TWENTIETH CENTURY ENGLISH HISTORY PLAYS

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ABSTRACT

Twentieth Century British History Plays -- An attempt to define the scope and limits of the genre of the history play in relation to twentieth century English historical drama, through an examination of selected plays which exemplify various approaches to history. This includes major works by writers of the first rank, such as Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan, T.S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, and Howard Brenton's The Hound of the Baskervilles; as well as successful works by minor playwrights, representing popular taste and response, such as Gordon Davidson's Richard of Bordeaux, Robert Bolt's A Man for All Seasons and Peter Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun. Shaw's Saint Joan illustrates the new tradition of history play stimulated by Shaw, with his emphasis on discursive elements, an anti-heroic tone and action, an overtly modern perspective, and a consciousness of different possible views of an event. Gordon Davidson's Richard of Bordeaux, Bolt's A Man for All Seasons and Clifford Bay's The Hound without a Thrill, popular plays by popular playwrights of the 1950's, demonstrate the meeting and crossing of two traditions, the Romantic and the Shavian. They exemplify the kind of narrowly realistic theatre in vogue at the time with its concentration on the obvious exterior world. In contrast, T.S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral and Charles Williams's Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury, styled in form and treatment, illustrate the use of history to explore deep psychological and spiritual areas of conflict.

Three plays of the 1960's -- Robert Bolt's A Man for All Reasons, Peter Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun and John Osborne's Luther -- reflect different concerns and different levels of imagination but a common interest, in their various ways, in religious motivation.

For my parents
ABSTRACT

Twentieth Century English History Plays - An attempt to define the scope and limits of the genre of the history play, in relation to twentieth century English historical drama, through an examination of selected plays which exemplify various approaches to history. This includes major works by writers of the first rank, such as Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan, T S Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, and Edward Bond's Early Morning; as well as successful works by minor playwrights, representing popular taste and response, such as Gordon Daviot's Richard of Bordeaux, Robert Bolt's A Man for All Seasons and Peter Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun. Shaw's Saint Joan illustrates the new tradition of history play stimulated by Shaw, with his emphasis on discursive rational elements, an anti-heroic tone and diction, an overtly modern perspective, and a consciousness of different possible views of an event. Gordon Daviot's Richard of Bordeaux, Reginald Berkeley's The Lady with a Lamp and Clifford Bax's The Rose without a Thorn, popular plays by popular playwrights of the 1930's, demonstrate the meeting and crossing of two traditions, the Romantic and the Shavian. They exemplify the kind of narrowly realistic theatre in vogue at the time with its concentration on the obvious exterior world. In contrast, T S Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral and Charles Williams's Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury, stylised in form and treatment, illustrate the use of history to explore deep psychological and spiritual areas of conflict. Three plays of the 1960's - Robert Bolt's A Man for All Seasons, Peter Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun and John Osborne's Luther - reflect different concerns and different levels of imagination but a common interest, in their various ways, in religious motivation.
Robert Bolt and Peter Shaffer provide two examples of minor playwrights going to history as a source, in the one case for a moving character portrait (A Man for All Seasons) and in the other for spectacle and sensation (The Royal Hunt of the Sun). They illustrate the putting over of history in a popular way. A playwright of much greater calibre, John Osborne is drawn to an historical subject for its religious interest. His play, Luther, focuses on the individual of remarkable stature who is both prime mover and victim of social and religious forces. It is a forceful rhetorical piece moving towards expressionism and a more poetic and violent form of theatre. This trend in modern drama is vividly demonstrated by the concluding play of the study, Edward Bond's powerful surrealistic drama, Early Morning. Revolutionary in approach and intention, it is a disturbing dream vision which opens up new possibilities for the treatment of history.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction: The English History Play in the Twentieth Century

Although the history play is a most popular genre among English playwrights of this century very little research has been done in the field. In particular, because it is a big and difficult subject, critics have generally tended to shirk any attempt to define the scope and the limits of the genre. Such attempts at definition as have been made are mainly based on Elizabethan playwrights and practice and very little work has been done along these lines in relation to the twentieth century; this is one of the reasons which make it a subject worthy of research. The term 'history play' has often been used rather loosely and in the twentieth century the existence of such a genre has not been clearly identified or sufficiently elucidated. Various preconceptions surround the term so that our understanding of its meaning is, at best, hazy. It therefore must be critically rewarding to examine it afresh seeking to define more precisely the scope and limits of the genre.

There is the need for a comprehensive definition of the term which covers plays of different approaches. But it is easy to lapse into too catholic a sympathy for all treatments of history; this ultimately is an abdication of judgement because it does not add clarity to our understanding of the form and can only leave us in a morass of ambiguity and indecision. Thus a statement such as: history plays are plays which are "based on history or having a historical theme" raises more questions than it allays doubts as to what constitutes the genre. Tucker Brooke, writing of Tudor drama in 1912, recognised the need for a definition of the history play but could arrive at none inclusive enough to embrace all he chose to consider histories. Yet he admits that "any ambitious discussion of the genre, unless based on sane definitions, is in danger of losing itself hopelessly in the attempt to
follow such quasi-historical will-o’-the-wisps as George a Greene and James IV. A real duty is neglected when no criteria are set. Sympathy for a variety of concerns and approaches does not preclude the need for some severe discrimination in judgement. While it is clearly inadmissible to fall into the error of only including forms which are readily acceptable or comprehensible to oneself, some framework is required for discussion to become meaningful.

The history play often carries with it the implication that the writer’s intention is to fulfil the function of the historian, showing a strict regard for historicity in the presentation of the facts and their interpretation. Scholarly insistence on historicity as the ultimate concern of the artist writing in this genre would reduce the full scope, power and flexibility of the form. A definition which required this would exclude works with a serious historical concern whose treatment leans towards the more purely imaginative. If we recognise that the genre need not be so defined as to demand strict historical accuracy, might we be led to the conclusion that the classification of a play as history need not be more than a broad indication of its subject or theme? That, however, would mean that the playwright has the license to make of history anything at all, resulting in sheer travesty of the term. Undoubtedly a line has to be drawn somewhere, for a total disregard for historical truth would be a distortion of truth itself. By this we mean that there has to be a valid basis for the point of departure of the artist, however subjective his vision. He has to come to terms with his subject and show a deep and serious interest in the past, free as he is to think critically and independently about it. The writer’s creative imagination, his skill in delineation, has full play in the presentation of his subject. His power of intuition enables him to penetrate beneath the surface of documented fact to explore the possibilities of human
character and situation within the context of actual experience. Undeniably the artist's invaluable contribution is his unique imaginative insight, yet there has to be some basis for his vision in historical fact, some respect for historical truth, or what he presents would not be history or truth at all.

But this brings us to the rather overwhelming question of whether there is such a thing as historical truth. This has been a much debated question among philosophers. The reaction to the positivist view which stressed the primacy and autonomy of facts in history and claimed the possibility of 'ultimate history' led to an extreme scepticism and the purely relativist doctrine that 'since all historical judgements involve persons and points of view, one is as good as another and there is no 'objective' historical truth.'

The interaction between the historian and his source material and the interdependence of these two factors in the writing of history caused many to doubt the meaningfulness of the term 'fact' in history.

What however do historians say on this matter? E H Carr, in his interesting discussion of the problem, foresees the danger of total relativism which pressed to its logical conclusion "amounts to total scepticism, like Froude's remark that history is a 'child's box of letters with which we can spell any word we please.'" But Carr himself claims that not all the facts about the past are historical facts; they become so only after the historian has elected them to a special place of importance. He is countered by G R Elton who argues convincingly for the independent reality of historical facts. That an event can be known, he says, is all that is required to make it a 'fact of history.' If the historian asserts his sovereignty over the facts he is a traitor to his calling, for history becomes whatever the historian likes to make of it.

Though one places a greater emphasis on the historian and his subjective perception of the facts, and the other on the pre-eminence of the data and an objective critical
approach to them both project the more or less accepted view that history essentially involves the interaction of two elements - the past or rather what is left of it in traceable form and the historian's skill in its reconstruction and interpretation. The first duty of the historian is to respect his facts after he has ascertained them through a scholarly, critical assessment of all sources. After this it is a matter of relating fact to interpretation and interpretation to fact. As G R Elton asserts, the professional historian's method may not be infallible but it creates a foundation of generally assured knowledge beneath the disputes which will never cease: "No historian would suppose his knowledge can be either total or infinite. But this does not alter the fact that it is knowledge of a reality, of what did occur, and not of something that the student or observer has put together for study." "Inability to know all the truth about the past," he says, "is not the same thing as total inability to know the truth."8 Thus we can conclude that there is such a thing as historical truth and though it is unattainable in an absolute form, it exists and is the historian's only proper ambition.

But what significance does this hold for the historical playwright? Do the roles of the historian and the historical playwright diversify or is it the dramatist's intention to fulfil the functions and purposes of the historian? Irving Ribner in his book, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare, published in 1957, feels that in the history play the dramatic and historical intentions are inseparable. He states that, though the dramatist's first objective is to entertain a group of people in a theatre, "when he goes to history for his subject matter, however, he assumes the functions of the historian as well."9 But the function of the historian is to contribute to the build-up of both fact and interpretation, the product of systematic, controlled research. The dramatist can hardly be expected to bring to the subject
the professional study necessary for a disciplined, scholarly assessment of the facts. The establishing of facts, the provenance of documents, the criticism of sources are strictly the jurisdiction of the specialist, areas, in fact, where the historian addresses himself to other historians. Even on the side of pure interpretation the historian is bound to subdue his imagination to the controls of scholarship and accept the primacy of his sources, whereas the artist goes to history for his inspiration but is free to explore the universal truths embodied in his subject. What then are the limits of the historical playwright? There have to be some controls within which he is free to exercise his imagination.

As mentioned earlier, the writing of history involves two aspects, one of which is fixed and the other variable. S T Bindoff explains it in the following terms:

The 'traces' of the past, the 'sources' available to the historian, are external to him: much as he would like to, he cannot alter or add to them, save by forgery or fabrication, although he may discover and reveal those previously lost or unknown. It is this fixity and finiteness in his material which marks the extreme possible limits of the subject, the 'frontier of knowledge' which, however he strives to enlarge it, must stop somewhere. What is, on the contrary, mutable and elastic is the intensity and nature of the interest with which the present approaches the past, and the degree of skill which it applies to the reconstructive process: on this side there is perpetual change, and, perhaps, some progress.10

As far as the facts and sources are concerned, the limit of the historian is the limit of the playwright. Historical fact is hard enough to ascertain and should be left to the historian. But in the matter of interpretation the playwright should have the freedom to approach his subject imaginatively and sympathetically while it may be incumbent on the historian to be critical and sceptical. However, since this is an area where conjecture plays a large part in the writing of history, the playwright should be able to bring to his understanding of the facts an artist's unique
perception and sensitivity which enables him to place himself in each character's position and look upon the situation from different points of view. Here he can bring into play his insight into the springs of human character and motivation provided it is controlled by an overriding respect for what is actually there in evidence.

But, since evidence is in many cases not clear-cut, there is often a problem not of interpreting fact but of establishing it which gives rise to historians seeing differences in the facts themselves. What then are the bounds of the playwright? Well, as G R Elton states, though there may be numerous theories and interpretations on a particular event or issue there is in short "a very large body of agreed knowledge on which no dispute is possible, and though this body of knowledge may not by itself provide a very sophisticated interpretation of the past it is entirely indispensable to any study of it."11 It is this area of generally accepted fact that a playwright should respect and not wantonly abuse. Obviously by this we do not mean minor alterations such as transpositions of time and place, the telescoping of events and imposing of artistic form and movement which are legitimate dramatic devices. Shaw dramatises confrontations that never happened in Saint Joan but his dialogues are based on relevant historical facts. But major distortions which violently affect the nature of character and events portrayed can hardly be justified. There is, however, a category of play which can be excepted given sufficiently imaginative treatment. Major exceptions to the general rule are rather important to my purpose and I shall be dealing with an important exception of this kind in my discussion of Edward Bond's Early Morning which takes flagrant liberties with external facts in order to project a deeper historical truth. A characteristic feature of nineteenth century historical drama, however, is that playwrights tended to look to history for possibilities of romance and spectacle and showed little regard for historical truth. Schiller's treatment of the Joan of Arc story
is a case in point. He causes her to fall in love with her enemy, an English knight called Lionel, and mercifully saves her from the horror of the burning episode. She is made to die heroically on the battlefield instead. He thus shirks the aspects of historical fact he found disagreeable or incompatible with his purpose. More recently there has been much controversy over Howard Brenton's play about the Churchills in which he takes much liberty with character and motive. Thus it is important to determine how free a playwright can be with historical material if his play is to be considered a history. A definition should allow considerable room for imaginative insight and expression but not for indiscriminate fabrication where a disservice is done to history and an injustice to those concerned.

The writer does not have to serve as a spokesman for any particular version of history. Rather, he can bring to his exploration of the past a personal awareness and interpretation with his own artistic integrity brought to bear. He does not have to be slavishly dependent on his sources. If he accepts without question the judgement of his sources he will be doing little more than present a certain account of an event in history. And it is necessary to remember that historical knowledge is by no means a static thing, for new facts are constantly being discovered which lead to a revision of supposedly established facts and a discrediting of earlier theories. As H Lindenberger notes, Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III, deriving as it does from Thomas More and the Tudor historians, bears little resemblance to a modern portrait of the king and "if the reality of a historical figure or context is defined according to the standards of contemporary academic historical writing, all but a few plays would seem scandalously inaccurate." Historians themselves have to contend with new material continually coming to light. G Clark, writing in 1957, observes, "No historian hitherto has had at his command all the sources which might be relevant to his subject; none has ever
completed his work so that no newly emerging source could invalidate it.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, since history itself changes according to increasing knowledge and shifting historical perspectives, playwright and historian alike can only be true to the facts as he knows them in his time and place. It will, therefore, be important to consider which historians a playwright uses and how aware he is of the sophistication that is required in the use of historical material and this is one of the lines I shall be pursuing in my examination of history plays. Of the playwrights looked at, Shaw and T S Eliot are the most aware of the complexity involved in approaching historical material and of the multiple layers of meaning that accrue to an event in the passage of time. In the plays of theirs that I shall be considering, Shaw's \textit{Saint Joan} and Eliot's \textit{Murder in the Cathedral}, they can be seen going back to the original documents for their portrayals. They are able to think critically and independently of their sources and register a sense of different possible views of an event. In contrast, Clifford Bax and Peter Shaffer are the least aware and concerned about historical complexity and in their plays, Bax's \textit{The Rose without a Thorn} and Shaffer's \textit{The Royal Hunt of the Sun}, which I shall be examining, they merely present a particular view of an occurrence in history.

What cannot be denied as truth is the significance which past events and figures embody for man. The artist in his vision includes their impact on posterity, what they have come to mean through the passage of time, projecting yet another truth reflective of the human condition. This then is another aspect of the history play. It takes into account not merely the thoughts and ideas of a specific day and age but also what another day and age has made of these as reflected in the mind and imagination of the playwright. A pronounced feature of the twentieth century English history play is the obvious treatment of the past in terms of the present. This approach can be seen to stem from Shaw. He audaciously challenged the conventions of nineteenth century historical drama which attempted to create a semblance of historical reality in the form of the
'right' historical atmosphere through elaborate costumes and sets, artificial speech and sentiments. Cecil Ferard Armstrong records the shock of Londoners when Shaw's Julius Caesar came on stage speaking plain English. Shaw succeeded in bringing about a radical change in the taste and outlook on the part of audiences as well as playwrights. Since Shaw most playwrights can be seen overtly reflecting their own time. Nearly all the playwrights I shall be looking at reveal this tendency. It can be seen in major writers such as Edward Bond whose use of startling anachronisms is an important feature of his work; and even in minor writers such as Gordon Daviot. The pacifist angle in her play, Richard of Bordeaux had immense appeal in her time, according to Sir John Gielgud who played the lead role and directed the first production. He was continually mobbed by enthusiastic crowds in the street and looks back to it as the greatest 'fan' success of his whole career. The great public interest in the peace question was one of the reasons for the play's astounding success. One way of distinguishing the major playwright from the minor is the former's ability to draw connections between past and present which are not obvious and to establish an image not only for his own generation but for successive generations as well. A really powerful playwright can create new myths in dealing with history. Thus we find not only a lesser playwright like Daviot but major playwrights like Shaw and Bond impelled to challenge the tremendous impact Shakespeare has had on our notion of the past. Some of their plays such as Daviot's Richard of Bordeaux and Dickon, Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra, and Bond's Lear are attempts to redress the balance and offer a corrective to Shakespeare's view or a fresh perspective. Shaw and Bond are playwrights powerful enough to impress images of their own on the modern consciousness; this is one of the reasons why I shall be considering a significant work of each - Shaw's Saint Joan and Bond's Early Morning.

It has been seen that historical plays of modern playwrights often refer more directly to the legend than the
This brings us to another important aspect that has to be considered in relation to the history play - the place of the romantic and legendary associations that spring up around every great historical figure and event. The inevitable question that arises is when does history become myth? If a great part of the impact of the history play lies in the artist's perception of history through another age's eyes with all the ramifications and reverberations of time gone by, is the writer prevented from bringing into his conception the mythic dimension that is so much a part of our sense of the past? What these historical figures and events have come to mean to us often surpasses mere historical fact. The fascination of mythical elements, even for those historians who would disavow them, is immense and they are consistently perpetuated to become part of the irresistible legend surrounding a historical character or event. As to the question of truth historians themselves are not always agreed. Edward Renan's opinion is that the whole truth about a historical figure is not to be found in documents. "To what," he says, "would the life of Alexander be reduced if it were confined to that which is materially certain? Even partly erroneous traditions contain a portion of truth which history cannot neglect." He points out that those who rely entirely on documents will find themselves in a quandary when they have to contend with documents which are "in flagrant contradiction with one another." So historians themselves find they cannot afford to neglect any sources, documentary or non-documentary, capable of adding dimensions to their understanding, which the conventional sources of history do not provide. F J Weaver, writing in 1938 in his book, The Material of English History, comments:

Historical records include much material which might appear to be too trivial for serious consideration, or too personal to have any bearing upon history as such. But it was a true instinct that led Herodotus, "the Father of history." to introduce into his narrative odds and ends of oral reports, stories he heard but did not really believe, traditions
which might or might not have evidential value. Stories that are obviously mythical, and probably invented to explain some tradition, often contain suggestions of the real origin of the tradition. So to the modern study of history in its various branches a seeming medley of material is freely admitted, solely on its merits - not only charters, deeds, and other such documents; laws, treaties, and proclamations; annals and chronicles; but also diaries, memoirs, and private correspondence; genealogies and wills; commercial papers and household accounts; ballads, songs, myths and folk tales, anecdotes and oral traditions; place-names, idioms, and the development of language. Different techniques are required for testing different classes of material and for estimating the value of their contributions to history, but each class has its own contribution to make.

A modern psychologist, E H Erikson, in his approach to history asserts that "the making of legend is as much part of the scholarly rewriting of history as it is part of the original facts used in the work of scholars. We are thus obliged to accept half-legend as half-history, provided only that a reported episode does not contradict other well-established facts; persists in having a ring of truth; and yields a meaning consistent with psychological theory." Furthermore, as has been observed, we are gradually finding our way back to the old wisdom, in the words of Kathleen Raine, that "fact is not the truth of myth, myth is the truth of fact."

Therefore, if the historian and the psychologist cannot afford to totally ignore the mythological dimension in their study of the past neither can the dramatist. It is his duty to be properly instructed with regard to the facts but not to keep narrowly within their bounds. He must be free to render the truth of the situation as he sees it. He might explore its mythological aspects and bring to it a specialised knowledge or focus of concern but that is all part of the historical interest and reality. History is the observer and the observed and this holds true whether it is being approached by historian, psychologist or playwright. Each throws his light and none can bring all-round
illumination but each has a unique and equally valuable perspective to bring to bear. The subjective element makes of history something of an art just as the objective element makes it something of a science. A certain balance has to be achieved but neither aspect can be denied.

And it is necessary, as E H Erikson suggests, "to contemplate (if only as a warning to ourselves) the degree to which in the biography of a great man 'objective study' and 'historical accuracy' can be used to support any total image necessitated by the biographer's personality and professed calling...." But, as he goes on to say, "a man's historical image often depends on which legend temporarily overcomes all others; however, all these ways of viewing a great man's life may be needed to capture the mood of the historical event."

Historical perspectives, thus, are continually changing in accordance with the bias of the writer and his age. Each generation rewrites history in its own image. Thus, the historian, Charles Wayland Lightbody states that "there are no final value-judgements of time or history, but always new judgements, reflecting new conditions surrounding those who do the judging." Historical works are, therefore, as much a comment on the writers and their own time as on the periods about which they are written. Critics often deny or minimise the value of Shaw's plays as history because he treats the past overtly in terms of the present and projects a distinctly modern perspective. But not only was Shaw primarily concerned with the present and interested in the past only as it relates to the present; he also had grasped that one cannot escape from the limitations of one's own temperament and environment. In the preface to his essay, The Sanity of Art, written in 1907, he says:

I deal with all periods; but I never study any period but the present, which I have not yet mastered and never shall; and as a dramatist I have no clue to any historical or other personage save that part of him which is also myself, and which may be nine tenths of him or ninety-nine hundredths, as the case
may be (if indeed, I do not transcend the creature) but which anyhow is all that can ever come within my knowledge of his soul. The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all people and about all time.\textsuperscript{22}

There is a fundamental truth in this which relates to any writer's approach to the past and applies as much to the historian as to the dramatist. It has now long been accepted by historians that historical judgements give to all history "the character of 'contemporary history' because, however remote in time events there recounted may seem to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein those events vibrate."\textsuperscript{23} This important truth had been re-enunciated in 1938 by Benedetto Croce, the Italian historian cum philosopher whose influence, as an English historian, C Webster, explains, "came from his insistence that past history only existed when relived in the minds of historians in the light of their own experience, that all history is for this reason contemporary history, something that they apprehend because they have become part of it." Webster goes on to say,

There are some who think that this is one of the great pitfalls of the present day and that it tends to make historians interpret the actions of men of previous ages as though they had the same environment as themselves. My own view is that it is just the analysis of our own experience which enables us to understand more completely that which is so different from it. The process will in any case take place in some form or other and it is far better that it should be done consciously.\textsuperscript{24}

This surely justifies the modern historical playwright's often radical reading of the present into the past, since it is an inevitable part of the writing of history. A writer sometimes mirrors intensely personal experiences. A play I shall be examining is Murder in the Cathedral in which T S Eliot's own personal sense of fragmentation and turmoil at the time may be seen reflected in the dilemma of his protagonist. While working on Emperor and Galilean Ibsen
stated in a letter that what he was putting into the play was "a part of (his) own inner life," what he described were things he had himself "experienced in different forms" and the historical theme he had chosen also had a closer connection with the currents of his own age than one might at first think. This he regarded as an "essential demand to be made of every modern treatment of material so remote, if it is, as a work of literature, to be able to arouse any interest." A man cannot escape from himself or from the political, social and cultural environment to which he belongs. Though it is undeniable that our apprehension of the present is indelibly affected by the conditioning of the past it is no less true that our understanding of the past is inextricably bound up with our experience of the present.

Another factor of crucial relevance in a modern consideration of the definition of the history play is the question of the nature of the subject matter. There has been a tendency in dealing with past playwrights to stress political themes and issues as a playwright's distinct concern in the writing of the history play. But today history is no longer thought of merely in terms of politics. One of the limitations of historical science in the nineteenth century, Herbert Butterfield states, was that it "studied the events of a nation and the changes in the world too much from the point of view of government." He says that an "important feature of the first half of the twentieth century is the realization in one field after another that history is much more than the mere story of governments." Our whole notion of general history has been affected by the enormous amount of work done in the cultural field and the remarkable development of economic history. Sir Lewis Namier broadly refers to "human affairs as being the subject-matter of history, stating that "all human pursuits and disciplines in their social aspects enter into it." Thus we find G M Trevelyan's social history of the English people "with the politics
left out" a much respected historical work. "Without social history," he claims, "economic history is barren and political history is unintelligible." In fact the present-day concept of history has broadened immensely to encompass practically every sphere of human activity and interest in the past. S T Bindoff states that "history, we now know, is not merely, or even primarily, past politics; it is also past economics, past society, past religion, past civilization, in short, past everything." But he asserts that it is still past politics in the sense that by far the greatest part of history which is at present read and written is political history and the widening range of new kinds of history - economic, social, cultural, scientific and technical, are almost everywhere treated as ancillary to the political core. In the same way, though most history plays revolve around political figures and events, we should not exclude works which have a different focus.

For example, Edward Bond's play on Shakespeare, Bingo, should not be discounted as a history on the grounds that he is a literary rather than a political figure. Shakespeare's significance as a universal literary monument can hardly be denied to have had a world-wide influence in the lives of men and as such he is a historical phenomenon to be reckoned with. In his play Bond focuses on the role of the artist in society and his portrayal of the last days of Shakespeare explores the tension between the man and his work. Whether Bond's portrait of Shakespeare is adequately based in history for his play to be categorised a history is a question I shall be considering in my chapter on Bond.

Another point of historical debate is the choice of period. Elton states that the problem goes back to Thucydides who questioned the possibility of any history except contemporary history on the basis that only personal experience and observation could guarantee knowledge and accuracy. "2500 years later," he states, "that argument
is still sufficiently alive for an American historian to ask the ironical question whether the past should concern the historian at all. In giving a warning against an excessive preoccupation with the contemporary, he adopted a position probably more common today than that of Thucydides, if only because developing techniques have given us a better control over the evidence for more distant ages and left us aware of the exceptional difficulties involved in discovering and assimilating the evidence for our own times.\textsuperscript{31} The main arguments in this position are that the full range of sources does not become available until later and that objectivity and perspective are hard to achieve in dealing with contemporary history. David Thomson, editor of the twelfth volume of \textit{The New Cambridge Modern History}, agrees that the writing of contemporary history involves the scholar in problems that in some ways are less acute for the historian of ages more remote. The historian's usual privilege of informed hindsight is somewhat curtailed, he says, and "the bugbear of bias, seldom completely absent from the task of historiography, is a particularly insidious enemy when the themes directly involve personal experience, sentiments, and expectations." But he goes on to argue cogently:

The contemporary historian, however, enjoys some compensating advantages. His sources, if not complete, are superabundant. He has the feel of the events, the sense of atmosphere, the appropriate presuppositions for sympathetic understanding. The very immediacy of his interpretation may endow it with value for his successors. In any case it is important that professional historians should not shirk the duty of making available to those who must try to shape the immediate future the best understanding of the age that their techniques and skills can achieve: for to abdicate this duty would be to abandon the field to propagandists and soothsayers.\textsuperscript{32}

The matter of choice of period, remote or recent, ultimately rests on the individual historian's personal preference and belief. Obviously then the historical playwright should
be left free to deal with remote eras, as T S Eliot
does in Murder in the Cathedral, as well as less distant
periods, as Edward Bond does in Early Morning. But there
are plays which look to even more recent times such as
Trevor Griffith's play, The Party, which treats events
in the late 1960's. If it can be admitted Edward Bond's
play, Saved, would also be a candidate. But that would
open up the term too far and I prefer to draw the lines
more strictly. I suspect it is better to reserve the
term 'history' for plays where there is some little
interval of time between the author and his subject because
of the gain in perspective, for otherwise a play can so
easily be built on assumptions that may be shattered
soon after.

Early twentieth century historical dramas, as can be
seen from the plays of Shaw, reveal a tendency to
concentrate on the impact of the exceptional individual on
his environment. But more recently, as can be seen from
the plays of Bond, the situation has been reversed and
dominant figures are seen as embodiments of social and
political forces. Stemming mainly from the widespread
influence of Marxian ideas on modern thought, there is a
tendency to set, in place of heroic figures, material and
economic factors as the motor power of historical develop­
ment. This is reflected in the current mode of historical
thinking. C H Wilson, in his professorial inaugural
lecture at the University of Cambridge in 1964, relates how
a reviewer trained in an older school of history, Sir
Harold Nicolson, remarked of a volume on the late nineteenth
century, that it represented this new trend: "In the old
days, he wrote, a little nostalgically, we should have been
provided with a narrative of facts concentrated on the
personalities of Napoleon III or Alexander II. But now
Marx and Darwin claim as much attention as Bismarck or
Mr Gladstone. Personalities are less important than
social and economic trends. 'Thus (he concluded bravely)
we are given here many bright pages about pig-iron.'"
Wilson states that "the clamour for what is sometimes
called 'history in depth', social analysis and the like, is to be heard on all sides. "Indeed", he says, "the need to place individuals in their social context (which is one half of the permanent historical equation) is probably more readily accepted amongst practising historians today than the need to measure the mark of individuals upon their surroundings (which in true orthodoxy is the other half of the equation)." It does not matter which half of the historical equation the dramatist concerns himself with. It should be entirely his prerogative whether to focus on the individual's influence on his times, or to project him as representative of the social, political and economic forces of his age, or to explore the relationship between the two, as John Osborne does in his play, *Luther*, which is one of my reasons for selecting it for examination.

But here another question arises. Need there be historical figures and events in a play to make it eligible as a history? There is what Lindenberger calls the "unhistorical history play" citing Hofmansthal's *The Tower* as an example of a play essentially concerned with historical issues but not based on any 'real' history. Then there are the vast number of mythological plays constructed around rather dubious historical sources where legend soon takes over. Some of the plays of John Arden and Edward Bond are so inspired and many of these, like Bond's play, *The Woman*, get to the essential concerns of history more truly than many overtly historical dramas. A play can be centred around historical issues rather than actual characters or occurrences and surely this is a kind of history play which a definition should be flexible enough to include. In my chapter on Shaw I shall be briefly considering *John Bull's Other Island*, a play without actual historical figures which presents an acute insight into English and Irish national character as revealed by their relations in history.

Considering all these different factors, it becomes
clear from the preceding discussion that the crucial question is how free can a playwright be with history. The delimitations of the genre must be fluid enough to encompass plays that are extremely creative in their approach to history yet restrictive enough to exclude plays whose disregard for historical truth would render the term 'history play' meaningless. It has to be determined just where and how a historical playwright is at liberty to be inventive with history and where and how he is not. To arrive at this it is necessary, I think, to explore the area of divergence between history and the dramatic process.

History and the history play are two distinct, disparate forms of writing with markedly different aims and have to abide by their own rules and conventions. A play is a play and to that effect, of necessity, creates its own internal frame of reference. The value of a play as history must not be denied on the basis of form which is the artist's unique projection of the facts. All forms, along with naturalism, are open to historical playwrights and a definition must include plays which are not concerned with a realistic adherence to the facts but rather seek to illuminate historical issues or deepen historical insight through a more purely imaginative treatment of history. Edward Bond's Early Morning vividly illustrates this. It is a bizarre historical fantasy which projects serious truths about the nature of a past era and its enduring impact on the present. What cannot be denied is that any attempt to reconstruct the past involves some degree of fantasising, with facts known or discovered adding to the mystery of what is irrecoverable in any total sense. Drama perforce involves this to a much greater extent than the writing of history. As Lindenberger aptly points out, the very term 'historical drama' suggests something of its nature, "the first word qualifying the fictiveness of the second, the second questioning the reality of the first."
What I feel we should not do is to make the mistake of stressing the historical element to the detriment of the dramatic or the dramatic element to the detriment of the historical. What has to be achieved is a fine balance and it is precisely the nature and scope of this balance that I hope to explore. History is governed by the very necessary discipline of having to limit its focus to what is actually there in evidence. It would, therefore, sometimes have to be dry and insufficient. Drama cannot afford to be so strictly limited by the facts. It cannot, certainly, afford to be dry! The dramatist has to engage with past experience in a far more committed way if his play is to come through with any conviction. His vision has to be controlled by an attempt to be true to fact but his interest is in recreating the whole of the past reality and as such is bound to lead him into large areas of imaginative conjecture. The dramatist has to read into history in order to convey the totality of an experience and he gains something by this greater degree of independence in the imaginative appropriation of the past. The history play, therefore, has to be, in a sense, more historical than history.

History is directly interested in historical knowledge for its own sake and historians are concerned to add to that build-up of learning about the past. A playwright's interest in history would be more from the perspective of what it can possibly bring to our awareness of what life is and can be. The true difference between the poet and historian, according to Aristotle, is that "one relates what has happened, the other what may happen." Poetry, therefore, he says, "is a more philosophical and higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular." "By the universal," he means, "how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity." And even if the poet "chances to take an historical subject, he is none the less a poet; for there
is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker." A salient point emerges from this. A playwright's truth is imaginative truth. He writes with a poet's unique insight into human character and intuitive grasp of life. His sense of the probable, of inner consistency between character and situation, is a dominating element in the creative process even when he goes to history.

Sir Philip Sidney, in his defence of poetry, supports Aristotle. History is tied "to the particular truth of things and not the general reason of things." He argues effectively that the historian is often forced to assume the role of poet and that "the best of the Historian is subject to the Poet." The historian is bound to tell things as they are, cannot be liberal, without being "Poeticall of a perfect patterne." "Manie times he must tell events, whereof he can yeeld no cause, and if he do, it must be poetically." Neither "Philosopher nor Historiographer," he says, "could at the first have entered into the gates of popular judgements, if they had not taken a great passport of Poetrie...."

It is undeniable that the imagination has an essential place in the writing of history because history is both scientific investigation and analysis, and imaginative reconstruction and insight. Butterfield reminds us that "it is easy to forget that in the art of the historian there is the exhilarating moment, the creative act." The historian is more than mere passive external spectator. "Something more is necessary if only to enable him to seize the significant detail and discern the sympathies between events and find the facts that hang together." By imaginative sympathy he makes the past intelligible to the present. As he goes on to state so eloquently,
There is a kind of awareness that only comes through insight and sympathy and imagination, and is perhaps absent from us when we are too alert for a purely scientific end... Impartiality in a historian stands condemned if it means the intellect in a state of indifference and every passion at rest. We go with instinct and sympathy and all our humanity alive. It is necessary that we should call up from the resources of our nature all the things which deflect the thought of the scientist but combine to enrich the poet's.  

David Knowles, in his discussion of 'the historian and character,' too, affirms that "a historian may well, in his assessment of character, show the same genius of sympathy that we recognise in a poet."  

There are in fact, striking affinities between dramatic and historical thinking. Butterfield in his book, History and Human Relations, asserts that "to delineate a scene, to depict a personality; to portray a personality in all its urgency; to narrate a series of events" requires not only the art of literature in order to give form to the conception which the historian is seeking to communicate. It demands "something of the imagination of the literary man to shape them in the first place - to turn a bundle of documents into a resurrected personality and to see how a heap of dry facts, when properly put together, may present us with a dramatic human situation." "In the last resort," he says, "historical students must be like actors, who must not merely masquerade as Hamlet on one night and King Lear on another night, but must feel so and think so, and really get under their skins - the defective historian being like the defective actor who does not really dramatise anything because in whatever rôle he is cast, he is always the same - he can only be himself."  

Here we find history and drama being brought together in a vivid theatrical image and it can be seen how closely inter-linked are the historical and dramatic imaginations.

The historian's main method of communication is through words and he has to rely predominantly on the
efficacy of words to record or interpret the stream of events and the behaviour of men. Drama is action, enactment. The dramatist's medium is not just words but actual people placed on a stage and required to move and be. Even if the play is a play of ideas, exploring abstruse philosophical concepts, these have to be translated into concrete human terms because the playwright has to deal with people on a stage, not bloodless abstractions. These people can break or make a dramatic situation because they bring their own truth and understanding to bear. Visual and aural elements play an essential part in the communication of meaning in the theatre. Words can be crucial or trivial, for at times what is happening is more important than what is being said. Words can be contradicted by action which is a comment in itself. We retain the ritual when we distrust the words or the efficacy of words. Drama, thus, operates on different levels. Its purpose is to communicate, to engage or involve an audience. Though the historian would, generally, wish others to read the history he writes, he is interested in knowledge about the past for its own sake. Drama includes the immediacy of an audience's response as an integral part of the theatrical process. For drama is a collective experience - an interaction between playwright, director, actor and spectator. It does not allow a fixedness of interpretation, a view or meaning which is single and apparent. Drama, by its very nature, is dialectical so there has to be a dialogue and tension of opposites if it is not to destroy the mechanics by which it works. Then it passes through the subjective consciousness of innumerable other people as the producer approaches the play; the actor, his part; the audience, the production. Thus its final effect is often unpredictable as there are so many variables involved and the meaning that emerges cannot be ensured. This, however, is its strength and its truth for reality ultimately can only be perceived through subjective minds and
impressions. So drama parallels the way we are confronted by issues in life. Truth is finally inscrutable and can only be apprehended through a filter of subjective impressions. Drama provides this multiple perspective, refracted as it is through the minds of playwright, director, actor and audience. This is how we meet any truth in life, the onus of interpretation finally resting with each individual as he makes sense of it in his own terms. Drama presents this deep reality inherent in its very form. The history play when acted is as subject as any other play to the dictates of drama intrinsic to its nature. Ultimately the effect of the play as drama will depend not so much on the manifest intention of the playwright as on whether it registers with the audience as true to the complexity of the human situation.

A central part of the theatrical experience is the inner drama that takes place in each member of the audience as he relates to what is taking place. At its highest level drama creates a heightened state of consciousness in its audience which renders it more alert and receptive. It raises and intensifies so that an audience feels it has been in touch with reality in a compelling way and been given a profound insight into the human condition. Through this sense of communion at a deep level an audience can find itself released and renewed; and somehow strengthened and increased to face life anew. When drama achieves this it is close to a spiritual experience as demonstrated by T S Eliot's _Murder in the Cathedral_ and Charles Williams's _Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury_, two plays which I shall be examining. Like all drama the history play should go as far as it can in this direction. Indeed our sense of the past often contributes greatly to this feeling of deep involvement.

It therefore can be seen that the historical play as a play generates its own controls just as history imposes its own limits for the historian. The playwright is bound to his chosen discipline just as the historian is
to his. But, consequently, this leads us to consider whether there is a distinguishing quality in the history play that renders it unique in any way in drama. And it is undeniable that the history play does wield a distinctive power arising from the fact that, while other plays make no pretence to be more than a simulation of reality, the history play tacitly claims to be engaging with reality, for its effect is often predicated on the audience's belief that it is dealing with a past actuality. When emotionally stretched, the audience cannot seek relief from anxiety by dismissing what is presented as unreal, purely a figment of the writer's imagination. The audience feels that it is being faced with certain ineluctable facts of existence because what is happening on the stage is reinforced by the sense of history. This can be turned to potent effect by the dramatist. Often the inescapable identification with the past leads to an intensity of response and involvement because we see the action on the stage brimming over into a continuum of events of which we are a part. At such moments certain projected 'truths' about human existence are brought home with frightening urgency, as in Shaw's *Saint Joan* and Bond's *Early Morning*. We get the sense of the inevitable chain of consequences which draws us in as part of the drama since the world portrayed has an undeniable relationship with our own world of present thought and action. The historical playwright, thus, owes it, not only to his subject, but also to his audiences, to be regardful of historical truth since the idea of factuality is never completely absent from their minds and they credit the events enacted with a degree of actuality. Any definition of the history play, therefore, should include this obligation on the part of the playwright.

In seeking to arrive at a definition in the field of drama one recognises the wisdom of M C Bradbrook's concern that since "the history of drama is the history of interaction between the author's imagination, the actor's skill and the spectators' expectation," the definition of a work
should cover the play in being, the dramatist's idea of it and the response of the audience as part of the play.

And if the history play is to be justified in its possession of this formidable power inherent in our idea of and reaction to the play, there must be a basis for it in the approach and attitude of the playwright and therefore in the definition of the genre.

It is my contention, therefore, that a history play is a play which evinces a serious concern for historical truth or historical issues though the expression of that concern and the treatment of those issues may take protean forms. This would exclude plays whose concern with history is sketchy and peripheral, plays which are romantic and sentimental in their approach to history, which reveal an ignorance of or indifference to the facts. It excludes plays with only faint pretensions to historical or political concerns, where history is exploited merely for its sensational and theatrical possibilities. A play is not a history when historical truth is a matter of relatively small importance and character is based on fabricated evidence, or when generally accepted facts of history are altered to serve a central theme or purpose.

As an illustration we might look at three varying approaches to the history of Thomas Becket by Tennyson, T S Eliot and Anouilh. Tennyson's Becket is a classic example of the kind of play which looks to history for possibilities of romance and sensation. What takes precedence over the conflict between Thomas and Henry, between the institutions of Church and Crown, are the romantic entanglements and intrigues woven around the facts of history. Quite unhistorically the rivalry between Queen Eleanor and Rosamunde is used to precipitate events leading to the final catastrophe. Anouilh's Becket is another play that would not qualify as a history. It is founded on a long outdated account of the subject - The Conquest of England by the Normans by Augustin Thierry - which Anouilh chanced
to come across and from which he derives some of the main premises of his play. Anouilh's picture of Becket, as E Martin Browne points out, is based on the idea, now exploded, "that he was a Saxon, a member of the conquered race in an 'occupied' country. The Normans would never let him be one of them: even when he wielded almost absolute power for Henry he felt this inferiority... and indeed it is true that 'for this drama it was a thousand times better that Becket remained a Saxon.'\(^42\) Anouilh knew the facts but chose to disregard them. He says, "no one except my historian friend (who had told him of the errors) was aware of the progress of history."\(^43\) The theme of a man suffering from the neurosis of the subjugated in an occupied country had an obvious interest and relevance for Anouilh. But his lack of interest in history is plain. He makes no pretence at historical veracity. Thus his play cannot be termed a history since it is deliberately based on a false premise and he has imposed motivation on his character and altered the known facts of history to justify it. In contrast, T S Eliot's approach to the subject reveals a serious concern for historical truth. His play is based on a sound knowledge of the facts. While it treats the external conflict between Church and State, it is also an immensely inward play, probing the deep spiritual conflict within Becket himself. Eliot might have projected some of the agony he was experiencing at the time in his own personal life into his dramatisation of Becket's inner turmoil, but there is ample basis for his portrayal in the records themselves. Eliot goes back to the original sources which he treats with scrupulous respect, but he also reads widely and is aware of the complexity of historical views on the subject. Thus Murder in the Cathedral emerges as the play I would select for examination.

Considerable space has been given to discussing the kinds of approach and treatment of history the definition would include, so it is not necessary to go into this again here. But, to summarise, whether playwrights deal
with historical subjects of varied nature and in diverse manner, whether these subjects have a basis in fact or in myth, the distinguishing feature of the history play must be a concern for historical truth or historical issues. It must be re-emphasised, however, that historical truth is more than history which, as one historian describes it, "is all the remains that have come down to us from the past, studied with all the critical and interpretative power that the present can bring to the task." Historians would be the first to agree that we cannot pronounce on the past with "a frightful degree of certainty." We cannot be sure we have the whole truth no matter how ingeniously the evidence is piled up. Only a fraction of the whole can ever be known and in the attempt to recover it - the certain, the probable and the speculative will co-exist. Historical truth is, thus, disengaged from any single person's view of it, but each has his light to bring. The historian's torch is systematic controlled inquiry and scholarship. The dramatist's is imaginative sympathy and insight. Thus the dramatist's imagination must be allowed full play over his material. He is not bound rigidly to his sources or to the views of approved prophets. He must be free to show us events from unexpected angles. But there are limits to this freedom, if he is not to lose hold of the concern for historical truth itself. A playwright is free to read into history, as long as no violence is done to history and he has reasonable grounds for his portrayal. There must be a basis for his vision in history, no matter how far inward into psychological states or outward into social and political debate he takes it.

In this introductory chapter I have discussed the general ideas and principles behind the definition I intend to work with. I have attempted to define the scope and limits of the genre, because hardly any work has been done on these lines in relation to twentieth
century English historical drama. In order to ascertain whether this concern for historical truth or historical issues, which I have established as the basis of my definition, is present in a given play, each play requires close individual examination on its own terms. Thus in subsequent chapters, the ideas raised in somewhat abstract terms in the introduction are pursued through a close examination of certain plays. The history play is a very popular form among English playwrights of this century and there are a great many plays that could have been chosen. The plays considered have been selected for their varying approaches to history and because they provide telling illustrations of many of the ideas that have been discussed. Major works by writers of the first rank have been included, such as Shaw's Saint Joan, T S Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, and Edward Bond's Early Morning, because writers of this quality are creative and dynamic in their approach to history. They strike out in fresh directions, stimulating new trends of thought and experiment. Popular works by minor playwrights have also been considered, such as Gordon Daviot's Richard of Bordeaux, Robert Bolt's A Man for All Seasons and Peter Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun, because they were immensely successful in their time and represent the response of popular taste. Then there are plays like Charles Williams's Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury and John Osborne's Luther, which are compelling in their own right, where playwrights have been drawn to historical subjects for their religious interest.

To conclude I shall briefly outline the reasons for selecting the various plays and groups of plays to be examined. Shaw's Saint Joan comes in for close study because it is a major historical drama of the twentieth century and illustrates the new tradition of history plays stimulated by Shaw with his emphasis on discursive rational elements, an anti-heroic tone and diction, an overtly modern perspective, and a consciousness of different possible views of an event. Gordon Daviot's
Richard of Bordeaux, Reginald Berkeley's *The Lady with a Lamp* and Clifford Bax's *The Rose without a Thorn* are popular plays by popular playwrights of the 1930's and interestingly illustrate the meeting and crossing of two traditions, the Romantic and the Shavian. They exemplify the kind of narrowly realistic theatre in vogue at the time with its concentration on the obvious exterior world to the loss of inner profound states of being. In contrast T S Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and Charles Williams's *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*, treated individually in subsequent chapters, are stylised in form and treatment and demonstrate the use of history to explore deep psychological and spiritual areas of conflict. But while Charles Williams is unable to do justice to the external social world, Eliot, highly conscious of history and the complexity of historical approaches, is able to register both internal and external dimensions of being and incorporate an awareness of different historical views of his subject. A further chapter examines three plays of the 1960's - Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*, Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, and John Osborne's *Luther* - by playwrights of different concerns and different levels of imagination. But they are all interested in their various ways in religious motivation. Robert Bolt and Peter Shaffer are two examples of minor playwrights going to history as a source, in the one case for a moving character portrait (*A Man for All Seasons*) and in the other for sensation and spectacle (*The Royal Hunt of the Sun*). They illustrate the putting over of history in a popular way. John Osborne, on the other hand, a playwright of much greater calibre is drawn to a historical subject for its religious interest. His play, *Luther*, focuses on the individual of remarkable stature who is both prime mover and victim of social and religious forces. It is a forceful rhetorical piece which can be seen moving towards expressionism and a more poetic and violent form
of theatre. This trend in modern drama is vividly demonstrated by the concluding play of my study, Edward Bond's powerful surrealistic drama, *Early Morning*. Revolutionary in approach and intention, the play is a serious attack on the preceding century and its effect on contemporary life. It is presented in the form of a disturbing dream vision that haunts the waking consciousness and it opens up new possibilities for the treatment of history.

I have dealt with the plays in chronological order as this will enable them to be seen in perspective. I have considered not only their historical aspects, but also their particular value and effectiveness as drama. For, as history is concerned to separate what is essential from what is trivial, what is enduring from what is transient; in the final analysis the real significance of a history play, as with any play, is its capacity to explore the universal implications of a human situation and penetrate to the truth of the human condition. The ultimate criterion by which it should be judged is the nature of our response. We experience the flash of recognition or the shock of the unexpected and are convinced only by the compelling truth of the artist's portrayal of life.
Notes to Chapter I


6. Ibid., pp. 4-7.


8. Ibid., pp. 51-3.


18. E H Erikson, Young Man Luther (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 34.


34. Historical Drama, p. 25.

35. Ibid., p. x.

43. Cited in E Martin Browne, "The Two Beackets," p. 27.
CHAPTER II

George Bernard Shaw - Saint Joan

In a study of twentieth century English history plays George Bernard Shaw is a good playwright to start with, not merely from the point of view of chronology. The modern approach to historical drama can be seen to start with him. The immense influence he exerted in his own time and continues to exert among English playwrights of this century is reflected in the fact that nearly all the playwrights dealt with in this thesis mirror some measure of his impact. He is evident in the background of the works of minor playwrights such as Reginald Berkeley, Gordon Daviot, and Clifford Bax; as well as major playwrights like T S Eliot, John Osborne and Edward Bond. Much of what we have grown accustomed to expect from a modern history play was brought about by Shaw's originality and daring in challenging the hidebound practices and conventions of nineteenth century historical drama. In this chapter I have selected Saint Joan for close individual examination because it is a major historical work of the twentieth century and illustrates the new tradition of history play stimulated by Shaw, with his emphasis on discursive rational elements, an anti-heroic tone and diction, an overtly modern perspective, and a consciousness of different possible views of an event. But because Shaw is seminal in the field, before coming to Saint Joan in particular, it seems appropriate to devote a little attention to establishing the precise nature of Shaw's originality in the mode.

Nineteenth century English playwrights were mostly drawn to history because of the opportunities it afforded for theatrical display. As Martin Meisel states: "the history play of the nineteenth century was characterized by three qualities: elaborate spectacle, romantic intrigue and flamboyant histrionics." History provided a splendid
backdrop against which to weave intricate webs of exotic romance and intrigue. Events were sensationalised, characters sentimentalised and historical issues subordinated to the petty round of personal disputes and passions. Thus in plays like Tennyson's Becket (1893) the 'love interest' is the focus of dramatic sympathy and the real issues involved in the clash between Henry and Becket recede into oblivion. The extremely successful plays of Stephen Phillips and Bulwer-Lytton were in this romantic, melodramatic tradition which catered for the popular taste of the time. There was no serious attempt at historical authenticity though playwrights went out of their way to create the 'correct' historical atmosphere through the superficial externals of historical period or personage. Vast sums were lavished upon elaborate sets, costumes and accessories. But these were merely factitious aids to produce the impression of historical reality. "'Correctness of costume' was a phrase invented to excuse pageantry, as was 'accuracy of locale' for spectacle." The shock to Londoners when Shaw's rational mild-mannered Julius Caesar came on stage speaking "plain, even slangy English" and the historical illusion was rudely shattered by startling anachronisms in the form of topical expressions and allusions such as "Egypt for the Egyptians," "Art for Art's sake," and Beaconsfield's "Peace with Honour."

Shaw reacted strongly against playwrights who were shallow and opportunistic in their approach to history. His genuine concern for historical truth caused him to dismiss their products as "historical romance, mostly fiction with historical names attached to the stock characters of the stage." Asked by Roy Nash of the
Manchester Evening News in 1938 whether a dramatist writing a historical play should be allowed to clothe his characters in "garbs of romance," Shaw replied:

If the characters are clothed in romance, as you so romantically put it, they are not historical. No historical character is worth dramatizing at all unless the truth about him or her is far more interesting than any romancing. A good play about Rip Van Winkle is not spoiled by calling it Rip Parnell; but it does not thereby become an historical play. Shakespeare always stuck close to the chronicles in his histories. And they survive, whilst hundreds of pseudo-historical plays have perished.  

Historical truth is, thus, a matter of importance to Shaw. A playwright should respect his sources; but this does not mean that Shaw believed in a slavish adherence to historical facts and records. He was well aware of the nature of the demands imposed on the historian or dramatist by the literary or dramatic form. In an interview in To-Day in 1894 Shaw states:

Historical facts are not a bit more sacred than any other class of facts. In making a play out of them you must adapt them to the stage, and that alters them at once, more or less. Why, you cannot even write a history without adapting the facts to the conditions of literary narrative, which are in some respects much more distorting than the dramatic conditions of representation on the stage. Things do not happen in the form of stories or dramas; and since they must be told in some such form, all stories, all dramatic representations, are only attempts to arrange the facts in a thinkable, intelligible, interesting form - that is, when they are not more or less intentional efforts to hide the truth, as they very often are. 

In Shaw's history plays historical facts do indeed take diverse and interesting forms because Shaw is extremely inventive in his treatment of history and is continually seeking out new approaches; but by no means can he be accused of "intentional efforts to hide the truth."
brief consideration of a few of Shaw's history plays illustrates this clearly.

Shaw's first history play, The Man of Destiny (1897), paradoxically subtitled 'a fictitious paragraph of history,' was written in reaction to Sardou's play about Napoleon, Madame Sans-Gêne, in which, Shaw complains, Napoleon is "nothing but the jealous husband of a thousand fashionable dramas, talking Buonapartiana." In his caustic review of a London production of the play at the Garrick Theatre in 1895 Shaw exclaims, "Surely the twenty minutes or so of amusement contained in the play might be purchased a little more cheaply than by the endurance of a huge mock historic melodrama which never for a moment produces the faintest conviction, and which involves the exhibition of elaborate Empire interiors requiring half an hour between the acts to set, and not worth looking at when they are set." The Man of Destiny is obviously a response to Sardou's version since Shaw takes as his title a phrase he had already used in his review. The play is built around a fictitious encounter between Napoleon and a strange lady, and though it has all the classic ingredients of romantic intrigue, it depends for its effect on the deliberate frustration of the audience's expectations. Despite the imaginary situation Shaw's characterisation of Napoleon is based in history. Shaw humanises the figure of Napoleon and presents him as an ironic blend of the admirable and the ignoble, yet focusing on qualities of mind and will which might account for his genius. As R N Roy points out, Shaw's portrait outraged many, for "Napoleon had become a romantic hero whom even sober historians depicted in the grand manner." A modern historian, however, would have no trouble in crediting Shaw's picture of the positive and negative aspects of Napoleon's character. David Knowles talks of "Napoleon's supreme lucidity of mind as an organiser and administrator, his admirable energy, his clairvoyance in campaign or on the field of battle, his daring in conception of great schemes."
"All these and many other qualities, reached in him to the point of consummate genius." "Yet," Knowles says, "the character behind this, as seen in his personal relations, in his diplomacy, and in his spoken and written words, seems to lack a corresponding generosity and nobility, as it also lacks warmth and grace and sincerity." The Man of Destiny is constructed around a fictitious episode yet it is a history because Shaw presents us with a view of Napoleon that can be endorsed by facts in history.

In Good King Charles's Golden Days (1939) is another play where the external situation is an artistic contrivance through which Shaw highlights essential historical truths. Shaw thus paradoxically subtitles it "A true history that never happened." The play is a lively conversation piece which brings together notable historical figures of a period - Isaac Newton, Charles II, George Fox and Godfrey Kneller - who embody in themselves dominant social, religious and political forces of the time. To foreshadow the abandonment of Newton's mathematical theories after the discoveries of Einstein a century or two later Shaw gives Hogarth's famous dictum, "the line of beauty is a curve" to the painter Godfrey Kneller. Hogarth, Shaw explains in his preface, "could not by any magic be fitted into the year 1680, my chosen date; so I had to fall back on Godfrey Kneller. Kneller had not Hogarth's brains; but I have had to endow him with them to provide Newton with a victorious antagonist." In all other essential respects Shaw is faithful to history. R N Roy asserts that Shaw has taken "outrageous liberties with the facts of Newton's life." Yet these liberties amount to little more than minor matters of locale, the telescoping or transposition of events. Lord Keynes similarly talks alarmingly of Shaw's "wild departure from the known facts" in describing Newton "as he certainly was not in the year 1680." But, as he goes on to say, Shaw "with prophetic insight into the possibilities" of Newton's nature, gives us "a picture which would not have been very un plausible
In Good King Charles's Golden Days qualifies as a history because it is concerned with essential historical truths and, as has been argued in the introduction, a play must not be disqualified simply on the basis of a form which is the artist's unique projection of the facts. Shaw departs from a realistic adherence to the facts, uniting in discussion historical characters in unlikely circumstances, and gains from this contrivance considerable breadth of scope and vision.

John Bull's Other Island (1904) illustrates a further point raised in the introduction - to be considered a history a play need not contain actual historical characters and events. It can still be centred around historical issues and warrant the term 'history' as does John Bull's Other Island. The play's fictitious characters and incidents present us with a sort of parable or paradigm of Anglo-Irish history. The Englishman, Tom Broadbent, taking over Larry Doyle's old love, Nora Reilly, and entrenching himself in Ireland politically and economically, symbolises the acquisition and exploitation of Ireland by the English, romantically, politically and economically. The play touches on numerous historical issues - the conflict of racial types, the dispossession and displacement of the Irish peasantry, the religious and political identity of Ireland. There are innumerable historical reverberations. As one critic notes, "...the Fenians, the hungry forties and subsequent famines, the land question and the Home Rule issue are part of the history implied in the play, and there is even an echo from Cromwellian Ireland. The temperament of the 'bould Fenian' is represented in Larry, though his old political alignment has vanished with his removal to England. The grimness, poverty and hardship of peasant life are recalled by the dour presence of Matthew Haffigan and comments others make on his experience." The play provides us with an acute insight into English and Irish national character.
as revealed by their relations in history. 

Caesar and Cleopatra (1898) with its anti-romantic, comic-ironic view of the hero stimulated a whole new trend in the approach to history. Shaw in fact preceded Lytton Strachey in breaking away from the old romantic school and pointing the way in a new direction. "The contemporary school of ironical biography," maintains Archibald Henderson, "began, not with Lytton Strachey's Queen Victoria, but with Bernard Shaw's Caesar." Caesar and Cleopatra, says Hesketh Pearson, by initiating a natural and humorous treatment of historical figures "completely changed the general attitude to historical subjects and revolutionised the treatment of history in biography, drama and the novel." Shaw humanised the heroic figure, portraying him as a mixture of the unique and the prosaic. In an article in The Play Pictorial in 1907 he writes: 

... we want credible heroes. The old demand for the incredible, the impossible, the superhuman, which was supplied by bombast, inflation, and the piling up of crimes on catastrophes and factitious raptures on artificial agonies, has fallen off; and the demand now is for heroes in whom we can recognize our own humanity, and who instead of walking, talking, eating, drinking, sleeping, making love and fighting single combats in a monotonous ecstasy of continuous heroism, are heroic in the true fashion: that is, touching the summits only at rare moments, and finding the proper level of all occasions, condescending with humour and good sense to the prosaic ones as well as rising to the noble ones, instead of persisting in rising to them all on the principle that a hero must always soar, in season and out of season.

