triumph in the end.

Casimir. Hear, hear, my Father!

Thou should'st have witnessed thine own deed, O Father,
Wake from that envious swoon! The tyrant's fallen!
Thy sword hath conquered!

(Part II. IV. 301-04.)

Raab Kiuprili stands in the play like a huge, mighty and majestic Oak sheltering the queen - Zapolya in its shade.
Bethlen's speech further clarifies the point.

Bethlen. He looked as if he were some God disguised In an old warrior's venerable shape To guard and guide my mother.

(Part II. III. 83-5.)

The centrality of the character of Kiuprili is also in evidence when Andreas says to Kiuprili -

............... let my youth Climb round thee, as the vine around its elm:
Thou my support and I thy faithful fruitage.

(Part II. IV. 363-65.)

Raab Kiuprili is all along majestic, valiant and patriotic. Coleridge has displayed some skill in creating this character.

Kiuprili's son Casimir is a lively youth - brave and energetic, but susceptible to the allurement of love and power. Emerick is able to win his support with the allurement of
power as well as of the love of Sarolta, a "Beauty's star," and activises Casimir's youthful passion and energy to his personal interest. Casimir ultimately realizes his mistake in siding with the usurper, when the youthful passion is calmed and age's wisdom begins to dawn on his mind.

Casimir. ............................

I had detected ere I left the city
The tyrant's curst intent. Lewd, damned ingrate!
For him did I bring down a father's curse!

(Part II.III. 358-60.)

This recognition of Emerick's actual character makes Casimir rectify his former blunder by doing justice to his father's will; he holds his father's sword against Emerick and kills him.

Casimir is the best drawn character of Zapolya. Casimir's character develops through action and speech, and he proves finally that he is the worthy son of a worthy father.

The character of Emerick is a fine study of shrewd ambition and Claudian vice. He is a character having close affinities with Claudius of Hamlet, though his relation with Zapolya distinguishes him from his Shakespearean counterpart. Emerick's shrewdness and cunning are noticed in his capturing the throne of his brother. The precautionary measures adopted by him in regard to granting interviews with the ailing King Andreas, and to making his position secure by planning murders of the queen and her royal infant - all testify to his shrewd
political farsight.

Raab Kiuprili. .................

    I here impeach Lord Emerick of foul treason,
    And on strong grounds attain him with suspicion
    Of murder -
Emerick. Hence with the madman!

Raab Kiuprili. Your Queen's murder,
The royal orphan's murder:

(Part I, 416-19.)

Emerick is not only shrewd and cunning, he is also lewd and ungrateful. His profligacy is noticed in his attempt to seduce Casimir's wife - Sarolta (Part II, Act III) at night; and in his lustful approach to Sarolta is also noticed his ungratefulness to Casimir, as well as the moral depravity of his character, unbecoming of a king. In this respect too, Emerick faintly resembles Claudius. And as a dramatic character Emerick is quite an interesting one, and displays Coleridge's skill in characterization. On the whole, the characters of Zapolya are more developed and more defined than those of Coleridge's earlier plays. Zapolya is certainly a better play than Remorse, in so far as the characterization is concerned.

As in the last plays of Shakespeare, so also in Zapolya, nature plays an important role. It is under the shelter of nature, that the seed of rightful royalty is preserved and brought up. Andreas may be called a foster-son of Nature. His personality and noble mind have grown in close
Great Nature hath endowed thee
With her best gifts!

(Part II. I. 410-11.)

Besides, the main part of the dramatic actions in Part II takes place, not in the royal palace in Illyria, but against the background of mountains, forests, caves and caverns. The growth of Andreas from his helpless infancy to the self-protecting youth with all strength and virtues, and his ultimate recovery of his father's throne give the impression of something, like the regenerative force of Nature, working silently and reviving the glory and freshness of Spring from the dreariness of winter. G. Wilson Knight seems to have meant the same thing when he says: "There is sense of a great purpose, to which indeed this whole play's action is ancillary, working through human customs and systems, so that the rightful heir is God-ordained and God-guarded." Zapolya, it is true, always gives the idea of a great purpose of some mighty and majestic invisible power upholding the interest of what is true and just. Raab Kiuprili symbolizes this spirit in the play. He is more than a mere co-regent of Illyria, and a General of the army; he is actually a principle personified.

In Zapolya, a further development of Coleridge's style is evident. Here, the blank-verse is poetically more improved; the style more natural, lucid and close-packed; poetry more mature and the verse more resonant. The imagery reveals the fecundity of the poetic vision of a romanticist of great poetic genius. Let us take some examples -

A spring morning
With its wild gladsome minstrelsy of birds
And its bright jewelry of flowers and dew-drops
(Each orbed drop an orb of glory in it)
Would put them all in eclipse.

(Part II.I. 32-6.)

or,

'Twas as a vision blazoned on a cloud
By lightning, shaped into a passionate scheme
Of life and death!

(Ibid. 166-68.)

And again,

For though grateful on us,
And filled too with our sap, the deadly power
Of the parent poison-tress lurked in its fibres:

(Ibid. 283-85.)

