"Mind the unities, which are my great object of research. ................. as for 'the million,' you see I have carefully consulted anything but the taste of the day for extravagant 'coup de theatre.'\(^1\)

On July 22, 1821, Lord Byron wrote this in a letter to Murray from Revenna. The letter is important for us in the sense, that it reveals Byron's dramatic aim and his repugnance to what was popular in the Romantic theatre of his time. Byron's aim and attitude as revealed are in essence revolutionary. He declares his stand against the dramatic convention of his time: he will follow classical unities, regularity and simolicity of the ancient Greek drama; he will again keep away from the sensationalism of the Romantic theatre, and never consult the popular taste which is depraved. The extreme license and aimlessness of the contemporary English theatre convinced him that for the greater interest of his national drama, some

\(^1\)Letters and Journals, V. 439. p.203.
reformatory effort should be initiated and he decided to spear-head the movement. "Disgust with the extreme license of romanticism," says Samuel Chew, "was a leading cause, indeed, as I think, the greatest cause, of Byron's abandonment of that romanticism and reliance upon narrow laws in his attempt at the formation of a truly national drama, of a drama of which England should not be ashamed." 2 Byron's sole aim was to lead a new dramatic movement that would gradually correct the entire system of the theatre. He was quite right. For nobody can deny, that the theatre of the early nineteenth-century England was crying for reform, and leadership of some one who could guide drama out of the state of crisis.

As a dramatist, Byron did not hanker after cheap popularity and immediate success on the stage; his eyes were fixed on the ultimate goal. "I want to make a regular English drama," he declares, "no matter whether for the stage or not, which is not my object - but a mental theatre." 3 His departure from the current dramatic convention was deliberate and purposeful; and he was thoroughly aware that, in going to pursue his goal, he would be misunderstood, and his drama would have to be unpalatable at first. To John Murray, Byron writes on February 16, 1821 from Revenna -

"You say the Doge will not be popular: did I write for popularity? ........ It appears to me, that good

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English, and a severer approach to the rules, might combine something not dishonourable to our literature. I have also attempted to make play without love; ..... All these will prevent its popularity, but does not persuade me that it is therefore faulty."^4

The point on which Byron is different in his aim and attitude and spirit from all others of his time is at once clear from this letter, and like all true reformers, he stood steady and firm, in his aim. No other dramatist of his time was able to resist the temptation of immediate popularity like Byron, and to sacrifice his individual interest to the greater interest of the national drama. Critics and scholars seem to have considered it not worth noting, and have ignored this which, we think, should be adequately stressed. For it shows how serious and determined Byron's purpose was; how genuine was his intention to work for the revival of drama. He accepted the unpopularity of his dramas with the true spirit of a reformer; "no reform ever succeeded at first,"^5 he writes to Murray, so why should he be disappointed at the unpopularity he met with? There is no doubt that Byron's dramatic project was based, not on some narrow motive of selfish success in regard to fame, or fortune, but on some higher consideration. In this respect Byron is a solitary example in his time. George Rowell has admitted this only partly, when he observes -

"Byron the dramatist stands somewhat outside the ranks of the Romantic poets."\(^6\)

Rowell notes the point of distinction in Byron's "approach to the theatre, both theoretical and practical;"\(^7\) but he and some others\(^8\) have failed to see that Byron stands distinctly away from other Romantics in his seriousness of purpose, in his ambition, and also in his enthusiasm as a genuine reformer.

Lord Byron's actual dramatic career began in May, 1817 with the composition of *Manfred*. Though Byron's connection with Drury Lane contributed much to the formation of his disgusting notion about drama, theatre, and audience of his day, still *Manfred* was composed, it seems, with no thought of dramatic reform; it is not the play that shows Byron the dramatic reformer. The stage which is marked by this play need not, therefore, be taken very seriously; for it does not reveal anything so especially Byronic which we are to see only later. Byron at this stage was somewhat like what Shelley was when he wrote *Prometheus Unbound*. For it shows that Byron did not give any serious thought to the necessity of following the rules of unities in dramatic composition. In other words, Byron was not yet a conscious dramatic author. But his journey from *Manfred* to *Marino Faliero* is very much significant.

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\(^6\)Rowell, op. cit. p.34.

\(^7\)Ibid.

\(^8\)Critics, such as Nicoll, Chew, Paul West, and others, so to say, failed to stress the point.
from the dramatic point of view. *Marino Faliero* is, actually speaking, a significant milestone in the dramatic career of Lord Byron; it marks a distinct stage of his dramatic progress. In between the composition of *Manfred* in May, 1817 and that of *Marino Faliero* in May, 1820, three years passed, and during the period the dramatist in him developed a great deal. He was able by that time to formulate his theory of drama, chalk out his programme of dramatic reform, declare in clear terms his dramatic aim, attitude and purpose; and he stood out as a dramatist determined to lead the movement of dramatic reform. *Marino Faliero* shows quite unmistakably the beginning of the second phase of Byronic progress—a phase of his bold departure from the path trodden by others of his time. This phase continues through three of his dramas—*Marino Faliero*, *The Two Foscari*, and *Sardanapalus*.

The third stage of his progress seems to have begun with *Cain*, and continued through *Heaven and Earth*, *The Deformed Transformed* and *Werner*. This last phase of development, different as it is from the second, has some affinity with the first in some broad aspects. In so far as the regularity and unities are concerned, Byron in the third stage resembles the Byron of *Manfred*. The enthusiasm and energy shown earlier by the poet in following his own theory of drama in his historical tragedies seem to be now gradually on the wane, and the romantic tendencies evident in *Manfred* appear to reassert themselves in variable degrees. Besides, Byron is found to have come nearer to the popular taste of his day (as in *Werner,*).
to some extent. Professor Chew also seems to have noticed this transition. "The significance of Werner," he writes, "is that it is Byron's one essay in the popular mode, his one effort to meet the stage half way."^9

But Byron in the second stage of his progress is most important for more than one reason. On August 23, 1821 he wrote from Revenna to his friend and publisher, John Murray -

"Your friend, like the public, is not aware that my dramatic simplicity is studiously Greek, and must continue so: ........ I admire the old English dramatists; but this is quite another field, and has nothing to do with theirs. I want to make a regular English drama, no matter whether for the stage or not, which is not my object, - but a mental theatre."^10

The letter (quoted earlier in part) holds up to our view the actual Byron of the second stage of his dramatic progress. His dramatic theory, his choice of model, his departure from the English dramatic tradition, his dramatic aim, and his primary attention to the "mental theatre" as opposed to the public theatre of his time - all are crystal clear to us. We come to learn from it that Byron's conscious effort was directed to the theatre of the mind. "I have never written," writes Byron, "but for the solitary reader, and require no experiments for apolause beyond his silent approbation."^11 Byron's declared

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^9Chew, op. cit. p.36.


approach to the "mental theatre" has been greatly misunderstood by most of the critics and scholars who even think, that either "Byron was no dramatist,"\textsuperscript{12} or he had done nothing better than the creation of some closet plays, "addressed to and adapted for, the mind of the reader."\textsuperscript{13} But the time has proved that his dramas written for "the mind of the reader" are not unfit, or disqualified for stage performance. Byron's "mental theatre," therefore, should not be taken in the ordinary sense of the term, and demands, we suppose, due consideration. We find that it is this mental theatre of Lord Byron which is conceptually interlinked with his comprehensive idea of dramatic reform. It is the nerve-centre of Byron's entire dramatic aim and programme; it is the microcosm of his dramatic reform and as such, to misunderstand Byron's "mental theatre" is to misunderstand Byron as playwright. J. Calvert also seems to have been a little intrigued by the term and writes -

"How he (Byron) expected to found a tradition of the theatre by the means of unactable plays he never made clear. Perhaps he had some sort of sublime trust in the taste of succeeding generations, .........."\textsuperscript{14}

Calvert, it is obvious, has failed to view Byron's mental theatre in its true light, and called the plays even "unactable."


Byron applies the term especially, to three of his plays - Marino Faliero, The Two Foscari, and Sardanapalus, which, though they remained unacted during his life-time, are nevertheless not at all "unactable," as Calvert thinks; their prolonged stage-history is the proof. The production-records show how quite different Byron's mental theatre is from that of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, or Hellas. An examination of the plays of Byron's "mental theatre" persuades us to think, that it is a kind of theatre that was intended to be satisfying to the mind, and not merely to the external senses; and the intellectual character of these plays has developed not at the expense of their dramatic appeal and stageworthiness. Byron, wanted to correct the dramatic taste of his time with his new dramas; he perhaps, thought that the mental training and preparedness of the readers were essential before the correction of taste of the theatre-going public could be expected. His new dramas were, therefore, addressed in the first instance, to the readers; they were intended to prepare the readers' mind for finer dramatic taste. Byron, perhaps, thought that if he could find favour with the reader, he would automatically find favour with the audience in course of time, when the general taste of the public would gradually improve, and the theatre, in order to cater to the audience of refined taste and sensibility, would, as a consequence be corrected accordingly.

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15Taborski, op. cit. pp. 152-326. Taborski has devoted three long chapters to give the elaborate history of the performances of Byron's plays in England, European continent and also in America.
Byron's method may be regarded as something approaching the method of slow-acting medicine. It has one more advantage: the persons for whom the method was employed were supposed to remain unconscious of what was happening to them. Behind this entire thing, Byron's motive was, it appears, not to shock the audience all at once. He did not want, perhaps, revolutionary change in the theatre-world, but only gradual change. This is what, we believe, Byron intended to do with the help of his "regular" dramas of the mental theatre. These plays have, therefore, certain qualities by virtue of which they were designed to educate the mind first, and to correct the theatre afterwards. Taborski is quite right when he maintains, that Byron intended to reform drama, and through drama, he wanted to reform theatre.1

This Byronic method of dramatic reform cannot be called fantastic altogether. For the theatrical public are not absolutely a different class of people living in isolation from the reading section of the society; the reading section of the public also form a part of the theatrical audience. And if it is so, the improvement of taste and sensibility of one section can automatically have all its imaginable effects on those others through social intercourse. The question may arise that no other dramatic reformer before or since adopted the method as Byron followed, and as such, the Byronic method is wrong from the practical point of view. We are not in a position to answer the question in definite terms, it is true. But no one can also say,

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that there is one and only one way of doing it, and that it is the way by following which Shakespeare, Marlowe, Ibsen, Eliot or Yeats succeeded or hoped to succeed.

The main point of contention here is that, Byron's "regular" dramas should not be confused with what are called Closet dramas. Professor Chew seems to have mistaken their actual character, as well as Byron's inner intention behind them. "They are Closet dramas," he says, "never intended for the stage," and in saying this, Chew may be believed to have taken merely the face value of the author's express statement. It is certainly true that Byron called them "closet;" he did not like that they should be performed on the contemporary stage. When some of the London managers intended "to bring forward Marino Faliero &c.!, Byron vehemently reacted to the proposal and wrote -

"Since such an attempt to drag me forth as a gladiator in the theatrical arena is a violation of all the courtesies of literature, I trust that the impartial part of the press will step between me and this pollution."^18

The intention of the London managers proves, that these plays of Byron were considered stageable, and their performances on the stage of the commercial theatre profitable. But Byron appealed to the press to cry down such attempt; and the question is - why did he do so? For it is the natural desire of every

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^18 Letters and Journals. V. p.137.
dramatist that his drama may enjoy stage-life. But Byron in this respect was an exception. And the case is such, that no ordinary reason can explain it. We learn from Byron's Diary that Murray also once expressed his desire to act the tragedy of Marino Faliero, and Byron as usual vehemently protested against it. His entry in the Diary on January 12, 1821, throws some light as to why Byron calls the tragedy a closet and says that it is not intended for the stage.

"It is too regular - the time, twenty-four hours - the change of place is not frequent - nothing melodramatic - no surprise, no starts, nor trap-doors, nor opportunities 'for tossing their heads and kicking their heels' - and no love - the grand ingredient of a modern play."\(^{19}\)

Byron's sense of disgust with the deoraved taste of the contemporary audience is clear from it; and his insinuative tone is unmistakably evident when he says, that his play is not intended for the stage. Byron's ironical statement also should not go unnoticed; the phrase - "grand ingredient" is, significantly suggestive of the tone in which he made this entry into the diary. Naturally, there is no scope for giving any verdict on the basis of the surface meaning of his statement, as Chew and others have actually done. Byron, only grudgingly says, that his plays are not intended for the stage - because, what is not there in Marino Faliero is present

\(^{19}\)Letters and Diaries. II. p.562.
abundantly in the popular stage-plays of the time. He does not really mean that his dramas are unactable, and as such, closet. Most of the critics and scholars seem to have misunderstood Byron on this point, and wrongly classed his dramas with the closet, or literary dramas. His statement of not wanting stage-success has been taken too literally.

Before we go to examine the dramatic merits of his plays, it is necessary to look into Byron's theory of drama. In a letter to Murray, Byron wrote from Revenna on February 16, 1821 -

"It appears to me that there is room for a different style of the drama; neither a servile following of the old drama, which is a grossly erroneous one, nor yet too French like those who succeeded the older writers. It appears to me, that good English, and a severer approach to the rules, might combine something not dishonourable to our literature."  

Byron thinks, that the "old drama" (obviously, the Elizabethan and the Jacobean) is too irregular in point of form; the neo-classical dramas, like Dryden's All for Love, Dr. Johnson's Irene, Addison's Cato and the like, based on the French model of the heroic dramatic tradition, are too rigid, and hence, both the types are not acceptable; the dramatic reform is to be started not by following either of them in toto,

\[20\text{Letters and Journals. V. 412. p.127.}\]
"but by writing naturally and regularly, and producing regular tragedies, like the Greeks; but not in imitation, — merely the outline of their conduct, adapted to our own times and circumstances, and of course no chorus."21

It appears from this and other records referred to below, that in the dramatic theory of Lord Byron, the obvious stress is laid on unities, regularity, simolicity and concentration of action, and that Byron has followed the Greeks, and the Italian dramatist — Alfieri, rather than his national dramatist — Shakespeare. "It has been my object to be as simple and severe as Alfieri,"22 he wrote on July 14, 1821; and "my dramatic simplicity is studiously Greek,"23 he declared on August 23, 1821. M.G. Cooke shows, that Byron not only owes to the Greek and the Italian classical models, he also owes to Dryden and Otway. The influence of these two Restoration playwrights is traceable on the Byronic theory of drama.24 It is not unlikely, that Dryden's An Essay of Dramatic Poesy might have influenced Byron and prompted him to lay stress on the unities in dramatic composition. Byron's sole aim was to write "regular" dramas, based on the unities, and to provide the age with such examples of dramatic composition which might establish the rule of restraint and order

21Letters and Journals. V. 405. p.115.
in the world of theatre. By regularity, Byron seems to have meant formal regularity. Shakespeare was no help to him in this regard, and, therefore, he was considered to be "the worst of all." Primarily, for his violation of the rules of unities, for the lack of simplicity, and regularity in construction. To found the tradition of "regular" drama was the ultimate goal, and it obliterates all other considerations. It was, therefore, essential for Byron, that Shakespeare should be avoided as a model. The critics and scholars have put forward different reasons (sometimes, quite ludicrous) for Byron's rejection of Shakespeare. Some have maintained that this rejection was motivated by jealousy; G. Wilson Knight thinks that Byron regarded Shakespeare as a danger, and avoided him. He writes -

"It was just because Byron had so much Shakespearean and other drama in him as a man that he regarded Shakespeare as a danger; and it was precisely because he had so Shakespearean a universe to control, that he preferred Alexander Pope as an examiner."26

Boleslaw Taborski seems to think that Byron's desire was to create shock and to oppose the free drama.