Shaw's impact was widespread. We find an immensely influential twentieth century playwright like Brecht applauding Shaw's "refreshing conviction - that heroes are not exemplary scholars and that heroism is a very inscrutable, but very real conglomeration of contradictory traits." Shaw, Brecht says, "knows that we have the terrible habit of forcing all the attributes of a certain
kind of people into one preconceived stereotyped concept. In our imagination the usurer is cowardly, sneaky and brutal. We would not think of permitting him to be even a little courageous, sentimental or soft-hearted. Shaw does."\(^{17}\) Shaw's influence on Brechtian protagonists must surely be felt in plays like *Galileo* and *Mother Courage*. The powerful nature of Shaw's impact on modern drama is revealed in the fact that the penchant throughout this century is for a debunking of the heroic, a sardonic though not necessarily unsympathetic view of the hero as an ironic, equivocal, inextricable compound of flesh and spirit, imagination and instinct, intellect and humanity.

Shaw's iconoclasm, his delight in upsetting rigid conventional notions and attitudes, is an inescapable part of his approach to history. *Caesar and Cleopatra* challenges not only popular romantic illusions but also Shakespeare's characterisations of Caesar and Cleopatra which have so strongly coloured our conception of these historical figures. Shaw's play is an attempt to redress the balance and provide a counterweight to Shakespeare's vision. There has been much critical controversy over the play's value as history. Much to Shaw's annoyance the play in his time was dismissed as 'historic extravaganza' or 'comic opera'.\(^ {18}\) Shaw persisted in his defence of the play and, throughout his life, insisted on its historicity. Critics generally have denied the claim. H Ludeke maintains that "Shaw's portrait of Caesar will not stand up under close historical scrutiny."\(^ {19}\) Stanley Weintraub asserts that "without impugning the play, we may yet consider it unreliable as history. G B S's Caesar is no more than Shakespeare's Caesar the Caesar of history."\(^ {20}\) Gordon Couchman similarly feels that while Shakespeare "failed to solve the problem of portraying Caesar to everybody's satisfaction" for many Shaw's solution has
proved no more enlightening. Neither Shakespeare nor Shaw would claim to be attempting the impossibility of portraying Caesar to everybody's satisfaction. Despite their contrary views of Caesar both visions have a basis in historical fact; we are provided with two artists' invaluable insights into the possibilities of his nature, and beyond that no writer can go. The historical records themselves are imperfect and there are considerable discrepancies in what survives. Thus, as G.B. Harrison points out, "there is often wide difference of interpretation between writers of all ages; yet all of them base their findings on the same sources. Certainly Caesar was ruthless in his drive to power but once power was assured his intentions appear to have been both statesmanlike and benevolent. Nor is it surprising that the pompous aristocrat portrayed by Shakespeare should be so different from Shaw's tolerant, rational, worldly-wise and avuncular statesman of Caesar and Cleopatra."22

The early accounts of Caesar's Alexandrian expedition are slight and I suspect that is why Shaw chose the period because it allowed him considerable freedom over his sources. That Shaw was seriously concerned about the play's viability as history is evident from the trouble he took to check its historical aspects with his friend, Gilbert Murray, the noted classicist. Writing to Murray, Shaw says: "I have carefully considered your comments on my history, and have modified accordingly." Murray accepts Shaw's interpretation of Caesar as quite plausible; for in his reply to Shaw's letter he writes, "You make a good defence at all points of my attack, especially about Caesar. I own I don't understand him; and your reading may be the right one."23

Critics have dealt exhaustively with Shaw's sources so I shall not attempt more than the briefest summary here.
In a programme note to an 1899 production of the play Shaw claims:

The play follows history as closely as stage exigencies permit. Critics should consult Manetho and the Egyptian Monuments, Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo (Book 17), Plutarch, Pomponius, Mela, Pliny, Tacitus, Appian of Alexandria, and, perhaps, Ammianus and Marcellinus.

Ordinary spectators, if unfamiliar with the ancient tongues, may refer to Mommsen, Warde-Fowler, Mr St George Stock's Introduction to the 1898 Clarendon Press edition of Caesar's Gallic Wars, and Murray's Handbook for Egypt. Many of these authorities have consulted their imaginations, more or less. The author has done the same.24

Shaw is obviously speaking tongue in cheek and having some fun at his critics' expense. Critics have pointed out that this list includes historical accounts which have little bearing on Caesar's Alexandrian campaign and omits other sources which Shaw was clearly familiar with, such as Suetonius's account of Julius Caesar and James Froude's book, Caesar; A Sketch.25 Gale Larson presents strong internal evidence for Shaw's use of two other sources, John Pentland Mahaffy's Empire of the Ptolemies and Sir J Gardener Wilkinson's The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians both listed in Murray's Handbook for Egypt.26

Shaw, as usual, has indulged in his penchant for making extravagant, often contradictory claims. At an early stage in the writing of the play when it was suggested to him that he had read up Mommsen and other historians he flatly denied it:

Not a bit of it. History is only a dramatization of events. And if I start telling lies about Caesar it's a hundred to one that they will be just the same lies that other people have told about him. I never worry myself about historical details until the play is done; human nature is very much the same always and everywhere. And when I go over the play to put the details
right I will find there is surprisingly little to alter...You see I know human nature. Given Caesar and a certain set of circumstances, I knew what would happen, and when I have finished the play you will find I have written history. 27

Behind the deliberate exaggeration Shaw is making a valid point. As has been stated in the introduction, the playwright brings to history an artist's unique insight into human nature, and his sense of internal logic linking character and event is an important part of the contribution he has to make in the search after the essential truth of history. Shaw, later, repeatedly asserts that he took the chronicle without alteration from Mommsen after reading extensively from Plutarch to Warde-Fowler. He found that Mommsen had conceived Caesar as he wished to present him. 28

Shaw's conception of Caesar as a great statesman and a practical realist undoubtedly owes much to Mommsen who states:

Caesar was thoroughly a realist and a man of sense; and whatever he undertook and achieved was pervaded and guided by the cool sobriety which constitutes the most marked peculiarity of his genius. 29

But Shaw by no means presents Caesar purely in the Mommsen light as some have claimed. Mommsen is unqualified in his adulation of Caesar and his summing up of Caesar's character is extreme indeed. The secret of Caesar's character, he says, lies in its perfection. "Caesar was the entire and perfect man...As the artist can paint everything save only consummate beauty, so the historian, when once in a thousand years he encounters the perfect, can only be silent regarding it...." 30 It is precisely this kind of absurd idolatry that Shaw flatly condemns. His own portrait of Caesar is much more mixed and ambivalent and shot through with comic irony. As Eric Bentley states, "Caesar's genius is shown to be paradoxical even equivocal rather than good. The central paradox of Caesar is that, while his clemency raises him above the hatchet-man, he is all the time dependent on the 'honest' hatchet-man
Rufio and sometimes on the 'dishonest' hatchet-man Lucius Septimius.\textsuperscript{31} The purpose behind Shaw's frequent references to Mommsen was merely to place himself in the pro-Caesar tradition of Mommsen and other nineteenth century historians. Shaw was only too well aware of the sophistication required in dealing with historical material and the complexity of historical views and approaches. Historical perspectives shift according to the bias of the writer and his age and Shaw was conscious that he was presenting history in the light of his own time. In his preface to \textit{Three Plays for Puritans} he states that "the playgoer may reasonably ask to have historical events presented in the light of his own time, even though Homer and Shakespear have already shewn them in the light of their time." Referring to the hero restorations of Mommsen and Carlyle he says, "allow me to set forth Caesar in the same modern light, taking the platform from Shakespear as he from Homer, and with no thought of pretending to express the Mommsenite view of Caesar any better than Shakespear expressed a view which was not even Plutarchian....\textsuperscript{32} Shaw's concept of historical progress involved the pivotal role played by heroes or supermen which was in keeping with the outlook of nineteenth century historians and philosophers such as Carlyle, Nietzche and Hegel who saw the individual as the motor force of historical development. The history of the world, according to Carlyle, is the biography of great men. "In all epochs of the world's history," he writes, "we shall find the Great Man to have been the indispensable saviour of his epoch; - the lightning without which the fuel never would have burnt."\textsuperscript{33} For Shaw too the great man is the agent of civilisation's advance; he prefigures the superhumanity of the future. In holding to this view Shaw was very much a Victorian.

The contention that \textit{Caesar and Cleopatra} is unreliable as history rests on two main grounds. One is Shaw's attributing responsibility for the death of Pothinus to
Cleopatra when, though various possible causes might have led to his assassination, nearly all accounts report it as having been done at Caesar's command. Shaw in switching blame has been accused of a gross violation of history. Gale Larson argues forcibly, and I would agree with her, that this is not a horrendous distortion of history, since Caesar was celebrated for his clemency and both adverse and sympathetic historians, ancient and modern, have praised Caesar for this quality. Shaw in attributing this murderous act to Cleopatra in no way violates her historically known character. Shaw has therefore in effect "transcended a fact of history so that a larger truth of historical biography would remain inviolable." This I think cannot be denied. A violence would have been done to history if Cleopatra had had a reputation for clemency and Caesar for vengefulness but Shaw distorts a fact of history to preserve an essential truth embodied in his image of Caesar.

The other main ground for contention involves what has been described as the "entirely pedagogic nature" of the relationship between Caesar and Cleopatra that is represented in the play. This, it is generally surmised, is largely based on the falsification of Cleopatra's age at the time - Shaw makes her sixteen when she is supposed to have been twenty. Critics have suggested that Shaw might have been misled by the deceptive nature of a reference in Mommsen. But numerous historians have given conflicting information about Cleopatra's age and Shaw had sufficient grounds for portraying her as a young immature girl, merely from Plutarch's comment that Caesar had known Cleopatra when she was "a girl ignorant of the world" whereas when she met Antony she was "in the time of life when women's beauty is most splendid, and their intellects are in full maturity." That is basis enough for a playwright because, as has been emphasised in the introduction, a playwright is not a historian and is not required to
weigh the evidence. Besides, though Shaw deliberately plays down the romantic side of the relationship as a foil to Shakespeare's portrayal of Caesar and Cleopatra, he by no means denies it. There are numerous pointers in the text itself. Right from the start we are told that "this Caesar is a great lover of women" (Alternative to the prologue, p.176) and Caesar meeting Cleopatra incognito informs her that Caesar "is easily deceived by women. Their eyes dazzle him; and he sees them not as they are, but as he wishes them to appear to him." (Act 1, p.187) He predicts that she "will be the most dangerous of all Caesar's conquests." (Act 1, p.191) When Pothinus asks Cleopatra how she is so sure that Caesar did not love her as men love women she replies, "Because I cannot make him jealous. I have tried." This really is no answer and Pothinus leaves unconvinced - "The curse of all the gods of Egypt be upon her! She has sold her country to the Roman, that she may buy it back from him with her kisses." (Act IV, p.259) Furthermore actresses who have played the part of Cleopatra such as Mrs Patrick Campbell, Gertrude Elliot, and Vivien Leigh have brought out the flirtatious nature of the relationship. The legend is well known and Shaw hardly needed to labour the point. Besides the play is built as a direct contrast to Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. Hence the hilarious scene at the end where Caesar in his departure from Egypt all but forgets to say goodbye to Cleopatra who jolts his memory when she appears looking cold and tragic in striking black - "Ah, I knew there was something. How could you let me forget her, Rufio?" (Act V, p.288) Caesar and Cleopatra has a reasonable enough basis in historical fact to warrant the term 'history'. It offers us a counter vision to Shakespeare's in a very different key. One mark of a great playwright like Shaw is the ability to challenge Shakespeare and abide the comparison. Later I shall be considering a lesser playwright, Gordon Daviot, who attempts it but fails.
Of all Shaw's history plays it was *Saint Joan* because of its universal impact which marked a turning point in modern historical drama. A genuine concern for historical truth caused Shaw to base his play upon the original documents - the contemporary reports of Joan's trial and the subsequent rehabilitation proceedings. He deliberately restricted himself to these and scrupulously avoided historians' accounts and the extensive literature on Joan until he had completed the play. The official Latin texts of both trials had been edited by Jules Quicherat in the 1840's and published in five volumes of documented history. Quicherat's scholarly work was translated into English for the first time in an abridged edition by T Douglas Murray, *Jeanne d'Arc*, published in 1902. In 1920 Joan was canonised by the Roman Catholic Church and Shaw must have been struck by this ironic reversal of judgement in history. Early in 1923 Sydney Cockerell, then curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, having recognised the dramatic possibilities of the historical material, handed Shaw a copy of Murray's book. Shaw had always felt drawn by the figure of Joan and now his imagination was fired by contemporary reports of one of the most enthralling trials in history. He wrote the play within six months and *Saint Joan* was first produced in New York on the 28th December 1923 with Winifred Lenihan in the title role, and in London on the 26th March the following year with Sybil Thorndike as Joan. It was published in 1924. The play was heralded as a triumph both in New York and London and it was subsequently produced throughout Europe where it met with equal acclaim. In France a production of *Saint Joan* by Georges and Ludmilla Pitoëff opened on the 28th April 1925. It was a tremendous success, ran for over a hundred performances in 1925 and was revived year after year for the next ten years. It awoke French dramatists to the possibility of a new direction in the writing of historical drama. As Daniel C Gerould states:
The humour, fantasy, and anachronisms that the critics had found in Saint Joan became accepted characteristics of the new genre of historical drama which was best represented in the works of Giraudoux...

Ultimately the real originality of Shaw's Saint Joan and the source of its influence in France lay in Shaw's application of comic irony and modern psychology to a historical subject which had previously been considered entirely serious.37

Shaw's break with the romantic melodramatic tradition of his time constitutes his innovation but this was not achieved without a struggle. In the *New York Times* of the 13th April, 1924, some time after the first New York production of the play, James Graham reports a fierce controversy raging in Paris about Saint Joan, which was sparked off by a dispatch in the Paris theatrical publication, *Comoedia*, from its New York correspondent, M Thomas, alleging that the author had insulted Joan. Shaw was accused of being not only sacrilegious but also boorish and ungalant. Shaw hit back in defence and in a letter to the London correspondent of *Comoedia* he writes:

I love the real Joan, but the conventional Joan of the stage makes me sick. The protagonists of my play, although they appear on the stage as soldiers and feudal noblemen, are in reality the Church, the Inquisition and the Holy Roman Empire. All united irresistibly to destroy a warrior saint. I have not belittled Joan, as would have been the case if I had turned her story into a melodrama about a wicked Bishop and a virtuous virgin. I have carried the tragedy beyond the taste of lovers of such melodrama and probably beyond their comprehension.38

The figure of Joan had been grossly sensationalised or sentimentalised in the theatre so that it had become something of a cliché; she was depicted as either the diabolical witch of the business as in *Henry VI* or as a romantic love-lorn figure as in Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*. Shaw found the pseudo-Shakespearean Joan ending in "mere jingo scurrility." He called Schiller's play,
"romantic flapdoodle" and dismissed all modern attempts known to him as "second-rate opera books."\(^{39}\)

In his preface to *Saint Joan* Shaw asserts that Schiller's play "has not a single point of contact with the real Joan" and this statement is hardly an exaggeration.\(^{40}\)

Schiller takes flagrant liberties with history. The Church does not figure in his play at all and the question of heresy never arises. The burning at the stake is replaced by Joan dying heroically on the battlefield. Historical truth is abandoned altogether in the interest of wild romanticism. La Hire and Dunois are shown vying for Joan's hand in marriage. A supernatural element is introduced in the form of a knight in shining black armour who warns Joan against entering Rheims. She pays no heed and before the gates of Rheims disarms an English officer with whom she falls instantly in love. Joan is torn between this impious love for her country's hated foe and her great mission to save France. The play centres around this conflict between the calls of love and duty.

Plays about Joan in Shaw's time went in equally for romance and sensation. Such realism as there was in Tom Taylor's *Joan of Arc* produced at the Queen's Theatre in 1871, was for the sake of spectacle.

The following reviews reprinted in *The Times* of the 21st April 1871 provide a lively idea of the nature of the production and its success:

The stately magnificence of the great hall of the castle of Chinon, the sensational splendour of the taking of Tourelles, with all its burning battlements, men in armour, scaling of fortresses, and Joan of Arc on her white horse, the centre of the picture, the superb pageantry of the Cathedral of Rheims during the Coronation of Charles with its never ending procession, its ecclesiastical pomp, its glitter of gold and silver, its nobles and its courtiers, maidens and handmaidens, its braying of trumpets and pealing of organs, for absolute luxury has never been rivalled in the annals of the stage. The applause was as deafening as it usually is on such
Seldom or never has a more imposing picture been placed upon the stage than the Cathedral at Rheims. The taking of the Tourelles is a spirited battle scene and when the mystic maid, fully armed and carrying her standard, rode upon the stage, the enthusiasm of the spectators knew no bounds. The scene in the torture chamber elicited great interest of somewhat an appalling nature. The drama follows Joan in her adventurous fortunes to her ultimate imprisonment for witchcraft and death at the funeral pile. Certainly we have arrived at the age of realism, when an actress is seen standing upon a mass of apparently burning faggots. The highest praise must be bestowed upon the manner in which the drama has been placed upon the stage. It is an enormous success.

The heroine of Jeanne d'Arc (1906), the play by an American playwright, Percy Mackaye, is a pale ethereal figure. The inevitable love interest is the focus of dramatic sympathy. D'Alençon is shown in love with Joan, in wild transports and spewing lines of sickly sentiment:

'Always you are with me.' Did she say these words
Or am I dizzy with this incense of her?...
'Always you are with me!' Always, always!
Here -
On the air, this moonlight, everywhere - her face
Encounters mine in glory.

But when he attempts to kiss her as she lies sleeping he is prevented from doing so by the dazzling winged form of St. Michael keeping vigil over the virgin maid. The immediacy and vitality of Shaw's modern colloquial idiom in Saint Joan was in bold defiance of the convention of employing artificially impassioned, highly stilted verse in historical dramas to suggest a time and place removed from the present. The following passage from Mackaye's play provides a classic example of the kind of language and sentiments traditionally
used:

My banner, dear my duke!
Come, we will go together, hand in hand -
Children of France, behold your fleur-de-lis!
Thou, Louis, stay, and when thou shalt have
seen
This banner touch the English walls - thy horn!
Blow it at Orleans' gate: the siege is raised!
Follow your lilies now, brave boys of France!
Ten thousand of his host surround us. See!
The sun goes down through archings of their
wings,
The river burns and eddies with their swords.
Work, work, and God will work! Follow the
lilies
And shoot your arrows straight - Jhesus Maria!

(Act III, p.112)

Shaw saw a successful London production of Mackaye's play
and when he was asked what he thought of the part of Joan,
he replied:

Yes, I saw Miss Marlowe play it. She was
very soft and sweet: that is, about as
little like Joan as Joan's charger. Nobody
could possibly have burned Miss Marlowe.
Job himself would have burned the real Joan.
Mind, I am not blaming Miss Marlowe: she
did the job she was given and did it very
well. She was called on to make Joan
pitiably, sentimental and in the technical
melodramatic sense 'sympathetic.' And
whoever does that makes Joan's fate
unintelligible, and in my opinion, makes
Joan herself vapid and uninteresting.43

Shaw abhorred these melodramatic stereotypes where the
real Joan is romanticised and idealised out of existence.
His concern was to make Joan credible in actual human terms
and project the distinctive qualities that made her a force
to be reckoned with in history. But the tremendous
pressure exerted by popular taste and theatrical tradition
can be seen from the fact that even in early productions of
Saint Joan the drag towards the conventional often asserted
itself and Shaw had to take pains to counteract it. In a
letter to the Theatre Guild about the first American
production he writes, "Simenon must not make the scenery
fantastic. It may be very simple; but it must suggest perfectly natural scenery. Joan was an extremely real person, the scenery should be keyed to her reality."
They were also asked to avoid leading to "that upstage effect with a very feminine operatic-looking Joan in the centre." Shaw once criticised Wendy Hiller's interpretation of the rôle of Joan and she was told:

Joan wasn't a cataleptic - she was forcible and sure from beginning to end, and never played pianissimo... when you come on in the Trial scene, kick the chain from step to step instead of dragging it. Let the kicks be heard before you come on: and when they take it off do not rub your ankle pathetically, but bend your legs at the knees and stretch them as if you were going to take on the whole court at all-in-wrestling - And call the man a noodle heartily, not peevishly. Get a big laugh with it. And now go your way in the strength of the Lord; but do not despise the instruction of the old bird - G.B.S.45

Referring to a certain continental actress's playing of the role Shaw complained, "She made the audience weep, but for all the wrong reasons. She played St Joan like a servant girl who has to go to jail for three months for stealing milk for her illegitimate child. Now that is a tragic situation, I admit, but it is definitely not Saint Joan!" But gradually the Shavian point and purpose sank home and helped to bring about a radical change in public taste and outlook. At the 1938 Malvern Festival Elisabeth Bergner played the part of Joan and the following comments on her performance by Ernest Short in Theatrical Cavalcade would surely have met with Shaw's approval:

Miss Bergner displayed beauty, pathos and charm, but there was nothing of the soldier, nothing of the peasant, and nothing of the obstinate saint. Only the martyr. Nor did Miss Bergner capture the rude common sense which made Miss Thorndike's presentation acceptable as history.47

The play's historicity is a subject that has come in for vigorous discussion both by critics and historians. When the play was first produced it aroused considerable reaction. J M Robertson devoted a whole book to refuting
the historicity of Saint Joan but his antagonism towards Shaw is apparent and the book is full of illiberal diatribes and narrowminded pedantry. Robertson is concerned with strict historical verisimilitude and the play is picked apart for its variation from history in all kinds of minutiae. Shaw, he writes, has shown little respect for "historiographical rectitude" and invented a "doctrinaire figure which has no historic actuality."

Again we find the desire for an idealised stained-glass window image of Joan. Who can fail to see, he says, that "when the noble figure of the tranced visionary, with her sheer burning medieval faith in God and the Saints, inspiring disheartened soldiers and populace to a kindred faith in her Mission, is transmuted to that of a kind of early Feminist Reformer - a Superwoman with a genius for artillery and tactics, reforming a demoralised army - we have lost a real historic figure and gained a mere whimsical contraption."  

T S Eliot commends Robertson's book and calls Shaw's Saint Joan "one of the most superstitious of the effigies which have been erected to that remarkable woman."  

Shaw's Joan of Arc, he states, "is perhaps the greatest sacrilege of all Joans: for instead of the saint or the strumpet of the legends to which he objects, he has turned her into a great middle-class reformer and her place is a little higher than Mrs Pankhurst. If Mr Shaw is an artist, he may contemplate his work with ecstasy."  

The shock to the sensibility of a major artist and critic like Eliot is a measure of the originality of Shaw's treatment of history, especially since Eliot was in fact deeply influenced by Saint Joan as can be seen from his play, Murder in the Cathedral where he adopts the same anti-heroic tone and modernity of spirit.

Historians themselves were at that time committed to a reverential approach to heroic figures like Joan. Writing in 1925, a Belgian historian with a special interest in the medieval period, J Van Kan, commends Saint Joan as the "first serious attempt to give a dramatic rendering of the
figure of France's sublime heroine based upon a truly historical foundation." But he calls attention to "certain historical inaccuracies which are the cause of small, but nevertheless unnecessary, blemishes in the character of the Heroine Maid, and which distort the surroundings over which she spread her angelic light."

For example he finds it wrong "to lay in the mouth of Joan words which have a tang of boastfulness" for "anything with the least hint of boastfulness was worlds removed from the Maid." The distinguished Dutch medieval scholar, Johan Huizinga, writing about Saint Joan in 1925 laments the absence of a "high dramatic style." He admits that Shaw's play would have gained nothing if the dialogue had been filled with "archaic grandiloquence and Walter Scotlike solemnity" as it was a "moot question whether that would make it more 'genuinely' historical." But the play is "too much lacking in the qualities of tragic poetry to be commensurate with the sublimity of his subject." He refers to a book he had written on life in the fifteenth century in France and the Nationalists in which he hardly mentions Joan. This, he says, had been charged to him as an error but it was a considered deliberate omission.

What had kept him from including Joan was a sense of harmony and a "vast and reverent humility." It is hard to imagine any scholar now being able to justify a serious omission on those grounds! It can, thus, be seen that even sober historians of the time treated Saint Joan as a removed exalted figure to be held in pious awe and veneration.

It was precisely this kind of Johannolatry that Shaw was revolting against. He by no means lessens Joan's stature - she is a very splendid figure indeed but immensely real as well. He did not want audiences to see Joan as a sublime spirit safely remote from themselves, so that they would fail to recognise the relevance of her predicament to contemporary situations. Shaw's primary
concern was with the present, not the past; thus he was bent on driving home the play in contemporary terms and pointing to modern equivalents. Sybil Thorndike was told that Joan of Arc was like a suffragette. In his preface Shaw compares Joan's situation to that of Sylvia Pankhurst and Edith Cavell. The question raised by Joan's burning, he says, is a burning question still, though the penalties involved are not so sensational. That is why he is probing it. If it were only an historical curiosity he would not waste his readers time or his own on it for five minutes.

Both early and contemporary critics can be found faulting the play as history because of its overtly modern perspective. Shaw is not concerned to present the past as remote and profoundly different from the present. The play is "full of spiritual anachronisms," states Desmond MacCarthy. "The atmosphere is not that of the Middle Ages." While admitting that the Shavian history play is the source of one of the most powerful conventions of modern drama, Margery Morgan feels that Shaw's plays reveal a total lack of historical perspective and describes "such 'historical' drama" as "merely a special area of fantasy." Her criticism is that the consciousness of Shaw's characters is modern and they speak anachronistically with a foreknowledge of subsequent issues and events. David Daiches asserts that "Shaw, like the great XVIII century moralists, believed that generalizations about the society you knew best, your own contemporary society, are valid for men at all times, and thus he cheerfully assumed that he understood Caesar or Saint Joan on the basis of modern analogies. But he did not understand them, for he lacked historical imagination; and these characters became in his hands modern Shavian heroes rather than convincing historical characters." Shaw is accused of imposing on the past the psychology of the present. "As in his characterisations," Edward Wagerknecht comments, "he makes
no attempt to escape from the limitations of his own temperament." But Shaw recognised that one cannot escape the limitations of one's own temperament and environment. In 1907 in a preface to the essay, *The Sanity of Art*, he says:

I deal with all periods; but I never study any period but the present, which I have not yet mastered and never shall; and as a dramatist I have no clue to any historical or other personage save that part of him which is also myself, and which may be nine tenths of him or ninety-nine hundredths, as the case may be (if indeed, I do not transcend the creature) but which, anyhow, is all that can ever come within my knowledge of his soul. The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all people and about all time.60

There is a fundamental truth in this which relates to any writer's approach to the past, and applies to the historian as much as to the dramatist. As has been pointed out in the introduction, history includes both the observer and the observed. Historical perspectives are continually changing in accordance with the bias of the writer and his age, and each generation rewrites history in its own image. Eventually Benedetto Croce, writing in 1938, brought about a radical change in historians' thinking about the nature of history by his insistence that historical judgements give to all history "the character of 'contemporary history' because, however remote in time events there recounted may seem to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein those events vibrate."61 Owing to his influence the tendency of present-day historians is to interpret the behaviour of men of previous ages as though they had the same environment as themselves. This has been justified on the ground that it is "just the analysis of our own experience which enables us to understand more completely that which is so different from it. The process will in any case take place in some form or other and it is far
better that it should be done consciously. Thus a dramatist can hardly be faulted for interpreting the past in terms of the present, since it is an inevitable part of the writing of history. If Croce changed the trend for historians, Shaw did so for dramatists. Since Shaw, modern historical drama has taken on this distinctive feature of registering the past patently in terms of contemporary concerns and conditions. All the playwrights who will be dealt with in this study reflect this tendency and a dynamic contemporary playwright like Edward Bond can be seen employing, with riveting effect, the Shavian technique of making an audience sit up through the force of startling anachronisms which bring past and present together and drive home the contemporary relevance of what is being portrayed.

The other main reason for which Shaw is accused of a serious distortion of history relates to his portrayal of the trial. It is claimed (erroneously I think) that Shaw projects the trial as non-partisan when it was politically biased. Most critics, even those who generally acknowledge the play's extreme fidelity to history, assert Shaw's departure from history in this respect. Eric Bentley states that Shaw "departs from the facts in at least one essential point, namely in representing the trial as scrupulously fair." "To this end," he says, "Shaw gave an inquisitor arguments such as no inquisitor would have ever approved, let alone employed, and made Bishop Cauchon amiable and rational." But, on the contrary, one has only to examine the proceedings of the trial to see how close to the records Shaw keeps as to the arguments used, and how amiable and rational Bishop Cauchon and the other judges went out of their way to be or to appear. J L Wisenthal too states that "it is in presenting the trial as free from political bias that the play departs most obviously from accepted history." And so also Louis Crompton writes that "only at one point does Shaw
seriously misinterpret Joan's career," for Shaw, he says, sees Joan's trial as pre-eminently a confrontation between a new prophet and the representatives of the status quo. But the Hundred Years War was a French civil war as well as an Anglo-French conflict. Joan's party was opposed by a group of Frenchmen who were pro-English and pro-Burgundian. "To the extent that he belonged to this party, it is impossible to regard Cauchon as an unbiased spokesman for medieval Catholicism." In brief, the court at Rouen was not an impartial tribunal. 65

But historians themselves are not always agreed on this point. Huizinga finds Shaw doing "violence to history in presenting the judges as limited but respectable persons and Pierre Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, with even a touch of greatness." But he admits that undoubtedly one of the "most exciting and most original aspects of Shaw's work is his relative rehabilitation of Joan's judges." He concedes that the proceedings of the 1431 trial of condemnation were in many respects more reliable than those of the rehabilitation trial of 1456 and that as far as the Archbishop of Beauvais was concerned Shaw could appeal to the sources on more than one point to support his picture of a well-intentioned Cauchon. He also agrees that though Joan "was asked cunning questions that she could not answer, though the reasoning was formalistic and one-sided, the crucial issue - whether Joan had been able to develop her amazing power owing to divine help or demonic - was a very serious one." "It is perfectly understandable," he says, "that ecclesiastical judges who could not share in the enthusiasm for the cause of Charles VII catalogued Joan among a host of overwrought persons who set the world in turmoil." But though the whole trial need not be seen as sheer wickedness and conscious bias, he nonetheless finds it hard to maintain the historicity of a well-meaning Cauchon, since many of the judges were his creatures and a few of them did raise
their voice against him. Another respected historian, Charles Wayland Lightbody, writing more recently in the nineteen-sixties, does not agree with this view. He finds it "difficult, despite the almost universal execration to which Joan's judges have been subjected in modern times, to read the Trial Record without feeling the deep sincerity of the ecclesiastics" in their quarrel with Joan. Of Pierre Cauchon he says:

It is one of the ironies of history that this man should have gone down alike in popular and literary tradition as one of the blackest villains of all recorded time, worthy of comparison only with Pontius Pilate, because of his leading part in the trial of the peasant maid from Lorraine, whom, we must believe, he regarded sincerely as a heretic and a witch, a poisoned sheep which it was a matter of Christian duty to remove before it tainted the whole flock.

It is this popular image which theatrical tradition had helped to perpetuate that Shaw is concerned to shatter. In his preface to Saint Joan he states that the "old Jeanne d'Arc melodrama, reducing everything to a conflict of villain and hero, or in Joan's case villain and heroine, not only miss the point entirely but falsify the characters, making Cauchon a scoundrel, Joan a prima donna, and Dunois a lover. But the writer of high tragedy and comedy, aiming at the innermost attainable truth, must needs flatter Cauchon nearly as much as the melodramatist vilifies him." If Shaw tones down the personal bias in the part of Cauchon it is to highlight the greater historical truth. His aim is to reveal the vast political and religious forces that moved into action against Joan, and prevent us from making Cauchon, the Inquisitor and the other judges, scapegoats for the institutions which they represented. Shaw has solid historical grounds for presenting this view. The trial received immense official backing, as historians admit. Lightbody describes the tribunal which condemned Joan as a "tremendously impressive array of leading
ecclesiastical talents and reputations of the time - almost a synod of the church." W P Barret states that "the distinguishing feature of the trial is the immense weight of authority behind it." Pierre Cauchon "was assisted by the collaboration of the Inquisition in the person of Jean le Maistre, who, with an ill and reluctant humour, agreed to participate only after an especial commission from the Grand Inquisitor of France instructed him to do so. But more important still, Cauchon had the support of the supreme intellectual authority and spiritual light of the University of Paris, especially in its eminent representatives Bèaupere, Midi and Courcelles, who were among the assessors." At this time the University of Paris was at the height of its medieval fame. It possessed supreme authority in law and theology and was, moreover, under English domination.

If Shaw whitewashes certain historical figures it is because he does not want the audience evading responsibility by merely shifting the blame. It is too simple to draw an easy moral by reversing the judgement and making Cauchon the villain of the piece, as was done twenty-five years after Joan's death when his body was dug up and thrown into the common sewer. Shaw shows that the responsibility for Joan's death lies equally with the institutions involved, the strongholds of social values and security, and with every member of society who actively or passively supports such decisions. The driving force behind his works is a passionate moral and social concern. Saint Joan was written in the period after the first World War when a second could be seen impending. One of Shaw's motives in writing Saint Joan was to shock people into an awareness of the consequences of the way they think, in the face of a "world situation in which we see whole peoples perishing and dragging us towards the abyss which has swallowed them, all for want of any grasp of the political forces that move civilization." It is to themselves that the audience is
made to look. Shaw wants them to recognise that as unthinking members of a system, they, like those members of the court that condemned Joan might have been part of the machinery that burned Joan and might be burning her still in a different form today.

It is also a measure of Shaw's achievement that he is able to distribute dramatic sympathy and argument and give equal weight to opposing points of view, thus greatly enhancing the dramatic effect. He is fully aware that truth is many-stranded and there are always two or more sides to every question. After his dramatisation of the trial of St. Joan Shaw was asked repeatedly to dramatise the Gospel story but he felt that "the trial of a dumb prisoner, at which the judge who puts the crucial question to him remains unanswered, cannot be dramatized unless the judge is to be the hero of the play." In his preface to On the Rocks (1933) he depicts an imaginary confrontation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate. Jesus warns Pilate, "Beware how you kill a thought that is new to you. For that thought may be the foundation of the kingdom of God on earth." Pilate replies: "It may also be the ruin of all kingdoms, all laws, and all human society. It may be the thought of the beast of prey striving to return." Similarly Joan is viewed by her judges as a threat to the unity and stability of the Church. She is seen to prefigure the birth of Protestantism and the judges warn of the consequences that will follow from it. As Katharine Worth points out, "the case for the opposition, as presented by Cauchon, is bound to be credited with real force by a modern audience who are in a position to check the accuracy of the prophetic observation Shaw has allowed him. Had this been otherwise, not only would the truthfulness of the action have been cast in doubt, but the extraordinary nature of Joan's insight would have been obscured." Shaw registers a sense of the multiple meanings that accrue to an occurrence in history in the
light of subsequent events, and by so doing includes a larger dimension of time of which the audience is a part. T S Eliot in Murder in the Cathedral has clearly been influenced by Shaw's method of bringing in layers of time by endowing his characters with a foreknowledge of future events. Becket is allowed the same quality of prophetic sight and continually anticipates later historical views and events which a modern audience can endorse from its knowledge of history.

But though Shaw provides Joan's adversaries with arguments of substance he by no means exonerates them or presents the trial as free from political bias. It is certainly not his view, as has been claimed, that the "execution of Joan was a regrettable but thoroughly understandable measure taken by upright men in full confidence of their judgement" who had they shared her visual acuity "would have followed her joyfully instead of bringing about her death."74 Discussing the Inquisitor with Henderson, Shaw once said that he thought Lemaitre "a most infernal scoundrel." This has been dismissed as yet another example of Shaw's "impish conversational manner."75 But the truth as to Shaw's own view might well be contained in just such light exchanges where Shaw, the eternal masquerader, might feel free to let slip his mask. In four postcards Shaw sent to Mrs Patrick Campbell in 1913, long before embarking on the play, he talks of doing a Joan play some day, referring to "a poor cowardly riffraff of barons and bishops who were too futile to resist the devil."76 And he reproaches the actor, Clarence H Norman, for misinterpreting his play, The Apple Cart (1929), in a postcard stating, "I am disgusted at the ease with which nice clothes and a pleasant address, with rank, impose on everybody. My infernal old scoundrel of an Inquisitor in St Joan got away with it like a cathedral canon; and now here you are swallowing my gentlemanly Magnus as a god! I'm surprised at you!"77 But it is to Saint Joan itself that we must
look to see what is finally projected and I shall deal with this aspect in my analysis of the play.

Saint Joan has been highly acclaimed by many historians. In his book, The Judgements of Joan (1961), Charles W Lightbody describes "the great play of George Bernard Shaw" as the "only notable historical work which modern Leftist thought" has contributed to the subject of Joan of Arc. Henri Guillemin, in his book, The True History of Joan 'of Arc' (1972), asserts that Saint Joan "contains the best that the superabundant literature of Joan has to offer us; it is a fine play, grave, sensible, intelligent and profound." G G Coulton in his book, Inquisition and Liberty (1938), describes it as a "fine dramatic success" and credits Shaw's portrait of Joan as "practically true to the records" although he dismisses Shaw's preface as "childish." "The itching for cheap paradox has overmastered him and he flounders blindfold among the documents." Non-historians too have faulted the play as history on the basis of Shaw's preface. Robertson finds the final impression left by Shaw's preface "simply one of chronic intellectual incoherence." Shaw, he claims, "puts with equal emphasis incompatible views on every main aspect of the case he raises." But this is probably precisely Shaw's intention. One must be careful not to confuse the debater of the preface with the dramatist of the play.

A tension can always be detected between Shaw's prefaces and his plays. It is a poor dramatist indeed who would explain away his play instead of allowing it to speak for itself and Shaw revelled too much in argumentative comedy to give away his game. His plays exist in their own right, apart from the prefaces, which were usually written some time after he had completed the plays. Saint Joan, for instance, was first produced in 1923 and the preface was not written till May 1924. It is worth noting too that Shaw often warned actors and actresses against reading his prefaces which were for readers, not
Wendy Hiller was criticised for her interpretation of Joan and Shaw attributed it in part to her having done too much homework including the reading of his preface. In the preface Shaw deliberately overstates his case to shock the reader out of his complacency and get him grappling for himself with the issues involved but this would not help an actor, since it would merely obscure his understanding of his part. It would be folly to fault a play as history on the basis of its preface. The preface to Saint Joan is a lively demonstration of Shaw's brilliant gift for wit and ratiocination and he debates the case with great verve. As he says, in his preface to The Sanity of Art, "the way to get to the merits of a case is not to listen to the fool who imagines himself impartial; but to get it argued with reckless bias for and against. To understand a saint you must hear the devil's advocate...."

In considering the play as history we must remember, as was emphasised in the introductory chapter, that a playwright is not expected to apply to his sources the critical tests required of a historian. As long as there is in history a reasonable basis for his vision, a playwright is free to explore beneath and beyond the facts. An examination of Shaw's historical source for Saint Joan, T D Murray's Jeanne D'Arc, reveals how remarkably close Shaw has kept to it. There is a basis in the records for nearly everything projected in the play. Saint Joan brings out, with extraordinary effect, the salient qualities of Joan's unique character as revealed in the records. She is a person of great force and will. Possessed of amazing faith and vision, she is intensely religious, but immensely practical and in no way introspective or morbid. In 1890 after having seen Sarah Bernhardt as Joan of Arc Shaw had complained that "she intones her lines and poses as a saint." The records disclose that Joan never posed as a saint even
though she was venerated as one by many in her own lifetime. One witness during the rehabilitation trial of 1456 recalls how when women came to visit Joan and brought her pater nosters and other religious objects for her to touch, Joan laughed and said, "Touch them yourselves. Your touch will do them as much good as mine."87

Shaw brings out the magnificence of her bearing during her trial - the courage, the good humour, the trenchant commonsense and ready wit, the sanity that never left her. The mental superiority that Shaw credits her with is another pronounced feature that emerges from the records of the trial. She refused to be intimidated by the official gravity and the sheer weight of ecclesiastical authority confronting her. Despite the strain of long exhausting interrogations during which she was inundated with questions from every side Joan showed an amazing clarity of mind and a remarkable memory which astonished those present. On one occasion it is reported, when questioned with regard to a point she had already dealt with before, Joan replied, "I was asked about this eight days ago, and thus replied." One of the notaries insisted that she had not, but when the proceedings of that day were read out Joan was proved to be right. At this she turned round good-naturedly to the notary and warned him that "if he made mistakes again, she would pull his ears!"88 Joan in the play displays this same acuity of mind and quality of good humour. She calls Courcelles a "rare noodle" when he insists that torture should be applied since it was customary procedure. (Sc. VI, p. 172) In the records, as in the play, the judges can be found making a grave issue of Joan's wearing of male attire and being met with her sane insistence that it was a trifling matter. She often saw them making needless difficulties out of nothing and with her downright commonsense often cut through to the heart of the matter. Joan's handling of profound theological questions astonished her judges because of her extreme youth and inexperience. Her replies were often marvelled at even by her adversaries, for
her answers to subtle, loaded questions seemed inspired. They confounded her judges and once the sitting broke up in consternation. Joan was asked, "Do you know if you are in the grace of God?" and she replied, "If I am not, may God place me there; if I am, may God so keep me." Shaw includes this almost word for word in his dramatisation of the trial:

Cauchon: Dare you pretend, after what you have said, that you are in a state of grace?

Joan: If I am not, may God bring me to it; if I am, may God keep me in it!

(Sc. VI, p. 175)

Joan's statements are full of her personality and Shaw captures its spirit by weaving into the dialogue of his play many of her actual replies with hardly any alteration. The following are just a few instances:

There is a saying among children, that 'Sometimes one is hanged for speaking the truth.'

(Jeanne D'Arc, p. 18)

It is an old saying that he who tells too much truth is sure to be hanged.

(Saint Joan, Sc. VI, p. 171)

In what likeness did Saint Michael appear to you?...Was he naked?

Do you think God has not wherewithal to clothe him?

(Jeanne D'Arc, p. 42)

Courcelles: How do you know that the spirit who appears to you is an archangel? Does he not appear to you as a naked man?

Joan: Do you think God cannot afford clothes for him?

(Saint Joan, Sc. VI, p. 176)

As to the women's work of which you speak, there are plenty of other women to do it.

(Jeanne D'Arc, p. 348)

There are plenty of other women to do it (women's work); but there is nobody to do my work.

(Saint Joan, Sc. VI, p. 173)
In the play Joan is seen imposing her will on captains and courtiers alike. "She is so positive, sir" Captain Baudricourt is informed by his steward and despite his sullen scepticism he finds events turning out quite contrary to what he expects. (Sc. 1, p. 83) Dunois before Orleans cautions Joan, "The rafts are ready; and the men are embarked. But they must wait for God." She flashes back, "What do you mean? God is waiting for them." (Sc. III, p. 122) The records are full of examples of this kind of spirit. "Act and God will act!" she declared. When told, by a member of the committee of theologians which the King's Council appointed to examine her, that if God willed to deliver the people of France from the calamity they were in then it was not necessary to have soldiers, she exclaimed, "In God's Name! the soldiers will fight, and God will give the victory." Asked by them, for a sign before they sent an army with her to Orleans, Joan replied, "In God's Name! I am not come to Poitiers to shew signs: but send me to Orleans, where I shall shew you the signs by which I am sent." Shaw has beautifully captured this spirit of Joan in his play.

Joan's military genius, especially her extreme skill in the use of artillery, is testified to by numerous witnesses in the rehabilitation trial. In the play Shaw emphasises Joan's amazing ability in this respect. She is shown impatient with Dunois and the rest of the French court at their slowness to act: "You don't know how to begin a battle; you don't know how to use your cannons. And I do." Her scorn of their methods draws the dry comment: "Not content with being Pope Joan, you must be Caesar and Alexander as well." (Sc. V, pp. 148-50) Here Shaw has clearly been influenced by Murray's introduction where Joan is compared to Caesar and Alexander and placed on their level.
After all that can be done by the rationalising process, the mystery remains of an untutored and unlettered girl of eighteen years old, not only imposing her will upon captains and courtiers, but showing a skill and judgement worthy, as General Dragomiroff says of the greatest commanders, indeed of Napoleon himself. While we must give due weight and consideration to the age in which this marvel showed itself on the stage of history, an age of portents and prophecies, of thaumaturgists and saints, yet when all allowance is made there remains this sane, strong and solid girl leaving her humble home, and in two short months accomplishing more than Caesar and Alexander accomplished in so much time, and at an age when even Alexander had as yet achieved nothing.93

Again, Murray evidently provides the germ of the central conflict dramatised in the play - the conflict between imperialism and catholicism on the one hand and nationalism and protestantism on the other. Murray refers to the opposing principles of imperialism and nationalism and outlines the Roman Catholic Church's position in the matter:

Jeanne's special merit was that she saw the possibility of a great French nation, self-centred, self-sufficient, and she so stamped this message on the French heart that its characters have never faded. Ecclesiastics, on the other hand, with their conception of a Universal Empire and a Universal Church, thought little of National aspirations or claims. To them, anything which would allay the bitter rivalries of France and England naturally appealed, seeing as they did, in such a change the promise of a return to the days before the Babylonian captivity at Avignon, and the bringing of all peoples into ready submission to Peter's chair.94

Shaw builds on this, presenting Joan as a forerunner not only of nationalism but of protestantism as well. He is not unique in projecting her in this light because, as Lightbody notes, German writers, notably the theologian, Karl Hause, had been foremost in expressing this view; but
it is Shaw, he asserts, who through his play, *Saint Joan*, has "rendered familiar to the modern world the concept of Joan as a nationalist heretic, a champion of the right of private judgement."95

Critics have denied the validity of this view and taken Shaw to task for portraying Joan, in all respects a good Catholic, as a martyr to the Protestant cause of the primacy of the private conscience. "It is, of course, in the portrayal of Protestantism as ultimately the decisive factor in Joan's fate," writes M A Cohen, "and in particular, in the motives ascribed to Cauchon and other members of the Burgundian Church, that Shaw took his biggest liberties with history."96 But Shaw has strong historical backing for this and keeps extremely close to the records in presenting Joan's refusal to defer to the judgement of the Church as the key issue upon which the case against her was built. The judges, in their examination of Joan, can be found returning to this question again and again:

'Will you refer yourself to the judgement of the Church on earth for all you have said or done, be it good or bad? Especially will you refer to the Church the cases, crimes and offences which are imputed to you and everything which touches on this Trial?'

'On all that I am asked I will refer to the Church Militant, provided they do not command anything impossible. And I hold as a thing impossible to declare that my actions and my words and all that I have answered on the subject of my visions and revelations I have not done and said by the order of God; this I will not declare for anything in the world. And that which God hath made me do, hath commanded or shall command, I will not fail to do for any man alive. It would be impossible for me to revoke it. And in case the Church should wish me to do anything contrary to the command which has been given me of God, I will not consent to it, whatever it may be.'

'If the Church Militant tells you that your revelations are illusions, or diabolical things, will you defer to the Church?'

'I will defer to God, Whose Commandment I always do. I know well that that which is contained in my Case has come to me by the Commandment of God;
what I affirm in the Case is that I have acted by the order of God: it is impossible for me to say otherwise. In case the Church should prescribe the contrary, I should not refer to any one in the world, but to God alone Whose Commandment I always follow.'

'Do you not then believe you are subject to the Church of God which is on earth, that is to say to our Lord the Pope, to the Cardinals, the Archbishops, Bishops, and other prelates of the Church?'

'Yes, I believe myself to be subject to them; but God must be served first.'

'Have you then command from your Voices not to submit yourself to the Church Militant, which is on earth, nor to its decision?'

'I answer nothing from my own head; what I answer is by command of my Voices; they do not order me to disobey the Church, but God must be served first.'

Shaw follows this very closely in his dramatisation of the trial, interpolating comments from the assessors which highlight the significance of what Joan is claiming, and reveal her to be totally unconscious of the enormity of her pretensions:

**Cauchon:** Joan, I am going to put a most solemn question to you. Take care how you answer; for your life and salvation are at stake on it. Will you for all you have said and done, be it good or bad, accept the judgement of God's Church on earth? More especially as to the acts and words that are imputed to you in this trial by the Promoter here, will you submit your case to the inspired interpretation of the Church Militant?

**Joan:** I am a faithful child of the Church. I will obey the Church -

**Cauchon:** (hopefully leaning forward) You will?

**Joan:** - provided it does not command anything impossible.

**D'Estivet:** She imputes to the Church the error and folly of commanding the impossible.
Joan: If you command me to declare that all that I have done and said, and all the visions and revelations I have had, were not from God, then that is impossible; I will not declare that for anything in the world. What God made me do I will never go back on; and what He has commanded or shall command I will not fail to do in spite of any man alive. That is what I mean by impossible — And in case the Church should bid me do anything contrary to the command I have from God, I will not consent to it, no matter what it may be. ...

Cauchon: Woman: you have said enough to burn ten heretics. Will you not be warned? Will you not understand?

The Inquisitor: If the Church Militant tells you that your revelations and visions are sent by the devil and tempt you to damnation, will you not believe that the Church is wiser than you?

Joan: I believe that God is wiser than I; and it is His commands that I will do. All the things that you call my crimes have come to me by the command of God. I say that I have done them by the order of God: it is impossible for me to say anything else. If any Churchman says the contrary I should not mind him: I shall mind God alone, whose command I always follow.

Ladvenu: (pleading with her urgently) You do not know what you are saying, child. Do you want to kill yourself? Listen. Do you believe that you are subject to the Church of God on earth?

Joan: Yes. When have I ever denied it?

Ladvenu: Good. That means, does it not, that you are subject to our Lord the Pope, to the cardinals, the archbishops, and the bishops for whom his lordship stands here today?

Joan: God must be served first.

D'Estivet: Then your voices command you not to submit yourself to the Church Militant?
Joan: My voices do not tell me to disobey the Church; but God must be served first.

(Sc. VI, pp. 173-4)

Similarly Shaw's version of the recantation, the absolution and the final sentence of damnation and excommunication derives directly from the official account. The speeches are simply compressed and the lines broken up for dramatic effect. For example part of the final sentence in the original records reads:

... for these causes, declaring thee fallen again into thine errors, and under the sentence of excommunication which thou hast formerly incurred, WE DECREE THAT THOU ART A RELAPSED HERETIC, by our present sentence which, seated in tribunal, we utter and pronounce in this writing; we denounce thee as a rotten member and that thou mayst not vitiate others, as cast out from the unity of the Church, separate from her Body, abandoned to the secular power, as indeed by these presents, we do cast thee off, separate and abandon thee; - praying this same secular power, so far as concerns death and the mutilation of the limbs, to moderate its judgement towards thee, and if, true signs of penitence should appear in thee, (to permit) that the Sacrament of Penance be administered to thee.98

Shaw uses the same sentiments and almost the same terrible words of abandonment but invests the sentence with greater resonance and dramatic edge, driving home the sense of awful finality, by giving it a ritualistic character. The Inquisitor and Cauchon rise up solemnly and intone the sentence antiphonally:

Cauchon: We decree that thou art a relapsed heretic.
The Inquisitor: Cast out from the unity of the Church.
Cauchon: Sundered from her body.
The Inquisitor: Infected with the leprosy of heresy.
Cauchon: A member of Satan.
The Inquisitor: We declare that thou must be excommunicate.
Cauchon: And now we do cast thee out, segregate thee, and abandon thee to the secular power.

The Inquisitor: Admonishing the same secular power that it moderate its judgement of thee in respect of death and division of limbs.

(Sc. VI, pp. 184-5)

Thus the play clearly keeps extremely close to history. But Shaw does not merely lift from his source. The material is transformed through the extraordinary force of the Shavian mind and imagination and it is all brought home in terms of contemporary thought and relevance. The characters and events are made completely intelligible to a modern audience because Shaw is not interested in the past for its own sake, but only as it relates to contemporary issues and concerns. The motive power behind all Shaw's work is social reform. As Chesterton says, Shaw was a humorist who hated to see man look absurd. His apprehension of the wearisome pattern of human history did not allow him a detachment from it. He had to try and change things in order to live. His wit and humour are a reflection of his unease, and underlying them is a passionate moral concern. "My way of joking," says Keegan in John Bull's Other Island, "is to tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world." (Act II, p. 418) "Every dream," he says, "is a prophecy: every jest is an earnest in the womb of Time." (Act IV, p. 452) Shaw has much of Keegan in him — something of the dreamer, the mystic, the prophet and the earnest jester. His plays are intended as a spur to public conscience. By stimulating thought Shaw felt he could effect a change in social consciousness and influence the character of the times. He wanted his audiences to come to terms with the issues they were confronted with on the stage. Thus all his plays present a discussion which the audience is drawn into. In Saint Joan the audience is taken beyond the emotional situation and made
to function on an intellectual plane, because Shaw did not want them emotionally swamped and unable to bring their critical faculties to bear. But a fine balance had to be struck if Joan's suffering was not to be minimised. Shaw achieves this with extraordinary effect. The play is an ingenious blend of the serious and the jocular in which he is continually bringing things to the verge of farce, yet the humour never jarrs or turns grotesque. Though we enter into the humour of character or situation we are never unconscious of the tragic nature of what is taking place. The laughter keeps us sufficiently detached, able to engage with the issues on a mental plane, but there are moments when the emotion is allowed to build to supremely moving heights. The play is a wry mixture of faith, hope and despair. Shaw presents us with a tragi-comic vision of life and communicates both the profound irony of human folly and the extreme pain of it. It is to an examination of the play as a whole that we must now turn in order to explore the precise nature of the ideas it projects and its effectiveness as drama.

Shaw in Saint Joan demonstrates that the individual in his pursuit of truth will always be alone in society, and the extraordinary individual will most often be destroyed, because of the threat he poses to what makes up the establishment. The individual committed to truth by nature is open to revelation, alive to the infinite possibilities of life. He is thus in stark contrast to society with its inherent tendency to overstructure and codify, so that, bent on preservation rather than growth it usually tends to turn in on itself which inevitably leads to stagnation and decay, rather than light and life. In Saint Joan we experience the clash of the private will against the public as Joan strives to live true to the voices within while the political forces at work in society are marshalled against her. No possibility of compromise is held out and Joan
dies unreconciled — "His ways are not your ways."
(Sc. VI, p. 184) 99

Eric Bentley sees the conflict between vitality and system as a central feature of Shaw's plays. Shaw, he says, "often places a model 'vital' character in the midst of a group of reprehensible mechanized ones." 100 Joan's predicament can be seen in such terms; her dilemma is that what she stands for — inspiration — and what society represents — institution — are fundamentally opposed in character. Joan is a creature of divine impulse and as such — vital, free, dynamic. Shaw depicts almost all the other characters as servants of the system and as such — artificial, mechanized, imprisoned in conformity. Right through the play the social concern with form and ritual is contrasted with Joan's natural vigour and spontaneity. As has been shown, Shaw deromanticises her, departing sharply from the traditional image of a lofty, ethereal figure, shrouded in a haze of sanctity. Surrounded by the formal, hierarchical figures of the court, she stands out as a vital country girl, obviously sprung from the soil but infused with a sense of vision.

As a character, Joan comes through extremely real and compelling. Her irrepressible will and buoyancy cut through the ceremony of camp or court, exploding the vanity of social form and pretensions. She is impervious to the contempt of the sophisticated courtiers recognizing that "dressing up don't fill empty noddle." (Sc. II, p. 112) She may appear naïve and presumptuous to some, but in her open, blunt fashion she states the fact as it is, often cutting straight through to the heart of a matter. "Thou'rt not king yet, lad: thou'rt but Dauphin," she tells Charles, discerning that there is some good in him but it is "not yet a king's good." (Sc. II, p. 113)

Shaw reinforces Joan's assertive nature by contrasting her against such negative spirits as Charles and Baudricourt.
The outwardly belligerent, superficially energetic, self-opinionated Robert Baudricourt is seen to collapse before Joan's inner strength of will. He is a caricature of the petty official with an inflated sense of his own importance who exults in pushing home his authority at every opportunity. Joan is seen to be not one bit intimidated by his pose of the commanding officer. She hails him unceremoniously with "Be you Captain?" and immediately brings him down to size. As she cheerfully forewarns him, he finds it "all coming quite different" from what he intends. Charles, though no fool, cuts an equally ludicrous figure at certain points. In marked contrast to Joan, he is clearly one of those who does not measure up to his calling. He "never asked to be king" and would rather be "left alone." But Joan will not have it. "It's no use, Charlie," she tells him, "Thou must face what God puts on thee. If thou fail to make thyself a king, thoult be a begger: what else art fit for?" (Sc.II, p. 112) To emphasise the situation Shaw farcically has Joan almost physically supporting the Dauphin as he gathers his courage with a grotesque effort in order to snap his fingers defiantly in his Chamberlain's face. (Sc. II, p. 116)

Joan epitomises the active principle in life in her determination to "dare, dare, and dare again, in God's name." (Sc. II, p. 115) She unites faith with action, as exemplified when she says that they must take their "courage in both hands" and "pray for it with both hands too." (Sc. II, p. 113) Her philosophy is not to sit back in expectation but to attempt in faith. Dunois recognises the quality of her mettle when his warning that not a man will follow her is met with the reply: "I will not look back to see whether anyone is following me." (Sc. III, p. 120) As such she is an inspiration in herself. Shaw highlights time and again the antithesis between the positive spirit she embodies and the passive
nature of society. The clash of principles they represent is reflected in their opposite ways of looking. Joan's retort to Dunois's claim that they "never know when (they) are beaten" is "You never know when you are victorious." (Sc. V, p. 148)

The nature of Joan's commitment is absolute. For her war is a question of "my life or thine, and God defend the right!" (Sc. V, p. 149) Her military zeal has totally selfless ends. For her, life has to transcend the domestic and personal. "Minding your own business is like minding your own body: it's the shortest way to make yourself sick." We are here to do "God's business" and do it we must though our hearts break with the terror of it. Disillusioned by the petty jealousies and self-seeking of court, she longs to be back at Orleans in the thick of death where "we lived at that bridge." (Sc. V, p. 141) For her, life has to be lived for something larger than self. She is a brave, free spirit asserting her consciousness of life's meaning and purpose in the face of all odds. She epitomises the courage of the human spirit to rise above the limitations of birth and circumstance in pursuit of a larger vision, one that is both cosmic and self-defining. Her extraordinary faith in a divine mission causes her to transcend her environment in no small measure.