There is no denying the fact, that the strength of Zapolya as a work of dramatic art lies in its verbal part, and also in its noble thoughts and ideas, enriched by a style of
matching magnificence. As a literary drama, Zapolya is
Coleridge's best work. But the play's poetic merit and
literary qualities do not necessarily make it a good play.
There is a glaring lack of spectacular action of dramatic
value. In the Part II of the play, this is more evident.
Sometimes, Coleridge has not utilized the opportunity offered
by the plot to display action in a way the audience would
have liked it most. As for example, the fall of Emerick is a
potential action to interest a theatrical audience, but the
poet has not been able to make it quite interesting. A
Macbeth-like fall would have been dramatically more satisfying.
Dialogue, sometimes, is dramatically weak; long poetic
utterances, sometimes in abstract terms, symbols and imagery
intensify, on the whole, the impression of a poem in dramatic
terms. But, after all, Zapolya can be staged by an
imaginative producer with the aid of scenic machinery and
proper lighting facilities available to-day, as in the time
of Coleridge. For in the early nineteenth-century London stage
these facilities though not so improved as to-day, were not
yet wanting. We quote from the Prologue composed by Charles
Lamb to Remorse, to illustrate the point.

The air-blest dastle, round whose wholesome crest,
The martlet, guest of summer, chose her nest -
The forest walks of Arden's fair domain;

27New Monthly Magazine, VIII (Jan.1818). Vide
Coleridge: The Critical Heritage, ed. J.R. de J. Jackson,
1970. p.420. The reviewer (unknown) is inclined to think;
that Zapolya may be "attractive upon the stage."
Where jaques fed his solitary vein -
No pencil's aid as yet had dared supply.
Seen only by the intellectual eye.
Those scenic helps, denied to Shakespeare's page,
Our Author owes to a more liberal age.
No pomp nor circumstance are wanting here;
'Tis for himself alone that he must fear. 28

(II. 40-9.)

The extract shows, that the age made substantial improvement in scenic machinery which was wanting in Shakespeare's time. But Zapolya was not performed, and our feeling is, that with all its faults it could have been performed. The main reason is, perhaps, that, Coleridge failed to adopt Zapolya to the taste of the then average London audience; in Remorse he came nearer to what the contemporary audience wanted. In Zapolya there are much less sentimentalism, very little crude physical and spectacular action, and very little melodramatic trick and Gothic machinery, and this scarcity of the most popular things in it might have prejudiced the London theatres against Zapolya, for which it remained unacted.

There remains to be mentioned a dramatic fragment -
The Triumph of Liberty (1800), originally planned by Coleridge to be an historical drama in five acts. This was begun, and the poet wrote only 373 lines and then left in this fragmentary form in the late autumn of 1800. Whereas in the

other four plays Coleridge used blank-verse style, in this dramatic fragment he employed both prose and blank-verse as the medium. It is not possible to predict what shape the play would have taken, had it been completed in the way as planned, nor is it possible to make any comment on its plot, character and action. But the dialogue, as it is evident from the fragment, shows no departure from what we have seen in the other plays. Even in the prose dialogue, the poetic fancy and declamatory expression can be traced.

Like most of the contemporary poets, Coleridge wrote not only dramas, but also poems of dramatic qualities. In these poems some dramatic elements can distinctly be traced. For example, we may mention the poems, like *Ancient Mariner*, and *Christabel*. These are the poems at once narrative and dramatic. The hidden dramatic impulse of the poet as traced in them, has been given a full-length expression in the plays discussed earlier. Some thematic correspondence between the poems and the plays can also be discovered. The remorse-theme of *Ancient Mariner* has been given a dramatic elaboration in *Osorio*, later revised as *Remorse*.

As dramatist Coleridge was not able to display any originality. His study of the works of the Elizabethans, especially, Shakespeare and the works of the Germans, especially Schiller, had a deep influence on him; but these two different influences - native and foreign, ultimately mingled into a single mixed character. This mixed character of the
influence under which Coleridge attempted dramatic composition, is noticed in his plays. This is something common almost to all the poet-dramatists of the period. Imitative impulse of an artist is an obstacle to the flowering of his individual originality, and Coleridge as a dramatist stands before us as a glaring example of this. "I tried to imitate his (Shakespeare's) manner in the Remorse," writes Coleridge, "and when I had done, I found I had been tracking Beaumont and Fletcher and Massinger instead." In Zapolya he tried to imitate Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale, and though the poet has left no explicit statement of his imitation in The Fall of Robespierre, it is not hard to find, that in Robespierre, Coleridge tried to imitate Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.

The nature of this imitation varies from play to play with certain things common everywhere. In Robespierre, the plot, character and phraseology tend to follow Shakespeare; in Osorio and Remorse, Coleridge seems to have worked under the influence of both Shakespeare and the German melodramatic tradition— the first being traced in style and manner, and also in plot and conception of character to some extent, while the second, in dramatic structure, setting and in theme itself. But Zapolya is more

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30 Coleridge's Works, II. p. 883.
a work of Shakespearean influence than of any other. Besides, Shakespearean blank-verse and poetry have been blindly imitated with imperfect success. Coleridge's verbal style reaches its climax in Zapolya, and it is the verbal beauty and the nobility of thought and the grandeur of ideas, that have made this work of the poet quite unique, not as a drama, but as literature. G. Wilson Knight is certainly right when he maintains, that "Zapolya, despite its failings, is unique."  