"More important was the desire to shock," he says, "and his genuine opposition to the free drama on principle. His dislike for Shakespeare was theoretical."27

None of these views is fully convincing. The actual reason of Byron's rejection of Shakespeare may be found with reference to the type of drama then in vogue, and also to Byron's idea and programme of dramatic reform. It is universally admitted that it was almost a craze for the dramatists of the Romantic period to imitate Shakespeare. But proper imitation was beyond the capacity of the authors of the time, and the cumulative effect of such crude imitation of Shakespeare was a chaos that, along with other things, aggravated the evils of romantic license in the world of drama and theatre. With wild extravagance, sentimentalism, and romantic license, this imitation of the Elizabethan dramatists was going on with a sort of crazy enthusiasm, and all these were intermixed in such a way, that one could not be separated from the other. Byron must have noticed this, and felt that, it would not be possible to reform the stage keeping Shakespeare on the scene. To bring about change in the current dramatic fashion, it was inevitable for Byron to abandon Shakespeare for the time being, till order was restored in the world of drama and theatre; it was a necessity - the necessity, especially for Byron the dramatic reformer. And this was more particularly, for inculcating dramatic discipline than for anything else. Eliot, like Byron, also rejected Shakespeare as a model, though for a different reason.

Byron's theory of drama does not normally accept love-theme as the principal element for a tragedy; his sanction

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28 We have briefly discussed in the introductory chapter the factors contributing to the decline of drama in the period.
for it is only conditional. He writes -

"Unless it is love, furious, criminal, and hapless, it ought not to make a tragic subject. When it is melting and maudlin, it does, but it ought not to do; it is then for the gallery and second-price boxes." 29

Taborski finds Byron's affinity with Corneille in this respect, and says that "Byron disapproved of love as a subject in drama, because he was interested chiefly in universal rather than individual emotions." 30 On this point we like to disagree with Taborski in so far as this generalization is concerned. For our examination of the plays of the poet shows that he was interested also in the individual emotions. Moreover, love also has a universal aspect; and, it is rather a contradiction that Byron's interest in the universal prompted him to exclude love from tragedy. His reason for exclusion of love is somewhat similar to the reason for Byron's exclusion of Shakespeare as a model. For love-theme might have been thought to open scope for sentimentalism, and as such, Byron's reformatory instinct perhaps, apprehended practical danger from it. Byron, therefore, could not approve of love-theme for a drama.

As for the plot of the drama, Byron was not in favour of pure invention. "There should always be some foundation of fact for the most airy fabric," writes Byron, "and pure invention

29 Letters and Journals. V. 405. pp. 115-16.

30 Taborski, op. cit. p. 82.
is but the talent of a liar."^31 Byron's dramatic plots have, therefore, some historical, or Biblical basis. "My object has been," he writes, "to dramatise, like the Greeks (a modest phrase), striking passages of history, as they did of history and mythology."^32

But as a dramatist, Byron did not show his blind and rigid adherence to the dramatic theory he expounded. Byron's theory of drama is a dynamic one, and the poet departed here and there from it both consciously and sometimes, unconsciously in his practice. He was, as Mr. Taborski justly thinks, an "experimental dramatist." From this general discussion, we now turn to the examination of his individual dramas.

II

Keeping in view the chronological order, we take up the dramas of Byron for examining mainly their dramatic aspect, and as such, **Manfred** is the first to begin with. **Manfred** was started in Switzerland in September, 1816 and completed in Venice in May, 1817. It was published by Murray on June 16, 1817 in England.

The plot of **Manfred** is quite simple. Tormented by remorse for a mysterious crime, Count Manfred calls by magic upon seven spirits of Earth, Ocean, Air, Night, Mountain, Winds, and his Star to bestow forgetfulness upon him. He wants to get relief by forgetting the torturing memory of his past. The

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^31 *Letters and Journals*, IV: 270. (To Murray, April 2, 1817).

spirits advise him to obtain it by death. Following this suggestion, the mentally oppressed Count goes to the cliff of the mountain to commit suicide by falling from it. But on the point of his taking the desperate step, Manfred is restrained by a chamois hunter. Thereafter Manfred raises by charm the Witch of the Alps, and confesses to her that he had nobody in this world save one whom he loved and destroyed.

Her faults were mine - her virtues were her own -
I loved her, and destroyed her !

He then asks the Witch to wake the dead, or to lay him low with the dead. The Witch expresses her inability, and disappears. Manfred then goes to the court of the Prince of Hell - Arimanes by virtue of magic. At his insistence, Nemesis calls up the Phantom of Astarte whom Manfred loved and destroyed. The Phantom tells Manfred that his "earthly ills" will end the next day, and so saying, it vanishes from his sight. Manfred then returns to his earthly castle.

The next day, the Count waits for the hour, when an Abbot calls on him, and requests him to turn to God from his communion with the world of Spirits, but it is of no avail. By the time, Manfred's hour approaches; the spirits from Hell appear to take him away. Manfred this time refuses to go with them, but begins to feel that he is dying every moment. He at last dies. The Abbot only says :
He's gone - his soul hath taken its earthless flight;
Whither? I dread to think - but he is gone.

(III.iv. 152-53.)

From dramatic point of view Manfred is weak almost in every respect. It has no plot, so to say. The drama opens after the climactic stage, and the expository stage of the play is not shown. Manfred has committed the sin even before the drama opens. He realizes his tragic mistake, and suffers from a dreadful and agonising remorse from which he seeks to get relief. In Act I, Scene i, we find the hero calling upon the spirits to bestow upon him the gift of forgetfulness. Knowing that only death can put an end to his mental agonies, Manfred goes to commit suicide. But his attempt at suicide is frustrated by the chamois hunter.

C. Hun. Hold, madman! - though aweary of thy life,
Stain not our oure vales with thy guilty blood:
Away with me - I will not quit my hold.

(I.ii. 110-12.)

Throughout the first act, we do not know the mystery of Manfred's remorse and agony. It is in Act II, Scene i, that we begin to gain some knowledge about the root-cause of the hero's agony.

Man. I say 'tis blood - my blood! the pure warm stream
Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love,
And this was shed:

(II.i. 24-8.)
Manfred's statement is still cryptic. Some hint of incestuous love is given with a faint suggestion of shedding blood. This statement made in a half-revealing and half-concealing way is dramatically important. Our sense of mystery deepens at once. But Byron has taken too much time to acquaint the audience with the source of his hero's mental conflict and crisis, and as a result, our curiosity is about to be lost in the growing sense of tedious monotony. In Act II, Scene ii, we come to learn more about it, when Manfred relates his past to the Witch of the Alps. The language is still cryptic, the nature of his sin is still vague, though his past is a little clearer to us than before.

Man. She was like me in lineaments - .......

.................................

I loved her, and destroyed her!

(II.ii.105-18.)

Manfred now asks the Witch to wake the dead, or to lay him low with her, but he is disappointed by the answer of the Witch. In utter disregard of the unity of place, Byron then shows his mentally agonized hero among the spirits in the other world in Act II, scene iv. Manfred's purpose is to meet Astarte whom he loved and destroyed. Though the scene is interesting, yet the sudden physical presence of Manfred in the other world mars, to some extent, the human interest of the story, and awakens a sense of supernatural atmosphere not quite in keeping with the spirit of the play.
In the Act III, we find Manfred again in his earthly castle. He prepares himself for his last journey to the place where the phantom of Astarte lives in death. The last act of Manfred is dramatically interesting. The hero is awaiting the hour of death; his apostrophic address to the declining sun touches our heart, and Manfred becomes one with genuine human thoughts and feelings.

Man. ............. Fare thee well!
I ne'er shall see thee more. As my first glance
Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
My latest look: thou wilt not beam on one
To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
Of a more fatal nature. He is gone -
I follow.

(III.ii. 24-30.)

The last scene reminds us of the last scene of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus. In both, at least the situation seems to be the same. Manfred's meetings with the Abbot, his last spiritual conflict when the spirit comes to take him away - all this has made the last act dramatically effective. The dramatic movement gains momentum; there is concentration of actions; there is tragic pathos as well as tragic intensity. This last act of Manfred is the best part of the piece. Taborski is quite right when he says that it "has a definite dramatic intensity, which was lacking in some previous scenes." 33

On the whole, though defective in construction, Manfred has certain dramatic qualities not to be found in Shelley's

33Taborski, oo. cit. p.136.
maiden attempt - *Prometheus Unbound*. The tempo with which the drama opens falls after the hero's suicidal attempt (I.ii.); it gradually rises in the last scene when the demons claim Manfred's soul. Professor Chew thinks, that the climax of the play lies in Act II, scene iv, when Manfred meets the phantom of Astarte. But it seems that the drama opens at a stage, when the real climax has already been over, and as such, the hero is mentally prepared for the catastrophe through suicide. Chew seems to have ignored this, and with this, the defect of Byron's construction of the plot. In the chamois hunter Byron has found an instrument to patch up the following scenes somehow with a view to carrying the dramatic actions up to the third act.

In regard to characterization, Byron has not much to his credit. The only character that deserves some notice is the hero - Count Manfred. Manfred is a man of Faustian type without Faust's unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He is a man of magic and charm, by virtue of which he gains command over the supernatural world. With the opening of the drama, Manfred is introduced on the stage as a man agonised by remorse from some secret guilt, and seeking self-oblivion. Having failed to obtain it, Manfred attempts suicide, but this is thwarted by the chamois hunter. Then we find him revealing in an enigmatic manner, the secrets of his mind first to the hunter, and then to the Witch of the Alp. From this we can guess the source of his dreadful affliction of the mind. Under the buoyant impulse of

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34Chew, *oo. cit. p.58*.
his youthful passions he must have committed some incestuous acts, and destroyed one he loved; he is guilt-conscious, dreadfully remorseful for what has done. This mental state of the hero continues from the beginning up to the end. He is mentally prepared to embrace death which alone can free his mind from torturing thoughts. This death-wish is ever present in him. The spirit offers to grant him "length of days" (I.i.168.), but Manfred replies -

Man. Accursed! what have I to do with days?
    They are too long already.

(I.i. 169-70.)

Even in the last hour of his earthly life, when he refuses to go with the demons, Manfred does not mean to live longer.

Man. ....................
    My life is in its last hour, - that I know,
    Nor would redeem a moment of that hour;
    I do not combat against Death, but thee
    And thy surrounding angels;

(III.iv. 110-13.)

The character of Manfred is, therefore, one that basically remains constant; he does not develop through the actions of the drama. In one respect, of course, we note a change in him. In the first two acts of the drama, Manfred is a half-human and half-superhuman being. His communion with the supernatural world, his journey to the land of the dead, his magic-power - all this goes to deepen this impression, but as he approaches his last
hour, Manfred, like Faust becomes more and more a man, and claims our sympathy. For we realize, that Manfred suffers for his passion of love - a genuine human weakness. G. Wilson Knight is quite right to look at this character from this angle. "Whatever wild arrogance or intolerable sin torments Byronic hero," he writes, "there is, at the personality's core, a love, a softness." Manfred claims our pity and sympathy, because his sufferings are the result of a human weakness.

The character of Manfred has been looked at by the critics and scholars from the different angles of vision. Chew notices in him the characteristic stuff of Prometheus, Don Juan, and Faust. "Manfred," he says, "is a complete representative of no one of these, but includes characteristics of them all." Leslie A. Marchand and a host of others, including Goethe, find Byron's close personal connection with this character. Allen Perry Whitmore regards this character as a germinal one, containing those "elements which are used to make up Byron's other dramatic heroes." Bertrand Evans finds in Manfred the consummation of the villain-hero of the Gothic tradition. Peter L. Thorslev also holds the similar opinion; he thinks that Manfred's crime and secret sin, and his nature of suffering from

36Chew, op. cit. pp. 74-5.
39Evans, Bertrand, Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley, 1947. p. 232.
It is undeniable that not only the hero, but Manfred as a whole shows the influence of the Gothic dramatic tradition, as no other drama of Lord Byron, except Werner does in an unmistakable way. In his illuminating article - Manfred's Remorse and Dramatic Tradition, Bertrand Evans further shows "that Manfred the play, its materials, motifs, and techniques, is in accord with the Gothic tradition" on the London stage of the time. D.P. Varma also maintains, that Manfred is a drama abounding in Gothic machinery. He finds:

"......... a curse, remorse, large Gothic halls, a fiery star, an attempted suicide, soots of blood on the goblet, a hall filled with demons, a phantom, ...... a warning abbot, terror-stricken and challenging domestic servants, and a mysterious death by blasting."  

42Varma, op. cit. p. 197.
Some of the critics, like M.K. Joseoh, even think that Byron must have taken the name of his hero from Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. \(^{43}\) It is hard to ignore the fact that Byron worked at this drama under the deep influence of this Gothic dramatic tradition which had been affecting the literary taste of England long since Byron was born; he carried with him this influence to Italy and had instilled this into *Manfred*, before he set his hand upon the task of dramatic reform. Byron of *Manfred* is not different from his other fellow poets of the age. We have also said earlier, that Byron's dramatic originality and speciality cannot be expected at this stage when he composed this drama.

Critics, like Herbert Read, have pointed out, that in regard to the style and the spirit, *Manfred* shows Shelley's influence on Byron. "Shelley's influence on Byron," says Read, "was direct and deep, and *Manfred* springs from the same poetic atmosphere as *Julian and Maddalo* and *Prometheus Unbound*.\(^{44}\) Byron, as far as we know, did not admit with candour the influence of Shelley on himself; but it was very likely, that Byron at that time worked at least under his spiritual influence. For, as Dr. Singh says, "*Manfred* was conceived during Byron's association with Shelley.\(^{45}\) Moreover, Byron's letter to Murray, dated October 12, 1817 also indirectly supports the view.