Shaw juxtaposes this creature of ideas and impulses against the professional man of ideology and tradition. It is a conflict between vitality and rigidity, naturalness and artificiality, spontaneity and rationalization which is ultimately the conflict of growth and decay, light and darkness, life and death. Shaw illustrates the sterility and destruction caused when man's personal will and identity become submerged in the system, so that he allows himself to be a mere cog in the social machine. Life lived in such a manner is stultifying and we see them all from Cauchon to Ladvenu unable to exercise their private minds and consciences. Shaw traces this through society. The
twentieth-century government official who comes in the Epilogue to announce Joan's canonization is a caricature of petty officialdom. He appears very much standing on his dignity. Yet for all his starchy formality and impressive official jargon we see him typically ineffectual when it comes to making a decision. A mindless puppet of the system, he can only defer judgement:

The possibility of your resurrection was not contemplated in the recent proceedings for your canonization. I must return to Rome for fresh instructions.

(Epilogue, p. 207)

True to the dehumanizing nature of all bureaucracies he is unable to function beyond his immediate role of glorified messenger-boy. Inevitably each individual's personal interests become inextricably tied-up with his position, and thus we find even the executioner rejecting the idea of Joan's resurrection. He voices a familiar sentiment: "As a master in my profession, I have to consider its interests. And, after all, my first duty is to my wife and children."

(Epilogue, p. 207) Shaw demonstrates how every member of society, however small his function, can contribute to the hostility and rigidity of the establishment by his attitude of subservience and self-preferment.

The individual's life is shown dominated and restricted by his official function, however abhorrent that function may be. "Peter Cauchon knows his business" says the Archbishop of Rouen, referring to the question of the burning of heretics. The Archbishop himself sees it as the Church's business to "make saints." (Sc. II, p. 103) He rationalizes the miraculous and even defies logic in his reconciliation of truth and falsehood: "Frauds deceive. An event which creates faith does not deceive: therefore it is not a fraud, but a miracle." He rests his superiority in such matters on the fact that it is "part of (his) profession." (Sc. II, pp. 105-6) Warwick admits to being quite hardened after having watched "whole countrysides burnt over and over again as mere items in military
"routine" and he suggests that Bishop Cauchon, "having to see so many heretics burned from time to time," is compelled to take a "professional view of what would otherwise be a very horrible incident." (Sc. IV, p. 133)

The human being is finally quite submerged by the profession to which he has committed himself and man is seen to operate as a functionary rather than as a person. Shaw drives this relentlessly home in the final scene when he shows Cauchon and the Inquisitor less concerned with the horror of what is taking place than with the observances of procedure, a sign of lesser intellects and imagination. The solemn recitation of the sentence seems cold enough in the light of Joan's passionate outcry. But we see Cauchon upset at the minor deviation of form. "No, no: this is irregular," he protests, "The representative of the secular arm should be here to receive her from us." He appeals to Brother Martin who, obviously disturbed, dismisses it curtly: "My place is at her side, my lord. You must exercise your own authority." The Inquisitor, even more shrewdly politic, calmly reassures Cauchon that they "have proceeded in perfect order" and if "the English choose to put themselves in the wrong it is not (their) business to put them in the right." Besides, he adds, "a flaw in the procedure may be useful later on." (Sc. VI, pp. 184-5)

At a moment like this they totally lack a human response, still bent on manoeuvring affairs to their own advantage. Warwick appears and they hurl accusations at each other:

**Cauchon:** There is some doubt whether your people have observed the forms of law, my lord.

**Warwick:** I am told that there is some doubt whether your authority runs in this city, my lord. It is not your diocese. However, if you will answer for that I will answer for the rest.

(Sc. VI, p. 186)

The underlying preoccupations of vested personal interests become obvious and Cauchon has the grace then to utter,
"It is to God that we both must answer." (SC. VI, p. 186) Essentially they are political opportunists attempting to suppress a spirit that threatens their own personal interests and the interests of the institutions they represent. We see the corruption of man when he comes to identify himself with his social function and suppresses his private conscience in order to promote himself or conserve his position.

All stand on their dignity and seek vindication for their actions through the exaltation of their respective public rôles. Even the executioner, indignant at being hailed unceremoniously by Warwick, is quick to protest against the impropriety: "I am not addressed as fellow, my lord. I am the Master Executioner of Rouen: it is a highly skilled mystery. I am come to tell your lordship that your orders have been obeyed... Her heart would not burn, my lord; but everything else is at the bottom of the river. You have heard the last of her." (Sc. VI, p. 190) His profession is to him a "highly skilled mystery" and he is so caught up in a sense of his own importance, the real mystery has passed him by.

The individual who is divinely inspired is generally beyond the comprehension of man, because he is often seen to fly in the face of social norm and expectation. In society often even the extraordinary is expected to fit into the conventional pattern. We find the Archbishop of Rouen declaring, "The creature is not a saint. She is not even a respectable woman. She does not wear women's clothes. She is dressed like a soldier, and rides around the country with soldiers." To some she is mad, a "cracked country lass." (Sc. II, p. 102) The English, naturally enough, see her as "an accursed witch," the Church as a "heretic," the army as "an angel dressed as a soldier" (Sc. II, p. 99) and to others she is "a bit of a miracle" in herself. (Sc. II, p. 90) But no one would deny that "there is something about the girl," a
"dangerous power" that makes her a force to be reckoned with. (Sc. V, p. 155)

Joan herself is projected as sanity itself in her apprehension of the supernatural. She has a fuller, freer sense of the rational, because for her, spiritual truth does not have to transcend the rational. She is quite prepared to accept a natural explanation for the supernatural. When Baudricourt suggests that her voices come from her imagination she finds no reason for contention - "Of course. That is how the messages of God come to us." (Sc. I, p. 92)

There is no inconsistency in this, for she sees God as reason itself and therefore quite understandably working through the rational. Shaw makes much of Joan's quality of ready common sense and, as a modern playwright, naturally enough attributes this and many other of her gifts to the fact that she is a woman. Joan is the only significant woman character in the play and, in contrast to the men around her, she appears refreshingly free from cant, pose and rigidity. She has a woman's intuitive power which enables her to dispense with needless complexities and arrive at the essence of a matter. Shaw shows her continually running up against men who are extremely legalistic and bound by rule or convention. The attitude of narrowly sticking by the book is seen to dominate them. Some form of legality is obviously needed, but it can get out of hand, for it is the narrow stressing of the legalistic, the cold inhuman following of codes or rules that can lead to terrible lunacy like Nazism. It is madness of this sort that led to judicial murder in the case of Joan. All forms of the law were strictly adhered to, but a gross injustice was perpetrated. Pierre Champion, considered by many historians the leading twentieth-century Joan of Arc scholar, describes the trial as "a masterpiece of partiality under the most regular of procedures." Henri Guillemin states that Cauchon wanted "a proper trial," by which he meant one which should be from the
canonical point of view invulnerable, concealing its character as far as possible by a strict adherence to the rules. Nothing was to be neglected; all must be done with that absolute vigour which a trial by the Inquisition ought to have in its exclusive concern for revealing the truth.\textsuperscript{102} Joan's judges in \textit{Saint Joan} are shown similarly caught up in the attempt to make the trial as unimpeachable as possible by a punctilious observance of procedure and Shaw has the Inquisitor in the Epilogue rising to speak for all judges "in the blindness and bondage of the law." (Epilogue, p. 206)

Again, it is because Joan is a woman, with a woman's common sense, that she does not categorise and divide life up into different compartments. For Joan there is no false dichotomy between the material and the spiritual world. Baudricourt impatiently tells her, "We are not talking about God: we are talking about practical affairs." Joan is utterly unconscious of any such division between spiritual life and life lived in practical, everyday terms. For her to talk about food, shelter, costs is also to talk about God, because he infiltrates every dimension of existence. She may have her "head in the skies" (Sc. I, pp. 193-6) but her feet are planted firmly on the ground. She is able to run while others crawl, but she never professes to fly, as others would have it, in the rising hysteria against her and all that she ultimately represents. Endowed with a healthy fund of down-to-earth practicality, she can always provide sound reasons for what her voices urge her to do. God's work has no false mystery. It is others who would distort her and her vision out of all proportion. Shaw reveals this humorously when he has the pusillanimous Dauphin asking her if she can "turn lead into gold or anything of that sort?" Joan replies ironically, "I can turn thee into a king, in Rheims Cathedral; and that is a miracle that will take some doing, it seems." (Sc. II, p. 114)
Human nature is such that it takes little to provide food for the imagination, as Joan adroitly points out to those who would have her flying "like a witch" from a "tower sixty feet high." The tower, she says, "has grown higher every day since you began asking me questions about it." (Sc. VI, p. 170)

Shaw draws freely on the available symbol and legend in Joan's story: her voices, the predicted death of the blasphemer, the identifying of the Dauphin, the changing of the wind at Orleans, the cross of sticks and the heart left unconsumed by the flames. Some of these are provided with rational explanations, others are not. But Joan is consistently depicted as irradiated with the force of inspiration. Shaw demonstrates that it does not take away from her spiritual stature if she is seen as genius or saint. Her inspiration, however interpreted, is no less a reflection of the sublime. But such a spirit finds it has no place in a society which is run on the principles of policy and self-interest. Though Shaw is concerned to highlight the political and religious forces at work and present Warwick and Cauchon as representatives of the establishment, he does not disguise the fact that personal factors play a significant role. Joan symbolises a threat to the system and thereby a threat to those who are so closely identified with it. Warwick plainly states as much when he remarks to the English chaplain, Stogumber, that, if this cant of serving their country takes hold of men, it is "good-bye to the authority of their feudal lords, and good-bye to the authority of the church."

"That is," he says "good-bye to you and me." He implies that the Bishop of Beauvais is not exempt from personal considerations, having been "turned out of his diocese by (Joan's)faction." Warwick himself blatantly displays the fact that his desire for the burning stems from political and self interest. He goes about the arrangement of it in the crude manner of a businessman conducting a commercial
transaction. He is prepared to 'buy' the maid at any price and is willing to pay "little commissions" to the middlemen as long as they "deliver the goods." (Sc. IV, pp. 126-7)

Cauchon is somewhat more sophisticated and subtle in his determination to vindicate himself and the Church under the plea of dire spiritual necessity. He cannot see Joan as a "village sorceress" as Warwick does. The devil has "longer views" than the damning of the soul of a mere country girl:

The Prince of Darkness does not condescend to such cheap drudgery. When he strikes, he strikes at the Catholic Church, whose realm is the whole spiritual world. When he damns, he damns the souls of the entire human race. Against that dreadful design the Church stands ever on guard.

(Sc. IV, p. 131)

The exaggerated sentiment and the rhetorical tone, lend an inflated, pretentious quality to these lines, which smacks of hypocrisy. Shaw creates this effect intentionally, to make us probe beneath the surface expression to read the underlying truth of the matter. With a slight shift of focus we see that it is the Church that must not be observed stooping to such "drudgery" as the destruction of a simple country maid. Neither does it want to be seen "subject to political necessity" which would reveal the justice of the Church to be a mockery. There has to be a larger universal concern to justify its rôle in the eyes of the world.

To cover up the Church's and Cauchon's own political interests, Joan must be seen as an arch heretic, a monstrous threat to the world. "The Pope himself at his proudest dare not presume as this woman presumes." Cauchon says he knows the breed. It is cancerous and if it is not "cut out, stamped out, burnt out, it will not stop until it has brought the whole body of human society into sin and corruption, into waste and ruin." He sees it all in
cataclysmic proportions:
What will the world be like when The Church's accumulated wisdom and knowledge and experience, its councils of learned, venerable pious men, are thrust into the kennel by every ignorant labourer or dairy-maid whom the devil can puff up with the monstrous self-conceit of being directly inspired from heaven?

(Sc. IV, p. 135)
There is irony in his deriding the humble origins of Joan and Mahomet when his words could equally apply to the founder of Christianity himself, a mere carpenter, who rose from the common masses to shake the institutionalised religion of his time. Cauchon talks of it all resulting in "a world of blood, of fury, of devastation, of each man striving for his own hand: in the end a world wrecked back into barbarism." Yet more irony lies in the fact that he seeks to prevent it by an act that is utterly barbaric in itself.

The vehemence of Cauchon's outcry appears to stem from a passionate concern for Christendom, as he clearly would have us believe. "I shudder to the very marrow in my bones when I think of it," he says, "I have fought it all my life; and I will fight it to the end." (Sc. IV, p. 135) But the excessive nature of his response, the extremity of his claims, lend a certain false note to his outpourings. The hollowness at the heart of Cauchon's lofty professions becomes increasingly apparent. In him Shaw depicts the front that man presents to the world, but through constant flashes of wit and humour, he exposes the reality beneath the facade and satirises the Church's inverted values. He thus makes Cauchon fiercely adamant that Joan is not a witch. "She is a heretic." A witch aligns herself with diabolical forces. A heretic goes against the established doctrine of the Church. The Church's scale of priorities is therefore clear. Warwick is happy to concede the point as long as he gets what he wants - "My lord: I wipe the
slate as far as witchcraft goes. None the less we must
burn the woman." Cauchon is outraged that the Church
should be treated as a "mere political convenience." He
is "no mere political bishop." He is so righteously
impassioned he is almost convincing. But Shaw reveals the
truth in the line that follows. "My faith" he says "is to
me what your honor is to you." (Sc. IV, pp. 131-2) This
is ironic because it is quite plain that Warwick has no
sense of honour and has made no secret of the fact.

Cauchon is far too anxious to flaunt a sense of his
spiritual concern. He is not thinking of "this girl's
body but of her soul which may suffer to all eternity." It
is all too clearly pious cant especially in the light
of Warwick's unequivocal rejoinders: "Just so and God
grant that her soul may be saved! But the practical
problem would seem to be how to save her soul without
saving her body." (Sc. IV, p. 133) The scathing
nature of Shaw's irony is shown in Warwick's blunt manner
of coming to the crux of the matter and revealing the
hidden motive that Cauchon would prefer to mask.

The hollowness at the heart of Cauchon's lofty
professions becomes increasingly apparent. If we give
careful ear to the tone of the prose we recognise the
performance within the performance, though the speaker,
reluctant to admit his guilt even to himself, may be
unconscious of this. He may not be deliberately playing
false with the world. What is infinitely worse is that
he is in fact playing false with himself. Shaw conveys
the intensity with which men will play a rôle in order to
 evade a personal sense of guilt.

Throughout the scene we see Warwick and Cauchon each
equally unable to appreciate the other's professional view-
point. Warwick is quite unmoved by Cauchon's outcry. He
thinks Cauchon exaggerates the risk and cannot see Joan
"becoming another Mahomet, and superceding The Church by a
great heresy." Cauchon expresses equal disbelief at the
notion that Joan is a "cunning device to supercede the aristocracy." Her idea that "kings should give their realms to God and then reign as God's bailiffs" he sees as "quite sound theologically." By locking them one against the other Shaw illustrates how prone people are to construe matters in a form that is conducive to their own interests. Warwick and Cauchon are depicted as shrewdly politic and wary of each other. Cauchon attempts to allay Warwick's fears. He asks him where the king would find the counsellors to plan and carry out such a policy for him and is met with a pointed reply: "Perhaps in The Church, my lord. Strike down the barons; and the cardinals will have it all their way." Recognising that they will not defeat the maid if they strive against one another, they agree to sink their differences "in the face of a common enemy." (Sc. IV, pp. 136-9)

Shaw satirises the dubious moral basis for the alliance. There is farce in the similarity with which he makes them express their different grounds for contention. Cauchon's arises from the fact that the girl "has never mentioned the Church and thinks only of God and herself," Warwick's because "she has never mentioned the peerage and thinks only of the king and herself." Both amount to heresy, spiritual or secular. Shaw humorously makes Warwick call her spiritual heresy "Protestantism" and Cauchon call the political side of her heresy "Nationalism." In making Warwick and Cauchon describe Joan as a Protestant and Nationalist, Shaw is endowing them with prophetic insight, for she does indeed prefigure these developments. They were right - she was a danger because, though much that was beneficial resulted from these movements, the results were not all to the good, as John Osborne demonstrates in his play, Luther. The emphasis on the primacy of the private conscience did break up the unity and stability of the Church and lead to widespread confusion and despair. As
Katharine Worth points out, "Luther could indeed be seen as a rewriting of Saint Joan from a later standpoint in history, with the birth of Protestantism and all that followed from it looked at in a much more critical, less hopeful light."  

Shaw underlines the political nature of the alliance between Cauchon and Warwick. He shows them uniting over the body of Joan in mutual agreement that, if Cauchon will "burn the Protestant," Warwick will "burn the Nationalist." (Sc. IV, pp. 138-40) Shaw juxtaposes their two heavily rationalised positions against the irrational stance of the English chaplain, Stogumber. Their coldminded reasonableness contrasts sharply with the naked savagery of the chaplain who exclaims from the start that "by God, if this goes on any longer (he) will fling (his) cassock to the devil, and take arms (himself), and strangle the accursed witch with (his) own hands." (Sc. IV, p. 125) Yet to all intents and purposes this is the unpalliated truth of their combined attitudes. It brings home the barbarism of what is being proposed underneath all attempts to justify and civilise it. "Progress," Shaw has said, "depends on our refusal to use brutal means even when they are efficacious."  

Stogumber is a caricature of the blind patriot. His hysteria for blood reveals a poverty of imagination and intellect. Critics have aptly suggested that Shaw must have perceived the parallel between English feeling against Joan in 1429 - 1431 and the anti-German jingoism which so deeply disturbed him during the First World War.  

Through Stogumber Shaw highlights what Cauchon and Warwick conceal behind a civilised social exterior. The reality beneath the façade is fully exposed at the close of the scene when each makes a final pronouncement as to his intention:  

**Cauchon:** I will not imperil my soul. I will uphold the justice of the Church. I will strive to the utmost for this woman's salvation.
Warwick: I am sorry for the poor girl. I hate these severities. I will spare her if I can.

The Chaplain: I would burn her with my own hands.

(Sc. VI, p. 140)

The sugar-coated falsity is seen against the stark truth. Because of the threat Joan poses to them both and the establishment, at the heart of the two carefully built-up positions is the same sort of blind zeal that the chaplain epitomises. But society cannot afford to admit to the naked reality. It requires the veneer of civilisation to maintain its authority. To preserve its own code of existence it has to justify its actions and thus often legalises its crimes. Ultimately it is to a question of truths that we are brought.

For Joan, truth is an absolute founded in God. She believes in the unqualified justice of her cause. France's salvation is a sacred duty, otherwise it "would be murder to kill an Englishman in battle." (Sc. I, p. 93) She deplores the bartering of France's soul, the pledging of her land at the pawnshop "as a drunken woman pledges her children's clothes." She may appear naïve in her attempts to infuse courage and integrity into an effete king, bidding him give his kingdom to God and "become the greatest king in the world as His steward, His bailiff, His soldier and His servant." Yet for all her apparent simplicity she envisions kingship in its ideal form - individualism sunk in the office of leadership, the king a servant of his people. Striving in that spirit she believes "the very clay of France will become holy." (Sc. II, p. 115)

Against the hypocrisy and guile of the men at court Joan appears "a poor innocent child of God." (Sc. V, p. 142) They look on her as a last resort hoping her presence will put some "fresh spunk" into the army, a case of nourishing "their faith by poetry." To them truth is not an issue,
for could you make citizens pay war taxes or soldiers sacrifice their lives, "if they knew what is really happening instead of what seems to them to be happening?" (Sc. II, pp. 105-6) In their eyes truth is a matter of social and political expediency. Once Joan has served her purpose they find her presence awkward. She is viewed as a public embarrassment, a dangerous upstart. Social values are set against private values and Joan experiences the essential isolation of the individual in his pursuit of truth. One by one the Church, the army and the state disown her and she finds herself a political outcast. In the face of collective pressure, the fear of isolation threatens to break her until she is urged by Dunois to heed "the truth." Furious, she recognises the mockery they have made of the term and she returns with bitter contempt:

Where would you all have been if I had heeded that sort of truth? There is no help, no counsel in any of you. Yes: I am alone on earth: I have always been alone. My father told my brothers to drown me if I would not stay to mind his sheep while France was bleeding to death: France might perish if only our lambs were safe. I thought France would have friends at the court of the king of France; and I find only wolves fighting for pieces of her poor torn body... France is alone; and God is alone; and what is my loneliness before the loneliness of my country and my God? I see now that the loneliness of God is His strength: what would He be if He listened to your jealous little counsels? Well, my loneliness shall be my strength too; it is better to be alone with God: His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love. In His strength I will dare, and dare, and dare, until I die. I will go out now to the common people, and let the love in their eyes comfort me for the hate in yours. You will all be glad to see me burnt; but if I go through the fire I shall go through it to their hearts for ever and ever. And so, God be with me!

(Sc. V, p. 154)

Joan is supremely compelling as Shaw depicts her here. The dazzling rhetoric of her lines raises the emotion to poetic heights. She heeds not their voices raised to discourage
her but only the irresistible voice of God within her. She is spirit-driven, spirit-inspired and against this force nothing can prevail. Their narrow self-interest and self-seeking are set against her total commitment and self-sacrifice. It is a clash between public will and private conscience. To sum up, Joan is faced with a choice of truths, and here, as she makes it, there is a definite parting of the ways. Her choice leads irrevocably to her trial and death. Shaw once again can be seen allowing his characters a foreknowledge of subsequent events in order to drive home the significance of what is happening. Long speeches like this of great rhetorical force contribute to the life of the drama as well as the keen cut and thrust of witty exchange. Shaw is a master of polemical dialogue. His plays are essentially dialectical, and Saint Joan demonstrates this careful balancing of opposites. Joan's crisis illustrates the tension that so often exists between private and social values and the disaster that can ensue when they come into open conflict.

He dramatises the antithesis further in terms of reason versus rationalisation. Joan refuses to deny the existence of her voices, but is the first to see the reason in what they tell her. It is mostly a matter of sound practical sense to her, for as she bursts out to the French court in genuine perplexity, "But what voices do you need to tell you what the blacksmith can tell you: that you must strike while the iron is hot." (Sc. V, p. 147) The deciding factor for her is the answer to the question - does it stand to reason? Accused constantly of pride, she finally brushes the accusation impatiently aside, unable to credit its relevance: "Oh never mind whether it is pride or not: is it true? is it common sense?" (Sc. V, p. 150) To her the soundness of what her voices propose is their ultimate vindication and reason is the yardstick by which she measures reality.
Where Joan is reason itself, those opposing her employ rationalisation as the instrument of policy. The judges at her trial appear perfectly justified in their own eyes, so much so that, as we have seen, Shaw has been accused by most critics and historians of presenting the trial as free from political bias and exonerating Joan's judges. As has been shown, Shaw by no means intends this, but is concerned to demonstrate, rather, that wrongs, more often than not, are perpetrated as a means to an end which is always represented as the right end. Through subtle forms of evasion and rationalisation a man can almost succeed in convincing himself that he is acting according to his conscience under the inexorable pressure of circumstance. Shaw presents each individual within his own frame of reference so that the rationale by which he works is revealed. The play thus provides different views and perspectives of the event. But Shaw does not stop at that. He also shows us the cracks in the surface which reveal the underlying motives. It is therefore not merely what they profess but the reality beneath the appearance that he illuminates. Individuals present their cases from their various social or institutional standpoints but at odd moments the mask slips to reveal the man within.

Thus Joan's judges are naturally concerned to assure themselves and all the world that there has "never been a fairer examination" and that Joan is being tried "by her most faithful friends, all ardentely desirous to save her soul from perdition." (Sc. VI, p. 159) The historical judges proclaimed as much and Shaw was keeping close to his sources even in this. We could easily be deceived as to their purity of motive were it not that Shaw highlights certain discrepancies which belie the sincerity of their professions. In the face of Warwick's insistence that Joan's death is a political necessity, Cauchon adamantly asserts that "the Church is not subject to political
necessity". Yet the need to placate the potentially dangerous Warwick causes the Inquisitor smoothly to intervene with the assurance that Warwick need have no anxiety about the result since Joan seems intent on convicting herself. Pacified, Warwick calms down but is characteristically revealing in the bluntness of his reply: "Well, by all means do your best for her if you are sure it will be of no avail." (Sc. VI, p. 160) Cauchon warns him that he is playing for his side at "the peril of (his) soul." Yet has not Warwick uttered the undisguised truth of the matter?

Both parties are striving for a similar outcome - the physical removal of the Maid. For all Cauchon's protestations that the Church does not take life, that it is more concerned for her soul than her body, he still seeks to know what provision has been made for the defence of the secular arm "should the maid prove obdurate, and the people be moved to pity her." The indefatigable Stogumber is pleased to assure him that he need have no fear on that score. The English have eight hundred soldiers mounted at the gates and she will not slip through their fingers "even if the whole city be on her side." Cauchon, revolted, cries, "Will you not add, God grant that she repent and purge her sin?" Stogumber's answer is cynically precise: "That does not seem to me to be consistent; but of course I agree with your lordship." (Sc. VI, p. 168) The subordinate bows to the superior as a matter of form but the contradiction is apparent.

The Inquisitor's magnificent address to the court on the evils of heresy is extremely compelling and has been seen by one critic as an "impromptu speech, spoken by a man of wide experience and great wisdom." It gives the impression of being all that and more; and one could easily be taken in by his arguments, as many have been, because of the combination in his manner of pleasant urbanity and imposing official authority. And yet a closer
examination of his speech reveals it clearly to be a masterful piece of oratory artfully designed to exert tremendous psychological pressure. Mark Antony's speech to the Roman mob after the death of Caesar in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, is not more subtly manipulating. While it is calculated to give the impression of a speech sparked off without prevision, it has obviously been carefully plotted from beginning to end. It anticipates every effect Joan is likely to have on the court and one by one strips off her every safeguard. They are not to judge Joan by the natural gentleness of her appearance and disposition, the austerity of her life, the sincerity of her faith, the charity of her actions. Yet he gives them nothing by which they are to judge her. He continually drives home his greater experience in dealing with these matters in phrases such as "if you had seen what I have seen," and "I have seen this again and again." He states in no uncertain terms that, if they had, the most tender-hearted among them "would clamor against the mercy of the Church in dealing with it." This makes them hesitant about coming to any conclusion contrary to his, and more inclined to defer to his judgement as a specialist in the field than to exercise any private judgement of their own. He puts them on guard against their natural compassion while yet convincing them that they are all "merciful men." He himself is "compassionate by nature" as well as by profession and would go to the stake himself sooner than do the work he did if he did not know "its righteousness, its necessity, its essential mercy." This brings to mind Mark Antony's speech where through the power of repeated suggestion, the mob is convinced that they are "all honourable men" about to do the honourable thing. In like vein the Inquisitor is concerned to assure the members of court that they are "all merciful men," "how else could (they) have devoted their lives to the service of (their) gentle Saviour?" (Sc. VI, pp. 165-7) Yet keen irony
lies in the mention of the gentle Saviour who by his very nature, constitutes a denunciation of what they intend. He plays on their fears warning them, on forfeit of divine mercy, against hardening their hearts; and then goes on to say with cold deliberation:

But if you hate cruelty - and if any man here does not hate it I command him on his soul's salvation to quit this holy court - I say, if you hate cruelty, remember that nothing is so cruel in its consequences as the toleration of heresy.

(Sc. VI, p. 166)

Inexorably, the point is driven home. Their emotions have been so artfully worked upon they are quite unconscious of the paradox in what is being said - be cruel if you hate cruelty. By the end of his long speech they are effectively indoctrinated. Except for Brother Martin, the rest are quite pliant, reacting precisely as intended, convinced that they are doing the righteous thing, the necessary thing, the merciful thing. Louis Crompton interestingly points out that the arguments Shaw gives the Inquisitor are "exactly those used by the nineteenth-century American Quaker historian H C Lea in his monumental History of the Inquisition to justify the extermination of the Albigensians, whose ultra-asceticism and contempt for marriage could only, in Lea's view, have probably resulted in lawless concubinage and the destruction of the institution of the family." The Church's official defence of the Inquisition to be found in an article in the Catholic Encyclopedia quotes Lea extensively and Shaw, according to Crompton, apparently studied the essay most carefully in preparing his play. 107

Ironically much of what the Inquisitor steels members of the court and of the audience against is sympathy for the kind of person appearing much as Christ must have appeared at his trial. Warning them that the accusations against Joan are supported by no evidence, while there is abundant
testimony that her excesses have been excesses of religion and charity and not of worldliness and wantonness, he goes on to say:

The devilish pride that has led her into her present peril has left no mark on her countenance. Strange as it may seem to you, it has even left no mark on her character outside those special matters in which she is proud; so that you will see a diabolical pride and a natural humility seated side by side in the self-same soul.

(Sc. VI, p. 166)

Everything said here could equally have been said of Christ. The presumption implicit in his refusal to disclaim the Messianic title was united with a singular grace and humility of bearing and he too was called a blasphemer for refusing to deny what he held to be true.

At another point Shaw, tongue in cheek, makes the Inquisitor solemnly pronounce that "the woman who quarrels with her clothes, and puts on the dress of a man, is like the man who throws off his fur gown and dresses like John the Baptist: they are followed as surely as night follows the day, by bands of wild women and men who refuse to wear any clothes at all." (p. 165) The absurdity of the claim, as intended, is patently obvious to us with our advantage of the perspective of time. But there is further irony in the reference to John the Baptist who was a true messenger of God, the forerunner of Christ, come to prepare his way.

Throughout the trial scene Shaw maintains a fine balance between the serious and the comic. The humour does not take away from the sober reality but serves as an effective check on the emotions. Right up to the impact of the final moments of the trial, Shaw controls the nature of the spectators' response, not allowing them to be overwhelmed by the awareness of impending catastrophe. The comic elements help to contain the horror of what is about to take place. The audience is kept sufficiently detached, able to function critically. The serio-comic
tone is handled with much power and sensitivity. The tragic sense is never vulgarised and the scene builds to an extremely moving climax.

From the start Joan does not have a chance. They are out to incriminate her as a heretic despite the acknowledged fact that "many saints have said as much as Joan." (Sc. VI, p. 164) Shaw deliberately pushes things to the point of absurdity to demonstrate how almost anything can be seen as heresy if one is determined to interpret it as such. They accuse her of trying to escape and the simple logic of her reply - "If you leave the door of the cage open the bird will fly out," - makes D'Estivet declare, "That is a confession of heresy. I call the attention of the court to it." Impatient with the absurdity of the claim Joan is suitably deflating in her plain-seeing of it as "a great nonsense." Joan in contrast is the epitome of clarity and good sense, quite justified when she protests, "But you will not talk sense to me. I am reasonable if you will be reasonable." (Sc. VI, p. 170) Against her adversaries' pompous cant and exaggerated sense of their own importance, Joan appears refreshingly free of pose, hypocrisy and self-delusion. Her answer to the threat of torture is sane and to the point. There are no heroic pretensions. She cannot bear to be hurt and, if hurt, will say anything to stop the pain, but it will be a pointless exercise since she "will take it all back afterwards." (Sc. VI, p. 171) Asked for one good reason why an angel of God should command her to dress as a soldier, she cannot see what could be "plainer commonsense." She is a prisoner guarded by soldiers. If she "were to dress as a woman they would think of (her) as a woman; and then what would become of (her)?" Their persistent sense of horror causes Joan to caustically demand, "Do you want me to live with them in petticoats?" (Sc. VI, p. 177)

Joan is disarming in her openness and candour and the vitality of her response to life. She brings her own
reason and experience to bear. This is what is finally threatened. Unable to prove her voices false the court insists they are diabolical and demands that she submit her case to the inspired interpretation of the Church. This for Joan is to command the impossible. She cannot declare that her visions and revelations are not from God, for that would be repudiating her own experience of inner truth. What they ultimately wish to deny her is her belief in herself, the credibility of her own mind and spirit which in the final analysis is all an individual has by which to measure reality. As she protests in genuine distress, "What other judgement can I judge but by my own?" (Sc. VI, p. 175) Shaw brings home the purblind nature of the court, for in the face of this self-evident truth, they can only express horror:

Out of your own mouth you have condemned yourself. We have striven for your salvation to the verge of sinning ourselves: we have opened the door to you again and again; and you have shut it in our faces and in the face of God. Dare you pretend, after what you have said, that you are in a state of grace?

The inspired wisdom and simplicity of Joan's reply already quoted is riveting:

If I am not, may God bring me to it: if I am, may God keep me in it!

(Sc. VI, p. 175)

True spirituality resides in the fact that Joan does not presume to judge even herself righteous but leaves the final authority with God. She does not diminish God as they clearly do in exaggerating the nature of the threat she poses, seeing "Christ dethroned" and the whole of Catholic Christendom brought down to "barbarous ruin and desolation" if such heresy is allowed to exist.

Joan has that inner freedom of being which is ultimately the only real freedom an individual can enjoy. It endows her with the courage to exercise her own mind and spirit in coming to terms with life. It is significant
that it is only when she cannot reconcile her faith and her reason that she plunges into despair and self-doubt:

Oh, it is true: it is true: my voices have deceived me. I have been mocked by devils: my faith is broken. I have dared and dared; but only a fool will walk into a fire: God, who gave me my common-sense, cannot will me to do that.

(Sc. VI, p. 179)

She is driven to recant but when she sees the darkness they intend for her, keeping her away from all life and light, from everything that brings her back to the love of God and by their "wickedness and foolishness" tempting her to hate Him, she recognises that their counsel "is of the devil" and hers "is of God." It is now she who reverses the situation, pronouncing judgement on them as not fit for her to "live among." (Sc. VI, pp. 183-184)

Sainthood is a phenomenon not easy for man to accept since it often results in a remorseless exposure of human frailty. Light judges as well as illuminates, and the nature of its revelation can be deeply discomfiting.

The trial scene ends with Joan's tragic death. The Epilogue which follows is crucial to the play's meaning and purpose. It deliberately frustrates any wish on the part of an audience to be left with a glowing vision of heroism. This relates to what I have said in the beginning. Dramatists, influenced by the general iconography of Joan, had tended to depict her as a sublime heroic figure. Audiences of early productions of the play, with this theatrical tradition behind them, expected to be left on an exalted tragic note. Shaw's originality and daring can be seen in his shattering these expectations in order to make people sit up. Ever since the play's first reception the Epilogue has raised spirited controversy and it continues to be regarded by a large body of critics as a crude excrescence. When the play was first produced the Epilogue was greeted generally with heated objections even from avid Shavian enthusiasts. It was felt to be a shocking anti-
climax. It destroyed the historical illusion and the tragic mood, and detracted from the play's impressiveness. Audiences were disconcerted by Shaw's audacious blend of the farcical and the sublime. James Agate's notice in The Sunday Times (30/3/24) refers to "a faintly jovial, quasi-satirical and wholly unnecessary epilogue conceived in a vein of lesser exaltation." J Kooistra's comment in 1925 is representative of early critical opinion:

If her tale is one with a glorious ending, the epilogue, with its mixture of satire, buffoonery and grandeur fails to convey that message... its incongruous elements disturb the noble impression left by the preceding action. It is a signal instance of miscalculated effects, perverse destruction by the artist of his own creation, and lamentable want of good taste.

Modern critics can be found echoing the same sentiments. When the play was revived in London in 1960 there were similar cries for the omission of the Epilogue by noted literary figures. John Fielden agrees with critics who have argued "that the epilogue, loquacious and tinged with humour as it is, destroys the mood achieved by Scene 6." Eldon C Hill asserts that "the controversial epilogue which brings Joan back to earth for her 1920 canonization, detracts from the tragic effect."

It is, however, precisely this tragic mood or effect that Shaw wishes to avoid. The Epilogue, he insists, is indispensable. "Without it the play would only be a sensational tale of a girl who was burnt, leaving the spectators plunged in horror, despairing of humanity." Shaw is more concerned to stimulate thinking than feeling. The audience must not leave the theatre on a fatalistic note, overcome by the tragic nature of Joan's end. It is not the individual awareness and inner change that tragedy effects that Shaw is concerned to bring about, but social consciousness and social change. He does not want the audience to condemn the political and religious
institutions that condemned Joan while unquestioningly accepting their modern counterparts. The Epilogue picks out the point of the play. It unsettles any comfortable notion that the audience might be tempted to entertain about a savage past and a civilised present. It is at themselves that the audience are made to look. They are made to realise that, as unthinking members of a system, they too may be contributing to such disasters as have ravaged human history.

In the Epilogue Shaw shows us that a spirit like Joan is her own salvation and ultimately cannot be destroyed. She is "up and alive everywhere." Her sword "shall conquer yet." (Epilogue, pp. 202-5) The greater human tragedy lies in the nature of the world reflected. Truth never seems to be accepted without violence. The world has still no place for its saints and can only extol them at a safe distance in time. The litany of praise raised to Joan is merely a matter of form and pretence and Joan's response recalls Christ: "Woe unto me when all men praise me! I bid you remember that I am a saint, and that saints can work miracles. And now tell me: shall I rise from the dead and come back to you a living woman?" (Epilogue, p. 206) One by one each person shuns the idea of her return. Shaw includes the audience in this rejection of Joan by bringing it right up to his own time. The twentieth century government official bows himself formally out of an awkward situation - "The possibility of your resurrection was not contemplated in the recent proceedings for your canonization. I must return to Rome for fresh instructions." (Epilogue, p. 207) The audience receives a douche of cold water through this startling and profoundly ironic reversal.

Joan is still a mere pawn on a complex political chessboard. It is still a world of false fronts and sham graces and the public veneration of Joan is yet another rôle being played. Joan is the only one who never plays a part. She is always herself. Even in the Epilogue we see the 'rôle' of saint as something quite apart from her. She is a saint
and does not have to act the part society now assigns to her. The twentieth century government official formally announces that "on every thirtieth day of May, being the anniversary of the death of the said most blessed daughter of God ... it shall be lawful and laudable for the faithful to kneel and address their prayers through her to the Mercy Seat." But Joan totally free and unconventional exclaims, "Oh no. It is for the saint to kneel." She chuckles at the idea of herself a saint: "But fancy me a saint! What would St. Catherine and St. Margaret say if the farm girl was cocked up beside them!" (Epilogue, pp. 203-4) Shaw presents her no remote ethereal figure but as delightfully real and familiar as ever.

All the others, too, are little changed. Brother Martin is still seeing and yet not seeing. He condemns the travesty of justice so evident in the second trial yet fails to see that almost everything he accuses it of, though more subtly disguised, can be seen to apply to the first trial in some measure. And for all his "fine words" celebrating the fact that "the white robe of innocence has been cleansed from the smirch of the flame," he is still the man who has good intentions but lacks the courage to act on his inner convictions. As Charles bluntly informs him, "If you could bring her back to life, they would burn her again within six months, for all their present adoration of her. And you would hold up the cross, too, just the same." (Epilogue, p. 193) He is the kind of man who can only lament an injustice after the event.

Charles, as ever, takes the "world as it is" and keeps his nose "pretty close to the ground." (Epilogue, p. 197) It is clear that political considerations have dictated the rehabilitation trial. In response to Ladvenu's distress that its proceedings were a travesty of justice, he replies: "My friend: provided they can no longer say that I was crowned by a witch and a heretic, I shall not fuss about
how the trick was done." (Epilogue, p. 192) Cauchon is still stubbornly self-deluded, intent on declaring, "I was just, I was merciful, I was faithful to my light."
(Epilogue, p. 197) He is still blind to the gross contradictions between his words and his actions. When Stogumber admits to doing a very cruel thing once because he had not seen what cruelty was like, Cauchon is quick to rebuke - "Were not the sufferings of our Lord Christ enough for you?" "Must then a Christ perish in every age to save those who have no imagination?" Like Cauchon, Stogumber has remained purblind. Against the resurrection of Joan, he pleads, "Give us peace in our time, O Lord." (Epilogue, p. 207)
But he at least has made one startling discovery:

If you could only see what you think about you would think quite differently about it. It would give you a great shock...For I am not cruel by nature, you know.

(Epilogue, p. 201)

This, perhaps, is Shaw's message to the audience. People who are not malevolent by nature contribute to the world's catastrophes through a want of imagination and understanding as to the political and social consequences of the way they think.

For Shaw, Joan is a visionary, a light-bringer, an agent of the life force. The play dramatises the propensity of humanity to destroy the instruments of its advance. The play ends on a compelling note. Joan is left alone on the stage isolated from the darkness around by a circle of radiant light. The hour strikes significantly providing an urgent sense of the passing of time. Joan raises her voice and we are left with her haunting question:

O God that madest this beautiful earth,
When will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?

(Epilogue, p. 208)
Notes to Chapter II


2. Cited in M Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theater, p. 350.


9. George Bernard Shaw's Historical Plays (Delhi; Bombay; Madras: Macmillan Co. of India, 1976), p. 12.


30. Ibid., p. 314.


41. The Times, 21/4/71.


43. See Archibald Henderson, Table-talk with G.B.S., p. 40.


46. Lawrence Langner, G.B.S. and the Lunatic, p. 75.


53. Ibid., p. 85.


55. Preface, Saint Joan, pp. 45-6, 58.

56. Shaw, p. 163.


68. Preface, Saint Joan, p. 73.
71. See Lawrence Langner, G.B.S. and the Lunatic, pp. 70-1.
75. Ibid., p. 75.
77. See Dan H Lawrence, Shaw: An Exhibit (Austin: The Univ. of Texas, 1977), column 450.
78. The Judgements of Joan, p. 170.


81. Mr Shaw and 'The Maid,' p. 89.


84. Ibid., p. 150.


88. Ibid., p. 305.

89. Ibid., pp. 18, 299.

90. Ibid., p. 277.

91. Ibid., p. 306.

92. Ibid., p. 307.

93. Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

94. Ibid., p. xvii.


98. Ibid., pp. 145-6.

99. All quotations from the text are from The Bodley Head edition.

100. Bernard Shaw, p. 195.


104. See Hesketh Pearson, Bernard Shaw, p. 357.
107. Shaw the Dramatist, p. 211.
110. See L Langner, G.B.S. and the Lunatic, p. 80.
CHAPTER III

Reginald Berkeley - The Lady with a Lamp
Clifford Bax - The Rose without a Thorn
Gordon Daviot - Richard of Bordeaux

The plays selected for consideration in this chapter, Reginald Berkeley's The Lady with a Lamp, Clifford Bax's The Rose without a Thorn and Gordon Daviot's Richard of Bordeaux, demonstrate the meeting and crossing of two traditions, the Romantic and the Shavian. Both the old and new ways of apprehending history can be seen coming together in these popular plays by popular playwrights of the 1930's. They exemplify the kind of narrowly realistic theatre in vogue at the time with its concentration on the obvious exterior world. These particular plays have been selected because, though none attain that power and penetration which is the hallmark of the best dramatic writing, they merit criticism on a more serious vein than most plays of the period. They are persuasive and alive taken on their own terms and go beyond the domestic concerns that preoccupied so many stages of their day. They achieved considerable success when first produced and reflect the tremendous pressure exerted by public taste as it operated in the theatre. Whereas, as has been seen, a great playwright like Shaw is creative in his approach to drama and a powerful shaping force in himself, a minor playwright merely registers the various influences determining the nature of drama in his age.

Writers have distinct features which reveal their own time and temperament and in these plays two strains appear dominant - the lingering penchant for romance and the immediate impact of Shaw. The trend in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was towards a more romantic treatment of history. Puff in Sheridan's play, The Critic (1779) declares that "it is a received point among poets, that where history gives you a good heroic out-line for a play,
you may fill it up with a little love at your own discretion; in doing which, nine times out of ten, you only make up a deficiency in the private history of the times." (Act II, Sc. I, 11. 15-19) Nineteenth century novelists and dramatists seem to have entertained a similar outlook. Romance plays an essential part in the historical novels of Walter Scott who has had such an immense influence on Western historical literature. Scott, Bulwer Lytton states, "employed History to aid Romance." Lytton himself was content with the "humbler task" of employing "Romance in the aid of History."\(^1\) Plays of his, such as The Lady of Lyons (1838) and Richelieu (1839), in which he is concerned to depict particular periods of French history, are built around romantic situations. In Richelieu the central figure, is a historical character, Cardinal Richelieu, who is shown embroiled in political intrigues in the French court. He is also directly immersed in the romantic plight of two non-historical characters and a great deal of dramatic interest lies in the resolution of their conflict. Similarly in historical dramas such as Dion Boucicault's Louis XI (1855) a 'love interest' is introduced which is the focus of dramatic sympathy.

This romantic tradition can be seen asserting itself in The Lady with a Lamp, The Rose without a Thorn and Richard of Bordeaux. Even while trying hard to be modern, these plays have a soft romantic angle in common. Their central situations are based on facts, but these are romantically interpreted and their characters are conceived in a slightly sentimental light. All three playwrights use a love relationship in the lives of their heroes or heroines as a focal point of interest. They were unable to shake off the old Romantic tradition but neither could they resist the tremendous impact of Shaw in plays like Saint Joan and Caesar and Cleopatra where he led the way for a very different kind of theatre. His plays are pithy and discursive while theirs are very much more lightweight but they all attempt to approach history after
the Shavian manner. All three evince an awareness that mythical saints or monsters die hard and try to put their characters in a rational credible framework. Then again they break away from the Romantic tradition and link up with the Shavian in the movement from verse to prose - the use of modern colloquial idiom, and in the attempt to interpret the past in terms of contemporary ideas and concerns. It is probably due to Shaw too that both Berkeley and Daviot register a greater consciousness of history as having been written by historians and a certain reluctance to take over uncritically a received version of history. Thus, interestingly, two traditions can be seen meeting in these plays as both the Romantic and the Shavian impulse find expression. Shaw's impact was so powerful that subsequent playwrights were inevitably affected by his style and approach. Therefore a playwright like Clifford Bax who fervently rejected Shavianism was influenced in spite of himself. But whereas a minor playwright is shaped by a great influence, a major artist like T S Eliot, great in his own right, is able to use it uniquely. As I shall be showing later, he fuses the inspiration he derives from Shaw into his own style, giving it the impress of his own personality.

The expectations of audiences and critics of the day for a realistic kind of theatre also exerted considerable pressure which playwrights found hard to deny in spite of the works of Shaw and Brecht. Brecht was writing plays from 1918 yet the English theatre was oblivious of the impact he was making or was to make. Shaw and Brecht continually shatter the illusion of reality and incorporate a sense of a larger dimension of time and an idea of different possible views of an event. Most playwrights of this period were devoted to scrupulously maintaining the illusion of reality. The play was set up to be regarded not as a play but as a slice of life and the audience was invited to lose all sense of artifice and disbelief for the
moment. Plausibility of thought and action, credibility of the bare explicit kind, was sought, for to 'ring true' was the critics' measure of a play's worth. Thus, as Katharine Worth points out, "even history plays started pretending hard to be 'real' in the period. Gordon Daviot's Richard II talks things over with his wife, Reginald Berkeley's Florence Nightingale confides in her favourite doctor in a modern idiom that invites us to think of them in a typically realistic fashion as people like us or not so very different...These writers are committed to the pretence that the play has no audience; is not a play at all but history as it happened, the real thing." The audience is placed in the role of overhearer and not participant of the collective experience that is the theatre. Essentially it is a closed world that is presented and the thought and action of the play do not spill over to assert their reality in direct and present relation to the audience.

The chief limitation of this narrowly realistic mode is that the realism tends to be skin-deep. When a playwright is committed to creating and sustaining an impression of outward realism it is often at the expense of a deeper truth and reality. As Chekhov has said, naturalism of this sort "tends to destroy the inner profound emotions in its effort to mirror their outward manifestations." In these plays of Berkeley, Bax, and Daviot that I shall be considering, an outward social reality is presented but the inward drama of being is little more than hinted at. We are given some apprehension of the personal conflicts of Richard II, Katheryn Howard, Henry VIII and Florence Nightingale but we do not plumb the depths of their individual dilemmas. A drawing-room view of the proceedings is presented but the private man is rarely glimpsed behind the public. All these plays treat experience from an external rather than an internal frame of reference. It is the social process that takes focus and we are kept on the outside looking on.
This tends to be artificial and distancing at times. In contrast, Charles Williams's *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*, which I shall be considering later, is extremely stylised in form and treatment and presents the action from an internal frame of reference. It concentrates on the drama of the hidden self, assuming, perhaps, too great a knowledge of external events on the part of the audience.

The plays to be considered in this chapter also share certain themes and concerns which reflect their time. All three can be found exalting the feminine viewpoint. Gordon Daviot (a pseudonym for Elizabeth Mackintosh, whom I shall be referring to as Gordon Daviot since her play is written under this name) reveals the distinct angle of a woman writer in the perspective registered on the question of peace. Bax and Reginald Berkeley express a marked sympathy for the feminine position. Anne of Bohemia, Richard II's wife, is given great prominence in Daviot's play - she is seen to be Richard's mainstay and is very much an equal partner in their relationship. Florence Nightingale breaks out of the strait-jacket imposed on women by the society of her time to realise a great personal destiny. Katheryn Howard symbolises, for Bax, the new drive in women to satisfy their capacity for delight and self-expression. This emphasis in the plays points to one of the dominant concerns of the 1930's. There was a ferment of interest in Women's Rights springing from the suffragette period. The long bitter fight for suffrage had resulted in Great Britain giving women the vote at the end of the First World War, and in the following year in 1918 America also capitulated and granted women suffrage. During the ensuing years the struggle for feminine emancipation in all areas of human endeavour and experience gained ever-widening attention and support. Many previously accepted ideas and values were questioned and we find this new thought and awareness registered in these plays. They were all first published by Victor
Gollancz who was known for his progressive publications. Then again, the abhorrence of war or social violence legalised in any form is noticeable in these plays, mirroring the particular troubled mood of the interwar period in which they were written. The intense suffering of the war-wounded at the hospital in Scutari is dramatised in The Lady with a Lamp. We are made to feel the senseless loss of a young life in The Rose without a Thorn as Katheryn Howard falls victim to the executioner's axe. Richard of Bordeaux celebrates the young king's great efforts for peace and the play's pacifist angle won it tremendous popularity in its time. The threat of another even more hideous war had stimulated an upsurge of interest in pacifism. It was an era in which peace societies flourished. The Fellowship of Reconciliation was formed in response to the war and other older established societies, like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, gained increasing support. A wellknown Christian pacifist of the interwar period was the Rev. Dick Sheppard, whose Peace Pledge Union, with its declaration, "I renounce war and never again, directly or indirectly, will I support or sanction another," attracted some 150,000 signatures. The League of Nations Union was an influential body in post-war British politics especially in the conduct of foreign affairs. A World Anti-War Congress was held at Amsterdam in August 1932, which was attended by representatives from 30,000 organisations from 27 countries. The peace movement gathered such support that it seemed for a time in the mid-thirties that absolute pacifism was growing strongly. This general climate of disquiet and concern for the preservation of society is reflected in these plays, with their opposition to war or social violence and insistence on a regard for life, beauty and culture.

Since they share a common concern and background it is therefore, perhaps, not surprising to find a similarity in theme and treatment. All three plays deal with the trans-
forming power of a dream or vision, and highlight both its positive and negative aspects. Florence Nightingale's ideal soars pure and incorruptible yet its working out in reality is at considerable human cost. Henry VIII's dream of youth and Katheryn Howard's dream of love are vital and rejuvenating, but they spring from a capacity for self-delusion and naivety in both. Richard II and his wife Anne share a vision of peace which invests their life with purpose, but it cuts against the grain of public taste and interest and its pursuit results in intense personal suffering. There is a dominating figure in all these plays as they concentrate essentially on providing a stirring character portrait. They all present an unconventional view of the protagonist. In Richard of Bordeaux it is not the weak self-indulgent monarch that is dramatised, but the idealist, the visionary. Henry VIII in The Rose without a Thorn is not the hardened philanderer, but the romantic, the dreamer. In The Lady with a Lamp the focus is upon the woman of steel rather than the angel of mercy.

Actors were drawn to these plays because of the star parts they offered. They were seen as attractive opportunities, for actors felt they could do something with these parts and benefit by them. A certain presence or versatility was required for the main rôles. Thus they drew such actors and actresses as Edith Evans, John Gielgud, Frank Vosper and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies. Yet these plays were obviously written to be read as well as acted. Like Shaw, Berkeley and Daviot provide mental pictures of their characters in lengthy stage directions which would aid a reader as well as an actor or director. Unlike more modern playwrights who are extremely theatrical in their approach, these writers tend to convey their ideas mainly verbally. Climactic moments in their plays are expressed in speeches rather than in boldly theatrical physical terms. There is little reliance on effects peculiar to the theatre - dumb physical forms of expression, stage metaphors, music, song, dance - as an integral part
of the drama. Characters tend to provide information and be over-explanatory of themselves. The leaning towards statement rather than suggestion and evocation is strongly felt. Ideas are made a little too conscious and explicit. All too often they are introduced as topics of conversation instead of being conveyed more imaginatively. Thus the style of these playwrights fails them when they try to go inwards and register the subconscious life.

Then again the tendency in these writers is towards an over-refined treatment of character and event. Tragic elements in their dramas are deliberately made more pleasant or palatable. Death and disease are dealt with delicately and there is the noticeable attempt to avoid a direct presentation of harsh events. We are only given a glimpse of Florence Nightingale immediately attending to the injured at the military hospital in Scutari, and even this is treated romantically, as the dying soldier turns out to be her lover, Harry Tremayne, and the focus shifts from his physical to his emotional condition. Katheryn Howard is shown going through a rehearsal of her execution rather than the actual event and so the audience is shielded from the direct confrontation of death. Daviot also tried to make the fact of death less stark in Richard of Bordeaux. The sickness and death of Queen Anne was a moment which stubbornly refused to come out right in performance. Initially the stage direction stated that Anne should be carried from the stage leaving Richard alone in despair. But it was found in rehearsal that the spectacle of grief was impossible to sustain with the object of it gone. So the scene had to be rewritten to portray the doctor arriving to discover that Anne was dying of the plague, and the curtain closes on Richard and Anne's pain at the disclosure. 4

Though these plays never attain any great dramatic power and concentration, they had enough human interest, breadth of concern and imaginative appeal to bring them
alive to audiences of their time. The inwardness of their characters is not registered with any real conviction; yet, despite this limitation, they are able to present men in society, coping with people and the cut and thrust of circumstance, and provide a sense of the practical realities of history. It is obvious that history held a fascination for all these playwrights. They each wrote more than one history play and tried their hand at writing biographies or historical novels, which suggests that they enjoyed exploring the region between history and fiction, that area where history passes into fiction and back again. In this chapter, I shall be looking at the plays selected for attention in turn, and examining the nature of their approach to history. But since there is hardly any criticism on these playwrights, I have found it necessary to spend some time establishing the background of these writers before coming to each particular work.

I shall begin with Reginald Berkeley. As a writer he can be seen to follow in the tradition of Shaw, motivated as he is by the concern to give a platform to contemporary issues in order to bring about social awareness and change. His efforts for the stage and screen were often the subject of controversy. Berkeley's life reveals a serious interest in public affairs. He was born in London in 1890 and educated at Bedford before pursuing a university education in New Zealand where he was called to the Bar in 1912. The intervention of the war drew Berkeley into active military service. Acquitting himself with some distinction in the Rifle Brigade, he gained his M.C. and became a Brigade Major, taking part in the march to the Rhine. On being demobilised in 1919, he was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple. He joined the League of Nations staff, serving first in London and then with the Geneva Secretariat. Entering politics, he resigned his post with the League of Nations on election to Parliament as Liberal member for Nottingham Central in 1922. He served in this capacity for two years, after which he settled down to
commit himself seriously to a writing career.

Berkeley's first contribution to the stage, a light comedy, French Leave, was a considerable West-end success and ran for a year at the Globe Theatre in 1920. But his play on Florence Nightingale, The Lady with a Lamp, produced nine years later, was his most notable dramatic achievement. Among his other plays are Eight O'clock (1920), Mango Island (1925), The Quest of Elizabeth (1926), Machines (1930), and The Dweller in Darkness (1931). In the last few years of his life, Berkeley turned to the screen and devoted his attention to films in Hollywood, where he was one of the highest paid writers. He achieved success with his screen version of Cavalcade and The World Moves On. But his film, Dawn, on Nurse Cavell was at first banned by the censor. This was not the first time Berkeley had met with such opposition. His sociological play, Machines, was rejected by the British Broadcasting Company as too political, but was produced by the Arts Theatre in 1930. He also tried his hand at other kinds of writing. He collaborated with J B Lynch on a book of caricatures and satires called Decorations and Absurdities, published in 1923. Unparliamentary Papers and Other Diversions, published in 1924, parodies a miscellany of people and events including various writers and their styles. He was also responsible for the first volume of the History of the Rifle Brigade and was engaged in writing the second volume when he died suddenly in 1935.

Berkeley's active social concern is revealed in his writings. His play, Machines, was rejected by the B.B.C. as being "of a propaganda nature" and "far too controversial" and political to be acceptable. Essentially the play deals with the threat of machines to modern life, but also embodies ideas on what Berkeley felt should be the whole trend of modern industrial thought, which was towards substituting a status of partnership for the status of employment. Berkeley reproduced the correspondence
between himself and the B.B.C. over the rejection of his play because he felt the matter was a public one. Broadcasting could develop into a new dramatic art form, as distinct as the theatre or cinema and inferior to neither, he said, but the question whether censorship should be extended to "works of the imagination dealing objectively and seriously with industry and politics" had to be faced.

In 1931 Berkeley published *England's Opportunity: A Reply to an Argument and an Outline of Policy*, as "a practical and non-partisan contribution to the discussion of national and economic problems" of the British nation, in answer to what he called "the defeatist propaganda" of Mr André Siegfried in a widely advertised book, *England's Crisis*, which he considered a gross misrepresentation of Britain's position. In his book Berkeley offered his reflections on the directions the nation could take to meet these problems. He thought that Britain, in the eighteen years after the Great War, had allowed things to slide and hence was awakening to sudden market shrinkage, an obsolete Parliamentary system and a civilisation very near collapse. He saw the need for a "New Democracy" and a "New Capitalism". By a "New Democracy" he meant "the abolition of the crudities, sham and obstructions of the party system, and the conversion of Parliament into a genuine working council of the nation" which was to be achieved partly by the work of leaders who saw the necessity for change, and partly by the discrimination of voters in electing to Parliament only those pledged to reform. He also considered the "Old Capitalism" moribund and advocated the development of a "democratic partnership in industry, whereby the decisions of industrial policy are jointly taken by representatives of capital and representatives of labour." "The idea of master and servant in industry and even of employer and employed," he felt, was false and needed replacement. Berkeley was thus after radical changes in the social and economic
structure, and a re-examination of traditional values and outlook. This concern finds expression in *The Lady with a Lamp* where, after the Shavian manner, discussion takes place over such issues as the value of work and the possibility of a new relationship between labour and capital.