As a tragedian, Coleridge seems to have tried, may be sometimes quite unconsciously, to re-create Shakespearean tragic world, and his dramatic essays which show what this tragic concept was prove that he has miserably failed. The tragic potentialities of his plots have been left unexplored; the tragic vision is limited and broken; and the artistic defects and mishandling of the tragic material have rendered the plays incapable of creating a sense of painful waste, and giving us a knowledge of the deep mysteries of life. In a word, in the tragedies of Coleridge, there is an utter lack of inner consistencies that contribute to the organic growth of the artistic vision. In Shakespeare, he finds, "all is growth, evolution, each line, each word almost, begets the following - and the will of the writer is an interfusion, a continuous agency, no series of separate acts," and this is

31 Knight, op. cit. p. 226.

possible in Shakespeare, because a unified vision of the artist remains as a sustaining force behind the work. And it is this unified total vision, or conception which is wanting in Coleridge. The plays of the poet show that there is a wide gulf between the creative and the critical talent of Coleridge - a gulf between the theory and the practice. Coleridge himself was also aware of this. In a letter he writes —

"Indeed I have conceived so high an idea of what a Tragedy ought to be, that I am certain I shall myself be dissatisfied with my production;"^33 and what is more, before the composition of Remorse Coleridge had had no confidence in him that he had the "talent for so arduous a species of composition as the Drama."^34

Of such a poet as Coleridge, one may expect some treatment of dreams and supernaturalism in his dramas. As a matter of fact, the former is present in Coleridge's dramas, but the latter is not. It is surprising to note, that despite his deep interest in the supernatural, Coleridge has not used the supernatural machinery in building up the plots of his dramas. There is no reason to believe that such thing was out of fashion in his days. In the Gothic dramas, and also in the dramas of Shakespeare and some of his contemporaries, these supernatural machineries were used to some advantage. In

33Coleridge's Letters, I, (To R.B. Sheridan, dt. Feb.6, 1797.)
Osorio and Remorse, a very slight attempt was made (III.i.) to show the spirit of Albert and Alvar respectively, but the attempt is so feeble, and in proper sense, so different from that used in the dramas of others, that it deserves no mention. But there are dreams made to serve some dramatic function. In the dramas of Coleridge, dreams are prophetic. Ferdinand in Osorio dreams, that he has fallen into a deep pit; and what actually happens is that Osorio murders him by thrusting him into a dark deep cavern (Act IV) and says —

Osorio. ....................

No bloodstains, no dead body!

His dream, too, is made out.

(IV. 150-51.)

In Remorse too, Isidore's dream comes true (Act IV), and in Zapolya, Raab Kiuprili and the queen — Zapolya have dreams. Kiuprili sums up the meaning of the dream —

Thou darest not doubt that Heaven's especial hand Worked in those signs.

(Part II. II. 51-2.)

In the final summing up, it is to be said that Coleridge's contribution to the English theatre was limited. He, instead of showing an advance and a new direction in which English drama might develop and be lifted from the stage of prolonged stagnation, has actually surrendered himself to the forces conspiring against the real growth of drama. The
comparative success of Remorse alone can hardly obviate his failure to make any lasting contribution to the field of drama. Watson puts this idea in a clear language when he says -

"but the oddity that he alone among the romantic poets achieved a successful run on the London stage ought not to disguise the fact of total failure. In drama Coleridge achieved neither artistic distinction nor a source of income." \(^{35}\)

Although we agree with Watson on this point to a great extent, yet we cannot think, that Coleridge had "total failure" as a dramatist. It is to be admitted that as dramatist, Coleridge is better than Wordsworth and Scott. Moreover, we cannot also rule out completely the idea that he might have done better in his future attempts if the condition external to him were encouraging.

".......... with proper encouragement of his dramatic talent," writes a reviewer, "his second, or third, or fourth essay in the art might have raised him far above his present level." \(^{36}\)

By "present level," the reviewer obviously means the level he attained in Remorse. The reviewer of Remorse is not entirely fantastic in his expectation; for in Zapolya Coleridge's improvement as dramatist is evident, even though the play fell

\(^{35}\) Watson, George, op. cit. p.53.

\(^{36}\) Critical Review, 4th ser. III (April, 1813). (Vide The Romantic Bards, p. 137)
short of Coleridge's original conception.

The plays of Coleridge cannot, after all, be dismissed as something not worth studying. They are interesting even to a modern reader mainly as literature, and also or at least as a record of their author's mind and thought, his success and failure in a field of art in which he stands no more than a mediocre writer, in which he could not leave a stamp of his stupendous talent, in which he also leaves the evidence, that so great a critic of drama was so small a dramatist.