\(^{45}\) Singh, op. cit. p.55.
"The Prometheus," he wrote, "if not exactly in my plan, has always been so much in my head, that I can easily conceive its influence over all or anything that I have written;"\(^{46}\)

But from dramatic point of view, Byron's *Manfred* does not quite compare with *Prometheus Unbound*; the former is more dramatic than the latter. The comparison is tenable mostly in regard to setting, dramatic machinery, fantastic elements, and supernatural characters of the both. *Manfred* can be presented on the stage with some minor alterations; it has also some stage-history behind it, but *Prometheus Unbound* has nothing of the kind to boast of. Taborski thinks that for select audience *Manfred* can be produced in the rhapsodic fashion.\(^{47}\) He also thinks, that it can make a good radio-drama. It is, as Taborski rightly maintains, dramatic on the whole, though in crude form.\(^{48}\)

Byron's next dramatic attempt is *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice; An Historical Tragedy, in Five Acts*. It was written at Revenna, from April 4 to July 16, 1820, and published by Murray on April 21, 1821. *Marino Faliero* is a sharp departure from the prevailing dramatic convention; it is the drama with which Byron first stood away from the other Romantics, and set out for dramatic reform. Byron's dramatic theory was first given a concrete shape in it with all seriousness and arduous zeal. *Marino Faliero* was, therefore, the first serious effort of Byron the dramatic reformer.

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\(^{46}\) *Letters and Journals*, IV. 299. p.68.

\(^{47}\) Taborski, *op. cit.* p.135.

\(^{48}\) *op. cit.* p. 137.
The plot of Marino Faliero is based on an event which took place in the year 1355 in Venice. The story is as follows: Michel Steno, one of the Forty has grossly offended the Doge, Marino Faliero by passing an objectionable comment on his wife – Duchess Angiolina. The high Tribunal of the Forty inflicts a nominal punishment of a month's imprisonment on Steno for his offence, but the Doge considers it a mere mockery of trial; he considers it too slight a punishment in proportion to Steno's crime. While the Doge is indignant more for the behaviour of the Forty than for the crime of Steno, one Israel Bertuccio calls on him to seek justice against one of the Forty. The Doge expresses his utter helplessness over the matter. Having learnt Doge's own grievances against the Forty, Bertuccio informs the Doge, that he has secretly organized a popular revolt against the tyrannous rule of the Forty, and wants his support. Marino Faliero agrees. At dead of night the Doge, Marino attends the meeting of the rebels. It is decided that when the storm-bell of the St. Mark will be sounded at the behest of the Doge in the next morning, the rebels will start their operation and slay the tyrannous nobles of the Forty ruthlessly by their sudden attack. But the conspiracy is betrayed by one of the rebels – Bertram, a vacillating fellow who has some soft corner for Lioni, one of the members of the Forty. The leakage of the information by Bertram warns the Forty. They take speedy steps to arrest the conspirators with the Doge among them. The trial is held. The

49 Steno's offensive comment was: "Marino Faliero the husband of the fair wife – others enjoy her, but he supports her."
leaders of the conspirators including the Doge, Marino Faliero are executed.

Now let us look into Byron's construction of the plot. The drama opens with a very short scene. The dialogue of the two officers of the Ducal Palace indicates the deeply disturbed mind of the Doge over the Steno-affairs. In Act I, scene ii, the result of Steno's trial is communicated to the Doge; the high tribunal of the Forty has sentenced Steno with a month's imprisonment when the Doge, Marino has been expecting death-sentence for the offender. The Doge is already deeply annoyed with the autocratic attitude of the Forty.

Doge. Know you not Venice? Know you not the Forty?

But we shall see anon.

(I.ii. 7-8.)

He finds "anon" that the attitude of the Forty is the same; the Forty by giving a token punishment to Steno has dishonoured the Doge of Venice. His deep sense of indignation is heightened by the behaviour of the Council of Forty, and his mind is shaken to the root by a convulsive passion of wounded pride. Steno is no longer the object of his anger; his fury is turned against the Forty, who with a mockery of justice have actually insulted him.

......................... at present
I have no further wrath against this man.

(I.ii. 205-206.)
His mind is in revolt, but the means of retaliation is yet not decided. The entry of Israel Bertuccio - the Chief of the Arsenal into the scene serves to concretise his means and purpose. Marino joins hands with Israel; a private and personal cause mingles with the public, and a conspiracy against the Forty is planned. The scene is full of tension on the mental plane. There is a lack of spectacular actions, it is true, but this does not mar the dramatic interest of the scene. Act II, scene i though quite long, is yet dramatically satisfactory. It is mainly a scene between the old Doge and his young wife - Angiolina. The characters are set in contrast. Act II, scene ii is set outside the Ducal palace. It shows the meeting of the two leading conspirators - Israel Bertuccio and Calendaro, reviewing their strength and weakness. They express their doubt about Bertram. Act III, scene i opens with the Doge in soliloquy. Israel Bertuccio soon joins him. The Doge's mental conflict is brought out through this scene, and the scene is tense in psychological actions. This is followed by a scene in which Byron shows the meeting of the conspirators with the Doge among them. Marino's presence first creates a stir among the common conspirators, and this is highly dramatic in essence. The scene is full of tension and suspense, and there are visible actions too. It is the climax of the drama. Its only defect is its length. Act IV, scene i shows Bertram's giving out the secret of the plot to the Patrician - Lioni. The actual force of opposition against the secret conspiracy rises from this scene with the leakage of the secret. From the dramatic point of view, the scene is, therefore, very important. It gives rise
to a prolonged suspense, and we breathlessly wait to see what comes of the situation so developed. Act IV, scene ii is theatrically very effective. The tolling of the giant bell of St. Mark adds to the theatrical and the dramatic effect of the scene. The sudden stopping of the toll constitutes a terrible dramatic irony faced by the arrested Doge - Marino Faliero; Doge's hope rises with the tolling,

Doge. .................. 

.................. Swell on lusty peal!

(IV. ii. 228.)

and his last surging hooe is crushed and shattered all on a sudden when it ceases to toll.

Doge (after a pause). All's silent, and all's lost!

(IV. ii. 249.)

The conspiracy fails at the very moment of its success.

Doge (aside). There now is nothing left me save to die; And yet how near success!

(IV. ii. 261-62.)

The drama should have ended here. The fifth act is an unnecessary elaboration, showing the trial and execution of the Doge and two leading conspirators. Samuel Chew has rightly called the entire fifth act "an undramatic aftermath."50

In the construction of the plot of Marino Faliero, Byron

50Chew, op. cit. p.57.
has closely followed the unities. He has achieved the concentration of action and interest. The actions follow the theory of cause and effect; the dramatic movement is soedy, and the suspense is maintained all through. M.K. Joseoh fails to find the dramatic climax of the play, and thinks Byron "essentially undramatic." It is difficult for us to agree with him on this point for the reason that Marino Faliero has an effective climax as discussed earlier. Byron's plot-construction in this play, it must be admitted, is not faultless, but it is not to the extent as may render the work undramatic. The main defect of the construction lies in the length, and also in the conception of dramatic actions of the fifth act. But this does not make Marino Faliero unactable and undramatic. Byron seems to have followed the Aristotelean conception of tragedy to some extent. His hero is a man of high status and position, having a tragic weakness of pride and passion. He joins and leads an insurrection out of his wounded pride, and with this he commits the tragic error that casts him to his doom. But the greater mistake that actually frustrates the entire scheme of the plot is to include the vacillating Bertram among the consorirators and to keep no watch over his movement. Marino's tragic mistake shows that he has something of Shakespeare's Brutus in him. He, like Brutus lacks practical insight and shrewdness equal to the business on hand.

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51 Joseoh, oo. cit. p.110. Hazlitt also finds nothing to praise it, and writes - "Marino Faliero is without a plot, without characters, without fluctuating interest, and without the spirit of dialogue ...." (Vide The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P.P. Howe (1930-4), XIX, pp. 44-6.)
In characterization, Byron shows his skill in and power of creating characters in so far as the major characters are concerned. Byron's minor characters are not well defined, and it is almost a common weakness of all the Romantics that they devote their attention mostly to the protagonists. The hero is mainly the centre of attention. The protagonist of this play is Marino Faliero - the aged Doge of the Venetian Commonwealth - the President of the high synod - the Forty. The drama opens with Marino Faliero apparently calm, but mentally restless about the result of Steno's trial. His suppressed internal storm exposes itself in the wildest form when he comes to learn about the token punishment of Steno. His passion of anger and overwhelming rage against the Forty find violent outburst at this, and we find the old Doge dashing down his ducal bonnet, and tending to trample upon it. His nephew - Bertuccio Faliero even has to say -

\[ \text{but still} \]

This fury doth exceed the provocation,
Or any provocation:

(I. ii. 135-37.)

The old Doge at once reminds us of Lear of the Storm-scene, tearing off his clothes. The character of his nephew is set in contrast to the Doge. Bertuccio Faliero succeeds in bringing the passion of the Doge down, when he says to his uncle:

If you forget
Your office, and its dignity and duty
Remember that of man, and curb this passion.

(I.ii. 96-8.)
The Doge is ashamed, and shows external calmness of temper, but his mind moves in search of a means to remedy the wound he has received. Marino's wound is deep-seated. Allen Perry Whitmore is quite right, when he maintains, that this personal cause, namely, the "insult lies in the background of all that happens in the drama."\(^52\) Marino's first meeting with Israel Bertuccio is dramatically very significant in the sense that his personal cause at once finds a public ground to stand on. For Marino, and also for the oppressed, the source of the trouble is one and the same — the rule of the Forty. Marino agrees to join and lead the rebellion; he chances to discover a way that can lead him to a goal both public and personal. For in going to free the country from the tyranny of the Forty, he can also free himself. But conflicts arise in his mind. His soliloquy (I.ii.) indicates the wavering of his mind; he is conscious of what he is going to do against all the norms of his duty as a sovereign of the state. But the poignant sense of personal injury resolves his conflict of mind and makes him steady and firm for the time being. On the eve of his attending the meeting of the conspirators, we again find his mental conflict and doubt. He weighs both the sides of the matter — the bright, as well as the dark. He is also critical of the possible outcome of the rebellion.

If we should fail employing bloody means
And secret plot, although to a good end,
Still we are traitors, honest Israel;

(III.i. 76-8.)

\(^52\)Whitmore, op. cit. p.38.
Marino is revengeful, but not Satanic in mind and spirit. He is not morally doomed. The moral integrity of his mind prick his conscience at times, and gives rise to his mental conflict. G. Wilson Knight also finds him not morally doomed completely. In the meeting when it is decided that the members of the Forty must die, the old Doge shows again his weakness of mind.

And can I see them dabbled o'er with blood?
Each stab to them will seem my suicide.

(III.ii. 471-72.)

In spite of his personal wrong, Marino cannot shake his soft feelings off for those would-be victims who are also his colleagues. These currents and cross-currents of his thoughts and feelings give rise to Marino's psychological tensions and constitute the real tragic beauty of his character.

At the last moment of his earthly life, Marino Faliero speaks to his wife - Angiolina in a way which reminds us of Hamlet's dying speech to Horatio. The whole pathos of his life is brought out when he says -

Then farewell, Angiolina! - one embrace -
Forgive the old man who hath been to thee
A fond but fatal husband - love my memory -
I would not ask so much for me still living,
But thou canst judge of me more kindly now,

.........................

............... I have nothing left, not even


53 Knight, op. cit. p.227.
He emerges as a really tragic figure arousing pity and sympathy in us. Byron is successful in creating a powerful and live character in Marino Faliero. Marino has revealed himself through his actions and speeches in an effectively dramatic way.

Although written for the closet, *Marino Faliero* is nevertheless a stage-play. Its only defects as a stage-play are the occasional lengthy dialogue and soliloquy, and its length, for which, as Taborski also thinks, it is "impossible to produce it within the accepted acting time of three hours." Taborski, therefore, suggests cut in order to make it fit for effective production. But its dramatic merits far outweigh whatever defects are there in it. If its lengthy speeches are pruned for performance, *Marino Faliero* as a stage play will appear to be, as G. Wilson Knight rightly remarks, a masterpiece.55

*Marino Faliero* is a study of passion. The tragedy of the old Doge is effectively brought out through realistic scenes and situations in a way communicable to the sensibilities of the readers and the theatrical audience. The drama "has a mass and weight," as Knight says (Ibid), "and on occasion a majesty of language, comparable with Shakespeare and Milton;"

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54 Taborski, op. cit. p.110.

and Byron's verbal style in *Marino Faliero* adds considerably to the theatrical appeal of the play. Though written in blank-verse, the play shows that the poet has broken down the verse as nearly as possible to the common language, and it was a conscious effort of Byron the dramatist. "Byron was deliberately aiming to part with tradition," says G. Wilson Knight, "and 'break down' the 'poetry' into a style of translucent clarity. The rhythm is often non-poetic......"56

It will not be unjust to hold, that in this respect, Byron the dramatist foreshadows T.S. Eliot whose chief emphasis, as a writer of poetic drama, is on the dramatic verse, and to whom the problem of modern poetic drama lies mainly in finding out a form of verse capable of giving a semblance of everyday speech, yet retaining its poetic flavour.57 An anonymous reviewer of *The Times*, having reviewed a performance of *Marino Faliero* in 1958 comments on the dramatic verse of the play -

"............... but in the theatre his direct and unadorned blank verse comes over much better than the more highly charged and poetic verse of his (Byron's) contemporary would-be-dramatists."58

The reviewer has found not only the comparative merits of the dramatic verse, but he has also felt how wrong he was in his expectation of a tragedy of the Romantic age. In other words,


this performance of *Marino Faliero* in the second half of the twentieth century removed certain baseless popular prejudices from which the poet-dramatists of the early nineteenth century had been suffering.

*Marino Faliero* is an historical tragedy, and in the Preface to the play Byron says that he has followed the history of Marino Faliero as nearly as possible. But Byron has not sacrificed dramatic interest to the historicity, as Sir Walter Scott has often done. *Marino Faliero* convinces G. Wilson Knight that Byron is "a dramatist of Shakespearian calibre revealing the historical interest behind his work." Knight quotes the lines -

> How my brain aches beneath thee! and my temples Throb feverish under thy dishonest weight.

(I.ii. 265-66.)

addressed by the mentally outraged Doge to his Ducal Cap, and finds in it the Shakespearian depth. *Marino Faliero* is a good historical tragedy, occasionally showing Shakespearian depth and intensity, but does not yet convince us that Byron is "a dramatist of Shakespearian calibre." Knight again seems to have been impressed more by its political aspect than by its historical character, and calls it Byron's "greatest political work" dramatizing Byron's revolutionary idealism. But one can

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60 Ibid.
find that it is neither in history, nor in politics, that the greatest interest of the drama lies; despite its historical basis and hero's political status as the sovereign of the state, Marino Faliero appeals, after all, as a tragedy of an individual. It dramatizes the tremendous mental struggle of the octogenarian Faliero of fiery passion and sentiment against his surroundings, and his tragic end. Byron's obvious stress is on the individual emotion, rather than on ideas. The comment of Allen Perry Whitmore in this connection, we think, is just and worth noting.