Like Shaw, Berkeley believed in the social function of art. It's rôle was to help provoke reform and give rational direction to the changes that were occurring. His play, *The White Château*, is "a play with a purpose." "It sets out, however ineffectively, to reinforce the determination to abolish war." The great war of 1914-1918 had left an indelible impression on Berkeley. *The White Château* was his contribution to the unremitting effort he felt was needed to prevent its recurrence.

The incidents of the play are invented but all, he states, could have happened. *The White Château*, the play's central motif, typifies "the destruction that overtook so many thousands of buildings" and commemorates "the indomitable spirit of those who later rebuilt their homes." The subject of the play is "not the war between A and B but War, the hideous Giant Despair of our times." This theme is reiterated in a biographical novel, *Dawn*, which celebrates the heroism of Nurse Edith Cavell who was put to death for protecting her countrymen from the German invader, but who had been trying to serve a higher goal than patriotism. Nursing, for her, knew no frontiers - her duty was with the sick and the helpless. Berkeley sees her actions as a "revolt against the war machine." He is drawn to this kind of heroic woman with a supreme commitment to a great purpose. He sees Nurse Cavell as the "embodiment of Duty and Sacrifice" as he does Florence Nightingale, and indeed there are many parallels in his portrayal of the two women. Like Florence Nightingale, Miss Cavell was one of these people who "have the kind of faith that burns inside them like a
fire."\(^{11}\) For her "life had all action, and no reflection. The opportunity for complete rest was not at all unwelcome. For the rest she had done what she thought was right. She had done it without fear of consequence, and without hope of reward."\(^{12}\) In an alternative ending to *The Lady with the Lamp*, Berkeley gives Florence Nightingale the same grounds of vindication at the close of her life when she says, "Only that I have honestly tried to work for other people. And I have striven to find out what is right..."\(^{13}\) Edith Cavell like Florence Nightingale technically breaks war regulations, displaying a woman's ready instinct for the essentials of a situation. Like Shaw in *Saint Joan*, Berkeley affirms the feminine sensibility in this book and satirises with mordancy the male penchant for rules and conventions. War is shown to be something of an elaborate game with men. Edith Cavell, facing the head of the German military police could only think, "What children men were. Destructive children to lay waste the fertile earth and shatter their cities with explosives. Cruel children, to hurt each other pitilessly, because of a set of rules of no more authority in the eyes of the Eternal than the rules of rounders or prisoner's base. Bloodthirsty children to organise slaughter on so gigantic a scale. But children, none the less, if only by virtue of their incurable solemnity about themselves, and their pathetic belief in the importance of their enthusiasms."\(^{14}\) The masculine delight in ritual reaches a ludicrous extreme in her eyes as she awaits execution:

She knew enough of military drill to recognise that the movement they had just performed was another point of resemblance to a guard of honour; for they had presented arms. To whom? She half-turned, expecting to see some gold-embroidered general. Then it dawned that this was the firing party, paying its grim homage to her it was to destroy. Laughter and pity welled up in her together. Only the childish minds of men could have invented such a grisly farce....\(^{15}\)
Evidently, Berkeley felt strongly about this, for in *The Lady with a Lamp* too, he dramatises this feminine cutting down of the male inclination to adhere religiously to a code of rules. Though Berkeley did write an unpublished play about Dreyfus, a controversial historical character, most of his concern with history was with periods closer to his own time. *Dawn* treats events in the first World War and *The Lady with a Lamp* goes back no further than the 1820’s. Another unpublished play, *The Tiger*, produced at the Embassy Theatre in 1936, deals with French politics of 1871, in particular with the career of Georges Clemenceau. In my reading I came across a review in *The Times* which provides an account of it. The play "presents a practical patriot among long-winded idealists searching with relentless ferocity for something that will work."

"It is a performance which focuses into a credible personality, the fierce energy, the scorn for armchair idealism, and the faith of the patriot growing older and wiser through storm after storm." Berkeley’s interest in treating historical characters and events nearer his own time springs from his pressing concern with issues that have a relevance for his own day.

*The Lady with a Lamp* was first published in 1929 by Victor Gollancz both separately and in a collection - *Famous Plays of Today*. The numerous reprints it has received are an indication of its success. It was reprinted by Samuel French in 1929. In 1933 it was re-issued by Gollancz in another collection, *Plays of a Half-Decade* and subsequently published separately by Longmans, Green and Company in 1948 in 'The Heritage of Literature Series,' and in 1949 in the series called 'Essential English Library.' French’s acting edition includes an alternative ending to the play. In a note to this edition Berkeley states with reference to this scene:

Originally this was the last scene of the play, but at the dress rehearsal I decided, largely on the advice of my friend James Agate, whose dramatic judgement is so
admirable, to omit it and end the play with the investiture.

Messrs. Samuel French have strongly urged me to include the scene for the sake of those amateurs who cannot face the difficulty of the investiture scene. My personal opinion is that the musical effects in this 'alternative' scene will prove infinitely harder to produce credibly and creditably than anything in the investiture. Moreover, I am satisfied that the omission of the investiture scene would cause the play to tail off at the end.17

One cannot help agreeing with Agate that the play is stronger without the original ending. It presents Florence Nightingale in her last moments, even in her febrile state of mind, taking stock of herself and her achievement:

... My life suddenly plain - like a picture....On all charges ... Often foolish and mistaken; more often obstinate and exacting. I make no concealment or excuses....but the work had to be done ... Yes, still - if I had strength ... Ah! ... the death of Sidney Herbert - and my misjudgement of him ... Nothing could be too severe for that ... And many cruel things said in anger ... And pride - and intolerance .... Only that I have honestly tried to work for other people. And I have striven to find out what is right....18

This comes through as artificial and totally unconvincing because it is so clear-cut and highly conscious. It over-states the case already made far more subtly and cogently. The scene ends on a lame sentimental note and we can see the definite pull towards romanticism. A choir is heard in the background rehearsing The Dream of Gerontius, a dramatic poem written by Cardinal Newman and set to music by Elgar. It celebrates a vision of the Last Things revealed to Gerontius just before his death. This is used to create the supportive mood for Florence's dying vision of Tremayne and their reunion in Paradise. This would be seriously debilitating to the play as a whole, causing it to
conclude on a note of maudlin sentimentality. Without
the omitted scene the play was found coming to a close
"with a scene of magnificent irony and almost intolerable
pathos."19

The play was first produced at the Arts Theatre on the
5th of January, 1929. It was received with enthusiasm and
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It gets a more just and considered appraisal in The Times
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selective restraint," governing Mr Berkeley's choice of
action.22

The play stimulated considerable public discussion
about Florence Nightingale, as can be detected from
correspondence about her in The Times. As a matter of
interest, a reader sent in for reproduction a letter of 1854
from Sidney Herbert to Sir James Y Simpson defending
Florence Nightingale from accusations of espionage directed
against her at the time.23 The play made a strong enough
impression to cause Mr Shore Nightingale to write in, to make it known that neither the executors of the will of the late Miss Nightingale nor any member of her family were in any way responsible for the production of The Lady with a Lamp, then being shown in London, nor had they been consulted with regard to it. Berkeley was quick to reply in retaliation:

Your correspondent, Mr Shore Nightingale, is quite correct in saying that the executors of the late Miss Nightingale’s will were not consulted about my play The Lady with a Lamp. But I am unaware of any obligation on a writer to consult the executors of the wills of historical personages before a noble life is reverently shown to the public. May I say that I think his complaint that no member of her family was consulted would be, even if it were grounded in fact, equally illegitimate? Obviously the question whether and how a great Englishwoman shall be represented on stage cannot be left to the caprice of individual relatives. In fact, however, this complaint is without foundation.

From this we can gather that Berkeley did indeed take the trouble to consult a member of the Nightingale family with regard to his play.

Berkeley was concerned to place “reverently” before the public his dramatisation of a great life but, in keeping with Shaw, and the new race of biographers that had arisen, he sought to present no saintly ethereal figure but the very real and formidable human personality behind the myth. In popular Victorian iconography Florence Nightingale is enshrined as a model of feminine virtue, an angel of mercy, the lady with a lamp. The play shatters this soft angelic vision of female gentleness and selflessness, replacing it with the sterner yet more extraordinary image of a woman of steel, and the relentless driving will that lay behind her vast achievements. A study of Berkeley’s sources has never been done before and thus I am devoting considerable attention to this here.

It has been pointed out that "when Lytton Strachey saw
conclude on a note of maudlin sentimentality. Without the omitted scene the play was found coming to a close "with a scene of magnificent irony and almost intolerable pathos." 19

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the production of Berkeley's *The Lady with a Lamp* in 1931 he recognised it as coming straight out of *Eminent Victorians.* There is strong internal evidence though there does not seem to be any external evidence, as far as I have been able to gather in my reading, of Berkeley having been influenced by Strachey. The play does give the distinct impression of coming under the Strachey view. After the Strachey manner it cuts down the popular image of Florence Nightingale, but nevertheless comes through with an image that is no less heroic, and one which most modern readers and audiences would appreciate. The play develops as its central theme Strachey's main point - that a demonic zeal and fury possessed Florence Nightingale:

The Miss Nightingale of fact was not as facile fancy painted her. She worked in another fashion, and towards another end; she moved under the stress of an impetus which finds no place in the popular imagination. A Demon possessed her.

The inexorable force that drove her, the force that created, was also the force that destroyed. Desmond MacCarthy has indicated that an important reason why Strachey disliked most types of ambition was that they "took control of personal relations and destroyed detachment." To deny love as Florence Nightingale had, according to Strachey, was to deny "the most powerful and the profoundest of all the instincts of humanity." Berkeley in *The Lady with a Lamp* dramatises this notion though rather more sentimentally. Florence rejects the suit of the man she loves, Harry Tremayne, in answer to a higher call. Tremayne protests:

Florence, I tell you that your call is a delusion. My call to you is the voice of Nature. The call that is as old as Creation. The call that sounds in the forests and the prairies; among the mountains and on the plains. That is older than the human race and wider than the human race ... The forefather of humanity and its ultimate end. The beginning and the purpose of life. The call of Race.

(Act I, Sc. II, p. 221)
In turning her back on love and marriage, Lytton Strachey sees Florence Nightingale as denying her womanhood and suppressing her erotic life. As Michael Holroyd, a biographer of Strachey, points out, his portrait of her is controversial because he "hints at her perverted sexual compulsion which he presents as responsible for her actions." The erotic love she sacrifices finds another expression in her ruthless commitment to work and in the power she exerts, especially over men. Her desire for work could "scarcely be distinguished from mania," Strachey states. He sees her as working herself and other people to death. Men become totally enslaved, their lives spent in her service, but it is chiefly in her relationship with Sidney Herbert that Strachey projects the terrible consuming force of her dominating will and personality:

She took hold of him, taught him, shaped him, absorbed him, dominated him through and through. He did not resist - he did not wish to resist; his natural inclination lay along the same path as hers; only that terrific personality swept him forward at her own fierce pace and with her own relentless stride.

Berkeley takes exactly the same line. At forty-one he describes her in his stage directions as "in the prime of her mental powers." "Seven year's rigid repression of sex" had "clamped her features into an ascetic mask, fixed the lines of her mouth in a hard line, and soured her sense of humour into an acid irony." (Act III, Sc. V, p. 263) She has devoted disciples in men like Dr Sutherland who expend their lives in her service but it is in her relationship with Sidney Herbert that we see the destructiveness of her terrible slave-driving will. Sidney Herbert reveres her for her "amazing vision and capacity" and finds her devotion to her work "magnificent." (Act I, Sc. I, pp. 206-7) He becomes the political instrument through which she works her will. She uses the power and authority he possesses as a successful politician to execute her
purposes. Where Berkeley departs from Strachey and from the facts is in his depiction of Sidney's wife, Elizabeth. She was in reality a warm admirer of Florence Nightingale, but Berkeley introduces a deep antagonism between the two women to bring out their keenly opposed natures. Elizabeth Herbert in the play serves as a foil to Florence Nightingale. She is representative of most social ladies of the time who were content to live drawing-room lives, and if they figured in world affairs at all did so merely as extensions of their husbands' careers. In sharp contrast Florence is an individual in her own right, self-defining and fulfilling. Right from the start Elizabeth Herbert is shown fearful of the hold Florence Nightingale has over her husband and this is seen to grow over the years. The strain imposed on him proves too great, his health breaks and he is forced to resign from office.

In his handling of Sidney Herbert's final illness and last dealings with Florence Nightingale Berkeley again shows every indication of having been influenced by Strachey. Strachey with his penchant for melodrama describes this last meeting by converting two passages from Florence Nightingale's correspondence into a theatrical state of events. Sidney Herbert is shown finally giving up the fight:

...at last his spirit began to sink as well as his body. He could no longer hope; he could no longer desire; it was useless, all useless; it was utterly impossible. He had failed. The dreadful moment came when the truth was forced upon him: he would never be able to reform the War Office. But a yet more dreadful moment lay behind; he must go to Miss Nightingale and tell her that he was a failure, a beaten man.

"Blessed are the merciful!" What strange ironic prescience had led Prince Albert, in the simplicity of his heart, to choose that motto for the Crimean brooch? The words hold a double lesson; and, alas! when she brought herself to realise at length what was indeed the fact and what there was no helping, it was not in mercy that she turned
upon her old friend. "Beaten!" she exclaimed. "Can't you see that you've simply thrown away the game? And with all the winning cards in your hands! And so noble a game! Sidney Herbert beaten! And beaten by Ben Hawes! It is a worse disgrace..." her full rage burst out at last, "...a worse disgrace than the hospitals at Scutari."  

As has been pointed out, there exists no documentary evidence to show that, in a bitter tirade, Miss Nightingale openly taunted Sidney Herbert with having been beaten by Ben Hawes. But in a letter to Sir John McNeill she wrote, "What strikes me in this great defeat, more painfully even than the loss to the Army is the triumph of the bureaucracy over the leaders - the political aristocracy who at least advocate higher principles. A Sidney Herbert beaten by a Ben Hawes is a greater humiliation really (as a matter of principle) than the disaster of Scutari." Though there is no record of her saying this directly to Sidney Herbert, in a letter to Harriet Martineau, she does recall a meeting when they had spoken of Cavour whose death Sidney deeply mourned. "And I, too, was hard upon him," she writes. "I told him that Cavour's death was a blow to European liberty, but that a greater blow was that Sidney Herbert should be beaten on his own ground by a bureaucracy. I told him that no man in my day had thrown away so noble a game with all the winning cards in his hands. And his angelic temper with me, at the same time that he felt what I said was true, I shall never forget. I wish people to know that what was done was done by a man struggling with death." The way in which these sentiments are expressed in the letters moderates them somewhat. In Strachey's account she is severely castigating, the words flung out in bitter rage and contempt.

The play follows the Strachey version in that Miss Nightingale gives vent to her fury in a similar confrontation but between Elizabeth Herbert and Florence Nightingale:
Elizabeth: Florence. It's time someone told you the truth. You've a lust for power! If things don't go your way you make a grievance of it... Dear - it isn't reasonable! Let Sidney get his health back, and perhaps later on he'll be able to pick up the threads again.

Florence: (fiercely) Pick up the threads! How can he ever recover his prestige after running away, sick, from his permanent officials? What a state of affairs! What a commentary on democratic Government! The elected tribune of the people driven to a rest cure by the bureaucracy he's elected to control. Sidney Herbert beaten by Ben Hawes! It's a worse disgrace than the hospitals at Scutari... Can't you see how he's letting everyone down, Elizabeth? Throwing away the game with all the winning cards in his hand.

(Act III, Sc. V, p. 269)

In his dramatisation of this scene Berkeley has obviously been influenced by Strachey's account. Strachey is an historian who thinks in dramatic terms. He has a strong visual imagination. This is clearly seen in the way he concludes his account. Bent on driving home the irony of Miss Nightingale's final situation, he provides us with a glimpse of her in her last years:

The thin angular woman, with her haughty eye and her acrid mouth, had vanished; and in her place was the rounded bulky form of a fat old lady, smiling all day long. Then something else became visible. The brain which had been steeled at Scutari was indeed, literally, growing soft. Senility - an ever more and more amiable senility - descended. Towards the end, consciousness itself grew lost in a roseate haze, and melted into nothingness. It was just then, three years before her death, when she was eighty-seven years old (1907), that those in authority bethought them that the opportune moment had come for bestowing a public honour on Florence Nightingale. She was offered the Order of Merit... by Royal command, the
Order of Merit was brought to South Street, and there was a little ceremony of presentation. Sir Douglas Dawson, after a short speech, stepped forward, and handed the insignia of the Order to Miss Nightingale. Propped up by pillows she dimly recognised that some compliment was being paid her. "Too kind — too kind," she murmured; and she was not ironical.

Berkeley, in conclusion, projects the same vision of Florence Nightingale as an "apple-cheeked, benign old woman of eighty-seven," the acute mind and acerbic wit dwindled into a vague and amiable sentimentalism. He ends the play with the same scene of the investiture and on the very same note. As the nurses begin to wheel Florence away after the brief ceremony with its encomiums, she says brightly, "They were so kind. So very kind. I don't know what they were all talking about... We must ask Dr Sutherland."

(Act III, Sc. VIII, p. 298)

From the close parallels between the two versions it is patent that Strachey's dramatic portrait of Florence Nightingale in *Eminent Victorians* was the chief source of inspiration behind Berkeley's play. For his closely wrought biography Strachey selected various aspects of Florence Nightingale's life and character that appealed to his imagination. In the preface he states that he "sought to examine and elucidate certain fragments of the truth which took (his) fancy and lay to (his) hand." He is hyperbolic in his handling of his theme which is set out in dramatic terms. I have noted his practice of collating documentary evidence and presenting it as a theatrical event — something that the reader can 'hear' and 'see.' It is interesting indeed to find a history play coming into the theatre through a historian who approaches history in almost theatrical terms.

But, though the dominant view presented is Strachey's, *Eminent Victorians* is not Berkeley's only source, because he does not make the errors Strachey makes, trivial though they may appear to be. For example Strachey writes of Florence as a young girl putting her own pet dog's paw in splints
when it was actually a shepherd's valuable working dog which
she treated by applying ordinary hot-water fomentation.
Then again he describes her in later years, lying in a
"shaded chamber" upstairs in South Street while downstairs
a constant flux of visiting dignitaries could be found come
to beg an audience. But in actual fact the room was not
gloomy but full of light, the walls were painted white; and
visitors came only by appointment and were rarely kept
waiting. Berkeley gets all these details right which
indicates a careful study of the facts. Berkeley most
probably read Sir Edward Cook's official biography of
Florence Nightingale, The Life of Florence Nightingale
(1913), which first traced a path through the enormous
collection of private and official letters left by Miss
Nightingale at her death. It is clear that he has drawn
from correspondence by or about Miss Nightingale at various
points in the play, and it does not seem likely that he had
direct access to these letters, since, as previously
indicated, the executors of Miss Nightingale's will dis­
avowed any responsibility for the production and claimed
they were not consulted. Cook quotes profusely from this
voluminous correspondence and seems the most probable
source.

For example Florence Nightingale's personal appearance
in early womanhood is described in a letter by Mrs Gaskell
to Catherine Winkworth, and Cook quotes the relevant portion:

She is tall; very straight and willowy
in figure; thick and shortish rich brown
hair; very delicate complexion; grey
eyes, which are generally pensive and
drooping, but when they choose can be the
merriest eyes I ever saw; and perfect
teeth, making her smile the sweetest I
ever saw. Put a long piece of soft net,
and tie it round this beautifully shaped
head, so as to form a soft white frame­
work for the full oval of her face...
and dress her up in black silk, high up
to the long, white round throat, and with
a black shawl on, and you may get near an
idea of her perfect grace and lovely
appearance. She is so like a saint. Berkeley seems to have been influenced by this description. In the play, before Florence makes an appearance on the stage, she is discussed by members of her family and friends. Among the remarks is Sidney Herbert's: "She looks like a saint." His wife comments, under her breath, "And dresses like one..." When she appears Berkeley provides the following description of Florence in a stage direction:

Florence Nightingale is now a woman of about twenty-eight, tall, very straight and graceful of figure; with warm brown hair, not a great deal of it; delicate complexion; large grey eyes. She has an oval face not perhaps pretty in the conventional sense, but lit up within by a kind of radiance; well-marked and well-bred features; high forehead partly hidden by the manner of wearing the hair; mobile lips that can relax into childlike merriment or harden into a thin inexorable line; firm, rather pointed chin; fine capable hands.

(Act I, Sc. I, pp. 207-8)

There is a strong similarity between the two descriptions which suggests that Berkeley's must have been partly based on Mrs Gaskell's.

Then again Berkeley seems to have been influenced by Cook's account of a serious emotional attachment in the life of Florence Nightingale. It called for a difficult and searching choice:

She was asked in marriage by one who continued for some years to press his suit. It was a proposal which seemed to those about her to promise every happiness. The match would by all have been deemed suitable, and by many might have been called brilliant. And Florence herself was strongly drawn to her admirer... Yet when the proposal first came, she refused it; and when it was renewed, she persisted. Then, it may be said, she cannot have been "in love" with him. And in one sense that is, I suppose, quite true; for love, as the poets tell us, does not reason, and Florence Nightingale reasoned deeply over her case. But it is
certain that she felt at least as much affection as suffices to make half the marriages in the world. She turned away from a path to which she was strongly drawn in order to pursue her Ideal... It was not a sacrifice which cost her a little. If, as some may hold, she was not in love, yet she confessed to herself many of a lover's pangs, and there were moments when, as she met her admirer again, or as she thought of him, she was half inclined to repent of her choice of a single life.42

Berkeley places great emphasis on this incident in Florence's life. He gives the suitor (whose name Cook does not mention) the fictitious name of Henry Tremayne and makes him rich and successful. Cecil Woodham-Smith, a later biographer, identifies the man as Richard Monckton Milnes who waited for Florence for nine years before his engagement to someone else.43 Berkeley makes more of this relationship and romanticises the whole episode. He has Henry Tremayne, after years of rejection, join the army, to end up wounded and dying in his lover's arms. In his last moments he is comforted by the knowledge that she loves him, and will love him and long for him "to the end of her wretched life." (Act II, Sc. IV, p. 259)

The influence of the Romantic tradition can be seen in that Berkeley is unable to resist building his play around a love story. But there is also the concern to be accurate, for there is a basis for his vision in historical fact. Berkeley thus is not merely fanciful in his approach to history. He shows a serious regard for historical truth. In the first place he tries to be accurate through a careful study of the facts. Then we can see both the influence of the Romantic tradition and that of Shaw and Strachey, since the play registers at moments the romantic popular image even while it attempts to cut it down and present us with a vision of the heroic in credible human terms. The influence of Shaw can be seen again in the attempt to go beyond personal emotions to the social issues involved and
in the pervading modernism of thought and idiom.

When the play opens Florence is twenty-eight, highly impatient of the ease and indolence of the life of the gentry class into which she is born. This is registered immediately in the setting - the handsome exterior and lavish surroundings of Embley Park, the principle country-house of Mr William Nightingale. A rather distinguished group is gathered on the terrace and a discussion of Carlyle's book, *Past and Present*, is taking place which points to a questioning of this way of life. *Past and Present*, published in April 1843, made an immense impact in its time and aroused both great praise and great anger. It is a social tract written in response to the critical conditions of English society. Carlyle contrasts the past with his own Victorian present and many of the values and attitudes of his time are severely criticised. The book was extremely influential and within a year received a review by Emerson and an extensive interpretation in German by Friedrich Engels. Florence Nightingale was deeply impressed by the book, especially by its ideas on work. In a letter to Julia Smith, quoted in Cook, she writes in June 1843:

Carlyle's new *Past and Present*, a beautiful book. There are bits about "Work," which how I should like to read with you! "Blessed is he who has found his work: let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose: he has found it and will follow it...." 44

The book continued to influence people with a social conscience and Berkeley himself must have been influenced by it because, as previously pointed out, he held the view that capital and labour should combine; and this is one of the views of Carlyle's discussed in the play. Sidney Herbert, lately Secretary at War in Sir Robert Peel's administration, now a private member of Parliament, is defending Carlyle's ideas:

Herbert : But that isn't what he means at all, Mrs Nightingale. He thinks everyone ought to do something useful. He
Mrs. N.: We've all got souls, Mr Herbert, at least I hope so.

Palmerston: Nobody grudges Labour a soul. The danger is, if you'll forgive the pleasantry, that it may develop a heel - and learn to use it.

Herbert: Of course. That's exactly Mr Carlyle's point. Unemployment has been so bad; and yet the country is so rich. He seems to think that they may combine.... In fact he urges them to combine.

Nightingale: And then rob the rich, and live in idleness themselves! What a delightful programme! And when the money's gone, what then?... May I ask how they'd any of them get any work at all, if it wasn't for the rich?

Mrs. N.: This doesn't sound at all a sensible or practical book to me. How did it come into the house, William?

Nightingale: I think it belongs to Florence.


Through the conversation we get a sense of the new ideas that are infiltrating into society with a view to upsetting the established order. It is a foreshadowing of things to come in time, of which Florence Nightingale is to be a pioneer, especially in the marking out of new spheres of influence for women. But we are made to see exactly what she is up against - a whole social institution. The radical nature of the break she is to make is all the more startling because of the stigma attached to the nursing profession. In society's eyes she is intent on a degrading course, "to see things no lady ought to see," to mix with "the coarsest, commonest people." (Act I, Sc. I, p. 206) Pitted against this is Florence's sense of a special destiny. Her parents are blind to her extraordinary abilities. This is in contrast to the deep impression she makes on people outside the family who regard her with almost religious deference. It is as if the discernment of potential greatness
requires a detachment that the closest relationships do not always permit. Mr and Mrs Nightingale, at any rate, feel "like a pair of ducks who've hatched a wild swan."

(Act II, Sc. III, p. 229) This expression is used in a letter by Mrs Gaskell written when on a visit to the Nightingales in August 1854. She was quite struck by Florence's will and character:

Is it not like St Elizabeth of Hungary? The efforts of her family to interest her in other occupations by allowing her to travel, etc. - but the clinging to one object! She must be a creature of another race, so high and angelic, doing things by impulse or some divine inspiration. But she seems almost too holy to be talked about as a mere wonder. Mrs Nightingale says with tears in her eyes (alluding to Anderson's Fairy Tales), that they are ducks, and have hatched a wild swan.45

This passage is quoted in Cook and Berkeley most probably came across it there. He keeps close to history in his depiction of the struggle Florence has to break free of the restraints imposed by her family.

Prevented from following the dictates of her own spirit, she is tormented within, especially by the incomprehension of those she loves. Berkeley tries to bring out her deep unrest at being conscious of needs that will not find satisfaction in the socially acceptable institution of marriage. But his style fails him here for it is contrived in a very artificial manner. Alone on the terrace by moonlight Florence speaks her inner thoughts to the fountain in the foreground:

Fountain! Why are we given conflicting natures? Why can't we all be simple and straightforward like you? Spirited through a silver jet and falling in beautiful uniform curves....How pleased your mother must be!...O God! if other people are to think for us and make up our minds why were we given brains of our own?...Fountain, what am I to do with my life? Is it all immaterial? Does it make no difference whether I try to achieve something for the
world or give up the struggle and conform, and settle down and become like all other women?...You say, what do I want? Should I come to you if I knew?...You say it is sweet to be loved and sought in marriage...You say, I could bring my babies here to play and listen to your music. But is the love of men and women to be compared with the service of God? You say that a lover's kiss is the centre-lock of the universe, the very heart of God Himself....Fountain, you have been dallying with the Night. You have been listening to the tales of lovers' joys and you are bewitched....

(Act I, Sc. II, p. 217)

Once again we see that Berkeley is quite unable to convey the subconscious. His device of the fountain to help convey inner thoughts and emotions is an egregious blunder, because it all comes through as quite false and mawkishly sentimental. It gets worse because Henry Tremayne appears on the scene and they communicate through the pretended medium of the fountain:

**Tremayne:** Fountain, there is a woman.... And she is so noble and her thoughts are so lofty that I am almost afraid to approach her....

**Florence:** The Fountain says: What do you know of her nature?

**Tremayne:** Fountain, it shines in her eyes; it glows upon her face; it proclaims itself in every inflexion of her voice.

**Tremayne:** You do care a little?

**Florence:** You know I do... Henry.

**Tremayne:** I didn't. I hoped....Oh, my dear, I'm so glad. (He takes her hands) You'll marry me, my dear? (She is silent) You'll marry me? I'll see your father tonight....He can't object - I'm disgracefully rich, you know.

**Florence:** (moving away) Fountain, will men never understand that women can want something more than passion and luxury? That they want the same freedom as men to direct their own lives and use their own brains?
That however much they may desire a mate they can be conscious of higher purposes than mating?

(Act I, Sc. II, pp. 218-20)

The scene ends with Florence rising transfigured to a vision of "multitudes of people struggling with Death." She sees her place in the midst of them and offers the sacrifice of their love in a prayer while Tremayne, dropping to his knees beside her, says "Amen" and bends over her hand as to a saint. The scene failed miserably in production. As one reviewer comments, the dialogue, "aiming at fanciful symbolism, comes perilously near to baby-talk. And after that, while her lover, kneeling says Amen - he does really say 'Amen' - to her refusal of him, Miss Nightingale hears her 'call' and sees visions of Crimean hospitals, until you want to shut eyes and ears and pray for the curtain."^46

Though Berkeley allows the infiltration of maudlin romanticism, the sentiments Florence expresses with regard to marriage have a basis in historical fact. Cook tells us that, in autobiographical notes which Florence Nightingale preserved in relation to this episode, she thus explained her refusal to marry:

I have an intellectual nature which requires satisfaction, and that would find it in him. I have a passiona1 nature which requires satisfaction, and that would find it in him. I have a moral, an active nature which requires satisfaction, and that would not find it in his life. I can hardly find satisfaction for all of my natures. Sometimes I think that I will satisfy my passiona1 nature at all events, because that will at least secure me from the evil of dreaming. But would it? I could be satisfied to spend a life with him combining our different powers in some great object. I could not satisfy this nature by spending a life with him in making society and arranging domestic things....To be nailed to a continuation and exaggeration of my present life, without hope of another, would be intolerable to me. Voluntarily to put it out of my power ever to be able to seize the chance of forming for myself a true and rich life would seem to me like suicide.47
Berkeley reveals his sympathy for the feminine viewpoint in emphasising this need in a woman for a rich fulfilled existence and a greater purpose in life than just marriage. He attempts to present a vision of a woman with a supreme vocation whose exceptional ideal nature demands an epic life.

Her appointed time comes when she is asked to lead a corps of nurses to the base hospitals in Crimea. The scene at the military hospital at Scutari is very effective. It testifies not to the ministering angel of mercy but to the woman of iron will and determination. She performs no less than a miracle, bringing sanity and order out of chaos. Berkeley demonstrates how only a person of stupendous force of character could have driven a way through the quagmire of confusion and filth, of gross ineptitude and mismanagement. With a woman's common sense she cuts through the paralyzing red tape which is preventing efficiency and "putting a premium on stupidity and death." Once again we see the male imprisoned by regulations because of a slavish bondage to rules. To Bamford, the purveyor to the forces at Scutari, "The Army is a matter of strict unquestioning obedience." To Florence "the Army is only a matter of common sense." (Act II, Sc. IV, p. 246) A person of her stature does not allow regulations to become a tyranny, but makes them serve her and the work for which they were made. She is seen rising to the exigencies of a situation, remorseless in her dealing with the entrenched stupidity of petty officials:

**Cumming**: (the Army Medical Inspector) Miss Nightingale has no business to be issuing all these things... I know you mean well, Miss Nightingale, but this is the purveyor's province - not yours.

**Florence**: So you think it's better for the wounded to die in accordance with regulations than be kept alive by proper attention.
Cumming: (impatiently interrupting) No, no -
Florence: ...Or perhaps you think: according to regulation they oughtn't to die. Therefore they can't be dead.
Cumming: (savagely) No, I don't think anything of the sort. That's the whole vice of introducing women into the public service. They drag in a long string of irrelevant repartees whenever you try to get them to understand how the system works. What I must beg you to understand -
Florence: I'm not going to argue anymore. My job which I was sent out here to do is to care for the sick and wounded. That doesn't only mean smoothing their pillows and giving them medicine. It means ensuring that there is a proper supply of necessaries and comforts. I'm going to see that job done efficiently or know the reason why....(Turning on Bamford) Have those blankets been delivered, Mr Bamford?
Bamford: (trying to be self-confident) No, madam.
Florence: Then in fifteen minutes I send this telegram to Lord Palmerston. And I return to England; and I publish my experiences out here. And if one single head of a department remains in his post it won't be my fault.

(Act II, Sc. IV, pp. 251-2)

We see the high power of an administrative mind which in time of emergency is capable of resource, initiative, decision. She has the courage of her own convictions. Unintimidated in a field of male predominance, she proves herself a force to be reckoned with.

Throughout the scene we are presented with a demonstration of 'the Nightingale power' at work and we see in action, the administrative genius, the stern disciplinarian, the uncompromising professional. This scene was most effective in the theatre. The Times reviewer comments, "Florence Nightingale at work is a living woman, charged
with vital affairs, keen, unswerving, unsparing of others and herself." One critic wonders if it could be bettered. "On the stage move nurses and doctors, officials whose air of self-importance masks their incompetence, and orderlies bringing in the wounded, while over all and through it all the spectator sees the dominating figure of the Lady-in-Chief, admonishing, insisting and controlling."

Only at the end the picture widens to encompass the legendary image of the 'lady with a lamp.' In spite of extreme exhaustion she "can't disappoint the men" and goes to the door to watch the last batch of the wounded being brought in from the boats. A man has been asking for her and it is Harry Tremayne, fatally wounded in the war, but holding out for a last moment with her. He has been through the hell of human misery and it is as if the sacrifice of their love is justified, when he tells her to do something to improve those boats: "Wounded men oughtn't to suffer that agony." He dies and Sutherland, the government sanitary commissioner, comes in to find her stricken beside her dead lover. He is moved to say, "It's the lot of the sons of women. You're too grand a woman yourself tae let this prey on you." But it is the call of duty that draws her back into the motions of living. Corporal Jones hurries in with a clipped appeal for help: "Miss Nightingale. Immediate amputation. Dr Ames says will you come and help him?" There is only a small pause before she replies, "I'll come." (Act II, Sc. IV, p. 262) It is her work and her belief in its transcendent worth that enables her to cope. Berkeley gets in the romantic view of Florence Nightingale in this scene and it works. It does not come across as unrealistic and sentimental unlike the fountain scene which falls through under the strain. It succeeded in production. The reviewer in The Times states that "the scene of the soldier's death is written with an admirable discretion and is beautifully performed by Mr
Banks. The reviewer in The Daily Telegraph puts it among the best in the play. Berkeley follows the Strachey style - the sceptical cutting down to size of the popular vision, through what is drawn from historical sources, while yet including the legendary image of 'the lady with a lamp.'

The third act opens on another radically different phase in Florence's life. Nearly seven years have passed since her embarkation for the Crimean War. The stage instructions are detailed and explicit. They have been "years of unceasing labour, hardening years." "Florence at forty-one, in the prime of her mental powers, bears little resemblance to the eager girl of the fountain or the anguished woman who saw her lover die before her. Habitual disregard of her own ailments has bred in her an impatient contempt for the illnesses of others - if those illnesses happen to interfere with 'the work.'" (Act III, Sc. V, p. 263) We have seen the constructive force of a will that can move mountains. Now we are shown the obverse side of the coin. The power to create is also the power to destroy. This is revealed in her merciless driving of those who serve her to the limits of their endurance and beyond. When Elizabeth Herbert informs her that Sidney Herbert has resigned his post at the War Office because doctors have declared him a very sick man, her rage is terrible. She can only see five years of effort for the reform of the War Office and the preservation of her life's work destroyed. She exclaims bitterly, "One more effort, only one was needed for complete victory. He could have rested then. And you talk to me of doctor's orders. I've been under doctor's orders for seven years. I've been given up, dead and buried, by doctor's orders. I've been told - even by old Sutherland here - that the work would kill me. But I've stayed at my post. I'm here working - morning, noon, and night. And I'm a woman. And you tell me the leader we've been proud to serve is giving up within
Florence is unsparing in her fury. Even when Elizabeth tells her that the work is killing Sidney, she is implacable. "Suppose it did kill him - or me - or you - or any of us," she replies, "What does that matter compared to the results?" There is undoubtedly something chilling in that she is impossible to reach even on very personal grounds. It is as if she functions on a different plane - noble but also remote. Her very selflessness makes her almost inhuman. When Sidney Herbert comes to face her with his failure it is clearly one of the saddest, most difficult moments of his life. He is plainly very ill but Florence is too blind to see it. When he predicts that he will be "dead in a month," she is gentle but disbelieving: "Is that doctor's orders too? Cheer up, Sidney. They've said the same to me for years. But I manage to jog along." She cannot contain her disappointment: "I've never known a bitterer moment than this in my life. When poor Henry was killed, I thought at least there was my work to live for. Now my work is killed too ... I suppose there is some purpose in being born!" He leaves, a broken man, and she is left to contemplate the wreckage of five years. Our sympathies are extremely mixed. Dr Sutherland enters and brings some balance into the situation. He hears that Sidney Herbert has given up and they are "to begin all over again." He takes it as a minor setback and not a major catastrophe. The scene ends with his comment: "Dearie, dearie me, is that no'provoking? Ah weel - it's a way life has!..." (Act III, Sc. V, p. 273) Although his response is something of a cliche the touch of down-to-earth realism is welcome.

The same note is struck in the next scene, when Florence learns during an interview with Lord Palmerston that she has been unjust to Sidney Herbert, and is more than a little
responsible for his breakdown in health, which dates from the perennial battles with Gladstone in the Cabinet fighting for her hospitals. She has come to realise more and more what they have lost in Sidney Herbert and is still hopeful that he might get back into the War Office in time to complete their work because "it matters so enormously to the future." Palmerston posits the opposing point of view:

**Palmerston:** You know, Miss Florence, I often ask myself whether our actions matter nearly as much to posterity as it flatters us to believe they do.

**Florence:** Laissez-faire! Your new Liberal creed. Hugger-mugger; squalor; confusion; chaos ....Leave it to stew and the people to stew in it, because we're too lazy to work out new systems. And invent neat phrases to explain it away!

**Palmerston:** My dear, I'm much too old to be evangelised. I'm willing to help in what you call your work because I happen to like you. But I'm not willing to abdicate my common sense and knowledge of human beings. Officials will always be stupid. The War Office will always mismanage wars and the country will win them in spite of it. If you do root out Sir Benjamin Hawes, you'll only root in someone else. You're not fighting corruption and abuse, that would be a different thing. You're fighting human nature.

**Florence:** I don't believe that. There's such a thing as working for the sake of the work.

(Act III, Sc. VI, pp. 278-9)

We see here the pragmatist versus the idealist. For Florence the work embodies an absolute value in itself, but Palmerston perceives that the abstract has to contend with the concrete fact of circumstance. The discussion is truncated by the arrival of Elizabeth Herbert, travel-stained and in deep black, with the news that Sidney Herbert is dead. She collapses in tears, but Florence is beyond tears when she is told, "...He spoke of you... in his last
words ... Not me! You ... and your - unfinished work...."

Ironically Florence, who was always Sidney's impetus and inspiration, now casts him in the rôle of teacher and guide. The scene ends with her saying softly, "He was our leader and our dear Master - And now that we know the greatness of our loss ... we shall never see him again..." (Act III, Sc. VI, p. 180) A certain degree of self-delusion lies in her romanticising of him and setting him up as the inspiration behind their cause. In a way it enables her to justify and sanctify 'the work,' allowing her to carry on with unabated zeal. There is a basis for this view in the records. Florence's letter to Harriet Martineau, already partly quoted, reveals deep grief at Sidney Herbert's death mixed with some remorse. "Happily for her peace of mind," Cook comments, "there came to her an almost immediate call to be up and doing in the service of her "dear master," as in her letters of this time she constantly named Sidney Herbert."  

Act IV opens on a room in No. 10, South Street, Park Lane, Florence's home and headquarters for the continuation of her work. It is the summer of 1886, twenty-five years to the day have passed since the death of Sidney Herbert, but the tireless energy of Florence Nightingale is still unexhausted. The stage directions which fill in the necessary background to her present position indicate the play was written to be read as well as performed: "From her sofa in South Street she directed the nursing arrangements for the Egyptian Expedition in the previous year. She has indoctrinated successive Viceroys of India with her views of sanitary reform and seen her ideas accepted and translated into law. A myriad of voluntary organizations have pursued and consolidated her hospital policy ... Her life's work has prospered. It may be said to be complete. All that remains now is to safeguard it from destruction..." (Act IV, Sc. VII, p. 281) This scene is not very theatrical, especially for the actress who plays Florence Nightingale. She is tucked up on a sofa and, while being
so physically restricted, has to give the impression of being still the indefatigable worker though somewhat milder and gentler. Dr Sutherland's entrance brings to mind another life expended in her service. "He is over eighty, worn out in the service of Miss Nightingale's demon of efficiency." But there is mutual regard and affection in the humour and geniality of their exchange:

Sutherland: Will I come in?
Florence: If you're not afraid to see an untidy old woman in bed.
Sutherland: Not up today? What ails ye?
Florence: Can't waste what little nervous energy I still possess on the meaningless fatigue of dressing up.
Sutherland: Little nervous energy. Hoots! I'd dae fine - on one quarter of yours. It's physical strength ye lack. Will ye never lairn tae gie yourself a chance? It's an everlasting wonder tae me what way you're still alive!
Florence: Croak! Croak! Croak! Why didn't you live in ancient Athens?
Sutherland: Tae sing in the frog chorus of Aristophanes? Aye. It wouldnae hae been anyway uncongenial.

(Act IV, Sc. VII, p. 283)

In spite of the tremendous demands Florence makes, she commands amazing devotion, for men think nothing of wearing themselves out in her service. When Sutherland tells her he is resigning his post in government, she grumbles that the accursed thing about working with people is that "they make themselves indispensable and then they desert you. Or else they die." Sutherland gently chides, "Mebbe that they must do the former in order to avoid the latter. An' me work is no longer what it used tae be .... Lassie, lassie, I'm gey an' vexed tae be leavin' ye. Hae I no' devoted all my leisure and all my dear wife's leisure tae be helpin' you .... But in this world the one thing certain is that the hour o'pairtin' will strike at last. An' the hour o' John Sutherland, M.D., has struck!" But he will
still come at six or at midnight or at any time that suits the convenience of his dearest friend in the world, and he will go on till his poor old head drops off if it will in any way please her. (Act IV, Sc. VII, pp. 285-6) All-consuming though it may be, there is obviously something irresistible about the force of a great personality in pursuit of a sublime vision. It might drain and even destroy but it also heightens and enriches. Thus no easy moral judgement can be made. A powerful spirit sweeps all before it in service of a high ideal, but it seems as if the sheer intensity of its commitment enables it to transcend the ordinary laws governing human behaviour.

But, naturally enough, those who see the inexorable demands made of those they love are hostile. For the first time since Sidney Herbert's death, twenty-five years before, Elizabeth Herbert comes to see Florence. She is still bitter. The difference between the two women is as pronounced as ever. In all these years, while Florence has mellowed, Elizabeth has hardened. She is now a Roman Catholic convert and there is a touch of religious fanaticism about her. The effect of their contrasting natures is brought out. While Elizabeth has tried to "bury the past completely," she does not "want to remember," Florence does not "want to forget." When Florence asks Elizabeth if she is gladdened to hear that Sidney's work has been accomplished at last, the reply is harsh:

Frankly, not in the least....I did what I could when Sidney was alive to help him. I did it because I loved him - not because I loved what he was doing. If he'd been a farmer I should have ploughed the land beside him with the same delight and pride.... But after his death I would never have gone near the farm again. I should have hated the place. Especially if it had killed him.

(Act IV, Sc. VII, p. 286)

The two are still diametrically opposed. Where Elizabeth's world is one human being, Florence's is humanity. For Elizabeth the work merely figures in relation to Sidney. Florence divorces the individual from the work. She has
to find transcendent merit in the work itself. She requires a goal removed from self, that brings with it a consciousness of life beyond self. That alone invests her existence with meaning. Elizabeth seeks meaning in religion. Florence's religion is inseparable from her work. In it she finds her faith and her salvation. But Elizabeth sees Florence's passionate commitment to her work as tantamount to an obsession, as revealed in the following exchange:

Florence: Wouldn't it have been easier for you — not to forget, but to remember happily, if you'd carried on his work with us?
Elizabeth: Work is your panacea for everything.
Florence: And yours is meditation. But meditation stands still. Work takes you on, exulting in the final triumph of the dead. And when that has been reached you can sing, as I do, the Nunc dimitis....
Elizabeth: Yes. Don't forget, though, that the Lord has a way of choosing His own time for letting His servants depart in peace!
Florence: ...You mean one might live on and on — unable to work and unable to die.... That might be my punishment.
Elizabeth: Yes Florence.... it might. Or rather your...purgatory. Which we must all endure....

(Act IV, Sc. VI, p. 287)

That Florence's nature is heroic is undeniable. From the first she is set apart for a special destiny. But through the figure of Elizabeth, Berkeley brings some kind of a dialectic into the play. There is no evidence of such conflict between the two women in the historical records Berkeley had access to. On the contrary they appear to have been warm and intimate friends. In making Elizabeth Herbert an antagonist for the sake of contrast, Berkeley introduces dramatic life and tension into the play. At its first production, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies as Lady Herbert was "a perfect foil to Edith Evans." One reviewer even thought that her study of the part, in its
subtlety, overshadowed "any other performance of the evening." 55

In the last scene we are presented with a glimpse of Florence Nightingale in her old age, helpless and bordering on senility. Yet she is not reduced in stature. She is to receive the Order of Merit for her vast achievements and when the apple-cheeked, benign old lady of eighty-seven is wheeled in to take her place at the investiture, the room becomes the "audience-chamber of a queen." Great tributes are paid to her. "Florence Nightingale's services to humanity," declares the Secretary of State, "are such as no one has yet been able to assess or measure. By her un resting diligence she has stirred up a spirit of compassion with suffering that, please God, will never be allowed to die...." "She is an international possession," says the President of the American Red Cross. "She is of Great Britain; but she does not belong to Great Britain. She belongs to the world: and the world is very proud of her saintly daughter...." (Act IV, Sc. VIII, pp. 294-5) Florence, though conscious of some honour being bestowed, is not completely aware of what is going on. She has to be helped with her signature. As people file up to salute her, Elizabeth Herbert comes up in turn. She is still in full possession of her faculties. She is moved to kiss the hand of her great contemporary and would have them forgive each other, but Florence is uncomprehending. The nurse attends to her as one would a child. The play ends with Florence saying brightly as she is wheeled out: "They were so kind. So very kind. I don't know what they were talking about....We must ask Dr Sutherland." (Act IV, Sc. VIII, p. 298) There is a touch of extreme irony and poignancy here, as we see the dominating mind and personality reduced to such puerility and childlike dependency. And yet, strangely enough, this in no way takes away from the stature of a figure who cannot be seen apart from her work. The lady is a legend in her own lifetime.
Both the Romantic and the Shavian traditions, the old and new ways of apprehending history, can be seen coming together in *The Lady with a Lamp*. There is clear evidence of an attempt to be seriously historical and base the play on documented fact, to focus on contemporary ideas and concerns, and to present us with a heroine who is first and foremost a vital human being. But, even while trying to be modern, the play has a soft romantic angle and sentimental moments which reveal the continuing influence of the Romantic school.

We turn now to a self-declared Romantic who strove to bring back "beauty of emotion and beauty of language" into the theatre. Clifford Bax never quite accomplished what was expected of him and what he expected of himself as a writer, despite his prolific output on a wide range of subjects. Among his numerous works are several volumes of discursive autobiography and reminiscence. They include *Inland Far* (1925), *Evenings in Albany* (1925), *Ideas and People* (1936), and *Some I Knew Well* (1951). He also wrote a book of short stories, *Many a Green Isle* (1927), a novel, *Time with a Gift of Tears* (1943) and published several volumes of verse. Just to provide some idea of his versatility, his range extended from 'a meditation on the future of religion and sexual morality'—That *Immortal Sea* (1933), a biography of a well-known cricketer—*W G Grace* (1952), and a contribution to the *Highways and Byways* series on Essex (1939). He also wrote a number of biographies, but it was in the field of drama that he was most well known.

His early plays were in verse and his first play to be produced in the commercial theatre was a comedy, *The Poetasters of Ispahan*, in 1912. He adapted John Gay's ballad-opera, *Polly*, four comedies by Goldoni, A N Tolstoy's *Rasputin* and Capek's *The Insect Play*. He wrote a few ballad operas and a great many full-length plays. He turned increasingly to historical subjects and moved from verse as a dramatic medium to prose. His style and treat-
ment render his plays more conducive to being read than performed. A case in point is Socrates where Bax has attempted to abstract drama from the Socratic dialogues. The play was given only a couple of performances in London by the Stage Society in 1930, and Sir Lewis Casson gave a memorable portrayal of the great philosopher. It is Bax's most serious and substantial offering, but it is almost totally devoid of visual action. The life of the drama resides too heavily in ideas discussed. His other plays on historical subjects are more light and romantic. These include The Venetian (1931), The Immortal Lady (1931), The House of Borgia (1935), The King and Mistress Shore (1936), and Golden Eagle (1946). He also collaborated with H F Rubinstein on a play called Shakespeare in 1921. The play which was the most successful and theatrically effective was The Rose without a Thorn, celebrating Katheryn Howard. I have therefore singled it out for close consideration because it reveals something about the nature of popular response and expectation in the period.

Clifford Bax had a cultivated literary turn of mind and a definite leaning towards the mystical. He set himself the highest literary and dramatic aspirations which he fell far short of achieving. He was born in 1886 into a family of comfortable means and moved in intellectual circles all his life. His elder brother was the composer, Sir Arnold Bax. Clifford Bax himself showed an interest first in art. He left Cambridge to study art at the Slade School and at Heatherly. He lived abroad for some time, chiefly in Germany and Italy, and eventually abandoned painting for drama. Bax was a man of diverse interests which pertained to rather recondite areas of knowledge. He was drawn to anything to do with occultism and spiritualism. He showed interest at different times in magic, palmistry, astrology, yoga, and was a lover of antiquity. Travelling widely to places as far east as China and Japan, he was intrigued by oriental philosophies.
While most young men of the period were avid disciples of Shaw and Fabianism, Bax was taken up with Theosophy and the ideas of men like George Russell and Arnold Bennet. He was drawn to Buddhist and Hindu concepts and his work as a whole reflects a certain eclecticism of thought and interest. In 1947 he wrote a dramatised version of Buddha's life and ideas which was produced by the B.B.C. and subsequently published.  

Bax was very active in the literary and dramatic world of his time. In 1907 he was made chairman of the Theosophical Art Circle, a mystical art movement which aspired to bring a new spiritual impetus to the arts. Much of Bax's energy was expended in the launching of a small quarterly magazine called Orpheus. By it he hoped to "revitalise the arts by attaching them to the deep thought of theosophy" and to "redeem theosophy by giving it aesthetic form." Bax saw this as a very urgent need in his time, for he felt he had been born into a "narrowly rationalistic period" and that the literary world of London had been "doped" by a trivial and materialistic philosophy. But he was not narrow in his concerns and devoted himself to various important causes. After the 1914-18 War he helped found The Phoenix Society which did such valuable work in reviving masterpieces of Elizabethan, Jacobean and Restoration drama. He also started off the quarterly, The Golden Hind, with Austin Spare in 1922. In 1929 he was made chairman of the Incorporated Stage Society which provided, through its Sunday night and Monday matinée performances, almost the only opportunity, at one time, for the production of unconventional modern plays. The society was labouring under a heavy deficit and Bax helped put it back on its feet. He was an active supporter of the Open-Air Theatre when Sydney Carrol opened it in Regent's Park, and a committee member of the British Drama League from its inception.

Besides being an industrious devotee of the arts, Bax was socially active in other spheres as well. The first
World War shocked him deeply. He called it the "most horrible war in the history of man." For most people, he said, it had riven life in two, for they had "known a normal period of youth and the war guillotined it" and afterwards they felt as if they "had been ghosts before 1914." Concerned to prevent the recurrence of war, he committed himself to a public stand on the question of the rehabilitation of Germany and Japan, editing a book of articles on the subject entitled *Never Again!* The only hope for society, Bax felt, was good taste. Taste, he said, would be "the morality of the future." He believed in a privileged class, if it could give back to society "something of value - taste, manners, intellectual energy and political wisdom." He had no time for the socialistic, communistic trends of his day:

I have lived most of my years among the "intellectuals", and have watched them reddening from Fabianism to Soviet-worship, and have also observed them to modify their philosophy from time to time in accordance with the pronouncements of orthodox source. They are now putting their hope in political and economic revolutions, and presumably like H G Wells at one period of his life, trustfully relying upon a "change of heart" to make their levelled society run smoothly.

To his mind, "change of heart" would only come if men were convinced that they survive death. The future of the world, he said, might depend upon the discoveries of psychic research.

The preservation of beauty and culture was for Bax of paramount importance. He felt that the real aim of man was that "life should be beautiful" and judged the spirituality of a man by his response to beauty. Nancy Price, the director who produced *The Rose without a Thorn* so successfully, stresses this aspect of his nature. "He thought beauty, indeed almost worshipped it" and this love of beauty in all forms was joined to a great admiration for beautiful women. Indeed it does seem that he was fascinated by beautiful women. He published a book,
The Beauty of Women, in 1946, which examines the ideals of feminine beauty in different civilisations. Like Berkeley he was also drawn to women figures in history, but women who had caused something of a sensation in their time because they exuded enormous physical charm. He wrote an account of Nell Gwyn, Pretty Witty Nell, in 1937, and biographies of Vittoria Accoramboni, The Life of the White Devil (1940), and Bianca Cappello. Bianca Cappello (1927) was his contribution to a series, called 'Representative Women,' on women of energy and character who had left a mark on their time.

But Bax seemed taken up by notorious women whose fame was more like infamy. In Bianca Cappello he sees a woman who could have been content to live in dullness and obscurity, but seized the chance "of letting her personality come to full flower." She justified her "innate sense of being a remarkable person" and kindled admiration, because of the inflexible will and unquenchable courage which enabled her "to force from life almost everything that she wanted." He makes a distinction between male and female genius, rather narrowly defining the latter as consisting "chiefly of a power not to make this or accomplish that but to live life effectively, to 'take the stage,' and to subdue the will of other persons by unaccountable fascination." His plays revolve around such romantic notions and reveal his fascination with this kind of reckless, exotic figure. Golden Eagle is about Queen Mary of Scotland and she is shown sinning "in the hope of an everlasting love." A collection of his plays entitled Valiant Ladies includes a dramatisation of Bianca Cappello, The Venetian, Winifred Maxwell, Countess of Nithsdale, The Immortal Lady, and Katheryn Howard in The Rose without a Thorn. Of these Katheryn Howard is the least wild and glamorous but she, too, demonstrates this capacity to seize from life whatever it has to offer without regard for social form.

It is therefore not surprising to find that Bax had a
definite sympathy with the feminist movement. In the
envoi to an anthology of poetry by women poets compiled by
Clifford Bax and Meum Stewart, The Distaff Muse (1949), he
writes that the book is intended to be a "salute to the
brains, the sensibility and the fine artistry of women-
poets" and hopes that it "may help in its own measure to
scrape some of the absurd associations that seem still to
cluster like barnacles round the melodious word
'feminine.'" Some of the poems are included because
the writers are advocates of Women's Rights. In the
prefatory note to this anthology Meum Stewart tells us
that Bax was invited to read a paper called 'Feminine
Poetry' over the air, which, however, due to "an emotional
hitch" in the Poetry Department at Broadcasting House, did
not get read. The paper was the origin of the anthology.
His sympathy with the feminist cause therefore must have
been well known. He associated the flourishing of the
arts with feminine influence, suggesting that "perhaps there
is more than chance behind the fact a queen was on the
throne during each of our most brilliant literary phases." Though his attitude can be seen as patronising and
reductive to some extent, it really ties in with his
romantic slant on life.

Bax was a self-styled romantic who felt himself trapped
in a materialistic, rationalistic age. He argued against
the notion that the word 'romantic' implied a falsification
or escape from reality. "The Romantic," he says, "aims at
self-realisation through his feelings, and considers that
he will have wasted the adventure of life if he does not
try to make it yield up the finest emotional experience of
which he is capable; but unlike the sentimentalist he does
not hide from reality or pretend he can get what he wants
without sorrow or stress." For him poetry and romance
were a part of truth and it was wrong to suppose that the
prosaic constituents of life were more real than the poetic.
The Romantic "relishes a world in which a millionaire may
fall desperately in love with a tanner's daughter, or
King Charles with Nell Gwyn, and he hopes that the
Rationalist will never achieve a society of complete equality.\textsuperscript{71}

His feeling of misplacement extended to the theatre where a "natural Romantic" must deride his own instincts because the intelligent theatre-goer "was less excited by the conflict of human emotions, as in 'The Second Mrs Tanqueray,' than by the blueprints of the Socialist Utopia or by the morality of taking rents from bawdy-houses."\textsuperscript{72}

He reacted strongly against the works of Shaw, referring to himself as a 'non-Shavian,'\textsuperscript{73} because Shaw embodied these new trends. Shaw, he says, "proclaimed that romance is so much nonsense, but if we have some realization of 'The Mysterious Universe' we shall know that our very existence is an item in a wildly romantic story."\textsuperscript{74}

"Audiences," he complains, "loved great poetry. And now we have taken to seeking our pleasure in Mr Coward's glib and filleted dialogue, an adroit record of so-called conversation in our time; or to the soulless and fifth-form 'brilliance' of my charming old friend, Mr Bernard Shaw."\textsuperscript{75}

His belief that language had become impoverished in the theatre was his reason for turning to historical subjects:

\begin{quote}
I wanted to bring back some splendour and force of language to our stage; and realised that I could not do so if I were to write Modern Comedy, imitating the slipshod colourless inexpressive English that we all use in daily life. For this reason I turned to the past and wrote costume plays, knowing that an audience might without embarrassment permit historical persons to express themselves with some freedom.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

This is a rather curious motive for turning to history, but he felt that people would still allow him "a modicum of eloquence, of poetry, of passionate expression, if they knew his characters had lived a long time ago."\textsuperscript{77} History obviously offered Bax an escape from the trammels of an everyday setting. It provided a more plausible climate for exotic romance, pictorial splendour, and the kind of 'grand' passion and 'lofty' dialogue he appreciated. It
is no surprise to find that Bax greatly admired the romantic, melodramatic verse plays of Stephen Philips (who has been called 'the rose-and-rapture dramatist') and considered him the greatest poetic dramatist since Elizabethan times.