"The important and significant part of the drama is the mental torment of the main character;...... We do not read the drama for its politics, but for what it tells us about human nature as it is revealed in the towering figure of the old Doge."62

It is to the credit of Lord Byron, that he has not turned out to be a chronicler, or a political propagandist, but ultimately a dramatist holding up to our view the essential truth of human nature and life. In this respect, Byron shows a Shakespearean quality without being his equal. Marino Faliero may be "Byron's greatest political work," if King Lear is considered to be Shakespeare's greatest political drama.

Marino Faliero proclaims Byron's originality and success as a dramatist. It is a work carefully written with a noble and broad intention in mind. It shows Byron's tremendous courage and

62 Whitmore, op. cit. p.35.
strength in his keeping himself above the dramatic license rampant in the Romantic theatre of early nineteenth-century England. Byron first shows in this play his sure and determined approach, mature style and clear conception as a dramatist. "Marino Faliero," writes William J. Calvert, "is the combined product of two impelling desires - for regularity and for historical truth - and is welded together with a practical eye to effect." And the ultimate result of these two conscious desires of Byron is a drama which stands out on its own dramatic merits. *Marino Faliero* is both as literature and an theatre/effective play.

Byron's next drama is *Sardanapalus*. It was begun in January and completed in May, 1821, and published by Murray in the same volume with *The Two Foscari* and *Cain* in December, 1821. *Sardanapalus* is the second play of the historical trio (*Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*) in which Byron has followed a consistent and definite theory of drama to bring about dramatic reform. For the subject, he now turns to the Assyrian history. *Sardanapalus* is a tragedy in five acts.

Sardanapalus, king of Nineveh and Assyria earns displeasure of a section of his subjects for indulging in sensual pleasure of life. He wrongs his queen - Zarina, and is

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63 Calvert, op. cit. p. 171.

64 Taborski, op. cit. p.113. Jeffrey in his unsigned review of the play in *Edinburgh Review*, XXXV (Sept. 1821), considers it the "work of a man of genius" and thinks that if the poet "would digest his matter a little more," "he might produce something that would command universal admiration." (Vide Byron: The Critical Heritage, ed. Andrew Rutherford, (Vikas Publications, 1970) p. 213.)
infatuated by the Ionian slave girl - Myrrha. It is his queen's brother - Salemenes who first seeks to dissuade the king from his intoxication of idle pleasure and tries to make him aware of the people's discontent. The king living in his own pleasure-paradise pays no heed to Salemenes. But soon the revolt breaks out. Salemenes with his timely-taken steps checks it, and produces the arrested leaders of the conspiracy - Arbaces and Beleses before the king. The king disbelieving their alleged disloyalty sets them free. But soon the rebels are successful in launching a terrible revolt that ultimately breaks through the king's spell of pleasure and credulity. The king joins the fight in person, and gets wounded. The hope of victory being faint, Salemenes requests the king to send away his queen and three sons to a safer shelter. This is done under the cover of darkness. The assault of the rebels takes more virulent form, and Salemenes, and other who have fought for the king are killed. Sardanapalus, helpless and disappointed, asks Myrrha to look for her safety, but she resolves not to leave the king alone in his impending wreck. When the rebels start pouring into the palace, and all hopes of the king's victory is gone, Sardanapalus gives away the key of the royal treasury to his faithful follower - Pania, and with Myrrha, mounts the burning pile heaped around the throne and perishes.

Lord Byron displays his admirable power of plot-construction in Sardanapalus. The central conflict of the drama is between self and circumstance. Sardanapalus' tragedy is that despite his sincere abhorrence for bloodshed and war, despite
his avowed principle of following the path of peace and pleasure, he is made to embark upon bloody actions against his will, and dies a tragic death. The plot of this tragedy has been constructed to show with utmost dramatic dexterity the tragedy of Sardanapalus - a lover of peace and pleasure.

The drama opens with Salemenes in soliloquy. The purport of the soliloquy is directed against the ideal of life as embraced by the king - Sardanapalus. He seeks to rouse the king from his dream of Epicurean life to kingly actions and duties.

I will not see
The blood of Nimrod and Semiramis
Sink in the earth, and thirteen hundred years
Of Empire ending like a shepherd's tale;
He must be roused.

(I.i. 5-9.)

This speech of Salemenes aims to set the atmosphere of the play and to present the scope of dramatic actions. Act I, scene ii begins with Sardanapalus effeminately dressed, attended by a train of women and slaves. The king is in his gay mood, and looking forward to the pleasure of the banquet to be arranged at midnight in the pavilion over the Euphrates. But the entry of Salemenes with the sole intention of "He must be roused" (I.i. 9) sets first the atmosphere of opposition to the king's will and ideal. This entry is effectively dramatic, and offers the desired note of contrast. The gay and light mood with which the scene opens passes into seriousness.
Sal.  I would but have recalled thee from thy dream;
Better by me awakened than rebellion.

(I.ii. 200-201.)

The scene is very important. It reveals the contrast between what Sardanapalus seeks to follow in life, and what his queen's brother seeks to make him follow. The conflict is one of ideals, and in this, the king's ideal triumphs. Sardanapalus is resolved to enjoy the midnight hour with the Ionian girl - Myrrha and others in the pavilion. Act II, scene i opens with the actual threats of rebellion led by Arbaces and Beleses. They are lying in wait for the midnight hour, when Sardanapalus will be with his girls in the pavilion, and they will take that advantage.

The first cup which he drains will be the last
Quaffed by the live of Nimrod.

(II.i. 52-3.)

But, they are arrested by a surprise attack led by Salemenes. The king is now half-roused to the realities. He comes forward with a sword taken from one of his guards, and the conspirators submit to him. Sardanapalus sets them free even against the warning of Salemenes. The scene is full of spectacular actions, and adds to the theatrical effect. Its dramatic importance is immense in the sense that the scene shows Sardanapalus' tragic blunder in believing in the conspirators, and setting the blood-hounds free when their throats are under his heels. The king's clemency has touched the heart of Arbaces; his rebellious will is now weak, but Beleses is obdurate. He seeks to incite the
smothered spirit of his comrade. His task becomes easy when Pania carries to them the king's orders to return to their respective satrapies of Babylon and Media. The entrance of Pania with king's orders is highly significant from the dramatic point of view. It sets the ball of action rolling more speedily than ever. The scene is well devised and interesting. Act III begins with Sardanaapalus among his guests in the banquet. The atmosphere is gay within, but tempestuous without. The sudden entry of Pania "with his sword and garments bloody" changes at once the gay scene into a grave and serious one. The theatrical effect of the scene is powerful; the contrast is striking, and the scene shows the climax of the drama. Taborski is entirely correct when he says:

"There are not many plays which can boast a climax more theatrically effective than that of Sardanaapalus. The transition from the joyous revel to the confusion that follows the ominous news is matched by the metamorphosis of the king from the effeminate sensualist into the brave monarch and warrior."65

The circumstance of the outbreak of rebellion presents itself in a highly dramatic way; it jerks the peace-loving, pleasure-seeking Sardanaapalus so violently that he finds no time to choose otherwise than to act as the situation demands. He arms himself and stands with his soldiers and fights and is slightly wounded. Even Salemenes has to say to the king —

65Taborski, op. cit. p.122.
This great hour has proved
The brightest and most glorious of your life.

(III.i. 342-43.)

The scene is full of actions, stage-fights included. Taborski's comment on it is worth noting. "It is particularly interesting," he writes, "that the theatrical writer asserted himself in Byron as against the purely literary dramatist."

Act IV begins with Sardanapalus asleep, and Myrrha soliloquizing over the sleeping king. The beginning promises a relief of tension, but the king's account of the nightmare soon heightens the psychological tension. The parting scene between Sardanapalus and his wronged queen - Zarina is indeed very touching. Sardanapalus is now doubly awakened, not only to his kingly duties and responsibilities, but also to the worth of his wedded wife's love. Act V shows the tragic resolution of the plot. The last scene is theatrically very effective. There is rising tension; and the dramatic actions speedily move towards the catastrophe with the death of Salemenes and the entrance of the frightened officer giving the most appalling news that the furious Euphrates has thrown down the city wall giving easy entrance to the victorious rebels. The theatrical effect of the scene showing Sardanapalus and Myrrha mounting the burning pyre is very great. In a word, Byron has been able to bring the drama to an effective close, and shows in Sardanapalus his superb skill and power in regard

66Ibid.
Byron's general constructive abilities, and finds technical faults in his plays, has to admit, that "Sardanapalus is a well constructed play."\textsuperscript{67}

As in plot-construction, so also in characterization, Byron is at his best in Sardanapalus. Sardanapalus, Salemenes, and Myrrha are the three important characters best developed through action\textsuperscript{s} and speeches. The hero is Sardanapalus. Like most of the tragic heroes he is credulous. Before he is roused to realities, Sardanapalus is given to voluptuous ease, forgetful of his kingly duties and responsibilities. But the circumstance breaks his spell, and in the rest of the drama, he is almost a different man. Sardanapalus' regeneration comes, not through love, but through circumstance. Some critics, of whom Whitmore is one, are doubtful about the moral regeneration of the hero.\textsuperscript{68} But it is quite clear especially, from his last meeting with his wronged queen, Zarina (IV.i.) that Sardanapalus undergoes a moral regeneration.

My gentle, wronged Zarina!
I am the very slave of Circumstance
And impulse - borne away with every breath!
Misplaced upon the throne - misplaced in life.
I know not what I could have been, but feel
I am not what I should be - let it end.

(IV.i. 329-34)

\textsuperscript{67}Chew, oo. cit. pp. 56-7.

\textsuperscript{68}Whitmore, op. cit. p.88.
the self-forcedful king is now self-critical and self-conscious. His self-awareness distinctly points to his moral regeneration; his realization of the true worth of his queen's love marks a distinct stage of his moral development. He says to Zari:

Had I never loved
But thee, I should have been an unproposed
Monarch of honouring nations.

(IV.1.430-32.)

Chev has only vaguely hinted at this point.

Most of the critics have looked upon this character as the self-portrait of Byron himself. "Sardanapalus offers a remarkable self-portrait,"69 says G. Wilson Knight, "The poet's self-portraiture," says Chew, "in the character of Sardanapalus is very evident."70 Leslie A. Marchand's stress on the point is evident when he says, that "as a projection of idealised Byronic qualities Sardanapalus becomes more understandable and more interesting."71 Andre Maurois goes to the extent of saying that "Sardanapalus led precisely the life that Byron led at the Palazzo Haceno, and answered his friends' reproaches with an eulogy of pleasure."72 How far this is correct, we do not like to discuss; our main concern is to see how far the character of Sardanapalus is dramatically satisfying. Sardanapalus is an excellent creation and "more

69 Knight, Lord Byron: Christian Virtues, p.133.
70 Chew, op. cit. p.113.
71 Marchand, op. cit. p.205.
comolex than any other that Byron drew."73 Professor Knight is charmed by this character, and declares in unequivocal terms, that "He is Byron's 'superman'."74 Knight is, on the whole, correct; for though not a superman from the point of view of an ideal, Sardanaapalus is undoubtedly Byron's super creation from the dramatic point of view. He is a life-size character of tremendous mental conflict - a living figure constituting the real tragic beauty and dramatic worth of the play.

As against this character, the characters of Salemenes and Myrrha are skilfully balanced. Salemenes offers a strong and dramatically powerful contrast to the hero. He may be called in a way, Sardanapalus' conscience. He is the most lively and full-drawn among the sub-ordinate characters of the drama. The character of Myrrha is also excellently drawn. She and Zarina are soft beauties; Myrrha is the best among the female characters of Lord Byron. Myrrha has been identified with the Countess La Guiccioli75 with whom Byron had once been infatuated. Jerome J. McGann, while discussing the role of Myrrha in the play, says that she is both the "lover" and the "moral antagonist" of king Sardanapalus.76 Myrrha seeks to rouse the king no less than Salemenes to the ideal of a king; she seeks to make him history-conscious, and says to him -

73 Chew, op. cit. p.111.
74 Knight, G. Wilson, The Burning Oracle, p. 248.
75 Chew, op. cit. p.115.
Myr. Look to the annals of thine Empire's founders.

(I.ii. 547.)

When Sardanapalus is obstinate in enjoying the midnight hour on the Euohrates (I.ii.), Myrrha tries to dissuade him with a sort of remonstrance.

Myr. Oh, Monarch, listen.

How many a day and moon thou hast reclined
Within these palace walls in silken dalliance,
And never shown thee to thy people's longing;

Wilt thou not

Yield to the few still faithful a few hours,
For them, for thee, for thy past father's race,
And for thy sons' inheritance?

(I.ii. 78-90.)

These and many other instances may be cited to show that Myrrha is a strong foil to the king like Salemenes. She is a lover of Sardanapalus, and like all true lovers she sincerely wishes to protect the king against all possible moral, degenerations and material damages.

In a letter to Thomas Moore, dated June 22, 1821, Byron writes: "I have sent Murray a new tragedy, ycleped 'Sardanapalus' writ according to Aristotle - all, save the chorus - I could not reconcile me to that." 77 It is true

that Byron has followed the rules of unities more closely in this tragedy than in any other of his dramas - not even his Venetian plays. But Sardanapalus shows a little deviation from Byron's theory of drama as followed in Marino Faliero and The Two Foscari. The deviation is rather conscious. The Byronic theory of drama, as pointed out earlier, does not normally absorb love-theme as a proper subject for tragedy. But he has put more love into this tragedy than in any other of his dramas. His entry into the Diary on January 13, 1821 shows the background of this revision of his theory. It is done under the influence of his Italian mistress, Countess Teresa Guiccioli.

"She quarrelled with me," writes Byron in his Diary, "because I said that love was not the loftiest theme for true tragedy; ........... I believe she was right. I must put more love into 'Sardanapalus' than I intended."\(^\text{78}\)

The love-element in Sardanapalus is so prominent that even G. Wilson Knight finds close affinity between this tragedy and Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. "Sardanapalus," he says, "is a Byronic reworking of Antony and Cleopatra. The hero's position as imperial master criticised for sexual laxity and irresponsible hedonism closely corresponds to Antony's."\(^\text{79}\)

But the comparison is not perhaps justified in details. The later developments of the character of Sardanapalus differentiates him from Antony. Myrrha who is obviously a Cleopatra to

\(^\text{78}\)Letters and Diaries. II. p. 566.

\(^\text{79}\)Knight, Byron and Shakespeare, 1966. p. 258.
Professor Knight, is no Cleopatra at all in this tragedy. Myrrha never seeks to keep the king absorbed in her love, as Cleopatra does; she does not aim at securing the exclusive attention of her royal lover to herself, and to nothing else; Myrrha is not jealous of others in the matter of love. She is not aporehensive like Cleopatra, lest others should divert the king's heart from her. What is more, she adopts no means to fascinate Sardanaapalus and draw him to her from his kingly duties. Rather she, like Salemenes seeks to remind the king of the duties he has neglected (I.ii.). When Myrrha supports Salemenes' point of view in relation to the king's duties, even Sardanaapalus has to say -

This is strange;
The gentle and the austere are both against me,
And urge me to revenge.

(II.i. 578-80.)

Myrrha, like Salemenes, has both love and good-will for the king, and is essentially different from Cleopatra as any one thing from another. It follows, therefore, that Sardanaapalus is not a love-tragedy in the manner of Antony And Cleopatra. Sardanaapalus is actually a psychological tragedy in the sense that the hero's transformation under the stress of circumstance hostile to his true inner nature is the central theme of this drama. A devoted pacifist is awakened by the circumstances to

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80M.G. Cooke also thinks that Sardanaapalus is primarily a love tragedy. Vide The Restoration Ethos of Byron's Classical Plays, in PMLA, LXXIX, 1964.
the unthought-of-truth that his pacifism is not enough to preserve himself and his position. We hear the disillusioned king's apostrophic farewell speech to his beloved Assyria at the last moment before he mounts the burning pyre. The pathos of his psychological tragedy reveals itself when Sardanapalus says -

Adieu, Assyria!

I loved thee well, my own, my father's land,

.................................

I sated thee with peace and joys; and this
Is my reward! and now I owe thee nothing,
Not even a grave.

(V.i.)

The speech shows where lies the tragedy of the king.

Some of the critics have noticed paradoxical elements in Sardanapalus. M.K. Joseph finds, that the story of Sardanapalus is the story of a king "doomed to betrayal for his very virtues." G. Wilson Knight traces paradoxical elements in the character of the hero. "The hero, poet-like, is somewhat bisexual," he says, "aiming to fuse man's reason with woman's emotional depth, while repudiating the evil concomitants." These and other paradoxical elements are found in the very core of the stylistic and the conceptual pattern of the play by Paulino M. Lim.

82Knight, The Burning Oracle, p. 247.
"The dominant syntactic strategy of Sardanapalus,"
writes Lim, "presents antithetical elements, ideas,
allusions, and metaphors that create paradoxes."^84

The paradoxical elements as brought out and studied by Lim,
serve the function of dramatic contrast in the play and form
a special stylistic device of Lord Byron. Besides this, Byron's
verbal style in *Sardanapalus* approaches the common conversational
speech-pattern; and it is not hard to imagine, that the poet
tried to solve the problem of communicability by making his
dramatic poetry close to prose, yet not shown of poetic beauty.

*Sardanapalus* reveals intense dramatic power, as no
other play of Byron does. It demands special place among the
dramas of the Romantic poets in general, and among the dramas
of Byron in particular. "*Sardanapalus* is in a different category
altogether:" writes E.M. Butler, "Psychologically absorbing and
deeply moving, it represents Byron's high-water mark as a
dramatist."^85 Wilson Knight also considers it the "most
exquisite single creation" of Lord Byron.^86 The theatrical
aspect of *Sardanapalus* makes Taborski think that Byron's sense
of the theatre has found fullest expression in this drama.^87
And yet it is really surprising when Byron declares that he has
not written such an intensely theatrical play for the stage!

We have discussed in the first section of this chapter the

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^87Taborski, op. cit. p. 123.
probable reasons for the same and maintained that to take these statements of the poet at their face value is to go away from the truth, revealed through an examination of his plays. *Sardanapalus* is unquestionably a good piece of literature and also good theatre.

Byron's next play is *The Two Foscari*, *An Historical Tragedy* in five acts. It was begun on June 12 and completed on July 9, 1821. The poet again turned to the Venetian history for the plot of this drama, as he did for *Marino Faliero*. With *The Two Foscari*, one important phase of Byron's dramatic development came to an end.

Francis Foscari is the old Doge of Venice. His son - Jacopo Foscari is arrested on the charge of having committed treachery against the state by writing a letter to the state's enemy - the Duke of Milan. He is under the trial of the supreme tribunal - The Council of Ten, one of the members of which is James Loredano - a sworn enemy of the Doge - Foscari. In course of the trial, extreme tortures are inflicted on the accused to make him confess the crime. But the young Foscari endures them all and confesses nothing. Loredano secretly works out his plan of wrecking his private vengeance upon the Foscari family. Under the active influence of Loredano, the Ten gives the verdict that the young Foscari must go to life-banishment in Candia. Marina, wife of Jacopo seeks the permission of The Ten to allow her to accompany her husband, and gets it. The old Doge maintains a perfectly judicial attitude of neutrality in respect of his son's affairs.
A high crime, which I neither can deny
Nor palliate, as parent or as Duke.

(II.i. 97-8)

While parting from the old father and his native land for good, the young Foscari, feeble and sorrow-stricken, dies of heart-break. Loredano does not stop yet; he now aims at the Doge, and even before the funeral of Jacopo is over, he influences the members of The Ten and those of The Forty to pass the decree of Doge's dismissal. The old Doge, grief-stricken, obeys the orders of his dismissal. He instantly gets ready to vacate the Ducal palace even with the deadbody of his son - Jacopo and widowed daughter-in-law - Marina. While leaving the palace, the old Foscari, victim of suppressed emotions, feels thirsty and asks for water. Loredano gives him water mixed with poison. The old man takes it and dies. Loredano is thus fully revenged.

Though written immediately after Sardanapalus, The Two Foscari is closer, in respect of its theme and the technique, to Marino Faliero, the first of his three classical tragedies. Long before the action of Act I begin, Jacopo Foscari is supposed to have committed an action against the interest of the state of Venice, which is made known to us through the speeches of the characters in retrospect. Byron has adopted the flash back technique in this play, as he has done earlier in Manfred. The drama opens with the trial of of the young Foscari, and we can well guess the outcome of the trial from the dialogues of Loredano and Barbarigo which reveal a strong revenge-motive.
working behind the scene of trial. The trial scene with the infliction of tortures on the accused is not shown on the stage. The groans and shrieks of the accused under tortures for confessing the crime are heard only. But the entrance of Marina lends some movement and vigour to the scene. Act II begins with Doge Foscari signing with trembling hand the paper sent by The Ten relating to the punishment of Jacopo. The scene lacks spectacular action, but there is some tension in it, especially when Marina and the Doge are in dialogue. Taborski rightly maintains, that the energy displayed by Marina "saves the successive scenes from dragging unduly." 88 Marina, moreover, heightens the sense of contrast and opposition in the scene. The scene changes to the dungeon in Act III with Jacopo Foscari as the prisoner. The prison may have some theatrical effect on the audience. But the scene lacks action. With the setting out of Jacopo Foscari from the dark dungeon for his darker life-banishment in Candia, drama comes to a sort of resolution in Act III, and the vital dramatic force seems to have spent itself up even at this stage. This is a serious structural defect. But in Act IV the seemingly spent-up force of dramatic action again gathers strength and vigour somehow to drag the remaining scenes to the tragic resolution in Act V. Act IV opens with Loredano and Barbarigo in conversation. The dialogue is revelatory. Loredano is not yet fully satisfied in spite of his effecting Jacopo's life-banishment.

Lor.  

This day
Shall be the last of the old Doge's reign,
As the first of his son's last banishment,
And that is vengeance.

(IV.i. 18-21.)

He now wants to put an end to the old Doge's reign. He does all this for the gratification of his deep-seated evil motive. The scene is dramatically effective, and shows the departure of Jacopo not only from his beloved father and motherland, but also from this world. Jacopo dies of heart break at the moment when he bids farewell to his beloved Venice. Byron, it seems, has grown impatient to show the death of Doge's son; for the display of Jacopo's death does not seem quite natural. It is artificially contrived. Act V shows the dismissal of the old Doge from his Ducal position even before the funeral of his son is over, and his subsequent death by poison. This is followed by dialogues between Chief of the Ten and Marina in which the former maintains obstinacy in regard to giving the Doge a state funeral, while the latter opposes him vehemently with sarcastic remarks. The drama, as Taborski rightly thinks, should have been concluded immediately after the Doge's death. For the rest is unnecessary and unable to sustain the interest of the audience.

Now, let us look at the plot of The Two Foscari as a whole. The drama lacks one of the most important things - the

89 Oo. cit. p. 117.
conflict in the real sense of the term. There is no opposition in the plot. The actions of The Ten against the old Doge and his son are one-sided; there is no dramatic resistance from the Foscaries. Jacopo is a prisoner and has no power to resist; the old Doge is powerless even as the sovereign of the state. His position has made him incapable of opposition against the actions of the Council of the Ten of which he is the president. Professor Chew has also noticed the lack of this essentially dramatic element of the plot and remarks -

"It is hardly tragic, for there is no resistance; it is not dramatic, for the conflict is one-sided, that is, it is brute force against impotence, which is no true conflict at all."\(^90\)

Only Marina offers some resistance in words, though not in action. The psychological base is thus, on the whole, weak. But, it is clear, that Byron has been able to stick to his theory of drama in so far as the observance of unities and maintenance of simplicity are concerned. The plot is simple, and the unities are followed without, however, succeeding to produce an effective drama. Of his three classical tragedies, The Two Foscari is the weakest as a play.

Byron's characterization in The Two Foscari is also weak. The minor characters, like Loredano and Marina are more vividly drawn than the major. Loredano's moving passions are hatred and revenge, and in following his inveterate motive, he

\(^{90}\)Chew, op. cit. p.52.
is relentless and Satanic in obduracy. Though a subordinate character, Loredano is dramatically most important in the sense that he lends tempo to the actions of the drama and sustains them up to the end; *The Two Foscari* begins and ends with his speeches. Marina contains in her the force of opposition against Loredano. She is a simple lady, not very much aware of her father-in-law's practical difficulties and duties as a sovereign of the state. She is wild in her inveighing the Doge for not doing anything for her husband and his son - Jacopo. She scoffs at his patriotism and sense of duties. "And this is Patriotism?/To me it seems the worst barbarism" (II.i. 427-28). Marina is sarcastic in speech, bold in her opposition, caustic in her remark, fierce in protest, but tender in love and duty as a woman. She is not a passive character. To her, her husband and children are above the state. She represents a type of womanhood Byron has not conceived of so far. In the midst of passive sufferings of the Foscari family, Marina is the only active force vehement in her protest. She is a life-affirmative character.

In a letter to Murray, Lord Byron wrote on September 20, 1821 -

"What I seek to show in 'The Foscari' is the suppressed passions, rather than the rant of the present day."91

If this is so, then the character of the old Doge - Francis Foscari shows this "suppressed passion" in him. The father and

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91 *Letters and Journals*, V. 455, p. 248.
the Doge are certainly in conflict in him; the father softens at the tortures and punishment of Jacopo, but the Doge is unmoved and resolved to do his duty to preside over the meeting of The Ten and to give his sovereign assent to the decree.

I shrank not from him:
But I have other duties than a father's;
The state would not dispense me from those duties;

(II.i. 183-85.)

The loyalty to his ducal position and the sense of duty as the sovereign of the state cannot allow his fatherly emotions and thoughts to gain an upper hand, and thus they are suppressed in his mind. The character of the Doge Foscari is a living personification of the suppressed passions; his heart burns, but his mouth is shut, and his hands are tight, and he is unmoved and austere. The suppressed passions are released only slightly towards the close, when he is removed from the position he holds. Bereft of his son and position, the octogenarian Foscari stands as a man in all his desolation and indignant feelings. Now for him, to die is to live in peace.

my son and I will go together—
He to his grave, and I to pray for mine.

(V.i. 250-51.)

When he feels thirsty while leaving the Ducal palace with the corpse of his son and his widowed daughter-in-law, he accepts from the hand of Loredano the goblet of water, saying—
Francis Foscari knows by intuition too well, that there is poison in it; but for a man like him, it is a need at this hour. It is a need to die, not to live any longer, and Loredano's goblet can but meet the necessity he feels so sharply. He takes the drink and dies. Francis Foscari is a tragic character and the hero of this drama. He is a victim of circumstances. But from the dramatic point of view, Francis Foscari is not a very lively and moving character.

The character of Jacopo Foscari is also not impressive. He is passionate, extremely emotional and enduring, but passive. He is a man of calm suffering. His love for his motherland—Venice is a passion. "I ask no more than a Venetian grave" (I.i. 144.). To live even in the dark Venetian dungeon is still better for him than to live in banishment in Candia. At the news of the orders for banishment, he is more shocked.

Then my last hope's gone.
I could endure my dungeon, for 'twas Venice;

(III.i. 126-27.)

Byron presents Jacopo Foscari as a helpless and pathetic figure—impotent and calm in his sufferings, sentimental and life-denying, so to say. Michael V. DePorte finds that Byron's heroes are always afflicted from a madness of response, rather than of perception. Jacopo Foscari is no doubt a character
of this type. His "passion for Venice is so intense, that it blinds him to every consideration of prudence and family responsibility....."92

In comparison with Marino Faliero and Sardanapalus, The Two Foscari is certainly less important and less interesting, and technically more defective. But it is, nevertheless, not unactable. Taborski, rather maintains that of the four stage plays of Lord Byron, The Two Foscari is the easiest to produce on the stage. He, at the same time, admits the limited scope of its theatrical success;93 and we think Taborski is quite correct on this point.

Byron's next attempt at drama is Cain: A Mystery. It was begun on July 16, and completed on September 9, 1821. Though written immediately after his three "regular" plays, Cain shows a sudden deviation from them. The change is noticeable even to a casual reader. Cain marks the beginning of a different stage of Byron's dramatic career. For subject, Byron now turns to the Bible, and not to history as he did in his Venetian plays and Sardanapalus. Cain is a drama in three acts.

The drama opens effectively with the entire family of Adam offering a sacrifice to God - the Maker, except Cain. All sing the praise of their Creator, except Cain who does not join them. This first scene of the drama has some theatrical quality: it shows the spectacular action of the family worship,

93Taborski, op. cit. p. 117.
with Cain striking a contrast in not joining others in the action. This is followed by dialogues in which Cain strikes the note of scepticism, while the rest stick to orthodoxy. This being over, Lucifer meets Cain when left alone in his thought. Lucifer tells Cain, that

They are the thoughts of all
Worthy of thought; - 'tis your immortal part
Which speaks within you.

(I.i. 102-104.)

Cain is in mental conflict, and Lucifer is able to resolve this conflict of Cain into a fixed idea. Cain seeks Lucifer's teaching and agrees to follow him. Act II has no connection with the earth. The scenes are laid in the Abyss of Space and in Hades. The entire act lacks action of dramatic importance. It is entirely devoted to metaphysical queries and discussion. Lucifer lays bare before Cain's eyes the mysterious world of Death and the futility of life of the mortal. He also seeks to rouse jealousy in Cain against his brother - Abel. He strikes the point that Abel is loved by God, and his parents.

Thy father loves him well - so does thy God.

(II.ii. 340.)