But, despite Bax's natural leaning towards this type of play with the ringing tone and large effect, he was unable to remain unaffected by the conventional taste for narrow realism. Thus he states rather tentatively, "The figures in a costume play can be a little larger than life: that is to say that, without offending one's sense of reality, they can express themselves a little more richly than figures who are photographed as exactly as possible from the life around us." "The historical dramatist," he says, "stands, in relation to the playwright of modern life, somewhat as a portrait-painter does in relation to a photograph. He gives or tries to give - the essentials of human emotion and experience: not an exact rendering of somebody's actual speech but an impression of what that somebody is feeling." And yet, ironically, he asserts elsewhere that "from history we cannot learn much, for in history we see nothing but the pageant of the material world." There is similarly a contradiction between what he intends and what he achieves. Conscious as Bax was of a spiritual interior life, he was not a good enough playwright to be able to register this. In his plays he fails to convey the inwardness of his characters with any conviction and does little more than present an outward social reality. He wished to give back to the theatre a religious drama, but his plays never attain that deep poetry and high seriousness to which he aspired, and remain rather sentimental and lightweight. He failed to recognise the genius of Shaw and denied his influence, yet he moved from verse as a dramatic medium to prose, and his plays reflect the influence of Shaw in their attempt to sound colloquial and modern.

The emphasis of Bax's plays is very much on the
verbal. Thus many of them like The Venetian, The Immortal Lady and The House of Borgia were not produced until two to five years after they had been written. The Rose without a Thorn lay dormant for three years before Bax gave it at last to a company of amateurs at Bristol where the first Katheryn Howard was Phyllis Slade. It was published a year before it was first produced in 1932, another indication that it was written to be read as well as performed. The play was published by Victor Gollancz in three collections: Valiant Ladies (1931), Famous Plays of 1932 (1932), and Plays of A Half Decade (1933), and an acting edition was published separately by Samuel French in 1933.

Bax had almost lost hope of the play being produced by professionals when he met Nancy Price, actress and director of the People's National Theatre, who read it and believed in it. The People's National Theatre was founded in 1930 by Nancy Price in conjunction with J T Grein. Its aim was an ambitious one: to develop into a "theatre of world-wide repute - a National Theatre subsidised by the public, because it gives them the best plays, acted by the best artists, and yet keeps its prices within the means of all pockets." It launched its first season at the Fortune Theatre in November 1930 with a revival of The Man from Blankley's. Grein withdrew some months later, but Nancy Price as Honorary Director carried on the enterprise at various theatres for eleven seasons until 1950, producing and appearing in many of the plays herself. One of the plays which she produced was The Rose without a Thorn. Originally Sam Livesey was asked to play Henry but subsequently Frank Vosper was engaged. Angela Baddeley played Katheryn Howard. The play was produced on the 10th February 1932 at the Duchess Theatre where it ran for 113 performances. It was such a great success that Nancy Price produced it again the following year at the Duke of York's Theatre where it ran for 128 performances. "Perhaps no play," comments Nancy Price in 1962, "has been honoured by so many repeat visits of royalty." It was
hailed in The Daily Telegraph as "quite the best new play which the People's Theatre has to its credit, and one of the best plays that Clifford Bax has written." The Times reviewer states that "Mr Bax has contrived a brilliant theatrical setting for the tragedy of a man whose too-youthful imagination prompts him to ask too much of life and of a maid whose judgement is too severely tried." Frank Vosper gave an extremely compelling performance as the King. In his book Early Stages (1939), John Gielgud states that Vosper's Henry VIII in The Rose without a Thorn "could hardly have been bettered." Ernest Short, writing in 1942, recalls that the play "was remarkable for a beautiful piece of acting by Frank Vosper, as Henry the Eighth. Vosper died young after some very promising work, including Shakespearean parts at the Old Vic. His Henry was one of the most highly-wrought character studies in the thirties and was comparable with Laughton's remarkable effort in the film - 'The Private Life of Henry VIII.'"

Critics were impressed by the play, especially as historical drama. Allardyce Nicoll, writing in 1932, states that The Rose without a Thorn, "from the point of view of the present-day theatre and audience, is probably Mr Bax's most successful play. Here both the lyrical moments of The Venetian and the philosophically contemplative tendencies of Socrates are avoided, and the author has set himself to develop characters within a pattern, based on historic fact, but shaped by his imagination." It is assuredly, he says, "one of the most important and beautifully constructed historical dramas of our time." J C Trewin, in 1953, in his stock-taking of plays, describes it as a "fastidious play, a rose that seems to bloom perennially." He thinks "that when theatrical recorders do their work in years ahead, the historical dramatist of our time will be Clifford Bax, author of Socrates and The Rose without a Thorn."

What Trewin required of what he calls the "true historical play" or "portrait-play" provides some
indication of the demands of popular taste:

A portrait-play should be neither semi-treatise nor pell-mell fable, neither too factual nor too coloured. We do not want a clutter of incident, comic-strip history, but an interpretation of character, a piece shaped and fired by an author with a fine mind, a feeling for period and playhouse, and - that precious gift - the ability to suggest genius.91

What was essentially looked for was a character study and a play which was carefully shaped and balanced, where all the pieces were designed to fit. The picture could take on varying shades and tones, but there must be no awkward incongruous elements that jarred and destroyed the historical illusion. This figures in direct contrast to the type of history play written by a playwright like Brecht, who reacted against plays which concentrated on providing an interpretation of character, because they conveyed the notion of a basic human character or situation which he rejected. According to his view of history, man is subject to change and he shows man creating and being created by his conditions. He deliberately shatters the illusion of reality and uses history to distance the action and pin it down as relative to a particular time and situation. Though Brecht had been writing almost continuously from 1918 and had produced his important theory of an 'epic form' of theatre in 1931, the English theatre had not fully awoken to his presence; and minor playwrights, like Berkeley, Bax and Daviot, were unable to resist the tremendous pressure exerted by the expectations of audiences for the conventional "portrait-play."

Of the three playwrights dealt with in this chapter, Clifford Bax is the least serious in his treatment of history. He goes to history for the broad outline of plot and character, but takes a light romantic view of the Katheryn Howard story. The entire situation is presented from the angle of the personal relationships involved and Bax avoids going into the politics behind it. A study of Bax's sources has never been done and, although I have not
been able to discover any external evidence for it in my reading, his principal source seems to be the biography by Francis Hackett, *Henry the Eighth*, published in 1929, about the time the play was written. Hackett, an Irish sociologist and novelist, was attracted to historical subjects, but his work is not seriously regarded by historians. Modern historians hardly refer to his account of Henry VIII and historians in his own time did not attach much credence to it either. G Constant, writing in 1934, in his book *The Reformation in England: The English Schism: Henry VIII (1509-1547)*, translated by R E Scantlebury, refers to Hackett in an appendix, stating that Hackett "has taken many quotations from *Letters and Papers* for his *Henry the Eighth*; but a great deal of the book comes from his own imagination and intuitions, as he himself admits. It is more amusing to be read than trustworthy, and trivialities are not always avoided." 92

From the close parallels between the play and Hackett's account it seems evident that Hackett was Bax's main source. Hackett introduces each of his chapters with a quotation and his chapter on Katheryn Howard is preceded by the quote: "The Rose without a Thorn." 93 In the course of the chapter he explains that the phrase was the tribute Henry had inscribed on one of the countless jewels he gave to Katheryn. Hackett is taken up with this image and returns to it continually in his account. It is significant that Bax chooses this phrase for the title of his play and similarly uses it as his central image.

Then again Hackett romanticises Katheryn and provides an extremely sympathetic interpretation of her character. She "was of sweet and abundant nature, of invigorating temper, and of the impulse unusual among the Howards to give herself rather than to acquire. The love of joy was in her...She passed on things Henry gave her - dogs, jewels, odd things to such recipients as Ann of Cleves. Henry watched this exuberance with the internal groan of a man who has become abstemious in these matters. But she even had it in her heart to ameliorate the human havoc that he..."
caused through his vindictiveness. She was sensual in the
grand English pre-puritan sense - 'endowed with feeling."\(^94\)
The play presents us with a similar picture of Katheryn.
She is full of a natural kindness and is characterised as particularly English in beauty. "Oh I love England -
every meadow and river of England," Henry tells her, "and you are like her very symbol - like a rose in the morning."
(Act I, Sc. I, p. 953.)\(^95\) She may be foolish and naïve, but there is a regenerative warmth and spontaneity in her response to life, a determination to enjoy every moment to the full. This is reflected in the Earl of Hertford's defence of her to Henry at the end:

We live, sir, in an age of upheaval. The new ideas from Italy have gone, like wine, to our heads. We no longer look upon life as a series of pitfalls devised by the Devil with a hope that he may prevent us from coming at last to heaven. We look upon it as a challenge to our capacity for delight, and we most honour the man who, like yourself, is able to extract from it the highest measure of joy. What wonder, then, if women have caught something of that new spirit, and if they too are eager not to go through the world as if they were deaf and blind?
(Act III, Sc. I, p. 992)

Katheryn is thus portrayed in the play in very much the same light as in Hackett's account.

Bax elevates the clandestine affair between Katheryn Howard and Thomas Culpeper into high romance. Thomas Culpeper is cast in the rôle of reckless hero who risks his life for a few precious moments with his beloved. Without her "the world's rubbish." (Act II, Sc. I, p. 966)

When the truth of their love is revealed they are both sentenced to death and they face their ends heroically in the knowledge of their undying love for each other. Here again Bax can be seen to be following Hackett who describes Katheryn's courageous acceptance of her fate in the following terms:

She expected to be put to death. She said she deserved it. She only asked that 'the execution should be secret and not under the eyes of the world.' This acceptance of her
fate seemed to arise from her wealth of feeling. She did not excuse her own insincerity. She had given Culpeper tokens of her love: she had wanted to give him herself: and, still living in her young imagination, she felt in a sense she was giving him her life... A large number of people had gathered at the scaffold. She spoke a few breathless words. A Spaniard heard them and wrote them. 'Brothers, by the journey upon which I am bound, I have not wronged the King. But it is true that long before the King took me, I loved Culpeper, and I wish to God I had done as he wished me, for at the time the King wanted to take me he urged me to say that I was pledged to him. If I had done as he advised me I should not die this death, nor would he. I would rather have had him for a husband than be mistress of the world, but sin blinded me and greed of grandeur; and since mine is the fault, mine also is the suffering, and my great sorrow is that Culpeper should have to die through me.' At these words she could go no further. She turned to the headsman and said, 'Pray hasten with thy office.' He knelt before her and begged her pardon. She said wildly, 'I die a Queen, but I would rather die the wife of Culpeper. God have mercy on my soul. Good people, I beg you pray for me.'

Similarly in the play Katheryn's thoughts at the end are full of Culpeper. Bax does not show the actual execution, but a last interview with Thomas Cranmer in the Tower, in which she begs him to give Culpeper her love. Just before he leaves she says, "I believe I had it in me to be happier than most people. That can't be helped....Oh, I shall die as the Queen of England, but I wish I had lived and died as the wife of the man I loved!" (Act III, Sc. II, pp. 1000-2)

There is however no evidence that any of this took place and considerable proof to the contrary. Culpeper denied his guilt to the last and was hardly the noble-minded hero of chivalric romance. He persistently attempted to pin the blame on Katheryn, insisting that he had met her secretly only at her demand and she then told him that she was dying for his love. Katheryn, on the other hand, denied that she had ever loved Culpeper. She had granted
him those dangerous illicit meetings merely to humour him because he had begged for those precious moments. She made an abject confession of her guilt in the end, but this did not extend to acts of infidelity after marriage. She did not declare at her death that she would rather have died Culpeper's wife. Hackett derives his narrative of these events from the Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England: Being a Contemporary Record of some of the Principal Events of the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI by an unknown Spanish chronicler who, according to a modern historian, sparked off the 'romance' of Katheryn Howard within a generation of her death with his "delightful and sympathetic, if singularly inaccurate, account of her career." Bax must have read Hackett's version, rather than the Spanish chronicler's, because he uses the details quoted in Hackett and does not follow other aspects of the Spaniard's account.

Hackett's depiction of Henry's rôle in the matter is extremely sympathetic. It was in "amiable egotism that Henry enjoyed Katheryn Howard. He renewed his youth and set him on the straight and narrow path to beauty. The autumn of 1540 saw him again in the saddle...'This King,' Marillac said by December, 'has taken a new rule of living. To rise between five and six, hear mass at seven, and then ride till dinner time which is at ten a.m.'" No one could deny that Katheryn had "'completely acquired' her husband's mellowing favour." The day before the fatal disclosure "the King had been felicitating himself on Katheryn. After receiving his Maker, he had directed his ghostly father to make prayer and give thanks with him for 'the good life he led' and hoped to lead with her. She was indeed the rose without a thorn." His first reaction on being confronted with the news "was that of a man who had accepted someone unquestioningly. He had never in his life been less suspicious or more genial, and he felt it must be a forgery." When her guilt was unquestionably proved, the King heard this revelation not as a man of power, but as
"a very simple human being." A deep silence came on the council as they awaited his reaction. "It was a long time before Henry could utter his sorrow. He sat there, feeling old, his heart 'pierced with pensiveness.' Then he began to cry. It must have moved everyone. 'And finally, with plenty of tears, which was strange in his courage,' he opened the heart that had been wounded."

Hackett takes an extremely soft indulgent line, but the account is based on facts. Henry's marriage to Katheryn did seem to give him a new lease of life and, as Marillac the French ambassador reports, he adopted a new vigorous routine. The fall of Katheryn was a serious personal blow to Henry. He was shattered by the discovery of her infidelity and did break down and weep on hearing the evidence against her. Bax's dramatisation of Henry's part in the affair has the distinct tone and colour of Hackett's account. It strikes the same romantic note, and has the same emotional build-up to the moment when Henry astonishes the gathered assembly by "burying his face between his arms and sobbing desperately." (Act III, Sc. I, p. 996) These strong similarities point to Hackett's book being the source for Bax's play. Here Bax obviously found an interpretation of character and event that was personally appealing, and its reliability as history does not seem to have been questioned.

In a note to the text Bax makes a point of indicating that "the acts of kindness done by Katheryn Howard in the course of the play are not fictions introduced with a view to whitewashing a wanton. They are facts. The incident of the block in Act III, Scene II, and Henry's behaviour at the end of Act III, Scene I, are also historical. The title of the play is the phrase with which Henry described Katheryn." But though Bax bases his play on a few facts which appeal to his fancy it is clear that he does not attempt to be seriously historical. In the play Katheryn's fate is seen only in the light of her own innocent folly. Bax merely alludes to the dark intrigue of palace politics in a time when women were used as pawns by rival political
and religious parties. The audience learns that Katheryn used to "trust everybody" before she came to court and Cromwell's part in the Henry/Anne of Cleves alliance has cost him dearly. The antagonism felt by Audley towards Katheryn is seen to spring partly from opposing factional interests. Thus the sense of an underground vortex of political engineering is hinted at, but it never takes focus. Essentially the drama revolves around the personal conflicts of the principal characters, caught up in a mesh of their own making. Bax found in the situation all the ingredients for the sort of emotional entanglement which holds such a fatal attraction for maudlin authors - the love triangle.

Katheryn is celebrated as a child of nature, an expression of the urge towards the free exercise of the human spirit. We are introduced almost immediately to her past affairs and indiscretions, but these have in no way destroyed her youthful innocence. Unable to return Culpeper's feelings in like measure she tells him that "love is like a rose" and hers is "only half-open." She admits that she might marry someone who could give her more than he can, but she would never marry anyone she did not love at all. (Act V, Sc. I, pp. 940-1) Henry's interest in her is in the wind and the prospect of marriage to him holds a mixture of attraction and fear. She cannot resist the glory of being Queen of England. Who would not be proud to have "all the bells of London" "pealing for joy of you" and she does know "how to be happy." (Act I, Sc. I, p. 954) Yet the presentiment of following in her cousin, Anne Bullen's footsteps, is prevalent. She recoils at the touch of a chain around her neck - "It always makes me creepy when I feel metal against my neck...." (Act I, Sc. I, p. 967) Soon after her acceptance of Henry's proposal she has this feeling come over her, "like walking to the scaffold." (Act I, Sc. I, p. 958) Yet some naked perversity within her seems to drive her to the very fate she dreads.

Historians have always found Henry's character difficult
to assess. "There was nothing commonplace about Henry," states A F Pollard, "his good and bad qualities alike were exceptional. It is easy, by suppressing the one or the other, to paint him a hero or a villain. He lends himself readily to polemic, but to depict his character in all its varied aspects, extenuating nothing nor setting down aught in malice, is a task of no little difficulty." His character, writes a modern historian, is "strangely and frustratingly elusive. To contemporaries and moderns alike, the man appears as a Janus in which the satanic and the angelic are inexplicably opposed. At one moment Henry emerges as a beast, lustful and brutal, grasping and vengeful, vain and obstinate beyond belief; at the next instant the image changes and we perceive the superb athlete, the generous scholar, the accomplished diplomat and the idol of the realm." In his portrayal of Henry, Bax just hints at the possibility of the satanic aspect breaking out and taking over, but concentrates on the angelic side of Henry in an area not commonly recognised. In the light of his innumerable marriages and their often disastrous outcomes Henry is usually thought of as an unscrupulous hardened philanderer. Bax depicts how, in his relationship with Katheryn, he is an idealist, a romantic. She epitomises for him the almost sacramental beauty of the English countryside with all its gentle, subtle depths and spirit-renewing qualities. "The green realm of England would make a fair setting for The Rose without a Thorn." It is as if his dream of renewed youth is symbolized by his marriage to Katheryn and indeed the effect of it is seen to be radically transforming. He is a different man. She takes him back "almost to twenty." (Act I, Sc. I, pp. 953-4) He regains his "old enthusiasm," "old good humour," and overcoming incredibly the debilitating effects of his disease he adopts a new vigorous routine of life. She "can work miracles." He is "the proof of it." (Act II, Sc. I, p. 962) He seems, for a moment, to stave off the decay of his declining years.
Far from being gross or pedestrian, Henry is an aesthete in his attitude to love. He abominates "the vulgarians who class women and drink together. Women and flowers, women and music," he says, "that's the right way to think of them." He would have Katheryn think of her beauty "as if it were sacred" for "a beautiful woman is like a chalice that only one goldsmith in the world could fashion; and if we wish to serve beer to boobies we do not serve it in a masterpiece of goldcraft." Here we find Bax's own sentiments coming in because, as has been seen, he had a great admiration for beautiful women. There is often a mixture of sentimentality, egotism and self-pity in Henry's professions. Nan Bullen "had no heart." How "dared she play fast and loose with a love" like his. She killed the best in him. He always expected "so much of love."

(Act II, Sc. I, pp. 947-52) Yet, though there is an element of self-deception in Henry's concept of love and himself, there is nothing false about his love for Katheryn. It is warm and winning in its youth and spontaneity. Just before the allegations of Katheryn's infidelity he has a masque enacted in her honour to celebrate the fact that she is indeed "the rose without a thorn." His first reaction to the news of her misdemeanours is outraged disbelief. On its confirmation he breaks down and weeps.

Disillusioned, Henry is as extreme in his denunciation of Katheryn as he was in his appreciation before. He pours out his grief in a bitter tirade:

Why did I love her? Why did I give away my heart? Fool, fool - I had learned the truth about women - learned it bitterly ... They are all wantons, and the only wise man is the Turk who shuts them away where they cannot make light of their bodies: and yet, knowing them all to be harlots by nature, and only restrained from out-and-out lewdness by the morals that men have set up ... knowing this, I behaved like a greenhorn of seventeen, and put myself at the mercy of a creature who could debauch her body to cool the lust of a sniggering music-master. My curse upon all women. They should inhabit not houses but stables and
styes. I tell you my brain is a dungeon, and all my thoughts are black, slimy, loathsome, and alive; nor shall I ever get out, for I am in their midst and every moment I generate a million.

(Act II, Sc. I, p. 981)

Henry's intense anger and grief at being betrayed has a basis in history. In a letter to Francis I, Marillac wrote that the King had "changed his love for the Queen into hatred and taken such grief at being deceived that of late it was thought he had gone mad, for he called for a sword to slay her he had loved so much. Sitting in Council he suddenly called for horses without saying where he would go. Sometimes he said irrelevantly that that wicked woman had never such delight in her incontinency as she would have torture in her death. And finally he took to tears regretting his ill luck in meeting with such ill-conditioned wives, and blaming his Council for this last mischief." The Queen was officially accused of having led an "abominable, base, carnal, voluptuous, and vicious life." She had "led the King by word and gesture to love her" and had "arrogantly coupled herself with him in marriage."¹⁰⁶

The play exposes the ease with which treason could be made out of such a charge and satirises the hypocrisy and bigotry of social outlook with regard to women. Henry is clearly shown to be paranoid in his attitude towards women whom he sees as purely there to gratify the male sensibility. Bax describes the play as "a study in physical jealousy of the crudest order"¹⁰⁷ and emphasises the different standards set for women and for men. In Henry's time Katheryn's fate was seen as well-deserved. The play's attitude of sympathy towards the feminine position, and its projection of Katheryn as the creature of a new generation of women, eager to assert and express themselves as separate entities, reveals an overtly modern stance which reflects the influence of the Shavian approach to history.

Bax attempts to convey the personal dilemmas of his characters, but, like Berkeley, is unable to realise their inner life. Henry, who suffers from megalomania, considers
himself a paragon of manhood and Bax tries to register his inner sensations at being betrayed:

I am poisoned. But poison, if it is not fatal, will work itself out of a man's system. There are men who think lightly of love. I could never do that. There are men who care little what a woman does with her body, and preach a foul doctrine that such matters are of no account in a brief life and a Hurrying world. Are they men at all? Are they my betters? Am I a savage to put so much value upon chastity? Or is it that I am a man through and through, while they are mere half-men who are left high and dry, little stagnant pools in the rocks by the great tides of passion that have made mankind the first of God's creatures and the conquerors of the earth? I only know that I have adored the beauty of woman, and that, for better or worse, the manhood in me is a live and intolerable force, and that once again I have suffered because I hoped greatly.

(Act II, Sc. I, p. 983)

The emotion is verbalised in language that is extremely stilted. It is all too artificial and contrived. Bax, we recall, turned to history because he felt it gave him the poetic licence to resort to the kind of fanciful symbolism and impassioned language he considered proper to the theatre. The play is punctuated with exaggerated, overworked speeches like this, but most of it is written in the racy colloquial idiom that reveals the impact of Shaw. The mixed quality of the play's language reflects the conflicting trends, the Romantic and the Shavian, that Bax was exposed to. He could not quite run away from either.

In spite of Katheryn's irresolution and emotional susceptibility, we are not allowed to dismiss her as shallow and frivolous, because Bax continually points to depths in her. She is warm and generous to Anne of Cleves and sensitive to the difficulty of her position. She sends blankets to the Countess of Salisbury, imprisoned in the Tower, and pleads for the release of Sir Thomas Wyatt and his friends. This, as Bax has indicated, is based on fact. But he goes further and shows that she is not incapable of self-sacrifice and sustained emotion. Her
realisation, all too late, that Culpeper is the man she loves and should have married, leads her to declare that she is his "as long as life endures" but the affair must end, to safeguard his life and Henry's happiness. (Act II, Sc. I, p. 966) The expression "yours as life endures" was actually used by Katheryn Howard in her only extant letter, in which she begs Culpeper to send her news of himself, and this letter is quoted by Hackett in his book, Henry the Eighth. It is a love letter written by an extremely naïve young lady. The initiative for their secret meetings appears to have come from Katheryn, but there is no evidence that she ever proposed that these assignations should end. But Bax obviously wished to project her in a romantically enhanced light. Thus she behaves in the high-minded, self-sacrificing manner expected of such heroines.

In the face of impending death, she displays courage of a high sort. She acknowledges the justice of her sentence and is more upset that her actions have cost the lives of others than her own. On hearing of the cruel sentence passed upon Manox and Derham she expresses sadness, but no morbid sense of remorse at what they had done: "Poor wretched fellows! We little thought it would end like this. We were young and wild, that was all." (Act III, Sc. I, p. 999) According to the records, however, Katheryn hardly showed such selflessness and equanimity. Cranmer reports to Henry that when he went to interrogate her he found her in "such lamentation and heaviness" and "far entered toward a frenzy." When he left her she tried "to excuse and to temper" the actions she had confessed to and said "that all that Derame did unto her was of his importune forcement, and, in a manner, violence, rather than of her free consent and will."¹⁰⁹

In the play Katheryn increases in stature through the manner in which she faces her end. She is frightened "not of dying but of dying badly." With childlike openness and simplicity, she requests that the execution block be brought to her prison cell, so that she can go through the motions of what she will have to face. The block is
brought in and set before her and the audience, who are
drawn into immediate unity, staring in horrified
fascination at this monstrosity which "makes one feel
like an animal." (Act III, Sc. II, pp. 1001-2) It is
in itself a terrible indictment of human society, and
Katheryn, enacting what she will be put through, must bring
home a very real sense of the horror of legalised violence.
A rehearsal of the tragic event actually took place in
history, for Katheryn, in accordance with the social values
of her age, took a particular pride in dying well. This
scene carried considerable edge in the theatre. Thus a
reviewer states that Angela Baddeley, in the part of
Katheryn Howard, "was at her best when Katheryn, moved by
an odd fancy, comes to rehearse her impending execution." 110

Bax's approach to history, as has been shown, is
shallow and opportunistic. He goes to history for subject
and theme, but romanticises the whole episode, for the records
reveal neither grand passion nor great heroism. As a
modern historian states, "Catherine's life was little more
than a series of petty trivialities and wanton acts
punctuated by sordid politics." 111 Katheryn's behaviour
becomes significant only when bound up with family ambition,
party rivalry and royal absolutism, or a political theory
which deprived the individual of all legal defence. In the
play Katheryn's career is not seen in political terms and
the official side of Henry, so crucial a part of the man and
his position, is not brought out. The deliberate omission
of politics and the imposition of a soft romantic angle
wrecks the play as a genuine historical drama, for, as has
been established in my introductory chapter, a serious
concern for history and historical truth is the distinguishing
feature of a history play.

Where Clifford Bax is quite content to take over a
version of history unquestioningly, the next playwright to
be considered, Gordon Daviot, is much more critical in
approach. Very little is known about her as a person
because she was extremely retiring by nature. John
Gielgud, who first met her in 1932 when he produced and played the title role in *Richard of Bordeaux*, remained her friend until her death in 1952. He states that "she shunned photographs and publicity of all kinds, and gave no interviews to the press." To him she seemed "a strange character, proud without being arrogant, and obstinate, though not conceited." This, perhaps, was because she was anxious that there should not be too much interference with her manuscripts from those who sought to stage them. Yet she did seem to live more or less the life of a recluse, partly as a matter of personal temperament and partly through force of circumstance.

Gordon Daviot (Elizabeth Mackintosh) was born in 1896 at Inverness and trained as a physical instructress at the Austley Physical Training College in Birmingham. She taught physical training at various schools in England and Scotland, but before long had to return home to look after an invalid father. Turning to writing, she had some short stories accepted by the *English Review*, and began also seriously to study the theatre. After writing a few plays which did not measure up to her own standards, she wrote *Richard of Bordeaux* which brought her considerable fame in its time. Daviot never attained quite the same success with her later dramatic ventures. Though she was best known as a playwright, she published novels and short stories from time to time, and under the pseudonym, Josephine Tey, wrote a number of detective novels which were quite popular. Daviot's sudden death of cancer in 1952 came as a shock to those who knew her. According to Gielgud, she, had known herself to be mortally ill for nearly a year but had resolutely avoided seeing anyone she knew. He finds this "gallant behaviour typical of her and curiously touching, if a little inhuman too."112

Her writings reveal her keen interest in history. She wrote other history plays, like *Queen of Scots* which was produced at the New Theatre in 1934, and *Dickon* (on Richard III) which was presented at the Playhouse in Salisbury in
1955. Her last work, The Privateer, is an historical novel based on a careful reading of the life of Henry Morgan. Daviot's concern for historical truth is reflected in the seriousness of her research. She considered it practically a duty to help vindicate much-maligned figures in history. In the preface to her biography of Claverhouse she expresses very strong feelings on the subject. She pays tribute to Mark Napier "who first gave the Queensberry letters to the world and so brought a real Claverhouse to confound the traditional one," but states that, in spite of various biographies which provide a detailed record of his life, "popular belief in the traditional Claverhouse persists; magazines pay for réchauffé horrors that were disproved fifty years ago, guidebooks quote the old hoary lies, and sermons, one is given to understand, are still preached on 'Bloody Clavers.'" She refers to the false popular conception as a noxious weed that requires "a constant sprinkling of acid if it is to be burned out" and her book is "but one more attempt to bring to common knowledge the facts of Claverhouse's life."

Similarly her play, Dickon, about Richard III, is an attempt to redeem from calumny a figure much blackened in history because of Shakespeare. "Any attempt to find the truth about Richard III," she says, "is over-shadowed from the beginning by the self-confessed and monstrous villain of Shakespeare's Richard III. Any attempt to remain aloof, objective, cool, is rendered extremely difficult by that fantastic personification of evil." "For 150 years the Tudor myth had stood unchallenged, and to this day in spite of Hugh Walpole and all his colleagues in the work of vindication, nine persons out of ten not only think of Richard III as a hunch-backed murderer, but are unaware that there is any evidence to the contrary." In Dickon, she goes to the other extreme, projecting Richard III as "the best king this country has ever known," a man dearly loved by the people for his justice and integrity, "whose very
heart is England.” But she obviously has a basis for this view, because she does seriously consider the evidence, as is clear from the historical notes appended. Her novel, *The Daughter of Time*, published in 1949, and written under the pseudonym, Josephine Tey, is essentially an elaboration of these ideas, which take the form of a detective's systematic demolition of the case against Richard III. The title, drawn from an old proverb—*Truth is the daughter of time*—suggests that only with time can historical characters and events be seen in perspective and studied objectively so that balance is restored. If the method of investigation in *The Daughter of Time* could be taken as a reflection of Daviot's own process of research, it would be extremely revealing as to how she worked. But unfortunately we cannot be sure of this, because of her indebtedness to Sir Clement Markham's biography, *Richard III: His Life and Character: Reviewed in the Light of Recent Research*, published in 1906, which proceeds along similar lines in its rehabilitation of Richard III.

From the novel it would seem that she examined contemporary accounts, collating different versions and exploring incongruities, and studied primary documents in order to ascertain the facts. For after all, says a character in the novel, truth is not to be found in any one man's account of contemporary events, but "in the unconsidered mass of contemporary documents: Patent Rolls, patents, proclamations, household accounts and private letters." In the novel, what is disparagingly referred to as 'Tony-pandy' is a situation her investigators often come up against—the distortion of a simple affair to huge proportions for a political end. But they expect that any attempt to redress the balance will meet with considerable resistance, for human beings found it difficult to give up preconceived beliefs. Brent, the detective in the novel, comments bitterly, "You'll be accused of whitewashing. Whitewashing has a derogatory sound and rehabilitation hasn't, so they call it whitewashing. A few will look up
the Britannica and feel competent to go a little further in the matter. They will slay you instead of flaying you. And the serious historians won't bother to notice you." Something of Daviot's own feelings must have found expression here. She was clearly caught up with the idea of affirming Richard III's innocence, since she wrote both a play and a novel on the subject. If the opinion of her protagonist, Brent, is anything to go by, she seems to have a rather narrow view of historians. They write with little knowledge of human psychology, he claims, and "seem to have no talent for the likeliness of any situation. They see history like a peepshow; with two-dimensional figures against a distant background."  

Daviot might have felt that an artist had this gift of human and imaginative insight to bring to bear in approaching history, but she also believed in certain restrictions. For she says that "to write fiction about historical fact is very nearly impermissible. It is permissible only on two accounts: (a) that neither the inevitable simplification of plot nor the invention of detail shall be allowed to falsify the general picture, and (b) that the writer shall state where the facts may be found, so that the reader may if he cares, compare the invention with the truth."  

Again we see the limitation of the 'realistic' view by the standard she sets for truth. Nothing should be "allowed to falsify the general picture." By contrast, in a Brechtian structure some idea of different views can be canvassed, for complex seeing is encouraged and is an integral part of the dramatic form. The audience is confronted with alternative perspectives of a situation or different possibilities of interpretation. But Daviot implies that "the truth" is apparent and a single view of experience is presented in compliance with the conventions of verisimilitude.  

Though Daviot wrote more than one historical play it was only with Richard of Bordeaux that she made any real impact. It was produced originally by the Arts Theatre
Club for two special performances on June the 26th and July the 3rd, 1932. Although it played to appreciative audiences, Gielgud felt that the middle part of the play was weak and Daviot made various alterations at his suggestion. More weight was given to the part of Anne, which gives more plausibility to the change in Richard after her death. Henry (Bolingbroke) was given another scene "because there was not enough of him in the play to give the audience a real interest in his final victory over Richard." Certain scenes which were unsuccessful in performance were adjusted or cut out altogether. For instance, there was a council scene after the Queen's death, which was not theatrically effective and thus omitted. The changes did much to strengthen the play in performance. It was subsequently presented on the 2nd February 1933 at the New Theatre where it was warmly acclaimed and it continued to play to enthusiastic audiences for over a year.

Leading actors and actresses were drawn to the play because of the star parts offered. John Gielgud, who directed the first production and played the title rôle, saw it as "a gift from heaven." "The part of Richard," he says, "was written with a great sense of humour, and was a splendid opportunity - the young, impetuous, highly-strung boy growing into a disillusioned man, his wife dying of plague, and his best friend betraying him." He was able to make use of his previous experience "to give light and shade to an immensely long and showy part, blending (his) methods to display every facet of emotion in the many striking opportunities which the play afforded (him)." He made such an outstanding success of it that he admits that it was in this play that he "won his spurs both as actor and director." The play "became a tremendous hit" and he had "the greatest fan success of (his) whole career." He says that Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, who played the part of Anne, contributed greatly to the play's success. "Her comedy scenes were perfect, she was exquisitely poignant in her moments of pathos, and her appearance in
the rich simple dresses which the Motleys designed for her was breathtakingly lovely."  

The play was received, states W A Darlington in The Daily Telegraph, "with a glorious full-throated roar such as the West-end seldom hears in these sophisticated days... It now ranks as the best history play that has been written of late years, after Saint Joan. It is brilliantly acted by Mr Gielgud and Miss Ffrangcon-Davies (as Richard's Queen and good angel.)" The play became one of the most popular spectacles in London. People went thirty and forty times to see it. The Theatre World magazine issued a special supplement consisting of seven pages of photographs of scenes from 'the play of the moment.' Richard of Bordeaux, it states, had "justly been acclaimed by critics and playgoers as the outstanding event of the theatrical season." These photographs reveal the production to have been a visual feast, and indeed we are told that a factor "which helped to make Richard of Bordeaux, the outstanding success of 1932 and 1933 was the décor by the Motleys, a feature being the ingenuity with which they made the King's dress express his changing moods, and the aging of the man as he passed from youth to manhood and from manhood to premature old age. Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, as Anne the Queen, wore the costumes and head-dress of the fifteenth century with rare distinction." The Motleys were three women, Elizabeth Montgomery, Audrey Harris and Peggy Harris, who made a name for themselves as theatrical costumers and scenery designers, and Richard of Bordeaux helped to establish them.

But apart from the arresting acting and the visual spectacle, another reason for the play's amazing success was the topicality of its central theme. The play celebrates Richard II's great endeavours for peace at a time when his country was bent on war and aggressive acquisition. Produced during the troubled interwar period when the peace movement was receiving increasing public support, this theme obviously struck a chord in its
audiences. John Gielgud tells us that the play's pacifist angle "had a great appeal." Ernest Short recalls that "in 1933 Hitler was registering his hammer blows against the democratic system in Germany; in Britain, the Conservative Die-Hards were calling for the exercise of the 'strong hand' in administration. Young Richard's peace efforts and his failure to hold the sympathy of his people somehow seemed oddly topical, especially as the dramatist was careful that no Wardour Street dialogue interfered with the quick apprehension of her topicalities."

Daviot makes no attempt to view war as it was viewed in Richard's time and the play's modern standpoint and modern dialogue bring it within the Shavian tradition. Drama critics immediately noticed the influence of Shaw, and saw it as a "kindred way of looking for the truth in history." Daviot projects a distinctly soft feminine view, bringing the issues alive in terms of a clash between the urge towards power, greed and aggression, and the urge towards beauty, culture and the arts of peace. The first World War had obviously affected her deeply, for John Gielgud says that she spoke very bitterly of it and "must have suffered some bereavement."

Richard of Bordeaux was originally published in 1933 by Victor Gollancz. An acting edition was published by Samuel French in 1935. The play has subsequently been reproduced by Longmans, Green and Company in 1938, by Penguin Plays in 1958 and Pan Books in 1966. It was also included in a collection of Daviot's plays published in 1953 and translated into German in 1959. In his foreword to the 1953 collection John Gielgud states that Daviot "was distressed by her inability to write original plots, especially when, on two occasions, she was unfairly accused of plagiarism. On the first occasion she was sued by the author of a historical novel about Richard II, but the case was settled out of court." The details of this incident are not recorded and required my writing to Sir John Gielgud for fuller information. In his reply he
discloses that the book that gave rise to the piracy accusation was *The Broomscod Collar* by Gillian Olivier, published in 1930. The arbitration of the case was undertaken by Professor Oman who "stated that both writers had evidently founded their research on the only surviving documents of the period in the British Museum." In a prefatory note to her book, Gillian Olivier states that the picture she offers is "based on a careful study of Richard the Second as he appears in contemporary chronicles and records, and in the pages of the chief modern authorities upon his reign." Daviot, using the same sources, presents a similar view of Richard II, but obviously the play had the artistic impact which the novel did not have. This indicates that a play *can* be more influential than a novel and so, presumably, scholarly references may be more necessary.

Of the three playwrights considered in this chapter, Daviot is the most original in her handling of history because she went back to historical sources and rethought to some extent. She goes against the conventional view of Richard II, as a prodigal indolent king who does not measure up to his calling, and presents a young ruler of great promise whose noblest instincts are thwarted by the stupidity and tyranny of society. Daviot's portrait seems to have been built up from the accounts of various chroniclers and historians who, though they do not totally vindicate Richard, evince a recognition of fine impulses.

The French chronicler Froissart appears to have *exerted* considerable influence. His impartiality as an observer is generally acknowledged, and in *The Daughter of Time* Daviot asserts that more credence can be given to a contemporary Frenchman's report than an Englishman's, because of the inevitable Tudor bias of the latter. Froissart emphasises Richard II's persistent efforts for peace, and the opposition of the nobles and commons with their preference for war. This is what the play concentrates on bringing into focus. There are close
parallels between the two versions. Froissart recurrently brings out Richard's courage and independence in striving for peace, although his singleminded determination in the matter added little to his popularity among the people, who were quick to complain:

What is now become of our grand enterprises and our valiant captains? Would that our gallant king Edward, and his son, the prince of Wales, were now alive! We used to invade France and rebuff our enemies, so that they were afraid to show themselves, or venture to engage us; and, when they did so, they were defeated. What a glorious expedition did our king Edward, of happy memory, make, when he landed in Normandy, and marched through France! 139

In Daviot's play, members of the council continually glory in past military exploits. Richard comments bitterly to his wife that he is not the king: "Oh, no, I am merely Edward III's grandson. And my father's son. They always compare me in their minds with my father. 'If the Black Prince had lived, there would be none of this pacifist nonsense.' War, war, war! It is all they ever think of." (Part I, Sc. I, p. 16)140 Though the language used in the play is modern colloquial idiom after the Shavian manner, there is a distinct verbal echo, a similarity of tone and stance, that links the two accounts.

In reference to the negotiating of a peace treaty between France and England, Froissart mentions the ordinary Englishman's obsession when it came to a question of Calais. The French would have had Calais razed to the ground, he says, but the English would not listen to this "for the commons of England love Calais more than any other town in the world, saying, that as long as they are masters of Calais, they carry the keys of France at their girdle ...."141 Similarly, in Daviot's play, Calais is referred to as a particular blind-spot of the English. One of the charges made against Richard's councillors in the crisis of 1386 is that they prompted Richard to betray Calais, and it has De Vere responding:
You know, the one mistake your councillors ever made, Richard, was to let you even mention the name of that misbegotten little French village. No Englishman is quite sane on the subject of Calais.

(Part I, Sc. IV, P. 51)

Then again Froissart had met Sir Simon Burley, Richard's adviser from youth, personally, and found him "a gentle knight" "of great good sense." He recounts how at his execution Richard "was very wroth," for Burley "had been one of his tutors and had educated him, and he swore it should not remain unavenged." Daviot makes much of this tutor/pupil relationship and includes Froissart's account of Richard swearing vengeance, making it a significant moment in the play, for it marks a definite change in Richard's attitude. Froissart recounts too the details of Richard's first expedition to Ireland where the Irish kings submitted to Richard "but more through love and good humour than by battle or force." The four kings were knighted "with much solemnity" and dined afterwards with the king "where they were much stared at" by the English who regarded them as "strange savage creatures." In the play Gloucester, referring to the same expedition, expresses his disgust at seeing the "King of England feasting barbarians and presenting them with gifts. Knighting traitors instead of stringing them up." Daviot too has the Archbishop approaching Derby disguised as a "sort of priest person" and this helps to accentuate her projection of his essential facelessness. Daviot thus seems to have used Froissart, since he is the original source for these incidents, though she might, of course, have followed an historian of her time who followed Froissart.

Most historians of Daviot's time, in spite of modifying Tudor versions of Richard's reign and character, are ambivalent in attitude, and in their overall assessment
tend to perpetuate the conventional notion of Richard as an effete king. Among the more sympathetic are W Stubbs in *The Constitutional History of England*, published in 1880 and K Vickers in *England in the Later Middle Ages* published in 1913. Stubbs finds Richard's personal character throughout the reign a problem to ascertain, but acknowledges that the legislation in the reign of Richard was "marked by real policy and intelligible purpose." He says that Richard was "a peaceful king thwarted at every turn by ambitious kinsmen." Though Daviot shares this point of view, it is Vickers who seems to have exerted an appreciable influence on the play, because there are demonstrably firmer links between the two accounts.

Vickers introduces the "unenviable heritage" that was handed down to Richard - the expiry of the truce with France and the threat of war, the political parties in bitter enmity at home, and the unfortunate capture of the control of taxation by the House of Commons, whose members were quite ignorant of finance. Moreover he says, "political complications were rapidly undermining the stability of the kingdom, though perhaps, the word political is too dignified to be used for the personal squabbles and conflicting ambitions which were unfortunately to bring Richard to a violent end. The king himself was now entering the political lists. He was a lad of spirit, as he had shown when he faced the rebels at Smithfield, and was by no means content to accept the subordinate position which sovereignty had assumed during the latter days of his grandfather." Richard of Bordeaux opens on precisely this state of affairs. Richard has walked out on the petty wrangling in Council, after showing considerable courage and independence in facing up to his formidable uncles, and the pressure from the Commons on the question of a peace treaty with France.

Daviot, in the play, places considerable emphasis on the relationship between Anne and Richard: the companion-
ship and respect that was its basis, Anne's salutary influence on Richard, and Richard's deterioration after her death. Historically Anne was very popular with the people because of her concern for the common weal. Contemporary chroniclers speak of her with respect and report several occasions when at her appeal a pardon was granted by the king to offending subjects. This gained her the title of 'The good queen Anne.' Contemporary observers report also the great personal happiness in the marriage between Richard and Anne, the devotion and loyalty Richard showed her and his extreme grief at her death; and historians generally accept this as fact. Froissart describes Richard at Anne's death as being "inconsolable for her loss (as they mutually loved each other, having been married young)" but does not suggest that this caused a change in Richard which resulted in later indiscretions.

In his study Vickers asserts that Richard's "impetuous nature found one healthy outlet in the love he bore to his wife, the gracious girl to whom Chaucer dedicated his 'Legend of Good Women.' He seldom or never allowed her to leave his side and after serving her faithfully in life, so deeply mourned her death that he refused ever to revisit the manor of Sheen where she died." "The death of Anne," he says, "marks a change in the fate of the nation. Again and again her influence induced Richard to stay his hand, and if this was in some cases a mere formal procedure, made fashionable since the days of Queen Phillipa, there are instances when it is obvious that her action was not collusive. His happy home life had helped to carry the King through many troubles, and after he lost that comfort he seemed to become more reckless." Daviot takes precisely this angle in the play. Anne's death is shown to be a tremendous personal blow to Richard. It marks a definite turning-point in his life and the life of the nation, for after this he becomes increasingly rash. This strongly suggests that Daviot used Vickers particularly.

Then again, there are certain verbal correspondences
between the two accounts. Vickers states that "men grumble at the King's friends, sneering at Suffolk's commercial origin, that of a merchant rather than a knight, but reserving their bitterest hatred for Vere." This contempt for De la Pole's commercial origin finds voice in the play. Richard comments that the people do not trust De la Pole because "they suspect him of lining his pockets. They can't forget that his father was a merchant." (Part I, Sc. I, p. 17) Referring to the deaths of Gloucester and Arundel, Vickers comments that "it is hard to squeeze out a tear for either victim." In the play two commoners discuss the same incident and one declares, "Well I must admit I don't approve of hole-and-corner business, but I don't feel like shedding tears over either of them." (Part II, Sc. III, p. 83) The other marked parallel can be found in the portrait of Henry, the Earl of Derby, who becomes Henry IV after Richard's deposition. Vickers states that it was as a warrior and not as a politician that Henry appealed to his subjects. It may seem strange, he says, "that the warm-blooded John of Gaunt should have a son whose career as king displays what seems to be a cold, unsympathetic nature." He attributes to Henry "a deep-seated ambition, inherited from his father, and a strong control of his emotions which was a characteristic all his own." But he was "pre-eminently a man of business. Efficiency was his greatest virtue." In Daviot's play Henry is portrayed as very much the warrior. "The dust of battle is incense in Henry's nostrils." He is shown to be very different from his father who finds him "not very lovable." (Part II, Sc. IV, p. 90) He comes through as staid and phlegmatic and Richard calls him a "tradesman." A practical business-like disposition is his salient feature, and this is satirised in the abdication scene. Henry tersely interrupts the tense interchange between York and Richard over York's and his son's defection, with the remark, "All this is beside the point." Richard cuts home
with the reply, "Yes, yes. To business, to business."
(Part II, Sc. VII, p. 106)

These are fairly definite lines of correspondence, though Vickers again is not a continuous source of influence, for in his overall assessment he is mixed in his sympathy:

The reign of Richard II still remains an unsolved problem. He came to the throne amidst troubles, he grew to manhood amidst rivalries and jealousies, social and religious discontent dogged his footsteps at almost every turn, and finally he fell. It was Richard's fate to experience a recrudescence of that feudal spirit which had puzzled Edward I and shattered Edward II, and he was not strong enough to stand against it. His appearance was too feminine, his prodigality too obviously the product of weakness. It was only by fits and starts that he could concentrate his attention, for he was ever fonder of pomp and display than of the business of Government. More especially he neglected the control of the members of his household, who brought their master into disrepute by their arrogance and rapacity. His principles were, so far as we can gather, generous, and his career suggests a sympathy for the poor at every turn.154

Daviot does not follow Vickers blindly. In fact she seems to have exercised her own mind and judgement without the aid of any contemporary historian, in the overall view she presents of Richard as a deeply concerned, loyal and courageous individual who is gradually embittered by the purblind nature of society, its frustration of his noblest aspirations and callous treatment of his friends. We are confronted with a picture of great possibilities atrophied.

It is interesting that Daviot seems to anticipate the views of much later historians who commit themselves to a similar stand. R H Jones, writing in 1968, states that:

On the whole, despite certain setbacks and losses in years prior to 1386, the architects of the royal programme laboured to good purpose. De la Pole's administration did not escape criticism, but modern verdicts have generally commended both his policies and his integrity... Richard himself had responded very favourably to the teaching of his mentors. His attachment to
de Vere and his impulsive fits of temper were his most conspicuous weaknesses. Neither was in itself serious. He developed the high sense of the dignity of his own position which was necessary to an exalted conception of the royal prerogative. Consistently, even courageously, he defended his ministers and his partisans from criticism and abuse. At the same time he demonstrated on more than one occasion a degree of independence which proved him to be no mere instrument in the hands of others.

"It is evident," he concludes, "that the conventional notion of the king's character and attitude requires substantial correction." "Richard is said to have lacked the tenacity of purpose and strength of character required of a would-be absolute monarch. It is certain that he lacked sufficiently influential support among his subjects. In another century a shrewder, less scrupulous and more flexible monarch, who troubled himself very little about oaths of loyalty and theories of monarchical right, would effect a practicable absolutism because he could learn to build it primarily on other foundations than a loyal aristocracy." A Tuck, writing in 1973, talks of Richard's "strong and bitter sense of personal loss" at the removal of his friends of the 1380's, his "considerable political shrewdness and skill in using the strengths of his position to place his power on new, and perhaps firmer, foundations, and to reassert his personal authority in government." He stresses the confused and often contradictory attitudes of "the various sections of English society to the prospect of an end to war," for there were many who stood to lose if peace were contracted, who would have preferred Richard to be a "more opportunist and warlike king."\

A Steel, in his book Richard II, published in 1941, refers to both Shakespeare's and Daviot's portraits of Richard II. He credits Shakespeare's Richard II as being, most probably, the fountainhead of a stream of publications on Richard II from the last years of Elizabeth's reign onwards, and states that:
From that time to this Shakespeare has often been paradoxically cited as the best historian of Richard's reign and, curiously, as the only historian to do full justice to Richard's point of view, yet, as Elizabeth and Essex knew, his general tone is really hostile, and though there are touches, drawn direct from Holinshed, of the friendly French chroniclers Creton and the author of the *Traison et Mort*, the groundwork is provided by that unfriendly Tudor, Edward Hall. Thus only the last years of the reign, the most difficult to defend of all, figure in the play, and Richard is depicted as a weak-kneed tyrant, alternately un-manned by misfortune and drunk with success; his unpleasantness in the early stages is not atoned for by the pathos of the later scenes. The real Richard was perhaps too fond of dramatising himself, but naturally not along these lines, and one feels that he might have protested with justice, though on different grounds, against Shakespeare and "Gordon Daviot" alike.

He sees the need for modern specialised research to attempt a "re-examination of a different kind from the blind sentimental vindication and romantic modernisation of Richard to be found in the works of certain historical novelists and in that successful play, Richard of Bordeaux."¹¹⁵

The real Richard might have protested with equal justice against innumerable historians' appraisals of his life. Historical truth is the historian's only proper ambition, but where lies certainty? As has been stated in my introduction, the historian's function is to provide a considered scholarly assessment of the facts and their sources, but the playwright, even were he to assume the function of a historian, could only bring an amateur's knowledge and understanding. When treating history it is necessary for the playwright to be controlled by and respectful of the facts, but for the rest the particular value of the playwright's contribution is his freedom to approach history imaginatively. Sentimental and romanticised though it may be, Daviot's *Richard of Bordeaux* is historically grounded; Steel's even deigning to mention it is a tacit acknowledgement of that. In
fact he seems to have been influenced by Daviot's view himself because, pointing out various aspects of Richard II's character, he states that, "There is the passionate and loyal friend and husband of early manhood, corrupted into bitterness and cynicism by personal insult and the judicial murder of his companions. There is the defender of the church, orthodox and sincerely religious to the last, yet strangely averse from the new-fangled idea of burning his subjects when they happened to be heretics. There is the unbalanced widower, half-hearted autocrat and pitiful neurotic of later years."  

In Richard of Bordeaux Daviot clearly sets out to challenge the image of Richard II established by Shakespeare. Committed as she was to the task of vindicating much defamed characters in history, Shakespeare's portrayal must have aroused her ready impulse to spring to the defence. In fact Shakespeare's Richard II was playing at the Old Vic in 1929 and Gielgud mentions that Gordon Daviot was said to have seen him in the part of Richard, and it was thus that she had him in mind for the part in her play. E Martin Browne notes that Gielgud "was already famous for his Hamlet and many other Shakespearean parts at the Old Vic; perhaps foremost among them was Richard the Second. To portray the same character in a modern play was in itself enough to arouse interest in Gordon Daviot's new reading of this piece of history." Spectators of the play were therefore immediately alive to the contrast between her Richard and Shakespeare's. The play's purpose, states one reviewer, "is no less than to give a new interpretation of the most mysterious and subtle of the Shakespearean Kings." Mr Gielgud's representation of Richard II in Shakespeare's play, he says, "presides over the present stage like a beautiful ghost."  

Shakespeare wrote according to his own lights and situation. His concerns were Elizabethan, thus the explosive question of the divine right of kings assumes
predominance. The predicament of Richard is the predicament of the deposed monarch, and the limitless implications of this for the man and for the nation are Shakespeare's focus. Richard's crisis sprang partly from an intrinsic concept of royal authority. The divine mystery of his office was a very real question for Richard, who strove for the recognition of his royal prerogative. Shakespeare brings this alive not as a mere theory of sovereignty, but as an integral part of the man and his predicament. The belief that the king is God's own appointed deputy is a faith that both elevates and oppresses Richard. Shakespeare brings home the sacred awe and mystery of the royal office through the complex psychological state of the man who has lost his kingship, but not his sense of kingship. He draws attention to Richard's deficiencies as king, but the real pressure of the play (and this contributes to it) is to bring us to an imaginative apprehension of the singular catastrophic nature of the act of abdication, through the agony of the man who is king by right but not by fact. In Shakespeare's play Richard's tragedy is the tragedy of the deposed king. Its concern is with the universal rather than the particular, and the treatment is poetic.

In Richard of Bordeaux the emphasis is on the particular case and individual. Daviot sees in relation to her own time. Thus Richard's situation is put forward in terms of a struggle between a gentle sensitive spirit and the turbulent militaristic tendencies of his age. In keeping with the outlook of her own society Daviot would tend to see a bid for peace as fine and ennobling. But, unlike Shaw, she is not a great enough playwright to challenge an image of Shakespeare's, and impress her own upon the modern consciousness. The image she projects is for her own generation only. In spite of her attempt to offer a corrective to Shakespeare's view, and the vindication of Richard by modern historians, Shakespeare's image continues to dominate the human imagination.

In Richard of Bordeaux Daviot presents a heroic view
of Richard, investing him with high ideals. She registers the strain of public office on the human personality, as the struggle to realise a vision, deeply held, takes its toll of the man himself. A fine, sensitive spirit collides against the crude, uncompromising will of social pride and perversity. In a society where war has become part of the very fabric of life and a passport to rapacity, the honour of England seems to be almost synonomous with the urge to war. Peace is a dirty word, a "monstrous suggestion." (Act I, Sc. II, p. 23) Richard has to strive for its reality under the blight of public scorn which stigmatises his endeavours as evidence of a pusillanimous spirit. His love for the arts, for food, fashion and pageantry is seen as gross effeminacy, vain and gaudy self-indulgence. The drama is presented in terms of this opposition, the two polarities of opinion constantly set against each other. But though Daviot attempts to provide some kind of a dialectic, her own particular bias asserts itself strongly to endorse one view rather than the other. Richard might be seen as rash at times, but it is the impetuosity of youth, spurred by the belief in its capacity to evolve something "infinitely important, infinitely worth striving for" which "unsupple minds" buried in "hidebound practice" are incapable of conceiving. His dream of peace for a better England, a better world, is dismissed as "visionary nonsense" amidst the general appetite for war and plunder, a trend set by the military ambitions of previous monarchs. (Part I, Sc. I II, pp. 21-2)

Richard's love for fine clothes, for feasting and pageantry makes him something of a hedonist in the eyes of the people:

Arundel: London didn't like the sound of those banquets very much. The usual insane extravagance!

Montague: Well, a military expedition would have cost ten times as much, including several hundred lives, and achieved nothing.

(Part II, Sc. II, p. 76)
The audience is continually presented with both views juxtaposed, but Richard's extravagance is shown to be by far the lesser evil. Daviot draws no fine distinctions. She sees it in uncomplicated black and white terms and there is no doubt as to where our sympathies should lie. Richard and Anne waste money "on beauty instead of on war." (Part I, Sc. V, p. 61) Their predilection for fine clothes and food is depicted as reflective of an aesthetic sense incomprehensible to the crude rapacious spirits of his time, as revealed in the following exchange, when the belligerent Gloucester refuses Richard's invitation to stay for dinner:

Richard: It is going to be a very special dinner today in Lancaster's honour. The cooks have been inventing new stuffings all day.

Gloucester: Eating is not one of my amusements.

Richard: No, I know. A hunk of cold beef on a bone is your meat. But that is a lack in you, not a virtue. Don't pride yourself on it.

(Part II, Sc. I, p. 70)

Daviot has a firm historical basis for projecting Richard's love for sumptuous food and clothes as the expression of an artistic sensibility. Vickers points out that it was Richard who undertook the restoration of Westminster Hall and left it much as we see it today. He gave his patronage to Chaucer who, among many other offices, was clerk of the king's works at Westminster, Windsor and the Tower. Gower was among his early courtiers. Anthony Steel states that

In literature the period is marked by the first great burst of vernacular excellence in English history; Chaucer and Langland immeasurably outstrip all English predecessors ... in art and architecture Richard's reign represents the last great effort of the English Middle Ages. It sees the perfection of the perpendicular style, the building of Westminster Hall and New College chapel, and the final triumph, of technique at least, in the draughtsmanship of monumental brasses and in the carving of effigies in the round. Everywhere in the
wool-growing districts the great wool-merchants' churches, adorned with stained glass at its loveliest, were beginning to arise; college was added to college in Oxford and Cambridge. Painting, carried to its limit in the art of book-illumination, spread to panels and church walls; more, the two greatest pictures ever known to have been painted in medieval England are, one certainly, and another probably, portraits of the young king. Richard II, like Henry III, was undoubtedly himself a connoisseur of building, sculpture, painting, books and music, as well as of plate, jewellery and dress; there is on record plentiful, if scattered evidence of these tastes, which has never been put together. 163 Daviot thus has strong historical support for her view of Richard and Anne as caught up with a dream to "make England so rich and so beautiful." (Part I, Sc. I, p. 16)

This vision is totally opposed by Richard's enemies who see it as weak and feminine. Henry, the Earl of Derby, is an obvious foil to Richard, as Mary, his wife, is to Anne. Beside Richard's volatile wit and temperament Henry's phlegmatic disposition is decidedly unattractive. He prides himself on his physical prowess and is a keen proponent of war:

**Richard:** The dust of battle is incense in Henry's nostrils.

**Henry:** I think it wouldn't be a bad thing for this country if a few more people didn't mind the dust.

**Richard:** In fact what this country needs is a really big war to redeem itself from the awful stigma of being at peace for more than two years!

(Part I, Sc. III, p. 36)

Henry comes through as a dull obtuse creature, without too much guile but unimaginative and something of a boor. He is totally devoid of Richard's grace and presence. "Even his revenges lack vision." After Richard surrenders to him in Wales, on their return to England, he makes Richard ride through London on a pony. Richard calls him a "tradesman" describing how, as they came through London, "he ducked to each blessing like a street singer catching
coins in a hat." (Part II, Sc. VII, pp. 104-5)

An equally marked contrast is drawn between Anne and Mary. Anne is a strong, enlightened individual with an alive, inquiring mind and very definite views of her own. She thinks that "the Church has become too rich, and forgotten its mission" and "something should be done to make it simpler and kindlier." Mary, on the other hand, cannot make a statement for herself. She "should like to study these things too, but the children take up most of (her) time." She is a placid, subservient creature quite willing to concede that "men understand those matters of State" better than women ever can. (Part I, Sc. III, pp. 37-8) Richard and Anne relate as equals. Their relationship is based on a deep, mutual respect and they enjoy a close companionship which is both supportive and challenging. Mary is completely under the domination of Henry, who relegates her to a fireside rôle, and domesticity. As with Berkeley and Bax, we see Daviot bringing into her treatment of history a modern tone and outlook as to the role of women in society. Her portrayal of Anne as an extremely thoughtful cultivated individual, however, is historical. She came of a famous line, the family of Luxembourg, and was the daughter of the emperor, Charles of Bohemia, who was a great lover of the arts. He knew the importance of learning, and was founder of the University of Prague. There is no doubt that Anne herself was highly educated. She possessed the gospels in three languages, Bohemian, German and Latin, and Archbishop Arundel is reported to have remarked that "she studied the four gospels constantly in English, explained by the expositions of the doctors; and in the study of these, and reading of godly books, she was more diligent than the prelates themselves." In the Dictionary of National Biography James Gairdner informs us that, in the commission given to the English plenipotentiaries sent to conclude negotiations for Richard II's marriage to Anne of Bohemia, "it is expressly stated that Richard had selected her on account
of her nobility of birth, and her reputed gentleness of character. The omission of all reference to beauty is perhaps significant." Thus it can be seen that though Daviot romanticises and modernises the relationship between Richard and Anne, she keeps close to history in that the essential basis of their relationship was one of mutual sympathy and respect.

The controversial character in the play, as in history, is Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who has been called Richard's evil genius. Though Richard subsequently created him Marquis of Dublin and Duke of Ireland, he was no lowborn upstart as Froissart asserts. He was from an ancient line of noble descent, and as Earl of Oxford ranked high in the kingdom, but the lords were envious of the prominence Richard gave him and saw him as a favourite of the Gaveston type. In the play he is an enigmatic figure and we are never quite sure what to make of him. Richard is drawn to him because they seem to share similar qualities of mind and spirit. But there are salient differences. Despite Richard's rich fund of humour he is intense when it comes to matters that touch him deeply. While Robert can sit back and laugh, Richard cannot, because he cares, he cares "dreadfully." (Part I, Sc. I, p. 17) Richard is unable to distance himself from the world. He is slowly torn apart by all that happens. His apprehension of the mean and wearisome nature of social behaviour does not allow him a detachment. When he experiences the futility of trying to bring about change, life loses its savour for him. Robert can still find joy in living for himself. In the hour of his worst catastrophe he can say, "And, strange as it may seem, life is still desirable." (Part I, Sc. V, p. 58) Robert's capacity for humour allows him such freedom and detachment that Richard wishes he had Robert's "Olympian view." (Part I, Sc. II, p. 31) But whether it is indeed a superior position is somewhat suspect, because one is constantly in doubt whether his ability to keep removed is
a strong vantage point or merely an escape from commitment.

Laughter is Robert's strength, his way of coping with the folly of the world, and he is not beyond including himself within the scope of its irony. This is revealed in a conversation with Richard, after an explosive session at Council, where their hopes for a permanent peace with France seem doomed. Richard is beside himself with anger and frustration, Robert is calm and consoling:

**Richard:** It is all coming to pieces, Robert! They won't try to understand, and Parliament will think as they do. It is going to fail.

**Robert:** Cheer up, Richard! It may fail this time. You can't expect them to absorb anything as repulsive as a new idea without some coaxing. But we are young, thank God; we have all our lives in front of us. We keep on coaxing, and presently they swallow the dose.

**Richard:** But you would think that we were trying to do something that would harm them, instead of something that would be to everyone's advantage!

**Robert:** Everyone's advantage is nobody's business. You should know that. Even we are not entirely guiltless of self-seeking.

**Richard:** What do you mean?

**Robert:** Analyse our noble desire for peace and it becomes strangely like a rather low desire for a quiet life. (He laughs)

**Richard:** How can you laugh, Robert?

**Robert:** How can I? A little natural aptitude, perhaps, and some little perseverance. Gloucester helps. Gloucester is very funny.

**Richard:** Gloucester! Funny! You know you don't mean that.

**Robert:** But I do mean it. Gloucester being righteous must make even the gods laugh.

(Part I, Sc. II, p. 31)

His irrepressible humour is disarming, and yet one wonders if laughter for him is a form of escape, if underneath it
all he lacks courage and conviction.

When the tension between Richard and the lords opposing his policies escalates into open warfare, all hopes are on Robert de Vere to relieve his friends in London with his troops from Cheshire. But they are cut off at Radcot Bridge by Derby and when Robert deserts his army Richard is devastated. The man he recently created Duke of Ireland, has let him down and cut an ignominious figure in the eyes of the public. When Robert comes to apologise, he turns on him:

You ran away. 'Lord Oxford fled,' says my page. A Vere bolting across the fields like a frightened rabbit! The Duke of Ireland escaping. Troops in confusion may be noticed in the rear. You coward!

(Part I, Sc. V, p. 57)

Richard is unsparing in his pain. Robert explains that he could only see that it was "not going to be a fight, it was going to be a massacre, hemmed in there between Derby and the bridge." "If I could have believed in the possibility of winning," he says, "I might have led them. As it was, I could only see the futility of the slaughter." (Part I, Sc. V, p. 56) Anne too mitigates his guilt. She gently rebukes Richard for his harshness:

His silly tender heart betrayed him. That is the truth about Robert. What he saw when Derby and his men came out of the mist was not the glory of taking a risk, but the certainty of his men's deaths. His imagination betrayed him. You blame him for the very thing that made him your friend.

(Part I, Sc. V, p. 59)

Richard's anger and despair with Robert "isn't because he lost the battle; not altogether. It is because he was Robert and he didn't fight!" (Part I, Sc. V, p. 60) Bitter reprisals follow the defeat and Richard, stripped of his closest friends and councillors, loses all his illusions. His suffering goes deep, and it is only the desire for revenge that enables him to endure patiently:
Gloucester will take all Robert's lands soon. He will own half England presently. And the people throw up their caps and cry. 'Long live Gloucester, the man of action. He kills for his gains and because I kill nobody, I am a fool. But I am learning. They are teaching a willing pupil. To become an expert in murder cannot be so difficult. I swear to you, Anne, I swear to you now that before I die I'll break them all, Arundel, Derby. As for Gloucester - he had better have spared Burley. He had better have spared him!

(Part I, Sc. V, p. 60)

This urge for revenge is shown to be the driving force behind Richard, enabling him to bear up under pressure even after Anne's tragic death. Showing admirable restraint and discretion, he bides his time until he is of age and then reasserts his personal authority in government, demanding the resignation of the Chancellor and the Treasurer and appointing two experienced statesmen of no pronounced party leaning in their place. In another shrewd political move he recalls from Spain, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who resumes his place in government, this time as a trusted ally of the king and a strong upholder of the royal prerogative. His influence acts as a counterbalance to that of the Duke of Gloucester. His position secure, Richard finally comes to execute his revenge. The violent objections of Gloucester and Arundel to Richard's successful pursuit of a reconciliation with France, and his proposal of a marriage alliance to secure the peace treaty, prove their own undoing. Richard takes the first opportune moment to cause their arrest and death. A quarrel between Mowbray and Derby provides him with another opportunity for vengeance and he banishes them both. Daviot's depiction of Richard as determined on revenge and merely waiting for the right moment to strike, is certainly one interpretation of his motives and actions, though there are contrary views on this.

Daviot is constantly satirical about the attitude of the masses. In a short, well-effected scene she
dramatises their dispassionate response to the fate of Gloucester and Arundel. They express a lively curiosity at the machinations of those in power, but are ultimately concerned only with what touches their own lives:

Woman with loaves : Hullo, Meg!
Woman with vegetables: Hello, Susan!
Woman with loaves : All well? So they've murdered the Duke of Gloucester at last!
Woman with vegetables: That they have! And good riddance, too, I say. Did they cut his throat?
Woman with loaves : No, hit him over the head, they do say.
Woman with vegetables: Serve him right, I say.
Woman with loaves : Heard about Lord Arundel?
Woman with vegetables: Who hasn't! I don't give much for his chances.
Woman with loaves : Nor me! What times! And flour gone up a halfpenny!

(Part II, Sc. III, pp. 84-5)

Richard, by now, is indifferent to public opinion. "Rumour," he says, "has slandered me all my life; my skin has grown hardened." (Part II, Sc. IV, p. 88) The only persons he trusts are "two thousand archers paid regularly every Friday." (Part II, Act IV, p. 93) Richard's mistrust of those around him is historical. Froissart tells us that he "kept up a constant guard night and day, of a thousand archers." In performance it was Richard's transformation from a spirited open-hearted youth into a devious cynical autocrat, which brought some life and character into the part:

Up to the quarrel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke, Mr Gielgud's acting is plausible and graceful. In that scene, and thenceforward, however, Mr Gielgud was remarkable; he achieved something more striking than a sympathetic airy carelessness. In the scene we watch a Richard who has tasted blood as an autocrat and likes its salt flavour, and in whom the slow poison of suspicion has begun to work. There was a morbid, feline elegance about his bearing and
careful movements. His expression has lost its frank gaiety and become foxy-hunted. The handsome youth, only capable of inspiring either tenderness or contempt, accordingly as he was judged as a companion or as a leader, had changed into a selfish, disillusioned man at bay, though for the moment victoriously at bay.171

His burning mission accomplished, Richard grows indiscriminate and arbitrary. The people "are bewildered. He takes no one's life but everyone's peace of mind. He holds England in his two hands and laughs like a wicked child, and men pause and hold their breath, not knowing what he may do with his toy." On Lancaster's death he dis-inherits Henry and turns him "from a mere exile into a martyr." (Part II, Sc. V, pp. 96-7) "He used not to be stupid," says Henry to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who comes to him in France to invite him to return to England and save the country. Richard oversteps himself because he has lost purpose and drive. It is as if he has tasted both the bitter fruits of disillusionment and the pungent flavour of success, but there is little joy or meaning in the victory. He has played society at its own game and won, but, not a person for games, he has grown weary of it. He thus takes defeat at the hands of Derby with surprising calm. When Sir John Montague reports that his armies have either deserted or surrendered, and his friend, Rutland, has with his father, York, gone over to Henry, he accepts it as the end, commenting wearily:

I am so tired. My life has lost direction, John; and I have nothing more to guide me. We had a vision once—Anne and I. We made it come true, too; as near as visions may be true. And then Anne—But for me there was still a purpose; a debt to pay. The hope of achieving that purpose filled the years for me. And in the end I paid it. Arundel, Gloucester, Mowbray, Derby. It is intoxicating to achieve one's purpose, John. It was such a heady draught that I may have drunk too deep, perhaps.

(Part II, Sc. VI, p. 100)

Richard is one of those who have to live for something larger than life. He had a vision which had seemed worth
realising but the constant battle with a hostile public for every step gained, has been a soul-destroying experience. His disillusionment with society and human nature is profound. The Archbishop of Canterbury, come to lead Richard into captivity, experiences his scorn. He wishes to deceive them into believing that he has come from Flint with only two followers, but Montague, catching sight of glints of light in the distance, demands an explanation:

Canterbury: I really don't know. The sun is shining on something bright, I expect.

Montague: Yes, the sun is shining on something bright! Do you think we are fools? That is the sun shining on helmets and spear-points. You and your two followers!

Richard: Come, come, Montague. Let us not be hasty. We can hardly accuse the Archbishop, who is not only an ambassador but also a holy man of God, of deliberately concealing the truth. We must take his word for it that the points of light are merely - points of light, my lord?

(Part II, Sc. VI, p. 102)

Richard's scepticism is complete. In the final scene, when Henry and his supporters come to get him to sign the deed of abdication, he reduces them all to size through the mordant nature of his wit:

Richard: I know that I am your prisoner, Henry. But it might have been more graceful to announce your arrival. You should learn from the Archbishop how to do an evil thing gracefully. (To Canterbury) Good day, my lord. Are you ambassador today, or do you for once represent the Archbishop of Canterbury? (To York) Good day, my lord. I am glad that your son is safe. Will you tell him so from me?

York: You must believe me, sir, when I say how inexpressibly painful all this is for me.

Richard: (soothing) Yes, yes. It is a little painful for me too.

York: In unprecedently difficult times I have done as it seemed to me best for all.
I hope that you will not blame Edward, or me, for the course we have felt impelled to take.

Richard: I have said already that I am glad your son is safe, and I mean what I say.

Henry: All this is beside the point. (He gives the deed to Canterbury)

Richard: (with an echo of Henry's manner) Yes, yes. To business, to business.

(Part II, Sc. VI, p. 106)

There is historical support for Daviot's portrayal of Richard as humorous in defeat. In the official account of the deposition in the roll of Parliament Richard is described as showing a cheerful countenance (hilari vultu) to the lords who visited him in prison. Daviot turns this to good effect in the play. Richard is shown to be buoyant yet cutting in his humour. Here Daviot strikes a different note from Shakespeare, and it was this quality that attracted Gielgud to the rôle. "Shakespeare's Richard," he says, "although a wonderful part for an actor, has no humour and can be monotonously lyrical." Richard's humour was winning on the stage and one reviewer talks of the relish Daviot gives to Richard in his preserving of "irony and wit in the face of disaster."

The deed of abdication is scanned by Richard before it is signed:

Richard: 'Insufficient and useless.' 'Unworthy to reign.' It is not a generous document, is it? 'Tyranny.' Have I been a tyrant? Curious. I never thought of myself as a tyrant. At least, no tyrant has shed less blood. Nor been so tolerant of others. I have never persecuted anyone for his own good. I leave that to you, Henry. What the towns will save in feasts for the King they will spend on the burning of heretics. Have you a pen, Maudelyn?

Maudelyn: (in a strangled voice) No, sir. (Richard looks up, surprised. His expression softens at sight of his servant's face.)
Canterbury: I have one here, sir.

Richard: You have forgotten nothing, have you, my lord?

(Part II, Sc. VI, p. 107)

Daviot keeps close to history in emphasising these grounds for the deposition of Richard II. He was indicted on account of his evil government and he had to confess to being "altogether insufficient and unfit to rule." One of the principal charges against him was that he "imposed great Taxes upon his Subjects whereby he did excessively oppress his subjects and impoverish the Kingdom." Daviot's portrayal of Richard as profoundly disillusioned with his people in the end, also has a basis in history. A contemporary chronicler, Adam of Usk, reports that he heard himself the following speech of Richard as he lay a prisoner in the Tower: "A wondrous and fickle land is this, for it hath exiled, slain, destroyed, or ruined so many kings, rulers and great men and is ever tainted with strife, variance and envy."

Richard's capacity for humour, his concern for his wife and servant, and his royalty of bearing in his darkest hour, make him a moving figure at the end. Gielgud states that he "nearly always enjoyed acting the last scenes of the play." He "had found a way of playing these scenes in complete control of (his) own emotions, although the audience became more and more affected, to the point of tears." Maudelyn's anguish at being separated from his master borders on sentimentality, but the play ends on an arresting note. Richard, stripped of title, family, friends, is brought to a state of utter isolation. He learns just before Maudelyn leaves him that the Commons have been complaining of Henry's extravagance. The curtain falls as Richard, staring after the retreating Maudelyn, then at the empty room, contemplates the irony of this. Amusement slowly returns to his face as he says to himself, "Extravagance! How Robert would have laughed!" (Part II, Act VI, p. 111)
Of the playwrights dealt with in this chapter, Gordon Daviot is the most original in her treatment of history. The overall view she projects is imposed without the aid of any contemporary historian and she can be found anticipating the views of later historians. Reginald Berkeley is the most socially conscious writer of the three, with his inclusion of contemporary social and economic trends, and his concern to help direct social change. Clifford Bax is the most romantic and superficial in his approach to history. He allows romance and sentiment to take over to such an extent that his play cannot be regarded as a genuine historical drama. I have devoted considerable attention to these playwrights and their sources, because a study of them has not been done before.

Interesting facts about the kind of drama in vogue in the period have emerged from a consideration of these writers. They all followed fashionable ideas of the time, with their exaltation of the feminine viewpoint, their reaction against war and violence, and insistence on beauty, culture and the arts of peace. It was a period of transition between the old and the new way of apprehending history, thus we see the intrusion of a soft romantic angle in their plays even while they are trying hard to be modern. Characters are conceived in a rather sentimental light, because audiences were still eager for this kind of slightly romantic theatre. They thus function on the edge of the Romantic tradition and yet were influenced inevitably by the powerful impact of Shaw with his startling modern idiom and perspective. Therefore two traditions can be seen blending in them. They were also affected by the tremendous pressure exerted by popular taste for drama which provided a realistic true-to-life portrayal, and this required concentration on a single dimension of time and experience, in compliance with the conventions of verismilitude. Now, it is not possible to write plays of this sort any more. Everything is different, because of the impact of Brecht, who was also influenced by Shaw. In the
following chapter I hope to trace the Shavian/Brechtian influence as it operated on a much more alive and conscious artist, who was able to fuse it into his own style and come through with a unique and powerful offering of his own.
Notes to Chapter III

1. Preface, Harold, the Last of the Saxon Kings (London: Knebworth, 1874), pp. xi-xii.
8. Ibid., p. vi.
10. Ibid., p. 166.
11. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
12. Ibid., pp. 113-4.
15. Ibid., p. 226.
16. The Times, 15/9/36.
18. Ibid., p. 96.
20. Ibid.
22. The Times, 7/1/29.
23. The Times, 9/2/29.
24. Ibid.
25. The Times, 13/2/29.
26. Katharine Worth, Revolutions in Modern English Drama, p. 5.
30. All quotations from the text will be cited from the following edition: *Plays of a Half-Decade* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933).
33. Ibid., p. 148
34. Ibid., p. 160.
37. Ibid., p. 407.
39. Ibid., p. viii.
42. Ibid., pp. 97-102.
44. *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol. 1, p. 34.
45. Ibid., p. 139.
55. *The Times*, 7/1/29.


60. Inland Far, p. 187.

61. Ibid., p. 246.

62. Ibid., p. 328.


70. Ideas and People, p. 223.

71. Ibid., p. 226.


74. Some I Knew Well, p. 140.

75. Whither the Theatre ....? , p. 27.

76. Ideas and People, p. 217.

77. Whither the Theatre ....? , p. 23.

78. Some I Knew Well, p. 18.


81. Ideas and People, p. 218.

83. The Times, 1/4/70.
84. See Clifford Bax, Ideas and People, p. 220.
    J C Trewin, Dramatists of Today, p. 220.
85. The Times, 22/11/62.
86. The Daily Telegraph, 11/2/32.
87. The Times, 11/2/32.
90. British Drama: An Historical Survey from the Beginnings to the Present Time (London; Toronto; Bombay; Sydney: George G Harrap, 1925), p. 488.
91. Dramatists of Today, pp. 77-8.
94. Ibid., p. 459.
95. All quotations from the text will be cited from the following edition: Plays of a Half-Decade (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933).
105. Lacey Baldwin Smith, A Tudor Tragedy: The Life and Times of Catherine Howard, p. 126.
107. Whither the Theatre...?, p. 29.
110. The Times, 11/2/32.
111. Lacey Baldwin Smith, A Tudor Tragedy: The Life and Times of Catherine Howard, pp. 9-10.
114. Historical Notes, Plays, p. 236.
115. Ibid., p. 217.
116. Daviot refers to Sir Clement Markham's book on Richard III in her notes to Dickon. See Plays, pp. 239.
118. Ibid., pp. 212, 162.
121. Ibid., p. 225.
124. Foreword, in Gordon Daviot, Plays, p. xi.
125. An Actor and his Time, pp. 104-5.
127. The Daily Telegraph, 3/2/33.
128. See John Gielgud, Early Stages, p. 239.
130. Ernest Short, Theatrical Cavalcade, p. 201.
131. An Actor and his Time, pp. 104-5.
134. Foreword, in Gordon Daviot, Plays, p. x.
135. Ibid., p. x.
140. All quotations from the text will be cited from the following edition: Plays of the Thirties, vol. 1 (London: Pan, 1966).
155. The Royal Policy of Richard II: Absolutism in the Later Middle Ages, pp. 25, 106, 111.
158. Ibid., p. 8.
159. Foreword, in Gordon Daviot, Plays, p. xi.
161. The Times, 27/6/32.
169. See, for instance, Anthony Tuck, Richard II and the English Nobility, pp. 156-8.
173. An Actor and his Time, p. 104.


177. Early Stages, p. 239.
CHAPTER IV

T S Eliot - Murder in the Cathedral

In striking contrast to the minor playwrights dealt with in the previous chapter, who waver unconsciously on the edge of two traditions, the Romantic and the Shavian, we see in T S Eliot the forging ahead of an independent spirit. Acutely conscious of traditions, old and new, Eliot draws inspiration from these, but merges them into his own style. In Murder in the Cathedral he breaks right away from the naturalist theatre of his time, as is evident from the stylisation and formal design of the piece. He moves into a much more direct, physical form of drama, presenting us in 1935 with a charged emotive ritual which in many respects prefigures future trends. The play is not intended to be read in private, but performed as living theatre, and it lends itself to a very modern approach and treatment.

Eliot returns to poetry as the form of language on the stage, but he departs radically from the tedium of nineteenth century blank verse. Poetry is used in a fresh compelling way, with its startling changes of pace and tone, its mixture of the solemn rhythms of medieval verse with the liveliness of modern colloquial prose. Various features of the play anticipate much later theatrical fashions: the resurrection of the Greek chorus, the exploration of the theatrical possibilities of mime, music and body movement, the exploiting of a wide range of speech rhythms to create and sustain dramatic tension, and the brilliant use of ritual to link past and present and to express the secret inner world of the anguished self. Then again the preoccupation with the complexity and precariousness of personality, and Becket's consciousness of rôle, are very modern. There is also the radical break with stage illusion at the end, when in a sudden switch from high emotion the Knights come forward to address the audience in the manner of a public debate. It is a moment of Shavian irony intended to shock the audience out of over-emotional empathy to
consider the significance of the event as it relates to
them. But Eliot goes even further than Shaw, because the
audience is not allowed to hide in the dark, to reside in
a sense of physical isolation, through this very direct
confrontation of them by the Knights. Indeed right
through the play Eliot can be found continually distancing
the audience from the surface of the action in order to
involve it on a rational plane. Becket himself reveals
a certain detachment from his role and often comments on
it. Eliot presents the action from without rather than
from within, so that we are conscious of other perspectives
of the situation and see it in terms of a wider historical
reference. He is not averse to making the audience aware
of its own identity and the fact of the performance.

The explosive impact of Brecht on the modern stage
immediately comes to mind, and the question arises - and it
is rather surprising it has not been posed before - of
Eliot's connection with Brecht. Could there have been a
link? Brecht was very much in the air, and the good
creative artist is very quick to pick up and exploit new
influences. Could Eliot have been influenced by
Brechtian ideas and techniques? Brecht had been writing
from 1918 and before the first production of Murder in
the Cathedral on the 15th June, 1935, he had written a
considerable number of works: Baal (1918/20), Drums in
the Night (1919), In the Jungle of the Cities (1921/23),
Haupostille: Poems (1927), The Threepenny Opera (1928),
Mahagonny (1928/29), Lindbergh's Flight (1928/29), Baden
Cantata of Acquiescence (1928), He who said Yes, He who
said No (1929/30), St Joan of the Stockyards (1929/30),
The Exception and the Rule (1930), The Measure Taken
(1930), The Mother (1932), Round Heads and Pointed Heads
(1932/34), The Seven Deadly Sins (1933), The Horatii and
the Curiatii (1933/34) and the Threepenny Novel (1934).
Could Eliot have had knowledge of Brecht's writings and
productions in Berlin? After all Eliot was editor of
The Criterion from 1922-39, and here he was functioning as
a journalist. There would have been the influx of all kinds of information about literary and theatrical happenings from abroad. I have looked at Eliot's signed and unsigned articles in The Criterion, but have not found any specific reference to Brecht.

But it is no proof that Eliot was not aware of a thing just because he gives no indication of its influence. We can see this with regard to Shaw. Eliot is very grudging in his acknowledgement of the influence of Saint Joan upon Murder in the Cathedral. He says of the scene where the Knights confront the audience after the murder, that he might, for all he knows, have been "slightly under the influence of Saint Joan," when Shaw's impress here is so glaringly apparent that it has caused all critics to refer to the scene as Shavian. Eliot got a lot more from Shaw than he admits. As I have already pointed out in my chapter on Shaw, he makes very slighting comments about Saint Joan in The Criterion where he describes Shaw's Joan of Arc as "one of the most superstitious of the effigies which have been erected to that remarkable woman." She is perhaps "the greatest sacrilege of all Joans," he says, for Shaw "has turned her into a great middle-class reformer, and her place is a little higher than Mrs Pankhurst." But in Murder in the Cathedral Eliot adopts the same anti-heroic approach and modernity of perspective. Like Shaw, he does not allow the spectators an emotional escape from critical and rational consciousness, but attempts to engage them in a conflict of ideas and opinions in order to get them to grapple with the issues for themselves. Like Shaw, he brings in a sense of layers of time by allowing his characters a foreknowledge of events which provides the audience with a forward perspective and an awareness of alternative views of the event. Eliot therefore owes much more to Shaw than he acknowledges. So he might well have known of Brecht's works and ideas, even if he does not express an awareness of them. Eliot and Brecht undeniably had a common model
Brecht greatly admired Shaw and his concern to get the audience critically involved, thinking about social problems and their possible solutions. Shaw, he says, "unhesitatingly appealed to the reason" and delighted in "dislocating our stock associations." His world is one that arises from opinions. He created a play "by inventing a series of complications which gave his characters a chance to develop their opinions as fully as possible and to oppose them to our own." Brecht shared this concern to get the audience involved as thinking beings, so that they could come to intellectual conclusions which might form the basis for action outside the theatre. Shaw therefore is indubitably a link between Eliot and Brecht - both have acknowledged his influence, and there is no questioning their major debt to him.

There is also another firm connection. Auden and Isherwood in England were great admirers of Brecht and they were very close to Eliot in terms of time and theatrical practice. Their plays were written for the Group Theatre, formally organised by Rupert Doone in 1932. Eliot took a keen interest in the activities of the Group Theatre, because he sympathised with its purpose, which was to correlate speech, mime and dance in drama. I looked at Auden and Isherwood and the work they were doing during this period to see if I could trace some information there, regarding a possible connection between Brecht and Eliot. Auden was in Berlin in 1928/29 and he describes his stay there as a major event in his life: "I was awakened in that for the first time I felt the shaking of the foundation of things." He was influenced by German poetry and theatre, particularly that of Brecht. He saw The Threepenny Opera when it was first produced on the 31st August, 1928, and it made a marked impression on him. He later collaborated on English translations of several of Brecht's plays. Both Auden and Isherwood have acknowledged the impact Brecht had on their dramatic writings. John Willett quotes Auden as saying that he was certainly influenced by Brecht's Haupostille poems and
by *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny.* Christopher Isherwood has said that the plays he wrote with Auden, especially *The Dog Beneath the Skin,* owe an enormous debt to German expressionism and to Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny.* "If the poetic drama has a rebirth in England, he wrote in 1939, and some people think it may, the movement will be largely German in inspiration and origin." Critics too have singled out Brecht as the crucial literary influence on Auden and Isherwood's dramatic works. F Buell talks of Auden as the English equivalent of Brecht and Eric Bentley refers to the extravaganzas of Auden and Isherwood as the "best imitations of Brecht."

Auden and Eliot could well have influenced each other's work, because their plays appeared in print almost side by side in the thirties: *Sweeney Agonistes* (1926/27), *Paid on Both Sides* (1930), *The Dance of Death* (1933), *The Rock* (1934), *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935), *In the Frontiers* (1938), *The Family Reunion* (1939). Eliot was definitely most familiar with Auden's work, because Auden had a contract with Faber, and Eliot was at the editorial desk, and it was he who considered Auden's work for publication. He was impressed by what he read and commissioned Auden to write for *The Criterion.* Eliot, after a dinner party with Auden in the 1940's, wrote to a friend that Auden was one of the younger poets of whom he had "the highest hopes" and with whom he felt "the closest sympathy." Auden in turn respected Eliot highly both as a man and a poet. "So long as one was in Eliot's presence," he said after Eliot's death in 1965, "one felt it was impossible to say or do anything base." Auden dined with the Eliots in the early thirties, so they were on friendly terms even then. It seems very likely that Brecht would have come up in conversation, since Auden was so taken up with his ideas and used them profusely in his plays. Even if they were not openly discussed there is no doubt that Eliot came
into contact with Brechtian theories and techniques through Auden's work, since he was Auden's publisher at Faber's.

In 1928 while he was in Berlin, Auden completed his first play, *Paid on Both Sides*, which he sent in to *The Criterion*. Eliot found it "quite a brilliant piece of work" and it first appeared in *The Criterion* in January 1930. It was published by Faber in both the 1930 and 1933 editions of Auden's early volume of poetry, *Poems*. *Paid on Both Sides* shows the definite influence of Brecht. It breaks completely with naturalist theatre. There is no attempt to create and sustain a dramatic illusion into which the audience can escape. The play works on different levels of meaning, and the emphasis is not on character and plot, but on the social situation represented. There are continual shifts in mood and tone, and the play is a mixture of political satire and farce, irony and pathos. It ends in a characteristically Brechtian fashion. The characters and audience are faced with the choice of accepting the oppressive state of affairs in their home country, or migrating to another, which implies the possibility of a new way of life offered by the Marxist society of the future. Auden had little interest in politics before his trip to Germany, but after his return a political dimension was added to his plays. Clearly affected by the ideas of Brecht, he too rejected a theatre which made the audience passive spectators of the inevitable consequence of human character and circumstance, and sought to stimulate critical thinking and awaken his audience to the urgency of action and change.

Auden's *The Dance of Death*, published by Faber in 1933, employs even further Brechtian techniques of alienation, to distance the audience from the surface of the action. As one critic notes regarding an early production of the play, "...an announcer mediates between stage and audience, actors are planted in the audience, the theatre manager and stage-hands appear on stage... the stage is bare, with actors occasionally pantomiming scenery. The Dancer's rôle makes
ballet prominent, while the parody musical-comedy chorus does other kinds of dancing, with singing. The small jazz orchestra on stage indicates immediately the distance from conventional drama. The play uses cabaret songs for satiric effect. It is symbolic and didactic, a sort of political musical comedy, and the influence of German experimental drama of the twenties and thirties, particularly that of Brecht, is immediately apparent. In October 1935 The Group Theatre opened a season at The Westminster Theatre and Auden's The Dance of Death was performed as a double-bill with Eliot's Sweeney Agonistes, which again reveals how closely their work was associated. Eliot must surely have seen the production. Auden's play would have intrigued him, because he believed strongly in the dramatic possibilities of ballet movement in drama. He would already have been familiar with the nature of Auden's play, since it was published by Faber in 1933.

In 1929 Auden started the play The Reformatory which was finished with Isherwood's help as The Enemies of a Bishop. It does not seem to have been considered for publication. In August 1930 Auden sent in the play, The Fronny, to Eliot. It was briefly considered, but ultimately dropped, and the manuscripts subsequently disappeared. In November 1934 Auden sent Isherwood the typescript of The Chase, which had already been accepted by Eliot for publication. The play was an amalgamation of The Reformatory and The Fronny. It had a political moral and was didactic in the Brechtian manner. Isherwood suggested a series of changes, which led to a collaboration. The play was retitled Where is Francis? and finally renamed The Dog Beneath the Skin (derived from Eliot's line "the skull beneath the skin" from Whispers of Immortality) at Rupert Doone's suggestion. The play is a typical Brechtian recipe, a mixing of comic revue, light verse, and popular song, with a serious political theme. The action does not develop, but each scene exists for itself. It ends with a chorus that was lifted from The Chase.
which invites the audience to decision and change outside the theatre:

Mourn not for these; these are ghosts who chose their pain,
Mourn rather for yourselves; and your inability to make up your minds
Whose hours of self-hatred and contempt were all your majesty and crisis,
Choose therefore that you may recover: both your charity and your place
Determining not this that we have lately witnessed: but another country
Where grace may grow outward and be given praise
Beauty and virtue be vivid there.

In Murder in the Cathedral the audience is similarly thrown a direct challenge at the end, and asked to come to terms with the moral and political implications of what they have been shown. Eliot had read The Chase in 1934 and might have been influenced by its Brechtian character.

The Dog Beneath the Skin was published by Faber in May 1935 just after Murder in the Cathedral had been published. The Group Theatre produced it a year later. Eliot attended a performance and afterwards wrote to Rupert Doone to say that he had enjoyed it, though he regretted some of the cuts. He continued, "What did irritate me was the chorus - not that Veronica Turleigh is not very good indeed; but these interruptions of the action become more and more irritating as the play goes on, and one tires of having things explained and being preached at. I do think Auden ought to find a different method in his next play." The method Eliot was referring to was the Brechtian method of periodically interrupting the action to alienate the sympathies of the audience from the action, as opposed to the old method of dramatic concentration and involvement. Eliot himself is a specialist in alienation and applies its techniques with subtlety and potency in his plays. Brecht could well have been a source of inspiration, because it is clear that Eliot took an extremely close interest in the work of Auden and The Group Theatre. He would most definitely have been aware of Brecht's ideas and methods through
Auden's work, even if he was not aware of them as Brechtian, though this seems very unlikely considering the length of Eliot's association with Auden as his publisher and friend. I have gone into this matter in detail because the connection between Brecht and Eliot has not been established before, and the Brechtian influence is strikingly evident in Murder in the Cathedral.

Brecht broke radically with the naturalist tradition, because he felt it created a climate of emotional acceptance where the impotence of the character is transferred through empathy to the audience. He reacted strongly against plays which tempted the audience to unconsciousness, to being emotionally engulfed to such an extent that its critical faculties were drugged, referring to playwrights who based their plays on "entering into feelings" as "sleeplullers." He felt the audience should be above the situation dramatised, not caught up within it: "Complex seeing should be practised. Though thinking above the flow of the play is more important than thinking from within the flow of the play." His plays encourage an overall objective critical response. In order to allow for detachment and critical withdrawal from character and event, Brecht continually confronts the audience with the fact of performance. He uses the notion of history to facilitate this distancing of the action, and to show it as relative to a particular time and place. Brecht rejected the concept of a basic human character or situation. The actor must play the incidents as if they were historical because "historical incidents are unique, transitory incidents associated with particular periods. The conduct of the persons involved in them is not fixed and 'universally human'; it includes elements that have been or may be overtaken by the course of history and is subject to criticism from the immediately following period's point of view." "The conduct of those born before us is alienated from us by an incessant evolution." This is an extraordinarily powerful statement which drives
home the idea of an ever-widening gulf which separates the past from the present, and the present from the future. It relates, of course, to the Marxist view of history and its doctrine of historical determinism and the necessity of change. Things do change and must change, and we can either assist history in its relentless onward movement or be brushed aside. Yet, despite Brecht's dramatic and political theories, his best plays achieve a very fine tension between the changing and unchanging aspects of being. Some of his most famous and unforgettable characters are universal human types with whom we identify profoundly. The audience is kept both detached and involved in a flow of mixed interest, sympathy, empathy, reflection. What comes through with potent effect is Brecht's provision of a complex, multidimensional vision, through his registering of alternative points of view, so that the audience is drawn in to consider a situation from different perspectives. A world is no longer dramatised mainly from the inside. The point of reference shifts from an internal to an external consciousness, and it is held apart, observed and entered into from the outside.

Eliot, similarly, can be found alienating the sympathies of the audience from the action from time to time, and moving in the direction of self-conscious theatricality in Murder in the Cathedral. He too presents the world depicted from the outside, enabling the audience to observe and reflect, to make connections between past and present, and to see the situation of the play in terms of a wider historical reference. He also includes the sense of a historical situation being overtaken by the course of history and rendered anachronistic by subsequent events and developments. But Eliot differs from Brecht, in that he does it with an eye to preventing the audience from resting in a complacency engendered by the knowledge of modern sophisticated interpretations of the event. His concern is to force the audience to come to terms with the eternal and universal, condensed within the transitory and particular. In an unsigned article in The Criterion
in October 1932, Eliot comments that one of the problems of our age is that "we are still over-valuing the changing, and ignoring the permanent." The Permanent has come to mean Paralysis and Death. The failure to grasp the proper relation of the Eternal and the Transient has resulted in an "over-estimation of the importance of our own time." This is natural, he says, to an age which, whatever its professions, is still imbued with the doctrine of progress. "But the doctrine of progress, while it can do little to make the future more real to us, has a very strong influence towards making the past less real to us. For it leads us to take for granted that the past, any part or the whole of it, has its meaning only in the present; leads us to ask of any past age, not what it has been in itself, not what the individuals composing it have made of themselves, but, what has that age done for us?" In Murder in the Cathedral the audience is tempted by the Knights to fall into precisely this trap - to see what Becket has accomplished in relation to their own time and values. Eliot sees this as part of the modern crisis: The notion that a past age or civilization might be great in itself, precious in the eye of God, because it succeeded in adjusting the delicate relation of the Eternal and the Transient, is completely alien to us. No age has been more egocentric, so to speak, than our own; others have been egocentric through ignorance, ours through complacent historical knowledge.22

Eliot's concept of history is essentially the Christian concept. Religious thought is inextricably bound up with historical thought, for Christianity is a historical religion, in the very particular sense that its religious doctrines are at the same time historical events or interpretations. Belief in the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection of God in Christ, present questions which must transcend the apparatus of the scientific historian, but provide certain bearings for the interpretation of the whole human drama of life on earth and the scheme of things in time. History is the process
of divine disclosure, and the central point in history, the point which gives meaning to human existence, is the Incarnation:

Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in and out of time,
A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history; transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time but not like a moment of time,
A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time and that moment of time gave the meaning.

(The Rock)

Here the "impossible union of spheres of existence is actual," the "past and future are conquered and reconciled." The divine incarnates itself in time, thus the eternal manifests itself within the temporal.

"History is a pattern of timeless moments." "But to apprehend the point of intersection of the timeless with time is an occupation for the saint." (Four Quartets)

The saint relates time and eternity and a martyrdom is an affirmation of timeless reality, of timeless value in time. Thus in Murder in the Cathedral Becket preaches in his last sermon that "a martyrdom is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways." (Interlude, 11. 65-7) 

As Nevill Coghill points out, "no modern historian can accept Eliot's postulate that 'a martyrdom is always the design of God' because historians wish their art to approximate as nearly as possible to a science, and obey the laws of terrestrial evidence like other scientists. If historians allowed the idea that God from time to time made unaccountable interferences in the course of events, history would cease to be scientific and so abandon its special discipline." But he goes on to say that a "poet is under no obligation to accept the limitations that historians impose on themselves." This is undeniably true. The academic historian must perforce concern himself with what can be established by concrete external
evidence, bringing out the things which must be valid, irrespective of creed or philosophy. But the historical playwright is not confined by the same limits and is free to carry the issues over into the sphere of the prophet, the philosopher or the theologian. Contemplating history, it is natural to be driven into ultra-historical realms. For an interpretation of the human drama the writer is ultimately thrown back on his own most private beliefs and experience. Thus we find, in Murder in the Cathedral, Eliot projecting the turmoil of his own inner state. There is a sense of terrible personal anguish in the play which suggests an emotional experience of an excruciating kind.

Murder in the Cathedral is a tremendously powerful play related to Christian history, yet it also explores a psychological inner state which could have connections with Eliot's own at the time. Originally written for the Canterbury Festival and produced in the Chapter House of Canterbury Cathedral, itself rife with very live connections with Becket, the audience is under pressure to see it in historical terms, to put the emphasis on the external historical aspect. Yet very prevalent is the obscure psychological conflict going on in Eliot himself. This psychological conflict is subterranean, but it accounts for what is powerful in the play. This aspect was brought out forcefully in Terry Hands's production of Murder in the Cathedral in 1972 at the Aldwych Theatre. Katharine Worth vividly recalls the "impressionistic set by Farrah, its pillars and arches tremulously fading in and out with each change in the stage light, its properties - white altar, huge cross - carried on by priests seeming to be deliberately setting a scene for a martyrdom." "It created," she says, "an exotic, insubstantial world which insidiously suggested itself, Genet style, as a creation of the troubled mind, a projection of an inner landscape which the male characters - the priests, and above all, Becket - needed desperately to establish as protection against a double terror. First a mysterious sexual nausea was brilliantly indicated by an
athletic female chorus, dancing and miming the acts of sex as an accompaniment to horrific images of animality - huge and ridiculous scaly wings, the taste of putrid flesh in the spoon. Then came the terrible vision of the 'void,' hypnotically delivered by priests in a chillingly flat monotone:

no objects, no tones,
No colours, no forms to distract, to divert the soul
From seeing itself, foully united for ever, nothing with nothing.

The play became a modern drama of self-consciousness in which the nausea and dread were related to troubling divisions in Becket's own nature. "The production brought out the fact that the play allows for a very modern treatment and interpretation.

Eliot wrote this play during an extremely traumatic time in his life. In 1933 he left his wife who was suffering from a serious psychological disturbance. She had been under medical treatment for years, and the effect of her illness, and financial pressures, on Eliot was very harrowing. He considered himself "emotionally deranged" and it had been a "lifelong affliction." He too had undergone medical treatment for his neurosis. Dredging the subconscious for truths about the self is a very painful experience and his writings during this period reflect this painful self-consciousness. Eliot's unhappy marriage caused him a nightmare of anxiety and self-doubt, and reinforced the sense of sexual guilt and horror of women, reflected in his early work. As Lyndall Gordon states in her sensitive biographical study of Eliot's formative years, "There is no use denying that many of Eliot's early poems suggest sexual problems - not lack of libido, but inhibition, distrust of women, and a certain physical queasiness." Another biographer, T S Matthews, also states that Eliot's sense of sin and guilt seems to have been centred "on two peculiar obsessions which he stated as general truths: that every man wants to murder a girl; that sex is sin is death." These feelings of sexual dread and recoil emerge strongly in the dramatic works
Eliot wrote during this time of intense personal stress caused by the break-up of his marriage. In addition was the overwhelming guilt which accompanied the terrible decision to leave his wife. He felt perhaps that he was abandoning her. It was done in a rather cruel fashion. In February 1933, while he was away on a lecture tour in America, he had his solicitors serve his wife with a Deed of Separation and along with it a letter from him, explaining what he was doing. She did not accept the enforced separation quietly, but endeavoured for years to get him back, often attempting to attract his attention in wild uncontrollable ways. Eventually she entered a mental home where she died in 1947. On leaving her, Eliot was hounded by dreadful remorse and guilt. His friend, Wyndham Lewis, describes him as looking like a "harassed and exhausted refugee, in flight from some scourge of God." The inner torment Eliot suffered is registered in the plays he wrote during this agonising period in his life.

Sweeney Agonistes (1926), Murder in the Cathedral (1935), and The Family Reunion (1939), are all explorations into the interior, and have a strikingly similar pattern. All three deal with phantoms in the mind and a state of acute self-consciousness. There is the same grappling with a subterranean nightmare world to do with sex, women and violence. In Murder in the Cathedral the sexual nausea in the verse conveys very strongly a sense of contagion and shuddering physical distaste. This feeling of physical revulsion is also expressed by Sweeney in Sweeney Agonistes and Harry in The Family Reunion:

Sweeney: Birth, and copulation and death.
That's all, that's all, that's all.
Birth, and copulation, and death.
...
Birth, and copulation, and death.
That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks:
Birth, and copulation, and death.
Harry: You do not know
The noxious smell untraceable in the drains,
Inaccessible to the plumbers, that has its hour of the night; you do not know
The unspoken voice of sorrow in the ancient bedroom
At three o'clock in the morning...
I am the old house
With the noxious smell and the sorrow before morning,
In which all past is present, all degradation
Is unredeemable.31

An overwhelming sense of contamination and guilt related to sex is what all three protagonists seem to be fighting to free themselves of.

In Sweeney Agonistes Eliot brilliantly realises a realm of dark anxieties and obsessions, and through it all runs the all-compelling drive towards murder:

I knew a man once did a girl in
Any man might do a girl in
Any man has to, needs to, wants to
Once in a lifetime, do a girl in.
Well he kept her there in a bath
With a gallon of lysol in a bath.

... He didn't know if he was alive and the girl was dead
He didn't know if the girl was alive and he was dead
He didn't know if they both were alive or both were dead.32

That Sweeney is going to murder Dusty in the end is implicit from the whole movement of the action. The Family Reunion similarly deals with dark drives in the subconscious. After being kept abroad for years by an unhappy marriage, Harry returns home clearly suffering from some sort of nervous breakdown caused by the death of his wife, who either fell from the deck of an ocean liner or was pushed overboard by her husband. Truths are unearthed about the family's closely hidden past and Harry learns that his father had been similarly obsessed with an urge to kill his own wife. The decision Harry finally makes to leave home, to come to terms with his sense of being haunted by
hereditary sin and guilt, results in the death of his mother. As with Sweeney Agonistes and Murder in the Cathedral, there is in The Family Reunion the pre-occupation with murder and the struggle to escape an all-constraining bond: "One thinks to escape/By violence, but one is still alone/In an over-crowded desert, jostled by ghosts." Harry, like Sweeney and Becket, is a lonely, tormented, extremely self-conscious being. He is deeply aware of troubling divisions within himself, and hounded by spectres of the avenging Furies:

Can't you see them? You don't see them, but I see them, And they see me.33

In Murder in the Cathedral Becket suffers from the same overwhelming sense of being hunted down - "All my life they have been coming, these feet." He is continually dogged by threats of violence and visions of his own martyrdom. There is a real connection here with the 'murder' obsession of Sweeney and Harry. The essential action of the play, as Eliot himself describes it, is: "A man comes home, foreseeing that he will be killed, and he is killed." A personal nightmare is involved. Eliot says that he "wanted to concentrate on death and martyrdom"34 and the whole drive of the play is towards this cardinal event. There is a similar drive within Becket himself. He is caught up by the dominating sense of this particular destiny, but there is a quality of self-absorption, a narcissistic tendency, in his urge towards martyrdom. It is this rooted egotism that has to come to birth in Becket's consciousness and so find expurgation. The word 'martyr' as we often use it today implies an element of the self-inflicted. The distinction between suicide and martyrdom is a fine one, and it is a theme that Eliot explores in the play. There is a personal trauma behind it all. Eliot deliberately dehumanises the characters and action to distance the situation from himself, but much of the torment, the withdrawal into self, the shrinking from sex and women that can be found in Murder in the
Cathedral may relate to his own marital problems at this time.

Perhaps Eliot's conversion to Christianity in 1927 was an attempt to find an inner peace and reconciliation in his dilemma. T S Matthews tells us that Eliot once expressed to an old friend, Paul Elmer More, "his incomprehension of those people who did not feel the emptiness at the core of life; and confessed that it was his own awareness of this central nothingness that had driven him to accept the partial panacea of Christianity. Further: that Hell exists, and for those who do not believe in life after death, Hell establishes itself here on earth; that people go to Hell of their own choice, and cannot change themselves sufficiently to make the attempt." Murder in the Cathedral powerfully realises this fear of void, of nothingness, at the heart of existence, and the hell people can create within themselves. A struggle towards inner peace is the central experience of the play. The sense of grappling with an inner world of nightmare is continually brought home through the hypnotic effect of rhythm and chant and ritualistic movement, and the lines often suggest suffering that springs from an intolerable burden of guilt:

In the small circle of pain within the skull
You still shall tramp and tread one endless round
Of thought, to justify your action to yourselves,
Weaving a fiction which unravels as you weave,
Pacing forever in the hell of make-believe
Which never is belief...

(Part II, ll. 606-11)

As has been established in my introductory chapter, a historical playwright may use extremely personal experience for his interpretation of history, as long as there is a basis for his vision in historical fact. Eliot may delve deep into the intimate recesses of his private life in his realisation of the theme of death and martyrdom, but he is in no way careless of history, as I intend to show. There was much in history that served his deep personal needs.
In Becket he probably found a character with whom he identified profoundly in many respects. Both had the unmistakable stamp of greatness, possessing extraordinary gifts of which they could not help but be fully conscious. They were both haunted by a sense of past guilt for different reasons - Eliot because he had left his wife, Becket because of former worldly compliance. They were both extremely withdrawn individuals in a particular way - there was about them a certain inner tension, a reserve, even repression. They both hid their deepest personality, meeting others on a different level. A distinguished modern historian, Dom David Knowles, writes in 1963, with regard to Becket:

In all the mass of biographical material there is scarcely a reference to personal affection given or received... The only two human beings (apart from his mother) who are recorded to have loved him are the two masters, Theobald and the king, whom in different ways he strove to please by concealing his real self, and it is worth noting that both were, though in different ways, disillusioned at the last.36

Becket had an extremely worldly side which he hid from Archbishop Theobald, his spiritual father, and a deeply spiritual side which he hid from Henry, his secular lord. Thus, like Eliot, he must have suffered at times from an acute sense of self-division.

Both Becket and Eliot went through a phase of terrible mental and moral strife, resulting in illness. Knowles describes the archbishop before the critical meeting with the king at Northampton in October 1164:

He was face to face with pain, imprisonment, perhaps even death, and that not for a principle but in a feudal, personal quarrel; he would pass into oblivion and pope and king would pick up the threads of their old life while he lay in prison or in the grave. His mental agony was joined to physical fear such as the battlefield had not brought, and that in its turn brought on an illness that was possibly the result of the mind's attempt to escape from its dilemma.
It is naturally impossible to be certain whether Becket's illness was psychosomatic, but, as Knowles states, "the fact of its frequent recurrence and its sudden disappearance would suggest a psychological element, and all agree that it was brought on by anxiety." Eliot thus has very strong historical support for placing such emphasis on a torn and anguished interior state. In so doing it is significant that he anticipates the views and approach of modern historians. In the play we find ourselves caught up in different areas of concern and conflict. Eliot is scrupulous in his regard for the external world of events, but the play is immensely inward as well, and the true field of battle is the inner one.

Murder in the Cathedral is Eliot's only history play. It was written for the Canterbury Festival of 1935 after Eliot was approached by George Bell. The historical sections of The Rock, "a pageant play" presented in 1934, were written by E M Browne and Eliot only contributed the choruses. These are oppressively didactic, dominated by the concern to drive home the Christian message. Eliot himself refers to them as written in the voice of the poet "addressing - indeed haranguing - an audience." But this tone is transcended in Murder in the Cathedral where the Chorus expresses a profound state of consciousness, a state of mixed spiritual hope and fear. The play has undergone many minor textual alterations in the course of successive editions. A special Canterbury edition was printed locally to be sold at the Festival and went out of print. The first edition of the play to be published was the Faber and Faber edition in 1935 which was the text without the benefit of production experience. Its variations from the Canterbury version have been aptly illustrated by E M Browne, who shows that the later editions of the play, which may be taken as final, follow the Canterbury text closely and are merely a tauter version of it.

Eliot's serious regard for historical truth reveals itself in his approach to history, which is similar to
Shaw's. Like Shaw, he goes back to primary sources to gain a first-hand knowledge of available historical evidence, and then goes on to present a distinctly modern vision. Like Shaw, he is extremely concerned to have it known that his play is based in fact. When Nevill Coghill was asked by Eliot to prepare the 1965 Faber and Faber educational edition of Murder in the Cathedral, one of the features Eliot wanted brought out was "how the action and dialogue were based in authentic contemporary records and were faithful to historical truth." In this edition Coghill includes translations of brief extracts from the primary source, the Rolls series edition of Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury edited by J C Robertson and J B Sheppard (1875-85). This contains a vast accumulation of material about the archbishop, written in Latin by his contemporaries, and writers of the next generation. It superceded the collection made by J A Giles, Sanctus Thomas Cantuariensis (1845-6). Its seven volumes are devoted mainly to contemporary biographies of the archbishop and to the extensive contemporary correspondence which refers to him. Eliot knew Latin and might or might not have used this enduring work in the British Museum. He could have used available translations of material from this work such as J A Giles's The Life and Letters of Thomas Becket (1846) and W H Hutton's St. Thomas of Canterbury from Contemporary Biographers and other Chroniclers (1899), The English Saints (1903) and Thomas Becket: Archbishop of Canterbury (1910).

The contemporary source material for the history of Thomas Becket is voluminous and of unequal value. A later translation of selections from this material by D C Douglas and G W Greenway, English Historical Documents 1042-1189 (1953) discusses the varied character of the abundant testimony and reproduces the most authoritative accounts of the events. A comparison of Coghill's notes to the play, which show how almost everything in the dialogue and action
is based on one or other of these chroniclers' accounts, and Douglas and Greenway's claim for the authenticity of their extracts, reveals that Eliot takes great care to make his dramatisation of events accord with the most reliable of these accounts.

From the original sources Eliot derives his controlling ideas for the play. Even his conjectural reconstruction of Becket's spiritual dilemma, his portrayal of the need for Becket to plumb the innermost recesses of his conscience to purify his will of any impulse towards martyrdom, has historical vindication. There are numerous indications in contemporary letters and narratives of Becket's declared willingness to accept martyrdom (he was often threatened with it) if it came to the crux. During his last months he became more and more convinced that only by his death would a solution be found to the conflict between State and Church. Edward Grim, who was not one of the Canterbury monks but a secular clerk on a visit to Canterbury, was present at the murder and stood by the archbishop to the last. According to Douglas and Greenway, he may be regarded as the most detached and impartial witness, since he was more or less a stranger to Canterbury, and his presence at the martyrdom was accidental. All the events he records are confirmed by other writers. A reading of Grim's narrative of the murder shows that Eliot followed his account very closely for his dramatisation of the event. Grim describes Becket as actually desiring martyrdom in the end:

...he who had long since yearned for martyrdom, now saw that the occasion to embrace it had seemingly arrived, and dreaded lest it should be deferred or even altogether lost, if he took refuge in the church. But the monks still pressed him, saying that it was not becoming for him to absent himself from vespers, which were at that very moment being said in the church. He lingered for a while motionless in that less sacred spot deliberately awaiting that happy hour of consummation which he had craved with many sighs and sought with such devotion; for he feared lest, as has been said, reverence
for the sanctity of the sacred building might deter even the impious from their purpose and cheat him of his heart's desire. 42

Similarly Eliot presents Becket rejecting the priests' entreaties to seek refuge:

Go to vespers, remember me at your prayers. They shall find the shepherd here; the flock shall be spared.
I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper,
And I would no longer be denied; all things Proceed to a joyful consummation.

(Part II, 11. 71-5)

Before reaching this point Becket has had to pass through a painful process of consciousness, in order to purge his will of any element of self-interestedness. This spiritual progression is essential to Eliot's vision of martyrdom. Selflessness and purity of motive are essential requisites of a saint and unutterably hard to attain. To dramatise the profundities of mind and motive, Eliot takes us into the tremendous corridors that lie within. We are continually driven below the threshold of consciousness. He portrays the crisis of the inner man when faced with a moment of critical decision, and probably uses the opportunity to project some of his own personal torments. But there is a firm historical basis for the idea of there being in Becket an urge towards martyrdom, which provides Eliot with a take-off point for his exploration of the inner man.

Another dominating idea which can be traced in the sources and shown to have some connection with the way Eliot treats it in the play, is the theme of peace. The Women of Canterbury continually lament the disturbance of the quiet seasons. The Priests anxiously inquire of the Messenger - "Is it peace or war?" "What peace can there be found/To grow between the hammer and the anvil."