Cain's journey into the Space and Hades has intensified the frustration of his mind, and prepares to some extent the psychological background that remains behind the action of Act III. Act III is by far the best among the three acts of this drama. The circumstances leading to the killing of Abel, and Cain's remorse are dramatically presented. After much
persuasion, Abel is able to make Cain ready for making offerings to God. Cain makes his offerings, and a sudden blast of wind blows the offerings off. On the other hand, Abel's sacrifice is accepted. Cain, unforgetful of what Lucifer has said immediately grows jealous, and out of disgust and frustration wants to destroy the very altar raised for sacrifice. Abel ooososes him, and in the heat of the moment Cain strikes Abel with a brand. Abel falls at once and dies. Cain comes to himself only when the deed is done, and bewails the death of his brother with brotherly feelings. Eve curses him and Adam asks him to leave him at once. Cain moves out of Eden with his sister-wife Adah and children to live a desolate life. In Act III, there are dramatic movements, spectacular actions, psychological tensions and an interesting human situation.

Cain, on the whole, is not a theatrical piece. It is speculative in character, and Byron seems to have lost much as a dramatist in it. From his earlier austerity of the classical rules and dramatic considerations, Byron seems to have come to enjoy a sort of holiday in Cain. Here, Byron the dramatist is not so important as Byron the debator.

The characters of Cain are both human beings and spirits, and are shadowy in their feature. The hero is Cain - the eldest son of Adam. He is an intellectual rebel questioning the traditional belief and orthodoxy. He, like Faust, has thirst for knowledge - not for its own sake, but for satisfying his metaphysical doubts. Peter L. Thorslev has also noticed
the Faustian qualities in the character of Cain. Leonard Michaels has rightly brought out a fundamental difference between Cain and other tragic heroes of Lord Byron, like Manfred, and that is, Cain, unlike Manfred does not suffer from the memory of his guilty past. Cain suffers from the effect of his parents' sin; and the realization of this actually remains behind his metaphysical queries and intellectual rebellion.

Toil! and wherefore should I toil? - because
My father could not keep his place in Eden?
What had I done in this? I was unborn:
I sought not to be born; nor love the state
To which that birth has brought me.

(I.i. 65-9.)

Cain does not find answers to these questions; his parents have no queries, nor have any answer, save one - and that is - "'Twas his will,/And he is good" (I.i. 75-6). Cain is not satisfied at this.

I judge but by the fruits - and they are bitter -
Which I must feed on for a fault not mine.

(I.i. 79-80.)

The thoughts like these make him resentful and angry. "His attitude," says Whitmore, "provides a fertile soil in which Lucifer will plant further seeds of rebellion and anger."
Cain, Whitmore thinks, is the study of frustration. "His tragedy is that of the man of pride," says Whitmore, "who thinks himself right and blames others, not himself, for what are actually his own failings." On this point we should like to differ from Whitmore. We find that behind the tragedy and frustration of Cain lies his intellectual awakening; he cannot accept things as others of his family do, and is not a blind believer in the ways of God. He finds contradictions, but finds no answer to them, and is frustrated. His mental irritation is intensified through his connection with Lucifer, who makes Cain's contradictions more glaring, his frustration more intense. Cain's murder of Abel is but an effect of this discontent. Edward E. Bostetter seems to have looked at the tragedy of Cain from this angle. In his illuminating article—*Byron and the Politics of Paradise*, Bostetter writes—

"Cain can be interpreted as the tragedy of the intellectual rebel who attempts to defy and break from the traditional faith." And it will not be unjust to say, that the cause of breaking away from "the traditional faith" is his intellectual awakening, for which Cain cannot but be an intellectual rebel. Cain's intellectual queries sometimes remind us of Milton's Satan. In *Paradise Lost* (Bk.IV), Satan also questions in the same spirit—

Knowledge forbid'n?
Suspicious, reasonless. Why should thir Lord
Envie them that? Can it be sin to know,
Can it be death? and do they onely stand
By Ignorance, is that thir happie state,
The proof of thir obedience and thir faith?

Peter Thorslev regards Cain as the true prototype of "Romantic rebels, ....... in the cause of Romantic self-assertion."\(^{100}\)

Cain is a living character. We realize that he is a victim of awareness, and we find it easy to sympathise with him. In this drama, Cain is the only character that lends human interest to the piece; he is one with human strength and weakness, and in his tragedy which may even be called the tragedy of human condition or predicament, we feel the tragedy of man in his position and circumstances. The characters, like Adam and Eve, though mythologically related to the human race, are given in bare outlines and mythically distant from us.

Byron has not \textit{written} \textit{Cain} in a way he has \textit{written} his stage plays. In \textit{Cain} he has created a purely literary drama in his "gay metaphysical style"\(^{101}\) with no thought of the theatre. Its dramatic defects should not, therefore, be taken too seriously; \textit{Cain} is a pure mental theatre in the sense in which the term is generally understood, though Byron's definition of the term may not quite apply to it. It is a mental theatre in

\(^{100}\)Thorslev, \textit{op. cit.} p. 178.

\(^{101}\)\textit{Letters and Diaries}. II. p. 667.
the sense as Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is understood.

As a literary drama *Cain* is, no doubt, beautiful. "It is a most extra-ordinary piece of composition," writes Sir Walter Scott, "and he (Byron) seems to me in many places fairly to have drawn the bow of Milton." 102 Shelley also admired this work in eloquent terms. "Cain is apocalyptic," Shelley writes to John Gisborne, "- it is a revelation not before communicated to man." 103 *Cain* has something of Miltonic grandeur all about it; Earth, Space and Hades enter into the constitution of this drama, as in *Paradise Lost*; the characters are the Spirits and the representatives of mankind; the theme is the assertion of free-will against the Biblical conception of God-as-Law; the style is matching the subject, and the poetic imagination is as lofty as the theme is vast. *Cain* has something of epical vastness and grandeur - it is grave in tone, and deep in its dealing with the cosmic problem of metaphysical weight. Commenting on *Cain* and *Heaven and Earth*, McGann says, that both the plays represent "Byron's most co-ordinated attempt to dramatize the fundamental cosmic premise of man's situation on earth and his relation to the gods." 104 *Cain* bears some comparison with Milton's Satan as a protagonist of metaphysical rebellion. Both Cain and Satan have the spirit of defiance, love of individual freedom, and choice of free-will. Peter Thorslev rightly thinks, that though Byron's *Cain* and

102 *Scott's Letters*. II. (To Stewart Rose, December 18, 1821.)


104 McGann, Jerome J., op. cit. p.245.
Milton's epic have some common features, the former is more appealing to the modern readers than the latter. Cain's appeal is primarily intellectual, as the appeal of Paradise Lost is primarily religious. E.M. Butler thinks that Cain has won for Byron a place by the side of Goethe. As a drama it is painfully bad, but as literature, Cain is a superb creation of Byronic genius.

Byron's next exercise in dramatic composition is Heaven and Earth. A Mystery, composed in October, 1821 and published in 1823.

Heaven and Earth is again based on the Biblical material like Cain, and has close affinities with the latter. Both of them are called by Byron "Mystery"; the human characters of both the plays belong to Adam's family in broader terms; in both, the vast universe is the scene; the characters are human as well as supernatural beings. In one respect, of course, Heaven and Earth is of a quite different type, unlike any other of Byron's plays. Structurally, as well as in spirit, this second Mystery of Byron comes nearer to Shelley's Prometheus Unbound. Like the latter, this play is a lyrical drama with chorus of spirits and of mortals. Byron writes to Thomas Moore from Pisa on March 4, 1822 -

"The new Mystery is less speculative than 'Cain,' and very pious; besides, it is chiefly lyrical."107

105 Thorslev, op. cit. p. 178.
106 Butler, op. cit. p. 188.
107 Letters and Journals. V. 482. p. 312.
Heaven and Earth is shorter than Cain, and seems to be incomplete. The play that exists is a fragment of three scenes (Part I), and the remaining parts remain unwritten.

Anah and Aholibamah are the two sisters of Cain's race, enamoured of Azaziel and Samiasa, the two angels of heaven. But Jaohet and Irad - the two sons of Noah are also enamoured of these two sisters who prefer the love of the angel to the that of man. Japhet suffers from the disappointment of Anah's love, but Irad bears it up patiently. Jaohet goes to the cavern of Caucasus to soothe his sad spirit and indulge in gloomy thoughts. In the same place, the two angels and their human lady-loves meet. Noah now appears on the scene and asks his sons to shake off their weakness for Anah. He tells him of the coming flood, when none but the sons of Noah will survive. When the great flood approaches to sink the vice-ridden earth, the two angels fly off with Anah and her sister. The water rises; men flee in every direction in consternation, but Noah's Ark floats towards Japhet who in his gloomiest thought of this universal doom stands upon a rock.

The plot of Heaven and Earth is slight and simple. The background is made up of natural objects: the mountains, caverns, and caves. The plot and actions have less theatrical value than those of Cain. The last scene shows something of Byron's sense of the theatre. The drama seems to personify the love sensual and the love divine, and in dramatizing the conflict between the two, Byron seems to have lost hold on the dramatist in him. Unities are, roughly speaking, observed,
though the result of this observance is ultimately not happy.

Heaven and Earth is more a poem than a drama. Byron also does not pretend to call it a drama in the proper sense of the term. It is, therefore proper, as Taborski has justly said, that Heaven and Earth should be judged as a lyrical drama.\textsuperscript{108} It is, like Cain, a play having a family-likeliness with Shelley's Prometheus Unbound and Hellas. It seems to have been written in a perfunctory manner, and in lighter vein than its other Biblical counterpart – Cain. Herbert Read thinks, and thinks, perhaps rightly, that Heaven and Earth also shows Shelley's influence on Byron,\textsuperscript{109} and as we have said, in regard to style, structure, and character it is more a kith and kin of Prometheus Unbound, than of any other of Lord Byron's plays.

Professor Chew imagines Byron's difficulty in completing this work. Apart from the other affairs engaging the poet, Byron, he thinks, was faced with some artistic problem.

"To tell of the destruction of the lovers would be a long anti-climax to the stirring close of the first part. To let them escape and 'wing their way from star to star' would leave the whole problem hopelessly unsolved – creatures sinning yet unpunished, rebels against Omnipotence yet not crushed. Wisely then he (Byron) left the poem a fragment."\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{108}Taborski, op. cit. p.149.

\textsuperscript{109}Read, The True Voice of Feeling, p. 317.

\textsuperscript{110}Chew, op. cit. p.142.
Byron's problem, whether artistic or human, is not a purely literary problem. We might take the fragment as it stands, and say that it is less important from the dramatic and the theatrical point of view.

The next drama of Byron to which we now come is Werner, begun on December 18, 1821, and finished on January 20, 1822. Werner shows Byron's return to the stage drama once again. Werner is a sort of adaptation of the German tale - Kruitzner, published in Lee's Canterbury Tales, which Byron read when he was very young. Byron had begun a drama on this tale in 1815 and nearly completed the first act, and then left it. The present work is entirely a fresh attempt at dramatizing the story from the same source. The story of Werner is as follows:

Count Siegendorf, disinherited by his father for his reckless youth, and wandering under the false name - Werner, takes shelter with his wife, Josephine in a decayed palace on the frontier of Silesia. His only son - Ulric is away from him for last twelve years, and supposed to have been with his father who has disinherited his son but kept his grand-son with him. In a stormy cold night, a Hungarian traveller - Gabor takes shelter in the same palace where Werner stays, and some time after, Baron Stralenheim and his train of attendants arrive to pass the night in the palace. The Baron is on his way to Prague where he is going to inherit the rich estate of Siegendorf's father who has lately passed away. The Baron is a

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111 Byron, Preface to Werner, Vide Byron's Works, pp. 667-68.
distant kinsman to the late Count of Prague; he is going now
to own the rich inheritance in the absence of the son and the
grand son of the late Count. In that very night, the young
Ulric also arrives there and chances to meet his parents. The
Baron looks at Werner and is suspicious about him; he takes
Ulric into confidence without knowing his identity and asks
Ulric and others to watch the movement of Werner who, he
suspects, stands between him and his claim to the inheritance.
Werner, on the other hand, understands that this Baron is his
sole enemy who will soon deprive him of his claim to the estate
of his father. Werner tells all about it to his son - Ulric,
and secretly prepares for his escape from the palace at night.
But on the eve of his leaving the palace, Ulric comes to his
father to know, if he is the assassin of the Baron who is lying
murdered on his bed. Werner is surprised to have heard it, and
concludes, that Gabor might have done it.

Next, we meet Werner as Count Siegendorf in his
inherited castle near Prague; he has succeeded his dead father.
Ulric is urged by his father to marry Ida - daughter of the
murdered Baron. But soon a new complication arises. Gabor arrives
and gives out the secret of Baron's death. Count Siegendorf now
finds to his utter surprise and mortification, that his own son -
Ulric is the actual murderer of the Baron. Ulric also confesses
it. On this issue the father and the son stand apart; Ulric takes
leave of his father for good and departs. Ida falls senseless
when she learns that her would-be husband is her father's
murderer. Siegendorf now remains to preside over this sad show
and tragic family disintegration at a moment when everything is promising a happy and peaceful future for him.

Let us now look at the construction of the plot. The drama opens in the hall of a decayed palace in a tempestuous night. Byron has introduced most of the important dramatis personae in the very first scene which is revelatory of Werner's past life and present suffering from extreme penury and illness. It throws light further on the motive of Werner's hiding out under false name. The dialogue between the Baron and Werner in the scene is highly dramatic and shows each mysteriously suspicious of the other. The scene also shows that the Baron's suspicion is not passive; he sends his man with a closed letter to the Commandant of Frankfort to convey his object of suspicion "into some secret fortress," and Werner learns this.

Wer. "To Frankfort!"

So, so, it thickens! Aye, "the Commandant!"

This tallies well with all the prior steps
Of this cool, calculating fiend, who walks
Between me and my father's house. No doubt
He writes for a detachment to convey me
Into some secret fortress. ...........

(I.i. 614-20.)

The situation so develops is highly dramatic in the sense that it creates suspense and arouses our curiosity about the shaping of the later dramatic events. The first act is full of actions,
both psychological and spectacular, and constitutes a very interesting part of dramatic exposition. The drama begins with a slow movement, but suddenly, the atmosphere changes with the arrival of the Baron; the dramatic actions at once gain momentum. Act II scene i shows the burglary of the Baron's gold by Werner, and allows us to have a full view of the source of conflict between the Baron and Werner. Act II, scene i presents one important character - Ulric, not yet introduced. We see the reunion of Ulric with his parents. This is also a busy scene, full of actions. The fight between Gabor and Ulric is theatrically effective. The meeting between the Baron and Ulric in private is dramatically significant because it confirms what Werner tells about the Baron's sole intent and purpose to Ulric. The Baron without knowing Ulric's relation with Werner confides everything with the latter. Ulric is now fully convinced that his father's apprehensions about the wicked Baron are correct. This prepares the background of whatever happens in Act III, including the Baron's murder. Act III contains in it the climax of the plot. Ulric comes to warn his father against the danger and advises him to escape from the palace before the dawn with the help of Idenstein. To bribe the man, he also gives him his jewel. The murder of the Baron is not shown; it is only messengered. Act III, scene iv is the most important scene from the dramatic point of view. The climax of the drama lies in it. On the eve of his escape, Werner is met by his son in the garden. Ulric asks his father if he is the assassin of the Baron. This sudden breaking of the
news of murder is dramatically effective. Act IV shows the scene of action in the castle of Siegendorf, near Prague. The action takes place a few months later; Count Siegendorf (Werner) has succeeded his father. A new character - Ida, daughter of the murdered Baron is introduced now; Ulric will marry her, and this union with

The last bud of the rival branch at once
Unites the future and destroys the past.