(Part I, 11. 79-81) This expression "the hammer and the anvil" was actually used by the Bishop of Chichester of Becket's own time. He is quoted by William Fitz Stephen
as having said to Becket:

You have shut us up in a trap by your prohibition, you have snared us, as it were, between the hammer and the anvil; for if we disobey we are ensnared in the bonds of disobedience; if we obey, we infringe the constitution and trespass against the king.43

Becket was continually under pressure to conform to the king's will. One of the forms that will took was the assertion that it was his duty to provide for the peace and security of the Church and the Realm. In a letter from the bishops and clergy of England to the archbishop (June 1160) the point can be seen to be driven home:

We do not assert that our lord the king has never erred, but we do say and assert with confidence that he has always been prepared to make recompense to God. He has been made king by the Lord to provide in everything for the peace of his subjects. It is to preserve this peace to the churches and peoples committed to his charge that he wishes and requires the dignities vouchsafed to his predecessors to be maintained and secured to himself... Wherefore it is the common petition of us all that you will not by precipitate measures scatter and destroy, but provide with paternal solicitude that the sheep committed to your charge may enjoy life, peace and security.44

Becket was also put upon by members of his own side. Herbert of Bosham, a close friend and adviser of Becket's, narrates how, after the failure of the conference at Montmarte (18th. November, 1169), one of their company went up to the archbishop and said, "This day the peace of the Church has been discussed in the chapel of the Martyrdom, and it is my belief that only through your martyrdom will the Church ever obtain peace." Becket, turning round, answered him laconically, "Would to God she might be delivered, even by my blood!"45 Becket was hedged around with threats. But he was not alone in his attitude with regard to this question of peace. The same chronicler reports the pope to have said to Becket "that the cause the archbishop was advocating was the cause of justice and
of the Church, and that, if peace was to be made, it must
be at one and the same time the peace of the Church and
the peace of justice. For the Church, whether in peace
or without peace, it was precious to yield one's life, and
for the archbishop more precious than for others."46

Eliot must have been influenced by the way this issue
of peace was thrust around by figures in the historical
situation. Peace was a pressing concern in his time as
it was in Becket's. Murder in the Cathedral was produced
in 1935 just two years after the advance of Hitler to
power and the threat to world peace was only too real.
Robert Sencourt points out that in the year Eliot was
completing the play, "Mussolini had come out with the
prophecy that if the nations of Europe persisted in their
current mentalities, there would be general war by 1939."47

The play was produced during this time of tension and
expectancy caused by the menacing nature of the inter-
national political scene. The questions posed by Becket
in his final sermon must have come across with particular
edge and immediacy to audiences of the first production:

Now think for a moment about the meaning
of this word 'peace'. Does it seem strange
to you that the angels should have announced
Peace, when ceaselessly the world has been
stricken with War and the fear of War? Does
it seem to you that the angelic voices were
mistaken, and that the promise was a
disappointment and a cheat?

(Part I, 11. 20-7)

From history Eliot derives the text of Becket's last sermon.
William Fitz Stephen tells us that, before the High Mass on
Christmas Day which Becket celebrated, he "preached a
splendid sermon to the people, taking for his subject a
text on which he was wont to ponder, namely 'on earth peace
to men of goodwill.' And when he made mention of the holy
fathers of the church of Canterbury who were therein
confessors, he said that they already had an archbishop who
was a martyr, St. Alphege, and it was possible that in a
short time they would have yet another..."48

The sermon in the play is built around these two facts,
but apart from them it is Eliot's own conception. Becket goes on to ask whether the peace that Christ himself spoke about ('My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you') was as we think of it, "the kingdom of England at peace with its neighbours, the barons at peace with the King, the householder counting his peaceful gains, the swept hearth, his best wine for a friend at the table, his wife singing to the children?" His disciples knew no such things, but went on to suffer torture, imprisonment, and death by martyrdom. "So then, He gave his disciples peace but not as the world gives." (Part I, 11. 30-40) Eliot sets up the notion of two kinds of peace, which, though not necessarily mutually exclusive, have to be kept separate in order to resolve the conflict - "The peace of man is always uncertain unless men keep the peace of God." The peace of God is an inner peace which springs from being in harmony with God's will. Inner peace was a central issue for Eliot at the time of the play, because of the ordeal of his private life. The Church offered him a way of reconciliation and release from his overwhelming sense of remorse and guilt. As a biographer states, "Eliot's passionate purpose in becoming a declared Christian was to turn his back on Hell and his face toward Heaven." From the way in which Eliot very carefully integrates the exterior world of events and the interior world of the spirit in Murder in the Cathedral, it is clear that he is both one of the most inward among the playwrights dealt with in this thesis, and also one of the most scrupulously respectful of the outward world of historical fact and event.

Various criticisms have been devoted to Eliot's treatment of historical material. J T Boulton studies Eliot's use of original sources in realising a theme which, according to Boulton, "concentres everything in the play - the clash between the values and attitudes of Secularism and those of religion." He illustrates how Eliot often relies for the detail, the general tone and the order of
speeches on contemporary narrative. The minute changes he makes are usually in the direction of impersonalisation, to extend the significance of the conflict beyond the individuals involved. It becomes a conflict between State and Church, the law of man against the law of God. This could be partly Eliot's motive, but the impersonalisation might also relate to his need to cover up personal involvement of a very special kind. P M Adair's reading of the sources suggests that Eliot "deliberately sacrificed the warmth and vitality and ironic vigour of the Thomas his contemporaries knew, in subjugation to his religious conception of sainthood and martyrdom." This is undoubtedly true, but again Eliot could also be using this impersonality as a mask, a way of distancing himself from himself. The Becket he presents is an icon-like figure - lone, austere, cold, remote. He makes no attempt to invest Becket with flesh and blood or to convey a living relationship between him and his fellow priests. He is his own counsellor, and the priests look to him continually from a distance removed, as creatures to be led, whereas the records tell us that, though he inspired admiration and loyalty rather than affection, he had intimate advisers like Herbert of Bosham and John of Salisbury, who felt very free to speak their minds in agreement or opposition.

These two historical characters appear by name in Eliot's manuscript notes, as E M Browne shows, reproducing excerpts from pages of the original manuscript preserved in the Houghton Library, Harvard. "They have clearly been sacrificed to the formal pattern," Browne says. "In the printed cast list, no characters are given names: even the Knights who kill Becket and whose names are well known are listed as First, Second, Third and Fourth. This is the terminus of the process by which history, though its sources are treated with the most careful respect, is subjected to theme; the human action is subordinated to the divine, the action in time to the timeless movement of God's will." But it is significant that Becket at the
end does actually refer to one of the knights by name as he turns to face them, which suggests a certain intimacy with his murderers. The doubling of the parts of the Knights and the Tempters, as has become theatrical practice, also drives home their relation to vital aspects of Becket's personality. The exclusion of Henry from the play is again surely extremely significant. Henry, because of his place in history and force of personality, would have figured as too much of a separate entity. Eliot realises a complex state of mind or consciousness, and all the other characters can be seen as inextricably linked to Becket himself, part of the mind's dialogue with itself. There is also the curious male/female dichotomy in the play, with Becket, the Priests, the Tempters and the Knights on one side, and on the other, the Chorus of Women, a strangely one-sex congregation, over which Becket achieves mastery and transcendence. There is the same sort of male/female division in Sweeney Agonistes where Doris and Dusty unite against the male threat of Sweeney and Pereira in a charged atmosphere of sexual tension and aggression - "A woman runs a terrible risk." Thus the formal design of Murder in the Cathedral need not merely relate to its religious theme, as most critics suggest, but to a hidden psychological struggle going on in Eliot himself. By making the characters and situation a little abstract and inhuman, Eliot is able to use private experience and guard it behind an ambiguous impersonal façade.

Thus there are compelling human aspects of the historical situation which he leaves out. Edward Grim, whose account of the murder Eliot seems to have followed very closely for his dramatisation of the event, stood by Becket to the last and had his arm nearly severed in his effort to ward off a blow at the archbishop's head. This moving feature is omitted. It is as if Eliot deliberately steers clear of all aspects of character and event that might arouse a rush of sympathy for his protagonist and
bring home his full humanity. He continually takes the
action away from the personal, breaking up connections
that are known and familiar, presenting us with a haunting
phantasmagoria of multiple faces and voices that suggest
forces both without and within.

Becket's isolation is emphasised. This isolation
could be partly the isolation of the priest. It
intensifies Becket's predicament, faced with a decision that
involves his pastoral commission. There is a struggle to
discern what is right action and what is merely an
extension of his own will. Yet, as Katharine Worth points
out, "the isolated elements are meant to coalesce, Chorus
and Saint to come together in the redemption of one by the
death of the other. That there has been an interior
happening of this kind is declared poetically with such
skill as almost to convince us that it has happened
dramatically too. But it has not. The Chorus are not
involved in any human relationship with Becket real enough
to move belief in his having power to affect their lives." 53
Actors too have felt this a problem. Robert Speaight who
has played the part of Becket more than a thousand times
confesses that he has "never felt near to him as a man.
He remains a figure on a tapestry or an effigy on a tomb-
imposing, important, intransigent, undoubtedly heroic, but
not very intelligent and with not much to say to the modern
world...." 54

It is again this removed quality about Becket that
leads Helen Gardner to state that his "sanctity appears too
near to spiritual self-culture" and "there is more than a
trace in the Archbishop of the 'classic prig.'" "There
is a taint of professionalism about his sanctity; the note
of complacency is always creeping into his self-conscious
presentation of himself." 55 There is undoubtedly a
capacity in Becket for self-absorption and self-dramatis-
ation, but this is precisely what Eliot is pointing at as
central to Becket's spiritual predicament. At the heart
of his dilemma is the agony of self-consciousness and self-
division. This was brought out in the Terry Hand 1972
production, as Katharine Worth indicates in her review of it: "This Becket was someone who could not face the thought of his own divided being: the driving force behind his actions seemed to be the need for singleness and simplification." The hidden struggle with conflicting inner impulses led to unity of a kind, in a sort of suicide. Eliot's guess at what might have been a principal weakness of Becket is a very plausible one, as Robert Speaight admits: "There was a self-dramatizing side to his character - as the chronicles record it for us - which might well have tempted him to do the right deed for the wrong reason." It was certainly a temptation known to Eliot.

It is not the unworldly ascetic that we are confronted with in Murder in the Cathedral. It is Becket, the man of great political experience and legal acuity, well able to foresee events and measure the future. Through the actualities of a particular case in history, Eliot presents us with a central conflict - the individual against the world and the individual divided against himself. The fact that Becket comes across as a dehumanised figure to a large extent, and that Eliot fails to establish a viable relationship between priest and people, so essential to his theme of Christian redemption, is probably due to a desire to distance the situation from himself. The poet, he believes, must preserve a necessary impersonality. He should go through a "process of depersonalization." For, writes Eliot:

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.

The play unites both the public world of history and the theatre with the private world of the individual and the poet, and the exterior world of physical action with the interior world of spiritual happening. It is precisely this capacity to suggest both dimensions simultaneously
that Eliot sees as the defining feature of poetic drama:

It is possible that what distinguishes poetic drama from prosaic drama is a kind of doubleness in the action, as if it took place on two planes at once. In this it is different from allegory, in which the abstraction is something conceived, not something differently felt, and from symbolism (as in the plays of Maeterlinck) in which the tangible world is deliberately diminished - both symbolism and allegory being operations of the conscious planned mind. In poetic drama a certain apparent irrelevance may be the symptom of this doubleness; or the drama has an under-pattern, less manifest than the theatrical one.  

Eliot was preoccupied with the poetic medium as a powerful force for suggesting that area of feeling and experience beyond "the nameable, classifiable emotions and motives of our conscious life," a part of life which he felt prose drama was wholly inadequate to express. The proper aim of dramatic poetry, he says, "is to go as far in this direction as it is possible to go, without losing that contact with the ordinary everyday world with which drama must come to terms." It is thus not surprising that Eliot turned away from the narrow realism of his time, with its concentration on the obvious exterior world. He moved right out of the realist tradition, the mainstream of the theatre in the thirties, whose limitations have been observed in the previous chapter. Eliot recognised these limitations, speaking as early as 1922, with prophetic insight:

The realism of the ordinary stage is something to which we can no longer respond, because to us it is no longer realistic. We know that the gesture of daily existence is inadequate for the stage; instead of pretending that the stage gesture is a copy of reality, let us adopt a literal untruth, a thorough-going convention, a ritual. For the stage - not only in its remote origins, but always - is a ritual, and the failure of the contemporary stage to satisfy the craving for ritual is one of the reasons why it is not a living art.
Eliot saw realistic drama as "drama striving steadily to escape the conditions of art." He stressed the importance of form - harmonious design, musical rhythm, ritualistic action. It was partly the coherent simplicity and beauty of design, and the perception of an order in life it elicited, that Eliot so greatly admired in *Everyman*. He saw it as a model play, and wanted English drama to go back to that drama of medieval ritual, which dealt with permanent elements of humanity and essential religious emotions. In *Everyman*, he says, "the religious and the dramatic are not merely combined, but wholly fused. Everyman is on the one hand the human soul in extremity, and on the other any man in any dangerous position from which we wonder how he is going to escape...." In *Murder in the Cathedral* Eliot achieves this poetic order and balance in form, and this fusion of the religious and the dramatic in theme.

He sought to highlight the universal truths embodied in a historical situation, but his task was made more difficult because he was working against the tide of contemporary thought and feeling. In reaction to the tendency of nineteenth-century writers and historians, like Mommsen and Strachey, to romanticise their heroes and villains and pronounce facile moral judgements, the succeeding generation was apt to be very wary. It often ran to the opposite extreme, reducing uniqueness to mediocrity and hesitating to take any ethical values as fixed outside its own time or context, in the fear that moral judgements might be no more absolute than a matter of social taste or fashion. In the 1920's Brecht was already opposing the idea of the individual as the focus in literature, when against a universe of events he appeared so small and narrowly bound by his time and circumstance. The accent in his plays is on social relations; the individual is seen as the product rather than the creator of social forces and movements. The historical process becomes the point of reference, the generator of values,
the source of character.

Brecht's stance is related to the Marxian view that history produced the individual. The shift of emphasis is essential to his idea of a society-changing theatre, as can be seen from the contrast set up in his play Galileo (1938): "Unhappy is the land who has no heroes." - "No, unhappy is the land who has a need for heroes." Brecht could possibly have been influenced by Shaw who in 1924 leaves an audience in much the same position at the end of Saint Joan:

O God that madest this beautiful earth,  
When will it be ready to receive Thy saints?  
How long, O Lord, how long?

Though the great individual like Joan is very important in Shaw's view of history, since she points the way of historical progress, it is society that is focused in his plays, for his aim too is social awareness and change.

Brecht's and Shaw's approach to the theme of martyrdom in Galileo and Saint Joan figures in interesting contrast to Eliot's in Murder in the Cathedral. In Brecht's play, whether Galileo should have been brave and died for his convictions, rather than cowardly and expedient, is left very much an open question. His giving up of his intellectual integrity is not affirmed; neither is his right to life and the continuity of his work denied. The possible consequences of his decision are suggested in terms of the man and society, and the audience is left to wrestle with the complexities of the moral issue. As has already been shown in my chapter on Saint Joan, Shaw's concern is to get the audience grappling with the implications of a historical situation in terms of its contemporary relevance. He takes very deliberate steps to shift the audience's attention away from the martyrdom itself to the kind of world that destroys the instruments of its advance.

Like Shaw and Brecht, Eliot is interested in getting the audience critically involved in the social and moral issues raised by a historical event. But his emphasis is on the individual as a spiritual being, a universe
within himself, and on martyrdom as a source of spiritual strength and renewal. The idea that these three playwrights are connected in some ways is intriguing, considering their varying religious positions: Shaw, an agnostic socialist, with his belief in creative evolution; Brecht, a Marxist and materialist, with his contempt for religion; Eliot, an Anglo-Catholic with his faith in Christ and the Church - a strange assortment, divided in their philosophies yet united in their appeal to reason and to history as the basis of their beliefs.

Eliot's focus is not the social or the particular. His play, as one critic puts it, is a "particular image of a perpetual situation." It is the absolute incarnated in the particular that he is concerned to illumine, what holds true for all time, despite the progression of history which might render its particular form and expression an anachronism. The individual is the centre, and it is the value of the individual life and the significant tradition of individual lives that is affirmed though, paradoxically, Eliot has reduced the personal quality in the actual characterisation. The timeless value of the present is asserted over and above all social and historical process, all evolutionary or revolutionary movement.

In an age of scepticism when science seemed steadily bent on disenchanting the universe, Eliot was pointing to its inscrutable mystery, the eternal present in time and the continual possibility of the numinous experience in the midst of the everyday. In a world distrustful of saints, the general tendency, as has been seen in the preceding chapter, was to shatter the myth and find the human being behind the saint. Murder in the Cathedral explores the possibility of the saint behind the man. In so far as he looks at the historical man, Eliot is not committed to the sanctity of Becket in the way the chroniclers who recorded the events clearly are. Eliot takes a historical personality but it is what makes for sanctity that he is concerned to dramatise. Through the
actualities of a situation in history, Eliot realises his vision of martyrdom, dramatising the significance of such an event for humanity. The play presents us with the questions of human life and destiny that men are faced with when history becomes catastrophic. The audience is drawn in to grapple with these on a mental and emotional plane, and is carried through to a state of reconciliation by a vision of history which embraces the catastrophe and transcends the immediate spectacle of tragedy.

The play opens, plunging us into an atmosphere of impending doom. Dramatic tension is created by the Chorus, the Women of Canterbury, a curiously one-sex congregation, set in opposition to an all-male priestly caste who are quick to rebuke and put these women in their place. Dimly perceptive of the Archbishop's return the Chorus expresses strong foreboding. They are the common people who have suffered "various oppression" but, mostly left to their own devices, are content to be left alone:

We try to keep our households in order;
The merchant, shy and cautious, tries to compile a little fortune,
And the labourer bends to his piece of earth,
earth-colour, his own colour,
Preferring to pass unobserved.

(Part I, ll. 26-9)

Camouflaged by the anonymity of their existence, they would rather avoid accountability of any great sort. Yet already they are being involved by something larger than themselves:

Some presage of an act
Which our eyes are compelled to witness, has forced our feet
Towards the cathedral. We are forced to bear witness.

(Part I, ll. 6-8)

Indeed, the Women have to see this thing - a man achieving freedom and mastery. This meaning underlies the obvious Christian theme of an inexorable will behind the scheme of things. An eternal design runs through the temporal, and human action is subordinate to the divine:
Destiny waits in the hands of God, not in the hands of statesmen
Who do, some well, some ill, planning and guessing,
Having their aims which turn in their hands in the pattern of time.

(Part I, ll. 44-6)

The idea of the wheel of time is foreshadowed here, with the suggestion of an all-controlling centrifugal force. Throughout the play runs the image of the universe, half-formed, in a state of becoming, groaning in darkness and travail. The New Year "waits, breathes, waits, whispers in darkness." "Destiny waits in the hand of God, shaping the still unshapen."

The Chorus communicates this feeling of waiting in anguished expectancy: "What shall we do in the heat of summer/But wait in barren orchards for another October?" Waiting is a central theme in the play. The passage of time is emphasised:

Seven years and the summer is over
Seven years since the Archbishop left us.

These lines are repeated by the Priests on their entry. They have "had enough of waiting from December to dismal December." Thomas himself waits in anticipation, foreseeing the nature of his death long before it actually happens - "All my life they have been coming, these feet."

The Chorus labour us with this sense of waiting in fear:

Some malady is coming upon us. We wait, we wait,
And the saints and martyrs wait, for those who shall be martyrs and saints.

(Part I, ll. 38-48)

In their waiting is the same kind of deep apprehension of something alien and menacing that we are made to feel in Sweeney Agonistes, as Doris and Dusty wait in dread of the shrilling of the telephone or the knock upon the door in fear that it might be "Pereira."

The Chorus fear the Archbishop's return, but they are not a "spiritless lot" who only "regain some spiritual stature under the guidance of Thomas," as some critics
They have the keener intuitive sense of women, a capacity for spiritual insight - "I have seen these things in a shaft of sunlight" - and are aware that something cataclysmic is about to happen, and what it will cost. The Second priest rebukes them for their "craven apprehension" and calls them "foolish, immodest and babbling women," but this is ironical, since he is the one who is totally lacking in percipience. There is a quality of extreme naivety about his unqualified delight at the news of the Archbishop's return:

The Archbishop shall be at our head, dispelling dismay and doubt. He will tell us what we are to do, he will give us our orders, instruct us.

... Our lord, our Archbishop returns. And when the Archbishop returns Our doubts are dispelled. Let us therefore rejoice, I say rejoice, and show a glad face for his welcome. I am the Archbishop's man. Let us give the Archbishop welcome!

(Part I, 11. 127-36)

His glib optimism is tempered by the utterance of the other two Priests. The First Priest fears for the Archbishop and the Church. He saw Becket as Chancellor, flattered by the king, Liked or feared by courtiers, in their overbearing fashion, Despised and always despising, always isolated, Never one among them, always insecure; His pride always feeding upon his own virtues, Pride drawing sustenance from impartiality, Pride drawing sustenance from generosity, Loathing power given by temporal devolution, Wishing subjection to God alone.

(Part I, 11. 114-22)

This is Becket in the days of his chancellorship, but it points to a capacity for cold, inhuman pride and detachment, and a solitariness that is self-serving. A strong image is impressed of a man "feeding upon his own virtues," isolated
partly by his own nature. Before the Archbishop's entry we are given a vivid suggestion of a quality of self-absorption, a man able to turn in upon himself.

The Third Priest, who is the most spiritually perceptive, is for allowing the pattern of events to take their course:

For good or ill, let the wheel turn.
The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.
For ill or good, let the wheel turn.
For who knows the end of good or evil?
Until the grinders cease
And the doors shall be shut in the street,
And all the daughters of music shall be brought low.

(Part I, ll. 137-43)

His words allude to a famous passage in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, which seems to be an eschatological fore-shadowing of the end of all time, when "God will bring every deed into judgement with every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:14) Eliot frequently draws on Biblical language and allusions to lend a ritualistic tone and quality, and convey a sense of timeless experience and reality.

The Chorus continues to build up expectancy of a moment of universal reckoning from which none can escape. They draw the audience in to engage with their fear and disquiet:

Here is no continuing city, here is no abiding stay.
Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain the danger
O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and rotten the year
Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, grey grey grey.
O Thomas, return, Archbishop; return, return to France.
Return. Quickly. Quietly. Leave us to perish in quiet.

(Part I, ll. 144-9)

They register the "strain on the brain of the small folk," asked to stand witness to reality in all its starkness. They are not without courage and resilience, "living and
partly living" in their "humble and tarnished frame of existence." They have had their "private terrors," their "particular shadows," their "secret fears," and they have gone on "living and partly living." But this is a fear of a different nature, "a fear like birth and death, when we see birth and death alone / In a void apart."

The inexorable cycle of earthly life, the machine-like inevitability of the passage of time, is driven home in their depiction of ordinary existence, and reinforced through the relentless rhythm of the verse:

Sometimes the corn has failed us,
Sometimes the harvest is good,
One year is a year of rain,
Another a year of dryness,
One year the apples are abundant,
Another year the plums are lacking.
Yet we have gone on living,
Living and partly living.

(Part I, ll. 161-8)

Mind and spirit are partially anaesthetised by the rhythms of day and night, work and rest, life and death, a pattern reinforced by the cycle of the seasons and the whole natural world. There is a kind of dreadful automatism in existence, which is also described in The Family Reunion:

In a thick smoke, many creatures moving
Without direction, for no direction
Leads anywhere but round and round in that vapour -
Without purpose, and without principle of conduct
In flickering intervals of light and darkness...

It is a terrible nightmare that is conveyed - the idea of history without spiritual direction. It is all a meaningless cycle of matter, a perpetually recurring pattern, having no fixed aim, leading nowhere but round and round in a circle. As pointed out earlier, Eliot was certainly subject to this nightmare, but it is also surely central to the modern mind - there is no God; all is chance; we are alone in the universe produced by chemical accident. The aeons of universal history and the natural world are inhuman, alien, rendering human action and suffering meaningless. The play realises powerfully this modern condition.
of spiritual lostness. The Women of Canterbury would rather not be brought up short to face the ultimate meaning of it all. They register the pain of consciousness, central to the play:

And our hearts are torn from us, our brains unskinned like the layers of an onion, our selves are lost lost In a final fear which none understands.

(Part I, ll. 188-9)

The superior stance of the Second Priest, who chastises them for their cowardice, is cut down by Becket who enters at this point:

They speak better than they know, and beyond your understanding. They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer, They know and do not know, that action is suffering And suffering is action. Neither does the agent suffer Nor the patient act. But both are fixed In an eternal action, an eternal patience To which all must consent that it may be willed And which all must suffer that they may will it, That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still Be forever still.

(Part I, ll. 107-17)

Becket's calm entrance and air of imperturbability contrasts sharply with the extreme agitation of the Chorus. The conflict for him, he thinks, has been transcended. In this paradoxical and rather obscure pronouncement, he conveys the sense of having come through to some kind of revelation about the meaning of human suffering and action. Time and eternity are interrelated. A divine pattern underlies the temporal. The action and the suffering are "fixed in an eternal action, an eternal patience / To which all must consent that it may be willed / And which all must suffer that they may will it...." To move in harmony with the divine will requires the surrender of the human will, which is both an active and passive state of being, a total
attitude of living receptively, of living a Passion.
And yet Becket appears very much more director than
directed. He is always a little above the action. He
prepares the audience for the situation almost like an
omniscient narrator:

For a little time the hungry hawk
Will only soar and hover, circling lower,
Waiting excuse, pretence, opportunity.
End will be simple, sudden, God-given.
Meanwhile the substance of our first act
Will be shadows, and the strife with shadows.
Heavier the interval than the consummation.
All things prepare the event. Watch.

(Part I, 11. 247-54)

Through the theatrical imagery the audience is made
conscious of performance and kept a little detached.
These words coming from Becket, in relation to his own
predicament, may reflect a high degree of prescience, but
also a certain consciousness of rôle, a capacity for self-
dramatisation. In the Brechtian manner Eliot has Becket
unfold his own history, as it were, commenting on it from
time to time, very much the expositor of his own situation.

The "strife with shadows" suggests an internal conflict,
which Becket's confrontation with the Tempters can be seen
to represent. According to E M Browne this follows the
line pursued by Eliot in writing the play. He "started
with the first three as historical figures, then trans-
formed them into semi-abstract figures, and added number
four." Browne in his productions tended to interpret them
more and more "as exteriorisations of Becket's inner
conflicts, past or present."67 But there are sufficient
touches to allow us to see them in part as representing
external forces as well. The doubling of their parts with
the four Knights, as is often done in production, adds to
this sense of their protean character. They are highly
individual and clear-cut cameo sketches in themselves.
And there are other echoes of history in the imitation of
medieval and earlier verse styles. The First Tempter
bows himself in glibly:
You see, my Lord, I do not wait upon ceremony:
Here I have come, forgetting all acrimony,
Hoping that your present gravity
Will find excuse for my humble levity
Remembering all the good times past.

(Part I, ll. 255-59)

He tries to fill Becket with nostalgia, to convince him that bitterness can be put aside, friendship recovered along with all the worldly pleasures of the past. Becket dismisses this with some contempt - "You talk of seasons that are past. I remember / Not worth forgetting" - asserting that "only the fool, fixed in his folly," may think he can "turn the wheel on which he turns." The Tempter changes his tone and slips into a modern colloquial idiom which suits his assumption of a conspiratorial air of easy familiarity:

My Lord, a nod is as good as a wink.
A man will often love what he spurns.
For the good times past, that are come again
I am your man.

(Part I, ll. 291-4)

When Becket reads him instantly and parries him effectively in the same manner, the Tempter allows an openly ugly, hostile note to intrude:

You were not used to be so hard upon sinners
When they were your friends. Be easy, man!
The easy man lives to eat the best dinners.
Take a friend's advice. Leave well alone,
Or your goose may be cooked and eaten to the bone.

(Part I, ll. 303-6)

Eliot very effectively uses startling changes of speech-style and rhythm, to break up moods or step up tension, and to connect past and present.

The Second Tempter is blunter and goes straight to the point. Becket should "rule over men" and "reckon no madness." He who "held the solid substance" should not "wander waking with deceitful shadows." The temptation is to join with Henry and

Rule for the good for the better cause,
Dispensing justice make all even,
Is thrive on earth, and perhaps in heaven.

(Part I, ll. 349-51)
The end seems attractive, but the price is submission to Henry. What Becket is being asked to do in essence is to deny his belief in the primacy of spiritual authority. There is considerable cut and thrust in the exchange, the pushing of punchy statements, questions and answers, back and forth:

Second Tempter: Power is present, for him who will wield it.
Thomas: Who shall have it?
Second Tempter: He who will come.
Thomas: What shall be the month?
Second Tempter: The last from the first

(Part I, ll. 356-59)
The precise meaning of this is not so important as the underlying feeling - the sense of inner turmoil and of a tenacious struggle between intractable forces. Eliot's use of rhythm and language to express strain, hostility and aggression brings to mind Pinter's use of words as a weapon in The Birthday Party when Stanley is broken down.

There is again a point, as with the First Tempter, when in face of Becket's persistent rejection, the Second Tempter turns openly threatening:

Yes! Or bravery will be broken,
Cabined in Canterbury, realmless ruler,
Self-bound servant of a powerless Pope,
The old stag, circled with hounds.

(Part I, ll. 361-4)
The sensation of being trapped and intimidated reinforces the suggestion of an implacable conflict between two forces, that can only be ended by the capitulation or annihilation of one of them. The Second Tempter can be seen as representative of external pressure, the political faction of Henry, as well as of an impulse in Becket towards the exercise of temporal power. Becket has the spiritual clarity to see that the temptation to "build a good world," "to keep order as the world keeps order," is the
temptation to put one’s faith in "worldly order not controlled by the order of God." It is to seek for the ultimate in worldly systems and institutions, and confound the permanent with the transitory, the absolute with the contingent. But Becket’s final dismissal of the Second Tempter reflects no small degree of pride in the power of his office:

... shall I, who keep the keys
Of heaven and hell, supreme alone in England,
Who bind and loose, with power from the Pope,
Descend to desire a punier power?
Delegate to deal the doom of damnation,
To condemn kings, not serve among their servants,
Is my open office. No! Go.

(Part I, 11. 376-82)

Like the First Tempter, the Second leaves alluding to Becket’s over-reaching pride - "Your sin soars sunward, covering king’s falcons."

The Third Tempter undermines the positions of the previous two in order to promote his own:

Well, my Lord,
I am no trifler, and no politician.
To idle or intrigue at court
I have no skill. I am no courtier.
I know a horse, a dog, a wench;
I know how to hold my estates in order,
A country-keeping lord who minds his own business.

... Excuse my bluntness;
I am a rough straightforward Englishman.

(Part I, 11. 398-410)

The image he tries to build up of a candid plain-speaking Englishman is cut down by the irony implicit in Becket's laconic reply: "Proceed straight forward." His assertion that Becket has no hope of reconciliation with Henry, draws the only expression of any real personal affection from Becket: "O Henry, O my King!" This is historical in that, apart from his mother, the only other persons Becket is recorded to have loved are the two kings, Henry and his son. The Third Tempter's urge that Becket should not look
to "blind assertion in isolation," but seek a "happy coalition of intelligent interests" with the barons against the king, meets with a scathing retort:

If the Archbishop cannot trust the Throne,
He has good cause to trust none but God alone.
I ruled once as Chancellor
And men like you were glad to wait at my door.
Not only in the court, but in the field
And in the tilt-yard I made many yield.
Shall I who ruled like an eagle over doves
Now take the shape of a wolf among wolves?
Pursue your treacheries as you have done before:
No one shall say that I betrayed a king.

(Part I, 11. 457-66)

The element of personal pride that is prevalent in Becket's replies reminds one of Becket's extraordinary achievement in those seven years at Henry's court. It is to this Becket that the first three Tempters appeal, to old friendships, values and ambitions. Eliot registers the diversity of conflicting impulses, the multiple selves within a single personality of no common mould.

The Fourth Tempter is unexpected partly because it is to the Becket of the present that he appeals, the Becket who has surrendered his life to the cause of the Church and begun to show signs of possible sainthood. His temptation is to a loftier ambition:

But what is pleasure, kingly rule,
Or rule of men beneath a king,
With craft in corners, stealthy stratagem,
To general grasp of spiritual power?

(Part I, 11. 504-7)

Becket's confrontation with the Fourth Tempter brings to mind the temptation of Marlowe's Faustus seduced by his own fantasies of power and glory. Eliot could certainly have been influenced by Doctor Faustus. William Poel's prestigious productions of Doctor Faustus (July 1896 and revived for two performances in the Autumn of 1904) and Everyman (July and August 1901 and repeated in May and July 1902) had received widespread attention and acclaim. Though these productions were too early for Eliot to have seen them, he must have been affected by the literary and dramatic interest they renewed in these plays. As has
been said, he greatly admired Everyman and admits to having kept its versification in mind while writing Murder in the Cathedral. He also had a high regard for Christopher Marlowe as a poet and dramatist.

From 1919 to 1934 he wrote on Elizabethan dramatists. He considered them also in performance, for in the 1920's he attended the Phoenix Society presentation of Elizabethan, Renaissance and Restoration plays, referring to it in The Criterion (1923) as a "wholly commendable enterprise." In an article in 1919, "Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe," he discusses Marlowe's experiments with blank verse. Referring to Doctor Faustus, he notes Marlowe's breaking up of the line to gain in intensity in the last soliloquy, and his development of "a new and important conversational tone in the dialogue of Faustus and the devil." Then again in 1927 Eliot wrote a review in The Times Literary Supplement of Una Ellis-Fermor's book on Christopher Marlowe. He found her particularly good on Doctor Faustus:

The central idea of the play she says is "an idea of loss." And the play is, as she hints (it has been said before, but not so well) a morality play: unlike the typical Elizabethan play, it deals not with the relation of man to man, but with the relation of man to God - for Marlowe was (unlike Shakespeare) either a great atheist or a great Christian: the enchantments of Faustus are the paradis artificiels of Baudelaire.

Thus Eliot showed a recurrent interest in Christopher Marlowe during these years and could well have had Doctor Faustus in mind when he wrote Murder in the Cathedral. At the heart of both plays is a tremendous spiritual struggle. Both protagonists are extremely self-conscious individuals, split by conflicting impulses and endowed with an extraordinary sense of the dramatic. There is the same luxuriant spinning out of a consuming vision. The situations are in reverse. While Faustus dreams of unlimited power exercised for a limited time on earth, Becket dreams of an enduring power held from beyond the grave.
Both are "fruits of lunacy" (Doctor Faustus, Sc. V, l. 19), "dreams to damnation." (Murder in the Cathedral, Part II, l. 583) Eliot employs in Becket's confrontation with the Tempters the same conversational tone he admires in Faustus's dialogue with the devil. There is furthermore a distinct verbal echo in Faustus being urged by his good and bad angels - "Sweet Faustus, think of heaven and heavenly things." "No, Faustus, think of honour and of wealth." (Doctor Faustus, Sc. V, ll. 21-2) - and Becket being exhorted:

But think, Thomas, think of glory after death...

Think, Thomas, think of enemies dismayed,
Creeping in penance, frightened of a shade;
Think of pilgrims, standing in line
Before the glittering jewelled shrine,
From generation to generation
Bending the knee in supplication,
Think of miracles, by God's grace
And think of your enemies, in another place.

(Part I, ll. 528-40)

In Martin Browne's production the temptation scene was played in private. Browne found the presence of the other characters in the scene a limitation and thought of ways to get them off the stage. Terry Hand, however, effectively exploited the fact of their presence in his production, as Katharine Worth indicates:

The temptation scene was, unusually, played in public, with the tempters emerging from the crowd and slipping back into it while Becket stood apart as the priests robed him, turning him from a vulnerable figure in a hair shirt into the Archbishop who had finally escaped from the horror of his own multiplicity. When the Fourth Tempter, who had been sitting with his back to the audience throughout the robing scene, turned round to reveal a mirror image of the Becket in the hair shirt, it was as if in abandoning this twin, Becket had committed a kind of self-murder.72

Becket in the production is robed in the Brechtian way. In the director's mind it was obviously appropriate to think of Brecht's Galileo where the Pope is a humane
person, but as he is robed he takes on his office and becomes dehumanised. Similarly, Becket is shown being robed, and subjugating self to office. He takes refuge in the rôle, escaping from the torments of a divided self.

This interpretation is not forced because Becket throughout the play is seen to be very conscious of rôle, and at a distance removed from it. It is also a dominant theme that recurs in Eliot's plays. Characters in The Family Reunion express the horror of being made "to play an unread part in some monstrous farce, ridiculous in some nightmare pantomime." (Part I, Sc. I, p. 22) The protagonist in Eliot's last play, The Elder Statesman, describes the lifelong attempt to escape a personal dilemma by seeking refuge in rôle:

Has there been nothing in your life...
Which you wish to forget? Which you wish to keep unknown?...
I've spent my life in trying to forget myself,
In trying to identify myself with the part I had chosen to play.

Murder in the Cathedral portrays the individual's struggle to cope with a hidden unbearable reality and the phantoms that haunt the wakeful mind. The play is immensely inward, but Eliot retains balance and control by continually pointing outwards to history and current circumstance. Like Shaw, he gives a forward perspective to the situation, referring directly to known future events. This immediately involves the audience, because the action on the stage is seen brimming over into a continuum of events which ultimately knits into a fabric continuous with its own age. Eliot widens the canvas immeasurably. Becket is seen not merely at the centre of his own stage in history, but against the much larger backdrop of history as a whole. The Fourth Tempter tells Becket that he has also thought,

That nothing lasts, but the wheel turns,
The nest is rifled, and the bird mourns;
That the shrine shall be pillaged, and the gold spent,
The jewels gone for light ladies' ornament,
The sanctuary broken, and its stores
Swept into the laps of parasites and whores. When miracles cease, and the faithful desert you, And men shall only do their best to forget you. And later is worse, when men will not hate you Enough to defame or to execrate you, But pondering the qualities that you lacked Will only try to find the historical fact. When men shall declare that there was no mystery About this man who played a certain part in history.

(Part I, ll. 547-60)

Eliot very effectively short-circuits any attempt on the audience's part to evade coming to terms with the situation presented through the sense of its remoteness in time. It is not allowed to rest secure in a detachment that might spring from a knowledge of modern sophisticated interpretations of the event. He includes an awareness of subsequent views and attitudes, and through the registering of these different perspectives of the situation, sweeps the centuries together and forces the audience to bring the issues home to themselves. At the same time he satirises the tendency of some modern historical assessors to reduce the extraordinary to comprehensible mediocrity, and the shallow academic character of their treatment of human motive and personality, when each human being has unfathomable depths and is an irreducible mystery in himself.

For Becket, the Fourth Tempter stressing the ultimate insignificance of his achievement in time, the idea that "nothing lasts but the wheel turns," is the temptation to see it all negated and passing into oblivion. It drives home the sense of time bringing to an end the individual life and generations of individual lives. It is the inhuman time of universal history and the objective natural world, without the Christian framework of belief which attributes to it spiritual direction and meaning. It is thus alien and diminishing, rendering human action and suffering meaningless. The audience too is tempted to see Becket's stand as ultimately insignificant. To Becket,
faced with the exigencies of the immediate situation, the issues might seem vital, the room for manoeuvre so small, but to the audience, with their knowledge of the larger movement of events in history, the individual and the issues appear greatly reduced.

Still more terrifying for Becket is the thought that he may be deliberately courting martyrdom for his own personal glory, which leads to anguished self-questioning:

Is there no way, in my soul's sickness, Does not lead to damnation in pride?
...
Can sinful pride be driven out Only by more sinful? Can I neither act nor suffer Without perdition?

(Person I, 11. 584-90)

This meets with the ironical addressing back to him by the Fourth Tempter, of Becket's opening lines:

You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer.
You know and do not know, that action is suffering,
And suffering action. Neither does the agent suffer
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed In an eternal action, an eternal patience To which all must consent that it may be willed
And which all must suffer that they may will it,
That the pattern may subsist, that the wheel may turn and still Be forever still.

(Person I, 11. 591-9)

The words now come through to both Becket and the audience with a new edge of meaning, accompanying the realisation that one can be moving in apparent harmony with the eternal pattern, yet evil can be deeply imbedded in the seeds of motivation. Each person, of his own nature, is a magnetic field that can distort reality into its own pattern. Where lies certainty?

The temptation to despair is very great. Becket falls silent as the struggle rages within him. The Chorus breaks
into a hysterical outburst which underlines the significance of the conflict, and expresses extreme horror and repugnance:

What is the sickly smell, the vapour? the dark green light from a cloud on a withered tree? The earth is heaving to parturition of issue of hell. What is the sticky dew that forms on the back of my hand?

The Priests and Tempters join in a symphony of despair. "Man's life is a cheat and a disappointment; / All things are unreal / Unreal or disappointing." Man passes from "unreality to unreality," from "deception to deception."

Becket is menaced on all sides, as these three groups of nameless faces and voices assail him alternately like phantasm in some awful nightmare:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chorus</th>
<th>Is it the owl that calls, or a signal between the trees?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>Is the window bar made fast, is the door under lock and bolt?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempters</td>
<td>Is it rain that taps at the window, is it wind that pokes at the door?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Does the torch flame in the hall, the candle in the room?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>Does the watchman walk by the wall?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempters</td>
<td>Does the mastiff prowl by the gate?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Part I, ll. 624-9)

The experience of being divided by self-confounding doubts and fears is powerfully conveyed. This is built to a crescendo by the Chorus's mounting hysteria:

We have not been happy, my Lord, we have not been too happy. We are not ignorant women, we know what we must expect and not expect. We know of oppression and torture, We know of extortion and violence, Destitution, disease, The old without fire in winter, The child without milk in summer, Our labour taken away from us, Our sins made heavier upon us. We have seen the young man mutilated, The torn girl trembling by the mill-stream.

...God gave us always some reason, some hope; but now a new terror has soiled us, which none can avert, none can avoid, flowing under our feet and over the sky;
Under doors and down chimneys, flowing 
in at the ear and the mouth and 
the eye.
God is leaving us, God is leaving us, more 
pang, more pain than birth or death.
Sweet and cloying through the dark air 
Falls the stifling scent of despair;
The forms take shape in the dark air:
Puss-purr of leopard, footfall of padding 
bear, 
Palm-pat of nodding ape, square hyaena 
waiting 
For laughter, laughter, laughter. The 
Lords of Hell are here.
They curl round you, lie at your feet, 
swing and wing through the dark air.
O Thomas Archbishop, save us, save us, 
save yourself that we may be saved; 
Destroy yourself and we are destroyed.

(Part I, 11. 637-64)

The Chorus of Women appear haunting, frightening 
creatures here - clinging, parasitic. The sexual imagery 
in the verse, the nightmarish sense impressions, work 
together to involve us in the experience of something 
monstrous and unnatural, some hidden, unspeakable terror. 
Becket struggles to retain self-possession in the throes 
of an emotion that makes him queasy. He turns away from 
all this nausea, to find refuge in an all-male priestly 
community which frees him from his own multifariouslyness. 
He becomes simply the man who expects to be killed and is 
killed:

Now is my way clear, now is the meaning 
plain:
Temptation shall not come in this kind again. 
The last temptation is the greatest treason: 
To do the right deed for the wrong reason. 
...

I know
What yet remains to show you of my history 
Will seem to most of you at best futility, 
Senseless self-slaughter of a lunatic, 
Arrogant passion of a fanatic. 
I know that history at all times draws 
The strangest consequence from remotest cause.

(Part I, 11. 694-700)

Becket arrives at some kind of release and liberation, 
but we get the distinct impression that he has not come
through the conflict so much as evaded it. He finds relief in the part he seems destined to play in history. There is always a certain attitudinising. He is never quite caught up in the action, but is forever above it, formal, controlled. By continually making us conscious of history, Eliot distances the action from the audience to some degree, and involves us on a rational plane. The audience is kept alert and functioning on two levels of experience. Through the figure of Becket intellectualising his dilemma, we function on the level of conscious thought; but the Chorus draws us in to apprehend the experience on an emotional plane. They present the grim underside of the conflict, the inner tumult that springs from deep wells of human need that can never be totally fathomed. No matter how rational man is, the unconscious finds ways in which to manifest itself, exposing his points of greatest vulnerability. Paradoxically, although Eliot uses a form that is highly balanced and controlled, throughout the play there is the sense of something untrammeled, uninhibited, orgiastic and threatening, breaking out, something raw and elemental that will go its own way despite man's attempt to rationalise and control it.

Becket must strive towards disinterested right action, but he cannot trust himself. The first part of the play ends with his once more surrendering the situation to God:

I shall no longer act or suffer, to the sword's end.
Now my good Angel, whom God appoints
To be my guardian, hover over the swords' points.

(Part I, ll. 705-7)

The Interlude is the moment of calm in the midst of the storm, and prepares the audience for the physical climax that is to follow the spiritual. On Christmas morning Becket preaches his last sermon on the text—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." At the end he predicts his own death, mentioning that Canterbury already had one archbishop who was a martyr and it was possible that it would shortly
have another. These are historical facts and compelling in themselves. According to E M Browne the sermon has always been "the best-remembered scene of the play," mainly because the "author was exactly right in calculating that when the hero reveals his heart in saying farewell to his people, he will win maximum response." But it might also have had such an impact for audiences at the first production, because the play was originally produced in 1935, just two years after the rise of Hitler to power, and the questions Becket poses in his sermon must have had striking overtones for the time:

Now think for a moment about the meaning of this word 'peace'. Does it seem strange to you that the angels should have announced Peace, when ceaselessly the world has been stricken with War and the fear of War? Does it seem to you that the angelic voices were mistaken, and that the promise was a disappointment and a cheat?

(Interlude, II. 20-7)

With the threat to world peace a growing reality, these questions must have had a compelling immediacy for the play's first audiences. Becket contemplates the nature of the peace Christ himself promised his disciples, peace, but not as the world gives. He goes on to say that, "a martyrdom is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr." (Interlude, II. 65-70) The sermon is spoken in direct simple prose and reflects a calm acceptance and lucidity of mind and spirit.

Part II begins with the Chorus sweeping the audience back into disquiet:

Does the bird sing in the South?
Only the sea-bird cries, driven inland by the storm.
What sign of the spring of the year?
Only the death of the old: not a stir, not a shoot, not a breath.
Do the days begin to lengthen?
Longer and darker the day, shorter and colder the night.
Still and stifling the air: but a wind is stored up in the East.
The starved crow sits in the field, attentive; and in the wood
The owl rehearses the hollow note of death.
...
Between Christmas and Easter what work shall be done?
The ploughman shall go out in March and turn the same earth
He has turned before, the bird shall sing the same song.

(Part I, 11. 1-20)
The cycle of the Christian year and the cycle of the natural year parallel the action, and both reflect the paradox of death and rebirth. One is continually set against the other, for, if only the sense of the controlling rhythms of nature predominates, we are faced with Sweeney's question again: "Is it all birth, death, copulation."
The cycle of the Christian year is a cycle of momentous events, to make them present again in the minds of the people, so that they can see their lives bound up with this significance.

The play gains great ritual power through the associations with Christian liturgy which bring the centuries together, underlining the universal significance of the action through the sense of traditional worship. Emotional tone and texture are also created through the use of music and chant to suggest deep repressed areas of feeling. The dramatic force of the play is also much enhanced by the exploitation of overtly theatrical effects. For example, the entry of the three Priests, one after the other, with the appropriate banner of the feast-day each represents, signals the passage of the three days after Christmas, and their appearances are punctuated by the introits of the respective saints. The Priests chant highly emotive lines interwoven with phrases from scripture:
Since St. John the Apostle a day: and the day of the Holy Innocents.
Out of the mouth of very babes, O God.
As the voice of many waters, of thunder, of harps,
They sung as it were a new song.
The blood of thy saints have they shed like water,
And there was no man to bury them. Avenge, O lord,
The blood of thy saints. In Rama, a voice heard, weeping.
Out of the mouth of very babes, O God!

(Part II, 11. 41-8)

A profound sense of mystery and foreboding is created. The hypnotic quality of the incantation with its scriptural reverberations must penetrate deep feelings rooted in the religious life of an audience. The Priests point to the possibility each day holds for the moment of timeless significance:

The critical moment
That is always now, and here. Even now, in sordid particulars
The eternal design may appear.

(Part II, 11. 60-2)

The four Knights enter and the banners disappear. The dramatic point is made with fine economy and the aural, visual and ritual elements combine to provide maximum emotional impact.

The crude bestiality of the Knights comes over in their confrontation of Becket. They refer to him as "the backstairs brat who was born in Cheapside" and their tone is insolent and provocative:

You are the Archbishop in revolt against the King; in rebellion to the King and the law of the land;
You are the Archbishop who was made by the King; whom he set in your place to carry out his command,
You are his servant, his tool, and his jack,
You wore his favours on your back,
...

This is the man who was the tradesman's son: the backstairs brat who was born in Cheapside;
This is the creature that crawled upon the King; swollen with blood and swollen
with pride.

(Part II, ll. 94-100)

The virulence of their verbal attack is often underscored by half-lines or phrases picked up and bandied around, which reinforces the impression of the taunting and bullying of a victim before the assault:

Second Knight: Won't you ask us to pray to God for you, in your need?
Third Knight: Yes, we'll pray for you!
First Knight: Yes, we'll pray for you!
The Three Knights: Yes, we'll pray that God may help you!

(Part II, ll. 114-7)

After rebuking them, Becket leaves, and the Knights also depart, to return with swords. The Chorus breaks into an outpouring of terror which extends the significance of the action as well as suggesting deep psychological disturbance. In the Terry Hands production "an athletic female chorus" danced and mimed the acts of sex and birth as an accompaniment to the "horrific images of animality" in the verse:

I have smelt them, the death-bringers,
senses are quickened
By subtile forebodings; I have heard
Fluting in the night-time, fluting and owls, have seen at noon
Scaly wings slanting over, huge and ridiculous.
I have tasted
The savour of putrid flesh in the spoon.
I have felt
The heaving of earth at nightfall, restless, absurd...

I have seen
Rings of light coiling downwards,
descending
To the horror of the ape.

(Part II, ll. 205-22)

There is a peculiar fixation on the rot and decay of organic life, an obsession with oppressive evolutionary images. Identification is expressed with animal existence at the lowest level: "I have tasted / The living lobster,
the crab, the oyster, the whelk and the prawn; and they live and spawn in my bowels, and my bowels dissolve in the light of dawn." "I have lain on the floor of the sea and breathed with the breathing of the sea-anemone, swallowed with ingurgitation of the sponge. I have lain in the soil and criticised the worm." (Part II, ll. 213-7)

These are the sensations of a personality experiencing deep fragmentation. A modern psycho-analyst talks of the "rock-bottom attitude" of patients and, where so-called schizophrenic processes have taken over, this attitude, he says, is "expressed in strange evolutionary imagery. Total feeling becomes dehumanized, and eventually demammalized. These patients can feel like a crab or a shellfish or mollusc, or even abandon what life and movement there is on the lowest animal level and become a lonely twisted tree on the ledge of a stormy rock, or the rock, or just the ledge out in nowhere." This was an ordeal that Eliot must have experienced as part of his own personal neurosis, and he uses it here to express spiritual chaos and inward fracture, physical corruption and revulsion. We are made to feel the whole drag of the corporeal world and the deep-seated conviction of sin and contamination.

A sense of universal degradation is conveyed. Everything is infiltrated and tainted. There is "death in the rose, death in the hollyhock." The deep inscrutable mystery of evil is felt through its imaging in the impersonal objective world of nature and in man's unconscious biological life with its heritage of imperfectly tamed instincts and appetites. It is all interlinked and interpenetrating with man's social life:

What is woven in the councils of princes
Is woven also in our veins, our brains,
Is woven like a pattern of living worms
In the guts of the women of Canterbury.

(Part II, ll. 229-302)

Becket's predicament is constantly set against a larger backdrop. Becket is man apart, contemplating himself and his situation. But in the choric odes the vision
continually widens, to set this against the whole of creation, the human and sub-human strata of which man is a part. Becket presents history on one plane - the individual, the drama of personality, the world of human relations. The Chorus presents the substructure - the female, the unconscious, the world of nature and animality, the illimitable waste. Through the choric odes we apprehend imaginatively how deeply man himself is rooted in earthiness, despite Becket's intellectualising of his predicament. In Becket we see highly conscious man and his choice of self-awareness, but against this we see the vast other side of the picture - man as part of the ecology in whose balance we are partly animals, because nature and history are not separable in the last resort.

The Chorus register the pain of consciousness, of what cannot be thought of too often or too long, unless dulled or distanced, "like a dream that has often been told and often been changed in the telling," for "human kind cannot bear very much reality." They acknowledge their part in the horror and the guilt, expressing it in violent orgiastic terms:

I have consented, Lord Archbishop, have consented.
Am torn away, subdued, violated,
United to the spiritual flesh of nature,
Mastered by the animal powers of spirit,
Dominated by the lust of self-demolition,
By the final utter uttermost death of spirit,
By the final ecstasy of waste and shame,
O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop,
forgive us, forgive us, pray for us
that we may pray for you, out of our shame.

(Part II, 11. 237-44)

There is an echo from Shakespeare here - "the expense of spirit in a waste of shame is lust in action."

It is significant that the idea of sin and guilt in the play is continually related to sex, and here it is conveyed overpoweringly through the sexual imagery and hysteria of the Women of Canterbury. Becket, who re-enters
now, tries to comfort them:

\[
\text{This is one moment,} \\
\text{But know that another} \\
\text{Shall pierce you with a sudden painful} \\
\text{joy} \\
\text{When the figure of God's purpose is} \\
\text{made complete.}
\]

(Part II, ll. 248-51)

Sexual and religious experience are closely related in the play and these lines bring to mind, Christ being pierced on the cross, a physical death which signifies spiritual life. The play is built on paradoxes like this, where joy and sorrow, the physical and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal, interpenetrate and find unity in the meaning of the Incarnation.

The frenzied agitation of the Chorus and the Priests contrasts strongly with Becket's control and serenity in his last hour. The Priests rush him off by force to vespers as a measure for safety. The Chorus chants a dirgelike lament while the scene is changed to the Cathedral, and Dies Irae is sung in Latin by a choir in the distance. The hymn that is sung is the call of a suppliant to Christ to have care over his ending and the last two verses of the Chorus echo its meaning:

\[
\text{Dead upon the tree, my Saviour,} \\
\text{Let not be in vain Thy labour;} \\
\text{Help me, Lord, in my last fear.} \\
\text{Dust I am, to dust am bending,} \\
\text{From the final doom impending} \\
\text{Help me, Lord, for death is near.}
\]

(Part II, ll. 304-9)

Word and music work together to build up tension and anxiety.

The atmosphere is further charged when the Knights re-enter the Cathedral, slightly tipsy, bent on violence. The tone they bring of a rowdy drunken brawl accentuates the peculiar horror of the violation of priest and sanctuary. Jazz rhythms in their song have a profoundly disquieting effect. The sense of dark primitive drives - menacing, compulsive, seeking outlet - is forcefully conveyed:
Where is Becket, the traitor to the King?
Where is Becket, the meddling priest?
Come down Daniel to the lion's den,
Come down Daniel for the mark of the beast.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you marked with the mark of the beast?
Come down Daniel to the lion's den,
Come down Daniel and join in the feast.

(Part II, 11. 353-8)

Becket comes forward fearlessly: "It is the just man
who / Like a bold lion, should be without fear / I am here."
To their cry of "traitor," he turns on one of the Knights in
fury:

You, Reginald, three times traitor you:
Traitor to me as my temporal vassal,
Traitor to me as your spiritual lord,
Traitor to God in desecrating His Church.

(Part II, 11. 387-90)

Eliot allows a personal note to intrude here. Reginald
Fitz Urse, one of the murderers, was a sworn vassal of
Becket's and was the first to lay hands on him in an attempt
to drag him out of the church. Grim reports that the
"archbishop shook him off vigorously, calling him a pandar
and saying, 'Touch me not Reginald; you owe me fealty and
obedience; you are acting like a madman, you and your
accomplices." Eliot keeps Becket more restrained in
words and actions, but he refers to this knight by name, which
is significant, indicating a closeness to his murderers.
This personal interchange leads directly to the murder, to
which Becket submits without opposition.

The killing can be done ritualistically, as the slaughter
of an unresisting sacrificial victim, in keeping with the
theme and mood of the play. In the first production it was
slowly mimed, "to reproduce the gestures and attitudes of the
Knights as these are represented in the medieval iconography
of St. Thomas." Robert Speaight felt that there was a hint
of affectation in this and the shock of sacrilege was
absent. In a production of the play directed by Robert
Helpmann for the International Festival of Arts at Adelaide
in South Australia, he says, the Knights converged on Becket
with a bestial roar, their swords upraised, and a pair of heavy circular doors before the altar closed in upon them. "An effect of sudden violence was thus secured without any untidy realism." In the Terry Hands production, Katharine Worth states, the Knights "were extremely sinister figures in black plastic and inhuman mask-like visors." Events took on "a dream-like, surrealist quality: the Knights cast monstrous black shadows, a white cloth came down like a pillar of cloud when the murder was done: red cloths were draped over the body and then later spread over the stage in the form of a cross, to balance the great wooden cross they all knelt to at the end." The murder is the climax the play has been building up to, a moment of almost ecstatic release. The Chorus erupts explosively:

Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take the stone from the stone, take the skin from the arm, take the muscle from the bone, and wash them. Wash the stone, wash the bone, wash the brain, wash the soul, wash them!

(Part II, 1. 422)

Their grief is expressed in haunting nightmarish images:

A rain of blood has blinded my eyes.
Where is England? where is Kent? where is Canterbury?
O far far far far in the past; and I wander in a land of barren boughs: if I break them, they bleed; I wander in a land of dry stones: if I touch them they bleed.

(Part II, 11. 399-400)

Continually we get a sense of the plumbing of an inner dark, the registering of unbearably sad and painful areas of the subconscious. The almost perpetual anguish of the Chorus is its chief expression.

At this emotional highpoint the Knights, having completed the murder, advance to the front of the stage and address the audience in modern colloquial terms, turning the stage into a platform for public debate. Eliot states that he intended by this "to shock the audience out of their
complacency," admitting that he might have been "slightly under the influence of St. Joan." It certainly has the effect of a douche of cold water and at the first production it came across with the startling edge of something totally unexpected. There have been critics and audiences who have found this scene a marring excrescence. Raymond Williams describes it as "essentially sentimental." But it is integral to the design and purpose of the play. It brings the action firmly out of the realm of the interior, back into the external plane of history and contemporary events. D E Jones is also surely right in saying that it is "the tempting of the audience corresponding to the temptation of Thomas."

The Knights step out of the twelfth century, as Becket has continually done, though in a less radical fashion, and seek to win the spectators' support for their action, attempting to engage them in a sense of complicity through reference to subsequent historical developments. They court sympathy at different levels. They project themselves as fair-minded pragmatic Englishmen with no talent for sophistry, men of action rather than of words, who have been perfectly disinterested, and merely sought their country's best interest. They appeal to similar qualities and concerns in the audience, certain that they are a "hard-headed sensible people" not to be taken in by "emotional claptrap." They put forward views which may sound highly tenable to a modern audience, indicating the evident merit of Henry's striving for legal reform, and his commendable desire for an almost ideal state through the union of spiritual and temporal administration under a central government. But Becket, they say, after sharing this vision, the moment he became Archbishop, asserted that the two orders were incompatible, and claimed for the church a higher order than that which he had striven with Henry for so many years to establish. The Knights point to the present situation where there is a "just subordination of the pretensions of the Church to the welfare of the State" and bid the audience remember that it is due to their
first step:

We have been instrumental in bringing about the state of affairs that you approve. We have served your interests; we merit your applause; and if there is any guilt whatever in the matter, you must share it with us.