(IV.i. 131-33.)

The scene shows the meeting between Siegendorf and the Prior Albert. The Count shows himself suffering from a sense of guilt in so far as his stealing away the late Baron's gold is concerned. His giving away that gold to the Prior to pray for the spirit of the dead is dramatically significant in the sense that Siegendorf, by doing so, gets relief from the torments of the unspoken guilt. Act V shows the scene of action also in the same hall of the Castle. The arrival of Gabor adds movement and interest to the scene; his narration of the Baron's murder pushes the dramatic actions speedily towards the catastrophe. This last act is busy in actions, mental tensions, and full of ironical turn of events. The last scene of this act is short, but compact and dramatically effective; it brings the tragedy to a proper close.

Byron's defect in building up the plot is that he has made some scenes intolerably lengthy. In Werner he has abandoned his cherished unities. The plot of Werner does not unfold any deep psychological or universal truth; the story, in this
respect, is undoubtedly inferior to that of Marino Faliero, or Sardanapalus. And though there is obviously a lack of thematic depth and weight, the story has a lot of dramatic possibilities for a stage play, and the poet has been able to organize his material to the theatrical effect.

In characterization Byron's skill is mostly limited to the portraiture of the protagonist - Werner. When the drama opens, we find the hero lamenting his past. He was disinherited by his father twenty years back for his reckless youth and marrying Josephine, daughter of an Italian exile. Werner is now a beggar; he is now ill, with nobody to sympathise with him except his wife - Josephine - the sole partner of his miserable life as it is now.

I have been a soldier,
A hunter, and a traveller, and am
A beggar, and should know the thing thou talk'st of.

(I.i. 33-5.)

Werner is emotional by nature. "I'm a thing of feelings,......" (I.i. 19.). Now he is self-critical.

But I was born to wealth, and rank and power;
Enjoyed them, loved them, and, alas! abused them,
And forfeited them by my father's wrath
In my ov'r-fervent youth:

(I.i. 77-80.)

The inherent weakness in his character is his rashness and impetuosity as revealed so far. In Act II, his speech and action
reveal him more. Werner divines the motive of Baron Stralenheim when the latter sends his man with a closed packet to the Commandant of Frankfort. He realizes that the Baron is his enemy.

this cool, calculating fiend, who walks
Between me and my father's house.

(I.i. 117-18.)

He apprehends that the Baron is planning to convey him into some secret fortress out of his material interest. He must, therefore, escape at any rate from the palace, and to bribe Baron's men to effect easy escape, he must have some gold. This thought leads Werner to a rash action; he steals Baron's gold lying on the table.

Here's gold - gold, Josephine,
Will rescue us from this detested dungeon.

(I.i. 737-38.)

Werner tries to justify this immoral action by some arguments, but cannot free himself from the remorse, or mental torments. He is mentally weak. He is essentially good, but not strong enough to overcome his impulse and infirmity of his essential nature. The result is his mental suffering. Whitmore thinks that by convincing "himself and Ulric that a crime, under certain circumstances, is hardly a crime, he unknowingly becomes, if not a murderer, at least an accessory to murder."112

But it may be thought, after all, that Werner commits the crime in a spirit of self-defence. A sense of helplessness and love

112Whitmore, oo. cit. p.122.
for life create in his mind a compounded feeling that urges him to make his way out of the threatening labyrinth of the situation he finds himself in. And this is quite clear from his speech addressed to himself immediately after he is conscious of his danger.

That he suspects me 's certain. I'm alone -
He with a numerous train: I weak - he strong
In gold, in numbers, rank, authority.

(I.i. 625-27.)

It is necessary to take into account the psychological background of Werner's crime of stealing Baron's gold, which, he thinks, may conduct him to his safety.

A study of the character of Werner shows that he is unlike the heroes of Byron's historical tragedies. He has only some affinity with Manfred. Both Manfred and Werner are guilt-conscious. Werner cannot forget his crime of theft which is still on his soul even when he has inherited his father's estate. He gives away the ill-gotten gold to the Prior Albert to give it in charity. Gabor's narration of the Baron's murder shatters the happy dream of Werner. His own sense of guilt is now further intensified when he discovers that his own son is guilty of murder. Byron seems to have shown the tragedy of Werner, issuing both from his mental and also from moral weaknesses. From theatrical point of view, Werner is an interesting character, and a lively one.

Other characters of the drama are not fully developed. Byron seems to have concentrated his attention on the hero as
usual, and the subordinate characters are a little neglected.

Werner is a domestic tragedy which has not been done with much care. It bears all the marks of haste and impatience of the author. Most of the critics and scholars including Professor Chew consider this drama unworthy of the author, and have practically ignored it. Chew finds that it is "about as complete a failure as anything in literature." It is true, that as literature, Werner is inferior to Byron's other dramas. But it has another side which should claim our attention, and this is its theatrical merit. M.K. Joseph thinks that Werner is "deliberately a play of greater action than its predecessors."

G. Wilson Knight also recognises its theatrical aspect and says that it is a "successful stage-piece," standing apart from others.

Perhaps, the most satisfactory study of Werner is T.H. Vail Motter's Byron's "Werner" Re-Estimated: A Neglected Chapter in Nineteenth Century Stage History, in which the author has discussed different aspects of this drama. "Werner must be re-examined," he says, "not as a literary work but as a theatrical document;.........."

Motter has given the detailed stage history of Werner, and comments that it "was a highly successful stage play with an unusually long stage life."

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113Chew, Preface to The Dramas of Lord Byron. He says that Byron's dramas deserve careful perusal, except Werner.


The outstanding characteristic of the play, as pointed out by Motter, "is its technique, the ultimate factor in its ability to appeal to audiences with greater success than the other Byronic dramas," which is different not only from the technique of Byron's metaphysical dramas, but also from that of his historical tragedies. What is more, Werner may also be seen as marking a transition from the poetic dramas of its time to the prose dramas of the later period. It is true, that Werner cannot be discussed within the limits of Byron's expressed dramatic canons which the poet followed enthusiastically in the Venetian dramas and Sardanapalus. Motter is certainly correct when he maintains, that Werner foreshadows prose dramas of the late nineteenth century, and this is primarily evident from the verbal style adopted in the play. Let us take an example:

Jos. Yes!
   My dream is realised - how beautiful! -
   How more than all I sighed for! Heaven receive
   A mother's thanks! a mother's tears of joy!
   This is indeed thy work! - At such an hour, too,
   He comes not only as a son, but saviour.

   (II.ii. 3-8.)

Werner shows a distinct Gothic atmosphere, suggesting a sort of kinship with Byron's earlist tragedy - Manfred. The Gothic elements of the play include "the storm outside, the


darkness within," the secret passage, the decayed palace, the "Gothic Hall" (IV.i.), the morose and remorseful hero, and so on. One may think, that the employment of the Gothic machinery in the play not only indicates Byron's surrender to the popular theatrical taste and predilection of the day, but also to the influence of the German source.

Werner, after all, points out one important thing relevant to our study: it proves that the Romantic poets are capable of writing stage plays, if they really intend to do so, and that contrary to the fashionable views, it further shows that the contribution of the Romantic poets to the theatre cannot be denied. "Werner, whatever we may think of its literary value," says Taborski, "like no other play of Byron, justified him as a dramatist in the living theatre of his own age."120

Byron's last attempt at drama is The Deformed Transformed: A Drama, written probably in the summer of 1822 at Pisa, and published in 1824 by John Hunt.121 The Deformed Transformed is a dramatic fragment in three parts, and Byron abandoned it soon after his beginning the Part III. From the point of view of form, this final dramatic exercise of Byron relates itself to Manfred. The characters are both human and supernatural beings; both men and spirits walk and act together in the world of this drama; besides, there are songs and choruses

120Taborski, op. cit. p. 256.
121Byron's Works. p. 722. William Gerard regards it as the "precious" fragment showing clear idea, but weak structure. (Vide Byron Restudied in His Dramas (1886). p.105.)
of men and spirits in it, as in Manfred. But unlike Manfred, the fragment has more potentiality from the dramatic point of view.

Part I, scene i begins in a forest, and gives a theatrically effective start to the actions of the drama. Bertha cruelly asks her deformed son - Arnold to avoid her sight and go to collect wood. Arnold is cruelly reminded of his deformity.

Yes - I nursed thee,
Because thou wert my first-born, and I knew not
If there would be another unlike thee,
That monstrous sort of Nature. But get hence,
And gather wood!

(I.i. 12-6.)

The pathos of Arnold's life at once touches us when he says to his mother -

I will: but when I bring it,
Speak to me kindly. Though my brothers are
So beautiful and lusty, and as free
As the free chase they follow, do not scorn me:
Our milk has been the same.

(I.i. 16-20.)

Arnold goes to his work and receives injury in the hand. But when he goes to the nearby spring to wash his wound, he finds his own deformity reflected in the water. His speech shows the tension of his mind created by his own image and his
mother's earlier reproach. He prepares himself to commit suicide by falling on a knife. But Arnold is prevented by a spirit rising from under the water of the sorging. The scene is spectacular in action and theatrically effective. With the help of the spirit calling himself Caesar, Arnold takes the beautiful form of Achilles. The deformed is thus transformed. Caesar, on the other hand, takes the deformed form of Arnold. The first scene is also a crowd scene in the sense that different phantoms taking different forms of great historical figures walk on the stage. Part I, scene ii takes place in a camp before the walls of Rome; Charles de Bourbon at the head of the French army has stormed the city, and the scene is laid in the battle field. Part II, scene i is also laid in the same place, and opens with a long chorus of spirits in the air. The assault on the city begins, and Bourbon is killed. The actions of the scene are spectacular; there is movement too. Part II, scene ii is also spectacular in action. Arnold who has already joined the fight, is now the leader of the action. He leads the army and sacks the city of Rome. Scene iii is laid in the interior of the St. Peter's Church. The beginning is theatrically interesting. The fight continues, and the Pontiff flees to the Vatican. But when some soldiers of the imperial army of France attack the Pontiff's daughter - Olimpia, Arnold stops them. Olimpia dashes herself on the pavement from the altar, but she is rescued after all. Part III begins with the chorus of the peasants, followed by the dialogue between Caesar and Arnold. Arnold is sick of Olimpia's love, whereas Olimpia is cold. Caesar advises Arnold to leave and forget her. The
fragment ends at this stage.

The plot, as far as it stands, is built with little regard to Byron's cherished unities. Some elements of absurdity are present in the plot. But in spite of this, the fragment possesses definite dramatic merits and promises an effective and interesting theatre. From this point of view, The Deformed Transformed is certainly a better work (though unfinished) than the two Mysteries — Cain and Heaven and Earth, and even still better than Manfred. Though absurd in theme, the fragment is entertaining. The monotony of the historical plays, the moroseness of Manfred, the speculative burden of Cain, the lyrical ecstasy of Heaven and Earth, and the sickly atmosphere of Werner are not to be found in it. Taborski also noticed the freshness of the piece, and holds —

"In spite of its defects, this mixture of fantasy, morality, historical tragedy and pastoral elements has a strange freshness about it."\(^{122}\)

The plot of The Deformed Transformed is based, partly on the story of a novel — The Three Brothers of Joshua Pickersgill, Jr., and partly on Goethe's Faust,\(^{123}\) but in building the story, Byron seems to have combined many of the ingredients of his earlier plays in it. It is difficult to say, whether this mixture of the different ingredients in the plot of the last play was attempted by Byron for the sake of a new

\(^{122}\)Taborski, op. cit. p. 140.

\(^{123}\)Byron's Works. p. 722.
experiment, or it is just fortuitous.

The characterization of The Deformed Transformed deserves some attention. Two characters mainly claim our notice, and they are Arnold and Caesar. Arnold seems to be the hero. When the drama opens, we find him as a lame hunchback. He is despised even by his mother. Nature has deprived him not only of a well-proportioned physique but also of natural motherly affection and love.

Oh, mother! - She is gone, and I must do
Her bidding; - wearily but willingly
I would fulfil it, could I only hope
A kind word in return. What shall I do?

(I.i. 28-31.)

The only things he wants are - love, affection, and kind words. His physical deformity has actually made him an object of hatred. He feels himself a forlorn being; he feels that everything around mocks him - even Nature. "The very water mocks me with/My horrid shadow-" (I.i. 50-1).

The transformation of Arnold has removed one barrier; he is now not mocked by men; he is capable of doing noble and great deeds, but he has not been loved. With the new body of Achilles, he takes part in the sack of Rome. He leads the army to a glorious victory. But is it enough for him? His heart is like a desert athirst for love and affection from his very birth.
Ah! could I be beloved,
Would I ask wherefore?

(III. 67-8.)

He wants to build his paradise on the love of Olimpia, but
Olimpia is cold and irresponsible. Where is the hope then? He
asks Caesar to teach him how to win her. "Teach me the way to
win the woman's love" (III. 93). But Caesar's reply is
disappointing. Arnold thinks that it is yet better for him to
love one who is even cold in her affection.

All wretched as I am, I would not quit
My unrequited love, for all that's happy.

(III. 97-8.)

Arnold is a passionate character. Byron has been able to show
the development of this character on which he focuses all his
attention. Arnold is a living character able to interest an
audience.

The character of Caesar is not to be left unnoticed.
Whitmore seems to think that Caesar is "like another part of
Arnold himself." But from the dramatic point of view, he is a well defined character taking part in the actions of this
drama. He is a spirit in human form, walking with Arnold as a
human character with supernatural power. Caesar's character
might have been conceived in terms of Goethe's Mephistoopheles.
Like Mephistoopheles, Caesar serves Arnold, but unlike Goethe's

124 Whitmore, op. cit. p. 132.
devil, he serves him without any condition. Caesar is a benevolent spirit resembling something of Ariel of The Tempest. Caesar is even a better spirit than Ariel in the sense that his willingness to help Arnold is not compelled by any compelling charm or magic-power of the person he serves; his willingness to serve is entirely motiveless, grown out of his genuine sympathy for Arnold. Caesar is dispassionate and objective. He is presented sometimes as a foil to the character of the hero.

The dramatic fragment - The Deformed Transformed is not to be ignored in the study of Byron's dramatic works. Whitmore thinks, that Byron probably intended to dramatise a conflict between love and ambition. He even finds the love motif in the fragment. "If the work had been completed," he says, "it may have turned out to be Byron's only drama which has love for its main theme."\textsuperscript{125} It is not profitable to conjecture as to what it might have been. As the fragment stands, we rather find that love is not the principal theme of the drama. The principal theme is rather the impact of physical transformation of Arnold on himself and also on the surroundings. It is, of course, undeniable that love-theme is also there in the plot, centering round Olimpia, and that in the hero's mind there exists a vacuum which can be filled only by a woman's love. With his new beautiful body of Achilles, it may not be a problem for him to secure this too, though Olimpia's love is unattainable. Because she cannot love him who has deeply injured her sentiment.

\textsuperscript{125}Op. cit. p.127.
Olimp. No! Thou hast only sacked my native land, -
No injury! - and made my father's house
A den of thieves! No injury! - this temple -
Slippery with Roman and with holy gore!
No injury! And now thou wouldst preserve me,
To be - but that shall never be!

(Part II.iii:113-13.5

Critics, like G. Wilson Knight, and Leslie A. Marchand have traced some auto-biographical elements in the plot of this drama. "The dramatic opening grew out of Byron's unforgettable memory of his (Byron's) mother in a fit of rage calling him 'a lame brat'," - writes Marchand.126 But our chief concern is to consider the fragment from the dramatic point of view. On the dramatic merit of the fragment, critical opinion is divided. Chew finds in it nothing to praise; he undermines it as he undermines Werner. His chief objection is that the fragment lacks a definite plan.127 Whitmore, on the other hand, finds that in this drama, Byron is perhaps "moving in a quite different direction from his other dramas."128 M.K. Joseph goes to suggest that the form of The Deformed Transformed is one which "Byron was seeking in the drama."129 Joseph's remark is a sort of hypothesis which demands examination. If the poet's own statements can be relied upon, it can easily be

126Marchand, op. cit. p.94. Also Knight's Lord Byron: Christian Virtues, pp. 271-72.
127Chew, op. cit. p.147.
128Whitmore, op. cit. p.126. Taborski's opinion is also somewhat the same.
said that the form of *The Deformed Transformed* is not one which Byron had been seeking; what he had been seeking may actually be understood with reference to his innumerable letters, and entries in his *Diaries* and *Journals* cited from time to time in the first section of this chapter. The records do not allow us to agree with Joseph on this point. It is necessary to mention here that this last dramatic writing found practically no or scarcely any place in the correspondences of Lord Byron, which may be taken as an indication of his indifference to the work. The case would have been reverse, if Joseph's assumption is correct. Contrary to what Joseph, Dr Whitmore thinks, this dramatic fragment shows Byron's partial return to the *Manfred*-stage; he is not moving in a different direction. The work is dramatically more vigorous than *Manfred*, it is true, and this is possible, because Byron is now more experienced as an artist than he was in *Manfred*. *The Deformed Transformed* closes Byron's dramatic career; its fragmentary form is not perhaps due to the author's confrontation of some artistic problem which he could not solve, or to the weakening of his dramatic power, but to his growing engagement in the affairs of the Grecian war of liberation, and the like.

Before we conclude, it is necessary to say a few words on *The Blues: A Literary Eclogue*, written at Revenna on August 6, 1821. "You need not send 'The Blues,' which is a mere buffoonery," - writes Byron to Murray on September 20, 1821, "never meant for publication." Obviously, Byron did not

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130 *Letters and Journals*. V. 455. p. 246.
consider it a play worthy of reaching the public. Thomas Moore in the foot-note in his *Life of Lord Byron* comments -

"This short satire, which is wholly unworthy of his pen, appeared afterwards in the Liberal."\(^{131}\)

But John Drinkwater, one of the leading dramatic authorities of our time, thinks that *The Blues* is also some sort of a play.\(^{132}\) We think it worthwhile to consider it briefly for two reasons mainly: first, it is somehow a short drama, and second, it is one, written in a satirical vein, as no other drama of Byron is written. It has two scenes which Byron calls Eclogue the First, and Eclogue The Second.

Eclogue The First begins at the door of a Lecture Room. Scamp (probably, William Hazlitt) has just finished his lecture when Inkel (probably, Byron himself) arrives there. He meets Tracy (probably, Thomas Moore) there, and the dialogue begins. Inkel fumes his sarcastic remarks on the Lake poets, and on Scamp, the lecturer. Eclogue The Second begins in an apartment in the house of Lady Bluebottle. It opens with a soliloquy of Richard Bluebottle - husband of Lady Bluebottle, whose ill luck is that he has married a "blue-stocking." Inkel and Tracy are also present here along with Scamp and other gentlemen and ladies. Soon the conversation begins on the literary persons and customs. The tone is satirical.


The character of Inkel is a sharp contrast to the persons gathered there. He is witty, but caustic in attack.

How does your friend Wordswords,
that Windermere treasure?

Does he stick to his lakes, like the leeches he sings,
And their gatherers, as Homer sung warriors and Kings?

(II. 47-9.)

As regards the plot, there is practically nothing. The Blues only presents a situation for satirizing the "blue-stockings" and the Lake poets.

There is wit and humour in it, though the piece is basically satirical in tone. There is no action in this playlet. Inkel might remind one of Shaw's John Tanner. The dialogue is terse and pointed, and the satire goes home.

III

"I think they must own that I have more styles
than one."

On July 22, 1821 Lord Byron writes this from Revenna in a letter to Murray. Byron's claim is true; he has certainly more than one style at his command, and he has proved it by his dramatic works. Byron the dramatist is distinctly different in this respect from all other Romantic poets. Taborski is very correct when he says, that Byron is an experimental

dramatist. A study of his plays shows that in each of his dramas, the poet has adopted a style different from that adopted in another.

Lord Byron's dramas, as our study reveals, are not free from defects both technical and conceptual, but they do not lack merits, theatrical and literary. Of the nine dramas including the playlet — The Blues, at least four are unquestionably stage plays of great merit. Here we attempt only a brief general estimate of the dramas and the dramatist.

In the Byronic dramas, the focus of attention is the hero. The Byronic heroes offer a stimulating study. They are convincing personalities of well-defined features. They also point out that though, unlike Shelley and Keats, Byron did not consciously conceive of them with some particular actor in mind, yet they ultimately turn out to be for some individual actor of the "star" system. The Byronic heroes are an interesting study of passion; all of them are passionate, suffering from certain "madness of heart" as DePorte rightly holds. Their mental struggle and tragedy engage our attention, and constitute the tragic beauty of the dramas as a whole. Paul West finds that the Byronic heroes are the "trapped" men. But one may find that they are far from so. They are, as Chew thinks, the men revolting against universal

\[134\] Taborski, op. cit. p.151.


\[136\] West, Paul, Byron And The Spoiler's Art, 1960. p.100.
norm, and asserting their individual will in a rather titanic obduracy. The Byronic heroes are the men of free will; their tragedy is due to the fact that they have ventured to outstep the bounds of the universal norm. As regards the sub-ordinate characters, Byron is not very successful as a portrayer of the minor characters; they are comparatively weak, and their features are sometimes indistinct. The minor characters are often half-drawn, and stand not for their own sake, as for the sake of the hero. In Byron's dramas, female characters are rare, and not very convincing or interesting. There are, of course, two exceptions: they are Myrrha and Marina. The characters of Angiolina, Zarina, Bertha, Olimpia, Joseohine, Ida, Anah, Aholibamah, Eve, Adah and Zillah are weak and half-drawn. In a word, Byron's dramas are masculine by character; the men are more important and more prominent than their female counterparts.

Paul West finds that Byron's dramas are neither good as literature, nor good as play; he points out certain defects and says -

"As literature, the plays are far from perfect; Byron did not often test his powers in them. . . . . . . There is none of the drama's suggestion of life's movement: the plays are statuesque."

137Chew, op. cit. p.149.

138West, Paul, op. cit. p.107. A.C. Swinburne also maintains somewhat the same opinion. "In structure as in metre," he says, "his elaborate tragedies are wholly condemnable; filled as they are in spirit with the overflow of his fiery energy." Swinburne regards Byron's plays as "dramatic miscreations." (Vide Essays and Studies (1875). pp. 238-58, and Miscellanies (1886). pp. 63-156.)
But our study of the plays of Byron makes it hard for us to agree with West in detail. The defects are certainly there, but they are not so great as to render these plays/as Paul West tries to have us believe.

In the verbal part of his plays, Byron has come nearer to the common conversational pattern of speech, without sacrificing the poetic value of the verse. Commenting on the dramatic verse of Byron, G. Wilson Knight writes -

"There are clearly many occasions when urgency of thought or sublimity of conception creates and demands poetic rhythm and response. But the tone of these finely wrought dramas is often nearer prose, though prose of a strange, at times rather Shavian, variety."139

Knight is very correct. It will not be quite wrong to say, that Byron was pointing to the way in which the verse drama might solve the problem of medium with a view to making greater appeal to the sensibilities of the audience. Byron's blank verse is neither Shakespearean, nor is it Miltonic in character; Byron's dramatic blank verse is essentially Byronic. Let us give a few examples -

............... but oh! thou true Sun!
The burning oracle of all that live,
As fountain of all life, and symbol of
Him who bestows it, wherefore dost thou limit

139Knight, G. Wilson, Byron's Dramatic Verse, in The Times Literary Supplement, February 20, 1959, p. 97.
Thy lore unto calamity? Why not
Unfold the rise of days more worthy thine
All-glorious burst from ocean?

(Sardanapalus, II.i.14-20.)

or,

Sar. My best! my last friends!
Let's not unman each other: part at once;
All farewell should be sudden, when for ever,
Else they make an eternity of moments,
And clog the last sad sands of life with tears.

(V.i. 400-404.)

or, Eve............................
May the grass wither from th' feet! the woods
Deny thee shelter! earth a home! the dust
A grave! the sun his light! and heaven her God!

(Cain, III.i.441-43.)

From these it is evident that the dramatic verse of his plays
does not stand as an obstacle to the purpose of communicability
between the dramatist and his audience. It is equally evident
that his dramatic verse is not like that of Shakespeare—full
of complex poetic imagery, different from the nineteenth-
century conversational prose. Some critics, like Allardyce
Nicoll140 and T.S. Eliot,141 trace the cause, or one of the causes
of Romantics' dramatic failure in their employment of blank-verse

and the usage of language.

"It is not primarily lack of plot, or lack of action and suspense, or imperfect realization of character, or lack of anything of what is called 'theatre,' that makes these plays so lifeless: it is primarily that their rhythm of speech is something that we cannot associate with any human being except a poetry reciter."\(^{142}\)

But it can be said, particularly about Byron's dramatic verse and language that the findings as these, do not quite apply to his style of dramatic writing. In this connection, the remark of M.K. Joseph is particularly pertinent.

"But Byron, like Eliot and Yeats over a century later," Joseph says, "saw the need to rethink the whole question of dramatic expression and find new models for it;\(^{143}\)

There is another prejudicial obsession among some of the critics. Despite the long stage history of Byron's plays, they are prone to regard these plays as closet. William Ruddick, while discussing the Byronic dramas, maintains -

"They are plays addressed to the ear and to the inward eyes. Perhaps our age offers a new possibility for their successful performance through the verbal resources of radio drama."\(^{144}\)


\(^{143}\)Joseph, op. cit. p.112.

But our contention is that Byronic dramas, at least, four - *Marino Faliero*, *The Two Foscari*, *Sardanapalus*, and *Werner* are the plays addressed not only to the "ear and the inward eyes," but also to the external eyes of the theatrical audience. There are the plays tested already on the stage on innumerable occasions, and were not found wanting in merits of a successful stage play. These plays are capable of serving the two usual levels of dramatic interest - sensuous and intellectual. Byron's *Manfred*, *Cain*, *Heaven and Earth*, and *The Deformed Transformed* may be the plays to which Ruddick's comment mentioned above may be applicable with some justification.

It is really surprising that the Byron criticism is often the result of distorted vision. Byron is often observed, it seems, through the magnifying glass; his defects are sometimes made to appear too serious and great, and sometimes his virtues too are made to look greater than what they really are. The critical opinions often represent these two extremes, and we quote, for instance, two modern critics representing these dual trends of Byron criticism.

"Shakespeare and Byron," says G. Wilson Knight, "are our two greatest masters of tragedy."\(^{145}\)

Knight is able to watch in Byron "a dramatist of Shakespearian calibre."\(^{146}\) He gives to Byron a very high place of honour as a dramatist, and says -

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"On Byron's drama pivots the swing from Shakespeare to Shaw."¹⁴⁷

Let us now turn to the other extreme. Paul West seems to be not disposed to give Byron the place of a dramatist at all. "Byron was," he says, "simply too unimaginative to compose drama; when he wants to brighten things up, he engineers a stunt. ............. The plays really amount to prodigious soliloquies set out as drama."¹⁴⁸ The widest variation of these critical opinions on the same subject makes us believe that, most probably, there is a lack of dispassionate estimate of his dramatic works.

Byron knew how to write drama; and where he has failed to render his works stageworthy, as in Cain, Heaven and Earth, and the like, he has failed, we believe, quite consciously. Byron's dramatic experiment shows his serious effort towards an appropriate form and style capable of reforming the Stage of his time. His intention was both honest and earnest. But despite his sincere effort, he is not fully successful in his mission as a dramatic reformer, and the reason for this is perhaps, that, the problem was too big and vast for any one man.

Yet the movement led by Byron has not failed altogether. The Victorian England recognised his dramatic potentiality, and our age has recognised especially the worth of his dramatic theory. Chew's remark is noteworthy in this connection.

¹⁴⁷Knight, The Golden Labyrinth, p. 236.
¹⁴⁸West, Paul, op. cit. p. 119.
"The modern poetic drama, if it is to exist at all," says Chew, "must fuse these tendencies, must have something of the classic strength, restraint, and regularity of design, which were the ideals of Byron in his dramatic experiments, and something of the wealth of imaginative poetry, which was apparently beyond his grasp but which alone, as in the case of Beddoes, will not result in great drama."\(^{149}\)

Byron is today recognised to be the forerunner of the modern poetic dramatic movement led by Eliot and Yeats. G. Wilson Knight writes -

"......... he shows a certain affinity to the classical theories of Mr. T.S. Eliot. Byron is, indeed, the one all-important link between the dramatic consciousness of the seventeenth century and our own."\(^{150}\)

There is one more reason for which the Byronic dramas have modern interest, and it is the psychological element of his plays. Byron's obvious stress is on the psychological, rather than on the external actions and episodes of his dramas, which is a modern tendency. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons, for which Byron is understood more in our time than he was in his own.

\(^{149}\)Chew, op. cit. p.21.

\(^{150}\)Knight, The Plays of Lord Byron, in The Times Literary Supplement, Feb. 3, 1950. William Gerard also holds a similar view. He also considers Byron "the fore-runner of a genuine dramatic reform, reaching back to Shakespeare on the one hand, reaching forward on the other to new times." (Vide William Gerard, op. cit. p.51.)