(Part II, 11. 530-4)

A modern audience with its belief in the equality of all under the law, and disdain of the interference of the Church in politics, might find themselves in agreement. The view that Becket, on attaining the office of Primate of all England, became a "monster of egotism" so that he courted death for the glory of martyrdom, would find sympathy with some modern historians. Many spectators have been won over by these arguments, but the brute fact of the murder lies before us, and there is the voice of political expediency in the Knights' professions with its sinister undertones of totalitarianism. And whatever the rights and wrongs of Becket's claims for the Church, the one issue on which he would have modern sentiment behind him is his refusal to yield to an overmastering central power, in this case the power of an unrestrained, arbitrary King. This is what emerged most strongly in the 1972 production of the play by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Martin Esslin, in his review of it, found the play "fully vindicated," even to a generation that had not "the slightest interest in whether the Church should be subordinated to the State or not," and which would therefore have had "some difficulty in appreciating the merits of martyrdom to that particular obscure cause." What came through was "the determination of an individual who refuses to submit to the power of the State and to the violence with which this power imposes itself on the individual."

This scene with the Knights is essential to the play and gives it a contemporary edge and flavour. The Knights dismiss the audience before they leave, suggesting that they "now disperse quietly to (their) homes" and "do nothing that might provoke any public outbreak." The attention of the audience is then allowed to return to the
dark church and the silent, motionless form. A sense of desolation is expressed by the First Priest:

The Church lies bereft,
Alone, desecrated, desolated, and the heathen shall build on the ruins,
Their world without God. I see it.
I see it.

(Part II, 11. 587-9)

The Third Priest refutes this, asserting that "the Church is stronger for this action," "supreme so long as men will die for it." The play ends with an ode of praise by the Chorus, while a Te Deum is sung by a choir in the distance. God's glory is displayed in all the creatures of the earth, both the hunter and the hunted, for all things affirm God in living, and His glory is declared even in that which denies Him as "the darkness declares the glory of Light." God is thanked for His redemption by blood, for His saints and martyrs, for, "wherever a saint has dwelt, wherever a martyr has given his blood," there lies holy ground and "from such ground springs that which forever renews the earth / Though it is forever denied." They acknowledge that the sin of the world is upon their heads, that the blood of martyrs and the agony of saints is upon their heads, and the play ends on a plea for forgiveness:

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Blessed Thomas, pray for us.

(Part II, 11. 646-50)

We have been brought with Becket from conflict to recognition, and from recognition to release and renewal. The stages of this cycle of guilt, remorse and expiation are essential movements in a purgatorial journey, an expression of Eliot's concept of the nature of sin, which receives poetic summary in The Family Reunion:

It is possible that sin may strain and struggle
In its dark instinctive birth to come to consciousness
And so find expurgation.

From the fantasies of the ego and the darkness of the will,
the individual seeks release and reconciliation. Human history, for Eliot, is a story in which Providence is resisted by human aberration. The special rôle of the saint or martyr is to bring men back to God's way. This has to be done every so often, or the lure of self-sufficiency, resignation or despair proves too great. The inexorable movement of time threatens to negate the value of the individual life of significant action, and the collective tradition of significant lives. But we are brought to a point where we can look beyond that negation. Through time and beyond time runs the creative and saving design of God. This is the purpose of history, constantly active, forever achieving itself. The present itself is capable of timeless value, and the saint's rôle in history is to relate time and eternity,

That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
Be forever still.

The play is constructed around the Christian theme of sin and redemption; however, Eliot does not really communicate the experience of spiritual reconciliation and renewal in Murder in the Cathedral. This assurance, for Eliot, lies some way off. There is more of nightmare in the play. A horror of void, of the abyss, predominates. Through a profoundly disturbing under-pattern, feelings of intense anguish, isolation and disorientation are registered. The play dramatises a condition of acute self-division and self-consciousness, a state of alienation and withdrawal from women and the world, which must have accorded with Eliot's own feelings at the time. Ultimately one's interpretation of the human drama is conditioned by one's most private experience of life and stands merely as an extension of it. But Eliot is in no way unmindful of history, as is evident from his careful integration of interior experience with external historical detail. Thus his achievement emerges as a peculiarly
fine and subtle balance between inner and outer reality.

In contrast, the playwright dealt with in the next chapter, Charles Williams in his play, *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*, concentrates perhaps too much on the inward drama of being, at the expense of the outward social reality, making extraordinary demands on his audience.
Notes to Chapter IV

12. Ibid., p. 333.
13. Ibid., p. 95.
17. See Edward Mendelson, Early Auden, p. 277.
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<td>23.</td>
<td>All quotations from the text will be cited from the following edition: <em>Murder in the Cathedral</em>, ed. by Nevill Coghill (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).</td>
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44. Ibid., p. 747.
45. Ibid., p. 752.
46. Ibid., p. 751.
49. T S Matthews, Great Tom, p. 119.
65. Ibid., p. 103.

The Times Literary Supplement (3 March 1927), p. 140.

The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett, p. 204.

The Elder Statesman (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 82-3.

The Making of T S Eliot's Plays, p. 47.

Katharine Worth, The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett, p. 204.


English Historical Documents 1042-1189, p. 767.


"Murder in the Cathedral," Plays and Players, 20, No. 1 (October 1972), p. 44.
CHAPTER V
Charles Williams - Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury
The Canterbury Festival play to follow Murder in the Cathedral was Charles Williams's Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury, produced in the Chapter House of Canterbury Cathedral on the 20th June, 1936. Not surprisingly, it was much influenced by Murder in the Cathedral, as is evident from its modern psychological approach to history, its exploration of the inner state through the use of mime, music, dance and ritual, its rich drawing from Christian liturgy for potent dramatic effects. Like Murder in the Cathedral, it is a highly stylised piece that uses a historical character and events to trace a spiritual progression which leads to martyrdom and death. But where T S Eliot selects a protagonist who is an extraordinary individual, capable of extremes and with a definite leaning towards martyrdom, Williams's protagonist is of the ordinary stuff of humanity, a man of average moral character who strove to choose a safe moderate course all his life in order to avoid martyrdom.

In some respects Charles Williams goes even further than Eliot. The action is starkly simplified and often realised in vivid metaphorical terms. Most of the characters are representative figures, like the Catholic Priest, the Protestant Preacher, the Lords, the Commons, and dominating the play is the Skeleton or Figura rerum, a grotesque enigmatic creature who flashes in and out of the action, controlling and commenting on it in ironic mocking tones. He assumes a variety of functions - Destiny, Conscience, Death - and this extraordinary creation of Williams is his device for revealing the supernatural active in the natural world. Audiences at the original production, no doubt in keeping with the playwright's intention, found him an extremely riddling, discomfiting presence. E Martin Browne, who directed the play, took the rôle. "Alternatively severe and clown-like," he spoke in "sepulchral tones yet with a caustic humour
that grated on the sensibilities," writes one reviewer.\(^1\)

Another describes the Skeleton as "weaving a spectral and mysterious pattern." Mr Martin Browne "plays this grisly part with much force and sense of drama. At times forbidding, at times sarcastic and biting, he leavens the innate horror of the rôle with Puck-like skips and jumps."\(^2\)

The Skeleton hounds Cranmer throughout, forcing him finally to face the truth about himself, and rushing him to the flames at the end. He is made equally real and present to the audience, whom he confronts directly at points, to harass with dire warnings or derisive laughter.

The play covers a considerable span of time—twenty-eight turbulent years in the life of Thomas Cranmer, from 1528-1556. It was a period of violent religious controversies and tumultuous social change. Though Williams keeps very faithful to history, his emphasis is on the spiritual dilemma of his protagonist; thus immense social and religious issues thrown up by the Reformation are drastically compressed and presented in highly symbolic terms. As a result the play, as E M Browne admits, "sometimes takes too much knowledge in the audience for granted."\(^3\)

It was also quite unconventional for its time. One reviewer describes its method of presentation as "a combination of the Shakespearian and the ultra-modern. There was no interval, no scenery, no curtain—chronology was sacrificed to dramatic demands, and except in the final scenes of recantation, there was little attempt at climax."\(^4\)

Its overall message and effect were distinctly worrying. Spectators found it a tantalising disturbing play and many "did not feel greatly inclined for conversation" as they left the Chapter House after a performance.\(^5\)

An anonymous contributor to the Canterbury Cathedral Chronicle writes after a performance, that at the start of the play "one was calm, appraising, taking pleasure." At its close, an hour and a half later, "one rose unsteadily to one's feet and went out." In an attempt to describe its cumulative effect, he continues:
When thoughts had crept back to what had been a conventionally ordered mind before the hurricane, one remembered horrors and delights: trumpets pealing over one's head from the Cloisters behind; processions moving up the aisle through the audience, heaving in Tudor magnificence; "Hosanna to him that cometh in the name of the Lord;" and entered the Skeleton, "necessary love where necessity is not," "the eternal bone of fact"; a voice running surely in the places of the ear and heart where few find the way... the horror in the fading of all certainty which was the death of King Henry... the growing oppression of a trap closing in on Cranmer and the mind, forcing out the reluctant desperate truth; black-gowned and masked Executioners with flames licking their hands; Cranmer running, stumbling into the arms of the Skeleton, the final appalling clarity and then the cries, "Speed! Speed!" and the rush of flames down the aisle and Cranmer pursued by the Skeleton flying after them.

The play thus was both aurally and visually compelling, and made a shock impact on its viewers.

Response to it, however, has been extremely mixed. The verdict of the reviewer quoted above was unqualified: "There was no approving to be done, the play silenced both approval and censure into acknowledged greatness." Robert Speaight, who played the part of Cranmer, describes it as "tortuous in thought and expression, but dramatically powerful in an expressionist convention." E Martin Browne and literary critics like Gerald Weales and William Spanos acknowledge its dramatic force and weight, but there were many who found it perplexing. Phillip Hollingworth, who played the part of Henry with distinction, describes it as "obscure and pretentious." A local Canterbury vicar declaimed against it, labelling it "blasphemous."

Archbishop Cosmo Lang was clearly impressed, yet not without reservations. After a special performance for youth, he said in an address to the audience:

I will not say whether I personally agree altogether with the rendering you have seen, but it is a most powerful one. You have been taken through a very perplexing time in
our history and into the inside of one of my predecessors in whom the fierce currents of that time moved with terrible confusion.

The reporter from the Kent Messenger declared it an "unsatisfactory play" - "Its form is hard to follow; its language though often beautiful, is abstruse, its action is slow in the extreme, it develops really, into an exhibition, albeit brilliant, of elocution by two men ... Cranmer of Canterbury is a tour de force for Mr Speaight and Mr Browne, but somewhat beyond the grasp of the ordinary man or woman."\(^9\)

There is no doubt that the play is difficult and makes considerable demands on its audience. Its language, though rich and ceremonial, is often cryptic and involved, requiring acute mental concentration. Then again, though history is seriously regarded, Williams focuses on the world of spiritual realities, assuming too great a knowledge of external facts and events on the part of the audience. This tends to obscure what is already complex, and enhances the uneasiness produced by the play's intentionally unsettling impact. But it is unquestionably a powerful play, and in production, words combined with dance and music to make it a live and memorable theatrical experience, which is one of the reasons for its consideration here. Another is its unusual treatment of history, where realistic dialogue combines with events presented in stylised metaphorical terms. In interesting relation to Murder in the Cathedral, it provides another illustration of the use of history to explore deep psychological or spiritual areas of conflict and growth.

Where the prevailing sense in Eliot's play is of spiritual chaos and uncertainty, in Williams's play it is of spiritual drive and purpose. There is horror and confusion, but it is all on man's part. Through the ubiquitous presence of the Skeleton manipulating the action at will, Williams shows that a divine reality is alive and active in human affairs, relentlessly working out man's redemption. Cranmer comes to experience this divine force closing in on him - "O bright fish caught in the bright
light's net."  The experience of God's saving grace is not without pain and cost. Man is made to face the deepest truths about himself. Williams, a specialist in spiritual thrillers, administers a series of spiritual shocks. The spectators are not allowed to sit back and passively watch the spectacle of another's discomfiture, but are made to feel that they themselves are taking part in a divine drama in which God is the chief character. They are continually shocked and challenged by the worrying presence of the Skeleton, who has the whole audience sitting on the edge of their seats, by the razor-blade sharpness he brings to each situation.

The play works on two levels. The outer physical reality is conveyed through the partly realistic historical figures, the historical flavour of the language, with its inclusion of actual words of historical characters, and quotations from the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. The inner spiritual dimension is conveyed through theatrical grotesquerie, the fantastic element in the drama, in which the bizarre figure of the Skeleton plays the dominant part. Both levels of reality are closely interwoven and conveyed with equal clarity and hardness of outline, because for Williams the physical and spiritual worlds were equally real and essentially one; the ordinary and the marvellous co-exist. The emphasis is very much on the personal. The historical situation is presented not in terms of people and events, but in relation to Cranmer's inward struggle. All the other characters in the play are not fully developed as people and come through as slightly de-humanised. They are peripheral to the action and merely revolve around Cranmer, except for the Skeleton, who can also be seen as an extension of his inner self.

Williams obviously had a serious interest in history, since his writings include two works of historical biography — on James I and Henry VII — as well as drama, theology, poetry and literary appreciation. He was also a keen writer of spiritual thrillers or shockers, as they
have been called, in which he gives imaginative expression to his unique insight into the supernatural and the mystery of good and evil. Thus it is not surprising to find a similar slant in his approach to history in Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury. For although the drama is set around singular events in the life of Thomas Cranmer and the clash between Roman Catholicism and the English Reformation that is embodied in his predicament, it is a spiritual conflict that is focused. Williams was obviously intrigued by the contradiction in the rôle of Cranmer as servant of God and servant of the king, when priest and prince can no longer be reconciled under one common law. The conflicting demands of office on Cranmer the spiritual leader and Cranmer the political underling are bound to create havoc in Cranmer the man. It is this inevitable disaster in the soul and its working out, that is explored as Cranmer is forced to come to terms with the reality both without and within. He walks a tightrope of tension as he strives to mediate between two all-consuming loyalties which allow him no safety net of compromise. Evade the issue as he may, the rope relentlessly tautens till he is brought down short in the dust, face to face with himself.

Cranmer has to come to terms with the God he professes, but little knows. At the outset his faith is apprehended in the mind, but the word he so delights in comes alive to translate all that he has conceived of only with his intellect, into the very flesh and blood experience of life and living. God's revelation is for Cranmer the beginning of self-knowledge. His beliefs come up against the material facts of existence and he experiences the difference between idea and reality, declaration and expression. The play demonstrates that we can be rooted in the word without the act. But God is the word, and the word was and is. It is this realisation that Cranmer is forced to contend with, as experience and not knowledge brings about truth and understanding.

If one turns to history one finds that few personalities have raised as much controversy as Thomas Cranmer.
In a discussion of Cranmer and his biographers, Jasper Ridley illustrates how for four hundred years the character of Cranmer has been a "bitterly contested issue between Foxe and Sanders, between Burnet and Bassouet, between Todd and Lingard, between Pollard and Belloc." Violently attacked or ardently admired by biographers and historians, "it would seem as if the righteousness of the English Reformation and the justification of the Church of England depended on the moral probity of the man who was its first Archbishop." Opinions have tended to veer from one extreme to another, according to Protestant or Catholic points of view, and he has been revered as a hero and martyr, "the greatest instrument, under God, of the happy Reformation of this Church of England" and reviled as a liar and hypocrite, "a name which deserves to be held in everlasting execration," which we cannot pronounce without "almost doubting of the justice of God."

The Protestant and Catholic attitudes on the subject have continued with little variation, but according to Ridley it is impossible to accept the traditional Catholic and Protestant analyses of Cranmer. The Catholic picture of Cranmer as an unprincipled opportunist and a tool of royal tyranny will not stand if Cranmer's record is compared with the much more suspect behaviour of his contemporaries. The Protestant depiction of a courageous reformist and one of the holiest bishops and best men of the age cannot be reconciled with his feeble compliance with the King on numerous issues, and the fact that he "betrayed his principles and retreated from Protestant doctrine to a much greater extent than his admirers allow." Perhaps the most accurate of all statements made about Cranmer in the last four centuries, he says, is that made by H Hallam in 1827 in his Constitutional History of England:

If casting away all prejudice on either side, we weigh the character of this prelate in an equal balance, he will appear far indeed removed from the turpitude imputed to him by his enemies, yet not entitled to any extraordinary veneration.
The controversy about Cranmer has continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with most historians taking a Protestant or Catholic stance, but generally a portrait has emerged in which the extreme prudence of Cranmer, his timidity, and his pliability are seen to have preserved him from the scaffold to which Henry sent so many of his bishops and statesmen, and yet the good intentions, the considerable humanity and gentle, scholarly nature of the man cannot be denied.

Charles Williams is intrigued by the mixed and contrary aspects evident in the historical personality of Cranmer and uses this as the basis of his vision. In his portrayal of Cranmer he keeps to the view of a man of gentle scholarly disposition who would have been well content with a quiet life at Cambridge. It was not ambition that drew him into public affairs and the precarious position of primate. That was to some extent thrust upon him. In the play Cranmer thus protests to Henry who would make him Archbishop of Canterbury:

I am no man for this; I am purblind, weak, for my courage was shouted out of me by schoolmasters and other certain men.

(Part I, p. 149)

This refers historically to the brutal severity of a schoolmaster who may have been partly responsible for a certain timidity that marked Cranmer all his life. In the face of almost certain destruction he is seen to choose expediency rather than truth. Actual resistance to the King’s will was highly dangerous. There were few like More and Fisher who would court death by refusing to conform to it. Yet Cranmer was a kind and sympathetic human being, and honest after his own fashion. It was because he believed in honesty without being quite honest with himself, that Cranmer was safe as none of the others who served the King were safe.

It is this paradoxical quality in the man that the play captures. One of the Lords comments that Cranmer is
Apt to be used, being shy of his own heart and mind, but not so apt - none of his kind are - if you trouble his incalculable sense of honesty which holds the King; who now has none, only a kind of clinging to honesty in others.

(Part I, p. 161)

Williams examines the case of the man who "without morality" believes "in morality," (Part I, p. 169) the man who would be honest, but confronted with the fear of death resorts to mental evasion and accommodation of his conscience. He is kindly but timorous. But, declares the Skeleton, "even a shy man must make up his mind." (Part I, p. 149)

The responsibility of difficult choices, difficult decisions, cannot be shirked by the morally diffident. To keep passive and silent is not enough. Thus Cranmer, who continually subordinates his judgement to the authority in power, comes in the end to make a statement for himself, to speak a mind "that is my own and not the Queen's, poorly my own, not richly her society's." (Part II, p. 199)

Yet even more than this, what lays hold of the imagination of Williams is the contradiction implicit in the character of Cranmer, if the broad path of expediency and compromise he walked is set against the great liturgical works he wrote, works in which the uncompromising call of Christ to the straight and narrow way is fully comprehended and expressed. This is the other store of historical evidence from which Williams draws. The writings of Thomas Cranmer have been acclaimed as "inspired from above" and throughout his day his burning zeal for the scriptures and evangelical truth was commended by such venerated names as Osiander, Erasmus, Peter Martyr, who believed that piety and divine knowledge took deep root in him.\textsuperscript{16} Even in this century his work on the Anglican liturgy is held to be "one of the finest monuments of sacred literary art."\textsuperscript{17} The contradiction between the accommodation of Cranmer's conscience in life and the absolute commitment reflected in his writings, Williams uses as the basis of a spiritual struggle which he realises in his play, Thomas
Cranmer of Canterbury. Through the workings of Williams's imagination the historical figure and events are treated in terms of a religious experience, and Cranmer is seen to make that slow and painful journey towards truth.

Like T. S. Eliot, Williams enters the personality and consciousness of his protagonist at great depth, going into areas of thought and motivation beyond the discovery of the historian or biographer. However, history is seriously regarded, for there is adequate justification for the spiritual conflict Williams sees embodied in Cranmer's predicament, in the marked discrepancy between the actions of the man in office and the religious zeal and commitment expressed in his writings. Williams uses both word and event, but reads into them quite liberally, exploring beneath and beyond the facts in order to dramatise the inner growth of conscious self-realisation.

The play combines the history of events, of surface thought and action, and the soul's history as it moves through a profound symbolism of inward being. This relates to Williams's idea of history, and his particular beliefs as a Christian. Referring to biblical history he states, "It is true that all that did happen is a presentation of what is happening; all the historical events, especially of this category, are a pageant of the events of the human soul. But it is true also that Christendom has always held that the two are indissolubly connected; that the events in the human soul could not exist unless the historical events had existed ... The union of history and the individual is, like that of so many other opposites in the coming of the kingdom of heaven, historic and contemporary at once. It was historic in order that it might always be contemporary; it is contemporary because it was certainly historic." For Williams, as for T. S. Eliot, time and eternity are mutually dependent, for history is the process of divine disclosure and fulfilment. The central point in time at which the meaning of human existence is most fully revealed, and through which humanity is redeemed
is the Incarnation. Thus, as the divine appeared in human form, the timeless is present in time. This belief has significant implications for Williams's treatment of history. Events in time take on a symbolic dimension. History becomes an eternal present. Past, present and future are co-inherent, for human action is at once both in and out of time. A historical action is thus simultaneously itself and other than itself. Existence and essence, the immediate and the remote, the concrete and the abstract, the temporal and the eternal, are brought into unity, where time itself ceases to exist and we are confronted by the reality of what is.

Charles Williams had a very real sense of the supernatural operating in the natural world, which he sought to convey in his works. T S Eliot, who revered him, states that he was "a man who was always able to live in the material and the spiritual world at once, a man to whom the two worlds were equally real because they are one world." It is this dual reality, a sense of the timeless and temporal together, that finds expression in Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury. The Archbishop seeks to devise

a ritual for communion, that men should find by nourishment on the supernatural, the natural moving all ways into the supernatural, and the things that are below as those above,

(Part I, p. 167)

Cranmer himself comes to experience what he has only known in theory. Williams conveys this element of the supernatural or extraordinary, through the unearthly figure of the Skeleton, within the action and yet above it. Cranmer is a man who all his life has sought Christ "in images, through deflections." Plastic, he seeks integrity; timid, he seeks courage. Most men, being dishonest, seek dishonesty, but he, among few, seeks honesty such as he knows "in corners of sin," "round curves of deception." But honesty is the "point of conformity, of Christ," declares
the Skeleton. Cranmer is twirled to this point, as the spiritual reality he has sought through words and images confronts him in life.

The play opens on a solemn note with the formal entry of a procession of Singers. In the silence their voices intone a beautiful collect from the Book of Common Prayer:

God the protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy; that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal: Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. Amen.

The very next instant, in jarring contrast, the Priest and the Preacher run on hurling violent abuse at each other:

The Priest: The Lord remember you!
The Preacher: The Lord remember you!
The Priest: Because you have forsaken him alone, The Lord shall smite you with scabs and emerods.
The Preacher: Because you have followed lying gods, The Lord shall set over you gods of stone.
The Priest: Atheist!
The Preacher: Idolater!
The Priest: Beast!
The Preacher: Devil!

(Part I, p. 143)

Any sense of tranquility set up by the opening prayer is shattered as the abstract and the ideal come up against the concrete and the actual. We are brought up short by the conflict between word and action. Complex spiritual and historical issues are suggested with extreme economy through this altercation between the Priest and the Preacher, who represent rival parties within the English Church - the struggle between conservative and radical factions. Their wild denunciations convey the disorder and confusion that threatened the Church. Doctrinal conflicts of the Reformation are indicated by the nature of their vituperations. "Will you silence God's word?"
exclaims the Protestant Preacher. "Will you touch God's altar?" retorts the Catholic Priest.

This points to the heated Catholic/Protestant controversy over the significance of the Eucharist or the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The orthodox Catholic view, based upon involved philosophies of the Middle Ages and established by the authority of the See of Rome, was that the bread and wine at the Eucharist were miraculously transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. The consecrated elements were therefore worthy of worship and adoration because Christ was in some mysterious way corporally present, and great emphasis was placed on the involved rites and ceremonies in the mass which signified the miracle of what was occurring. Central importance in the service was given to the altar and the priest who offered Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice on behalf of the people. The mass was celebrated in Latin, which most laymen could not comprehend, and except for special occasions the laity generally did not communicate. Private masses for the dead were held at which only the priest was present.

The Protestant reformers rejected the idea of the mass as a sacrifice. Relying on the authority of scripture for their interpretation of the sacrament, they claimed that the Lord's Supper was a memorial and representation of that perfect sacrifice and oblation which was made by Christ once for all upon the Cross. There were varying schools of thought; some following Calvin acknowledged Christ's presence, but it was a spiritual, not corporal, presence, which was communicated to the soul of a worthy receiver and not inherent in the sacrament itself. A more extreme view asserted by followers of the Zwinglian school of thought reduced the sacrament to the level of a mere commemorative rite, denying any special presence of Christ and any special grace bestowed upon the receiver. The reformers demanded greater simplicity in the celebration of the sacrament. Emphasis was placed on the preaching of God's word and all Christians, clergy and laity alike, were urged
to read the scriptures. A background knowledge of these issues is essential, for they have a direct relevance to one vital theme of the play, introduced in such concentrated dramatic terms.

The Priest and the Preacher fall apart after their vehement exchange. A placard is raised announcing the place and date - 'Cambridge 1528' - and Cranmer enters. This device of captioning the major dates and events against the action serves as a necessary guide for the audience because of the extreme compression of history. In the Canterbury production a child in purple and green Tudor dress sat demurely behind a big book of dates and events, turning the pages at relevant points. As has been pointed out, "Williams' use of short scenes, each with its 'headline' title, may be said to anticipate the adoption of Brechtian techniques on the English stage by some twenty years."21

On his entry Cranmer expresses the euphoria of his Cambridge days:

From riding to reading sweetly the days go.
I praise God for his space of Cambridge air,
where steeds and studies abound, that my thighs,
body and mind have exercise,
each o'erstriding his kind in beast or word.
...

Coming in from the gallop, I vault on language,
halt often but speed sometimes, and always heed
the blessed beauty of the shaped syllables.

(Part I, pp. 143-4)

Williams brings together here the two great skills that Cranmer delighted in throughout his life. He was a splendid horseman, as well as a considerable artist in words. The exercise of both these abilities must have given him a sense of mastery and exhilaration. He exults in the freedom and control provided by his command over both.

Cambridge affords him an idyllic existence, the quiet world of a scholar, well suited to his gifts and temperament. The conflicts of the age might almost have passed him by:

I would let go
a heresy or so for love of a lordly style
with charging challenge, or one that softens
a mile
to a furlong with dulcet harmony, enlarging
the heart with delicate diction. Come,
today's journey waits: open gates! Blessed
Lord,
thy hast given me horses, books, Cambridge,
and peace:
foolish the man, having these, who seeks
increase.

(Part I, p. 144)

There is a faint echo of Isaiah 26:2 - 'Open the gates
that the righteous nation which keeps faith may enter in.'
Cranmer's faith resides very much in the mind. It is yet
to be tried by experience.

He realises that here in Cambridge must he too "wring
souls duty out of that beauty" and come to terms with the
controversy over the meaning of Christ's words:

This is my body; take eat:
Drink this; this is my blood:
feed on this in your heart by faith with
thanksgiving.

(Part I, p. 144)

A bishop enters, vested with acolytes and incense, and goes
round the stage. At the sight of this, Cranmer comments
that "now is man's new fall." Instead "of God are God's
marvels displayed,/rivals to Christ are Christ's bounties
made,/and dumb are our people: negligent they lie and
numb." There is an obsession with vain rite and ceremony
which has caused a perversion of the truth to take place.
He sees it as an inverted form of self-worship - "false
awe" and "false delight" springing from "self-circling
adoration." The true meaning of salvation restored by
Christ "in means of communion" is lost as now the "means of
communion" is adored. Cranmer holds that Christ's gospel
is not a ceremonial law. It is a religion to serve God.
But the glory of God has been darkened and obscured, as the
human sensibility, caught up with "multiple show and song,"
"beats its heart in a half-sleep." "Covered by that
panoply's art," man has forgotten "the bare step of the
Lord." Thus "dyked from approach; untrod, unexplored, is
the road." (Part I, pp. 144-5)

Yet Cranmer has himself to walk the road. Ironically
he is guilty of the same deflection, though in a much subtler way. He too indulges in the worship of form and images - the power and beauty of words. He perceives the truth with his mind, and is able to give it voice in beautiful words, but the mind is a little ahead of the soul's experience. This is indicated by the Skeleton, who enters at this point, carrying a crozier. The Singers herald his entrance significantly, with the words - "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." These were the words with which Christ was heralded on his entry into Jerusalem. The Skeleton crosses the stage, declaiming:

Fast runs the mind,  
and the soul a pace behind:  
without haste or sloth  
come I between them both.  
There blows a darkening wind  
over soul and mind:  
faith can hear, truth can see  
the jangling bones that make up me:  
till on the hangman's day,  
and along the hangman's way,  
we all three run level,  
mind, soul, and God or the Devil.

(Part I, p. 146)

Right from the start the Skeleton is a grotesque enigmatic figure. The audience is made uneasy as to what to make of him, unsure whether he is an agent of God or the Devil. In the Canterbury production he was given some of the impish qualities of a medieval vice figure. He had a "pantomime appearance" and was both macabre and clownlike. His costume "in many ways resembled that of Death in Poel's Everyman, but in the coloured head-dress there was an attempt to suggest the promise of life through death."\(^\text{22}\)

Despite the controlling influence of the Skeleton in the action, Cranmer for the most part remains oblivious of his presence. He prays that Henry will enforce true religion in England, and "smite his people with might of doctrine," so that God's word may become the law of the land, even though this should be achieved at the cost of
Cranmer himself being made outcast by his brethren.

Prayer is dangerous, the Skeleton warns:

We of heaven are compassionate-kind;
we give men all their mind;
asking, at once, before they seek, they find.
We are efficacious and full of care;
why do the poor wretches shriek in despair?
They run; after each, entreating him, runs his prayer.

(Part I, p. 146)

We are startled into an awareness of the rashness of facile utterance. The Skeleton continually drives home this human tendency to be free and articulate in prayer, without the full terrifying consciousness of what the words involve - "We see our servant Thomas; we see how pure his desire - Amen; let his desire be." (Part I, p. 146)

Trumpets are sounded and the King, Anne Boleyn, the Lords and the Commons enter. As the King takes his throne, the Singers sing one of the psalms of Solomon:

Give the King thy judgements, O God;
and thy righteousness unto the King's sons.
Then shall he judge thy people according unto right; and defend the poor...

... He shall come down like rain into a fleece or wool: even as the drops that water the earth.
In his time shall the righteous flourish; yea, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth.
His dominion shall be also from the one sea to the other: and from the flood unto the world's end.

(Part I, p. 147)

The psalm celebrates kingship in its ideal form - the king, a servant of God and defender of his people. He is a life-preserving force. He protects and nurtures. But when Henry acts and speaks it is in direct opposition to this. He calls for Thomas. The Skeleton goes to Cranmer, touches him, and brings him to the King. Cranmer kneels, and the Skeleton stands between and behind them like Destiny or Providence. Instead of making the public personal, Henry makes the personal public. He tells Cranmer that he "is
married to a Death." The lives he sows are "slain in the woman's blood." "Corpse-conceived is the heir of his kingdom and power." His soul is the "power of God over this land." His soul pines, the land dies. He must have Anne to set him free to "free the fate of the land."

(Part I, p. 147) Cranmer at least believes in something outside himself. Most of the other characters, like Henry, are able to see no further than themselves. The temporal world is all. They are the world. They are time and space. God is created after their own image. Man worships the illusion that is the self.

Cranmer denies the validity of the Pope's dispensation, which enabled Henry to marry Katharine, and moreover asserts that the Pope has no jurisdiction in England. Henry is absolute head of the English Church. "Within Christ's law there is none above the King." (Part I, p. 148) Cranmer is created Archbishop of Canterbury - the Skeleton hands the crozier to the King, who hands it to Cranmer. Despite his sincere desire to free the nation from the thraldom of vain and superstitious rites, Cranmer is enslaved himself, when as archbishop he continually subjugates his own beliefs to the authority in power. His only defence is his conception of the duty and obedience he owes the king. Within Christ's law, he says, there is none above the king. But he neglects the fact that there is none above Christ's law, not even the king.

This belief in royal absolutism enables Cranmer to rationalise and evade his conscience. Through the continual subordination of his mind and will, he becomes increasingly the king's creature he urges Anne to be:

The King is masked with his majesty; all we are tasked to be shaped at his will, infiltrated with his colour, whether for dolour or peace. You must have no sense, madam, but of this spiritual obedience to make you in mind and feature the King's creature, as the King is God's; be you the image of God's image.

(Part I, p. 150)
The word 'masked' is apt, for it suggests a moral ambiguity
which Cranmer fails to take cognisance of. By making himself over completely to the king, Cranmer is rendering to Henry an absolute obedience he owes to God alone as the supreme reality. His seeing the king as God's image on earth is yet another form of idolatry.

The Skeleton comments that the land also has its visions, and bids it speak. Voices break out from the Commons in violent clamour:

Adoration!
Communion!
Adoration!
Communion!

Up with the clergy!
Down with the clergy!

Texts and the Councils!
Text and the Fathers!

Shibboleth!
Abracadabra!

(Part I, p. 151)

The heated cries raised in dispute signify the continuing clash over worship and doctrine. The Skeleton intervenes:

Hark, the images go abroad!
Once in a way, once in an age,
when men's spirits rage, I set the images free,
all idols of hall, chapel, and marketplace,
spectral images, lacking love's grace, of me.
Their foreheads' phosphorescence shines;
they make signs; then one man walks, one talks,
under those moons, and in action and speech
each grows a wicked automaton to each,
a diseased bone, to be flung to Gehenna;
yet I am the pit where Gehenna is sprung.

(Part I, p. 151)

The corruption of the truth that can so easily occur, is described in terms of an unearthly pagan ritual, an unholy delirium taking over men's minds and actions. All men have their images of God. By holding blindly to them and fanatically pursuing them to the exclusion of all others, they are often led into a perversion of the truth. Then "all but the hearts of the blessed ones dance/askance from
love of Christ to love of corruption, crying maniacally
Abracadabra, abracadabra, abracadabra." In times of such
fevered madness, where lie sanity and direction? The
Skeleton goes round the stage as if blind and begging,
crying, "Do you hear me? where is the way? / O my people,
where is the way?" (Part I, p. 152) He is met with
varying responses:

The Priest : Accipe; this is the way.
The Preacher: Audi; this is the way.
The Commons : This, we heard, was the way.
The Lords : This, we feel is the way.
The King : This that I bid is the way.
The Commons : This - is not this
the way?

(Part I, p. 152)

The spectators are drawn into the general doubt and
bewilderment aroused by the conflicting claims. The
Skeleton turns to confront the audience:

Yet, O my people - can you believe it?
blessed and chosen are they who receive it -
there is a way; I am the way,
I the division, the derision, where
the bones dance in the darkening air,
I at the cross-ways the voice of the one way,
crying from the tomb of the earth where I died
the word of the only right Suicide,
the only word no words can quell,
the way to heaven and the way to hell.

(Part I, p. 152)

The Skeleton continually identifies himself with
Christ - the living word, the way, the truth and the life.
And yet he does not allow for a simple explanation and a
complacent response. A subhuman unearthly figure, he
arouses both hope and fear. Breaking into a strange
dance, he weaves around the stage singing, "I am the way,
the way to heaven; who will show a poor blind beggar the
way to heaven? I am the way, the way to hell, who will
 teach a poor blind beggar the way to hell?" The other
characters attempt to follow his movements, running and
dancing after him, until he suddenly stops and throws out
the challenge: "Let us hear what my people make of this dance; especially what my Thomas makes of this dance."

(Part I, p. 153) Words, music and body movement combine with arresting effect, to reinforce the Skeleton's suggestion of himself as Lord of the dance, of life and death. Like T S Eliot, Williams is very modern in his moving towards a much more direct and physical theatre.

The action of the play is overtly theatrical. There is a bold simple use of mime and props. Historical events are conveyed in stylised symbolic terms. When Anne Boleyn falls from favour and is condemned to death, the Skeleton covers her with his cloak and leads her out. A serious attempt by the Lords to overthrow Cranmer, in the time of Henry, is depicted in the following physical terms: The Lords come between the King and Cranmer, back to back, with outspread arms. The First Lord advances, driving Cranmer back before him; the Second stands over the throne. Action of this sort is interspersed with realistic dialogue in which Williams often keeps extremely close to what was actually said historically.

For example, in the play, Henry roars out in outrage at this threat by the Lords to his Archbishop:

Thomas!

Where is Canterbury?

Where is the archbishop?
Keep him waiting, do you, among your boys in the scurvy noise of your lackeys, your runabouts hey?
I say, by my faith I have a fine council; this man that is better than the proudest of you, the King's more than any in his true heart, what, you would start as a cony, would you, and dog-chase on to his doom with fellows that will find room to spare and to swear this or that slander for a crown or two? I will put you down, master: come hither, Archbishop; this is the man I owe much, by my faith in Almighty God. I will nod you to your death before him; I vow there shall none of you touch the man the King loves.

(Part I, p. 163)

The incident is highly condensed, and the audience requires some background knowledge for a full understanding of what
actually took place.

Historically, Henry called Cranmer privately to him, and informed him of the Council's desire to have him committed to the Tower to undergo examination for heresy. Cranmer thanked the king and expressed his willingness to go to the Tower "so that he might be indifferently heard." "O, Lord God!" exclaimed the king. "What fond simplicity have you, so to permit yourself to be imprisoned. Do not you think that if they have you once in prison, two or three knaves will be soon procured to witness against you." Henry gave Cranmer a ring, to show the Council that he had taken the matter into his own hands. The next morning, when the Archbishop went to the Council Chamber, he was kept waiting for three-quarters of an hour in an ante-room with serving-men and lackeys. When he was finally admitted into the Chamber, it was announced that he was to be sent to the Tower to await trial for having infected the whole realm with heresy. Cranmer produced Henry's ring. The Council members repaired to the king, who chastised them severely:

Ah, my Lords, I had thought that I had a discreet and wise Council, but now I perceive that I am deceived. How have ye handled here my Lord of Canterbury? What! make ye of him a slave, shutting him out of the Council chamber amongst serving-men? Would ye be so handled yourselves? I would you well understand that I account my Lord of Canterbury as faithful a man towards me as ever was prelate in this realm, and one to whom I am many ways beholding by the faith I owe unto God; and therefore who-so loveth me will regard him hereafter.

Thus, it can be seen that though historical events are presented in an extremely compressed form, they are treated with a serious respect for historical truth.

While Williams takes pains to ground his play in the facts, he is at the same time very free with history. His emphasis is on the religious and personal significance of the historical events for Cranmer, and here he gives free reign to his imagination. It is the turmoil of the inner life that is focused. There are times of nagging self-doubt, as when Cranmer tries to convince Henry that there
was no intimidation involved in the way he got confessions from Anne Boleyn and the Nun of Kent:

    God help me, sir, I cannot bully; I went friendly. I have searched my heart often to know if I went too friendly; she and the Nun of Kent, poor creatures, shut in prison, and I went, speaking them softly; did I speak too soft? I cannot shout; but what they said I told. If I deceived - did I deceive? I desired justice to the prisoners, justice to the King.

(Part I, p. 157)

It is the voice of uncertainty, for who knows the hidden unconscious motives of the human psyche. He seeks refuge in books, but, taunts the Skeleton, "Are words wiser than women or worship? safer, securer, purer?" (Part I, p. 158)

Henry's protection provides Cranmer with some sense of security. But as time progresses the King himself is riddled with doubts and anxieties. The power he wields seems less and less real. He is beset on all sides by threats which become increasingly palpable: "Boars and bulls root at me and butt me." This brings to mind the verse from Isaiah - "like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones." (Isaiah 10:13) He is surrounded by avarice - "There is blood running over gold in all men's eyes" - and is pathetic as he cries to the only man he trusts: "Stand by me, Thomas. I am the king. I need no help; only stand somewhere near me." (Part I, p. 157)

The very need to assert "I am the king" implies a doubting of its truth. Is he the king? And finally he comes to question whether he is anything at all, as we see when he relates a dream he had:

    I saw a creature run about the world, everywhere at all times, that would be caught but would not stay for catching, or mayhap the thing was still, it was everything else ran by,
    and I ran also, too slowly or too fast; sometimes I could see, sometimes I could not see but when I saw I wept for the joy of it - a crimson flashing creature, full of power. All my life I sought for it, and then I died, and it was gone and everything was gone, except a voice calling, Where is the prey, King of England? but I was not the King: it called
    Henry, where is the prey? but I was not Henry.
In the nothingness, for the creature was not, I stood
and answered: I - and before I added more
the nothingness broke over me in a peal
of laughter, all the angels crying You! -
Here is a fellow calls himself I, - and their mirth
filled me, but I was weeping; there were streams
of mockery running to misery...

(Part I, pp. 163-5)

The dream powerfully conveys Henry's sense of spiritual
loss. Reality exists in God. The transcendent is
immanent in the created world, which is charged with his
presence. God's revelation of himself is never final or
complete, but he is there to be found. He is the crimson
flashing creature in the dream, which Henry sought to catch.
It is compelling yet elusive. It "would be sought but
would not stay for the catching or mayhap the thing was
still, it was everything else ran by." God would be
known, Williams suggests, but perhaps discovery lies in the
mode of knowledge. It calls for a different kind of aware-
ness, a radical change of perspective, a placing of God at
the centre instead of man. But lose God and there is
nothing, as is Henry's experience in the dream. He finds
himself in the nothingness, for the creature was not,
because when it was gone, everything was gone. In losing
God, Henry loses himself. He becomes nothing, unreal,
because only in God does one possess one's true reality.
Henry does not arrive at this truth. Hence he is only
given a dream where there is an intuition of it. He does
not grasp it consciously. Through the dream, one gets the
sense of the self that cannot be argued with - a blind
force groping after reality.

The death of Henry results in the Protestant ascend-
ancy. Edward succeeds to the throne, and power passes into
the hands of the Lords. Their dominance over the throne
is expressed in simple but vivid physical metaphors in
action. They put on their hats, perch irreverently on the
arms of the throne and lift up the crown. Through the use
of such acted metaphors Williams is able to dispense with a
great deal of tedious detail and explanation, which otherwise
would be necessary to a strictly realistic portrayal. Thus he is left free to concentrate attention on the spiritual world of being which accompanies the physical world of action. This bold use of stage metaphors anticipates a very modern trend. Edward Bond in his play *Early Morning*, which I shall be considering in a later chapter, reverses the process and takes a great leap further. He uses brilliantly realised physical metaphors in action, not simply to summarise the events of the external action, but to focus and analyse the moral and spiritual reality behind a historical situation.

The Lords represent the facile optimism of worldly men who refuse to see further than themselves and the temporal state: "We are the world. We are time and space." Their culture and gospel is materialism and greed. They worship possession. The "propriety of proprietorship" is the "rite and religion" they live by. The view of life they assert is a blatant perversion of the truth:

> We are making a ritual for our own communion on lands, houses, chantries, abbeys, guilds, which are broken for us, and blood is given for us.
> Feeding on that body, we grow; we grow into houses lustily foundationed over leagues of land. Our bodies made space and our blood time. Enlarged so, a man's spirit has nothing, nothing at all between himself and God.

(Part I, p. 167)

Their's is a ruthless marauding egotism, for they see only in terms of self-interest. They rationalise their actions in the name of "obvious reason" and "natural decency." Williams satirises their outlook on life through humorous understatement and euphemism. When the period of their ascendancy is forced to an end by Mary's wrestling the power, they treat the removal of Lady Jane as awkward but necessary: "After all, the Dudleys were never really gentlemen, Lady Jane was making difficulties already." They entreat Mary to "restore adoration and the Pope who has been of late a stranger only by accident, by a slight misunderstanding about motherhood." (Part II,
Behind a veneer of culture and sophistication lies an amoral, inhuman driving force that is totally predatory and self-serving. Throughout the raging Protestant/Catholic controversy their main concern is that the abbey lands which were theirs when they were Protestants, will be equally theirs when they are Catholics. They are the time-servers and opportunists, who acknowledge no God outside themselves: "Be still, and know that we are the Lords." (Part I, p. 166)

On their first rise to power, they give Cranmer permission to write his ritual for communion. The Commons break out in rebellion, crying, "Down with new-fangled communions! down with the rich! Grievances! grievances! hear the Commons' grievances!" (Part I, p. 168) This refers to the rebellions which broke out in 1549 after the Book of Common Prayer came into force. Immediately, there were risings in Devonshire which were followed by a religious revolt in the West Country, an agrarian rising in Norfolk, and riots in various parts of Eastern England. The grievances of the Devon rebels were sent formally to Russel, Lord Privy Seal, who had agreed to receive them. Cranmer drew up an answer to their articles of complaint, in which he denounced the wickedness of rebellion.24 In the play, the Commons shout out some of the demands that were made, in a great clamour:

Give us back something we can pray to!
Give us back the thing that hangs in the Church.
Give us back our shows and songs!
We will not have the Mass said in English!
We desire Latin and processions and a great to-do!
We will not have the Bible printed in English!
...

We will have a mystery, a wonderful thing.
Everybody shall bow and touch their foreheads,
and any one who shall not shall immediately be slain.

(Part I, p. 168)

Adopting a high moral tone, Cranmer sharply rebukes them for desiring the "mystery of Christ to be no more than an unintelligible monster." Yet can he afford to be so
bliighting and categorical, insinuates the Skeleton in the background:

How absolute we are! now in your night
is there no ravage? does nothing, Thomas, roar
like seas or the crowds of the poor marching?
is all hushed down to those sweet-sounding collect
where reason and charity softly kiss each other?
You were less certain in old days at Cambridge.
This is the ruinous nonsense of the mind,
that men come mightily to believe their causes,
because of their mere rage of controversy,
and without morality to believe in morality.

(Part I, pp. 168-9)

What is implied is that Cranmer fails to take cognisance
of the real cause of the religious uprisings - social
injustice. Historically, agrarian discontent had been
aggravated by the greed and exploitation of the new owners
of the abbey-lands. The rebels asserted that a gentleman
should only be allowed one servant for every hundred marks'
worth of land that he owned. They also demanded that half
the abbey lands be taken from their present owners and used
for the building of new abbeys. Cranmer expressed his
indignation that the Commons should wish "to turn upside
down the good order of the whole world, that is everywhere,
and ever hath been, that is to say the commoners to be
governed by the nobles and the servants by their masters."
He who had himself once objected to the distribution of
abbey spoils to speculators, denounced the rebels for seeking
to "dispossess just inheritors without any cause."
This was perhaps in order to keep in with those in power.

Though in the play this is not spelt out, it is implied
in the mockery of the Skeleton. The contradiction between
idea and reality is again emphasised. Beauty of thought
and expression are not in themselves a holiness before God.
Art and knowledge are wonderful gifts, but hold equally the
possibility of damnation. Cranmer's writings embody great
spiritual truths and are undeniably a source of inspiration,
but are no vindication of the author if he does not attempt
to follow them in life. Of course his exhilaration in
writing the Book of Common Prayer is quite justified:
It shall blow as the wind of youth; it shall take youth with wonder, nor age lose it nor death deny.

(Part I, p. 171)

The book becomes all that he says it will, as perceived by the audience with their perspective of time. Not even his death as a heretic can destroy the truth of the work itself, which lived on to become the richest inheritance of the Church of England. Cranmer does indeed write a ritual worthy of communion. But, as the Skeleton is bent on driving home, much study of communion is not communion itself. To be aware of the pattern is not to be part of the pattern. This is a very real danger. As C S Lewis has said, it is "so fatally easy to confuse an aesthetic appreciation of the spiritual life with the life itself."

As Cranmer writes the words of the Communion Service, he says them out aloud and the Singers respond in exultant worship:

Cranmer: Lift up your hearts:
The Singers: We lift them up unto the Lord.
Cranmer: Let us give thanks unto our Lord God:
The Singers: It is meet and right so to do.
Cranmer: It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks...

(Part I, p. 173)

The Skeleton breaks in to comment, "Ah how the sweet words ring their beauty," "but will you sing it with unchanged faces/when God shall change the times and the places?"
The harmonious words can so easily be glibly uttered, without full consciousness of what they imply or might cost. Cranmer himself, steeped in the Scriptures and delighting in the Word, is yet dead to the fact that the Word is an active principle, the "anatomy itself talks, talks of itself." (Part I, p. 176) For God is just even if men are not. He takes them at their word even if they do not take him at his. If men speak before they know, and are not prepared for the Way, the Way itself prepares them.

Williams presents Cranmer's suffering as necessary to his
redemption, because of his self-deception. He cannot be saved "difficult life, difficult death" if his soul is to be pulled through the crack. (Part I, p. 162)

With the mounting political and social pressures, Cranmer is haunted by fears both without and within, which the Skeleton attributes to his own manoeuvrings:

Whatever faces you see, or hear feet go by, they are only I, points and joints in me; I only waiting for what I only am working.

(Part I, p. 174)

Cranmer slowly becomes aware of a shadowy presence dogging him, which indicates some measure of spiritual growth. He addresses the Skeleton for the first time: "Friend, do I know you? Are you of my household?...Forgive me if I should know you. Much study, it is written, tires the flesh." There is irony in the Skeleton's reply - "Much study of such communion tires the flesh, though perhaps less than the communion itself tries." (Part I, p. 174) The Skeleton is uncompromising in his drivings to force Cranmer to face up to himself, and to the reality he has mentally grasped, but eluded in experience. He is "the delator of all things to their truth," "to what you say you would find." Cranmer, plagued by his hounding presence, and repeatedly stopped and challenged by him - "Do you run to me or do I run to you?" - at last cries out in protest, "Christ or devil, leave me to lie in peace." The pun is intentional, for to leave him thus is to leave him "to lie, to change without changing, to live without living."

(Part I, p. 175)

As the political affairs grow more threatening, Cranmer's disquietude increases. The writhings of a troubled conscience allow him no respite. The psalm sung by the Singers in the background reflects his deep unrest:

My God, my God, look upon me, why hast thou forsaken me: and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint?

O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not: and in the night season also I take no rest.

And thou continuest holy: O thou worship of Israel.

(Part II, p. 178)
He, who always strove for safety and compromise, is torn apart by guilt and self-doubt, as the mind, ghost-ridden, sinks into its havoc:

Lambeth and Westminster are full of a strange song.
A voice but now cracked from the street like a thong high to the sky, stinging all ears with Wait wait, singing the day of the hangman's way.
I sit in my study; a fit of fear takes my heart while in my mouth the grand art fails, speech fails; the thong cracks to the sky; at the song the souls out of each part of heaven fly;
heaven is thick with spirits flying and crying, fleeing towards me, and fleeing off ere we meet: Tyndale was burned; Forrest was cruelly burned - behind them the souls of the righteous ride in the air;
God be witness I never turned in my mind or denied, but always sought and desired to spare...

(Part II, p. 178)

Cranmer did always try to spare. He alone interceded for Fisher and More, for Anne Boleyn, for Cromwell and Bishop Tunstall. But in his tormented self-questioning there is the hint that, perhaps, even this might have been what was emotionally congenial to him.

The advent of Mary to the throne is for Cranmer the time of reckoning. "My hour is at hand," says the Skeleton, physically assuming the attitude of one crucified: "The writings yield to the Rite, the Rite to me." This is the end of "all translation." Truth comes in the form of Mary. Cranmer expresses his paralyzing sense of fear in terms of horse-riding imagery, which suggests an inversion of his earlier state when first he went to Cambridge:

when the Queen from the depth came rising, riding so near;
when the Queen came riding yesterday into the town; she had no head, over her shoulders the Crown threw a golden light; her hands emerged on the rein;
at her horse's pacing my limbs jerked in pain, as the Queen rising, riding, came steadily in.
Purge, O God, a sinful man of his sin.

(Part II, p. 188)

Cranmer, who glorified in his mastery over beast and word in the opening scene, is now very much the enslaved. Physical fear has control of his mental faculties. The Queen is
quite dehumanised in this vision he has of her. The crown in place of her head symbolises her office, the royal authority Cranmer has served as the supreme reality. He can no longer rationalise his accommodations with the truth under the guise of duty. He sees clearly for the first time all that he is and has been. He has lived "askance in a jest, the puppet of the prince/of the air," each limb jerking and gyrating "at some power's ruling the hour." All his life makes nonsense of his words and they desert him now "becoming babble/of words, words unmeaning, insignificant gabble,/words infinitely dividing; infinitely sliding/smoothly, faster and faster, before and behind each other..." Words prove a precarious foothold, offering no safety or escape. As he bows himself in wretchedness, the Singers, using his own words from the Book of Common Prayer, chant the third collect at Evening Prayer for aid against all perils -"Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night." (Part II, pp. 187-8)

Cranmer is informed by Mary's Bishop that she has denounced him to the Pope, who has ordered his degradation. In a humiliating little ceremony he is stripped of the symbols of office. The Skeleton wrenches the crozier from him and gives it to the Bishop. Cranmer is unfrocked and a coarse gown is put on him. The Queen will have Cranmer recant. He is to submit to "adoration and our Father at Rome." It is a moment of truth, when he is asked to accept the two central positions he has violently rejected. The Skeleton declares:

There is an hour - this, Thomas, is the hour - when the pure intellectual jurisdiction commits direct suicide: the mind and the world die, and the life shivers between their bones.

(Part II, p. 192)

Terrified by the prospect of a cruel death, Cranmer once again resorts to mental evasion with a familiar ploy. "If the Queen serve the Pope," he says, "I will serve the Queen." But this will not do, declares the Queen and her Bishop:
The Queen : This shall not serve; we have signed the writ for the burning.

The Bishop : But see, what quiet might come instead of burning!

The Skeleton: And no man can think clearly while he is burning! Though, we agree, that is neither here nor there. What is incineration compared to truth?

The Queen : Consider the command of the Prince who is as a god.

The Bishop : Consider the witness of doctors to the will of God.

The Skeleton: Consider anything with a remote resemblance to God that is likely in the least degree to save you from burning.

(Part II, p. 192)

Cranmer is gradually broken down. Under tremendous pressure to conform, he voices a very natural doubt - "General Councils have erred and Popes have erred: is it not like that my word went wrong?" (Part II, p. 193)

Submerged by fear and uncertainty, he finally signs the papers of recantation. The extreme abject terms in which he is made to recant, bring home the tyranny of the State. He is forced to vilify himself and is allowed no vestige of dignity:

... I will believe adoration,
I will receive the Catholic Church of the Pope,
I will put my hope in images and substitution;
I sinned in the false dissolution of King Henry's matter
Bring me all; I will acknowledge all.
I was the master of a whole college of heresies - faster! faster! - I am the worst
that ever the earth bore, most outcast, most accurst
... Korah ... Saul ... the penitent thief ...
O Christ, what have I done?

(Part II, p. 194)

Williams keeps close in spirit to the actual historical documents here. Cranmer signed six recantations. The last one was the most debasing. He had blasphemed, persecuted and maltreated. He was made to compare himself to the thief on the cross. He was most deserving not only
of human and temporal, but also of divine and eternal punishment, since, as he confesses:

I opened wide the windows to heresies of every sort, of which I myself was the chief doctor and ductor ... In this indeed I was not only worse than Saul and the thief, but most accursed of all whom the earth has ever borne ... 26

In the play, too, the recantations leave Cranmer nothing. His grief at his action is rooted in the sense of having denied God and himself, and having lost God and himself in the process. When he realises he has "denied God for naught," for they intend to burn him anyway, the Skeleton, far from sympathetic, sees this as necessary to his salvation:

What is that, O soul, to thee and me?
Thomas, all your life you have sought Christ in images, through deflections; how else can man see?
Plastic, you sought integrity, and timid, courage.
Most men, being dishonest, seek dishonesty; you, among few, honesty, such as you knew, in corners of sin, round curves of deception; honesty, the point where only the blessed live, where only saints settle, the point of conformity. Mine is the diagram; I twirl it to a point, the point of conformity, of Christ. You shall see Christ,
see his back first - I am his back.

(Part II, p. 195)

Cranmer has to face up to himself and his own duplicity. Not girt to tread the way, "he is girt now by the way."
(Part II, p. 182) He is brought to painful self-knowledge. With it comes the realisation that the end is also the means - "Can life itself be redemption? all grace but grace? all this terror the agonizing glory of grace?"
(Part II, p. 195) He grows to a new quality of spiritual faith, which he demonstrates at the hour of death. The Executioners enter, carrying flaming torches. Cranmer is brought to the centre of the stage. He is given leave to make a public declaration of his repentance and recantation. The Skeleton, commenting that he is now equated to Cranmer's very soul, also bids him speak. Kneeling, Cranmer says a
prayer which is mainly derived from a moving prayer that the historical Cranmer actually spoke at his end.\textsuperscript{27} In the play it is compressed into verse form:

\begin{verbatim}
Blessed Omnipotence, in whom is heaven,
heaven and earth are alike offended at me!
I can reach from heaven no succour, nor
earth to me.
What shall I then? despair? thou art not
despair.
Into thee now do I run, into thy love ...
\end{verbatim}

(Part II, p. 198)

The concluding scene of the play follows history closely and is the most dramatic scene of the play. The final moments build to a great climax. Cranmer, rising from prayer, begins his address to the people quietly enough. He bids them not to give their minds "to this glozing world," nor to "murmur against the glory of the Queen," and to "love each other, altogether love each other." He urges the rich to "give naturally to the poor/always, and especially in this present time/when the poor are so many and food so dear." And then, suddenly, he shifts his focus to draw attention to the thing that he says troubles him more than anything else he ever did - the writings he made public, against his heart's belief, to keep his life. Thus, he declares boldly,

\begin{verbatim}
this hand,
which wrote the contrary of God's will in me,
since it offended most, shall suffer first;
it shall burn ere I burn, now I go to the fire,
and the writings, all the writings wherein I
denied God's will,
or made God's will but the method of my life,
I altogether reject them.
\end{verbatim}

(Part II, p. 199)

There is a pause; everybody is stunned into a silence which suddenly explodes into general uproar. The Executioners rush out to stoke the flames, while voices break out from the rest in anger, relief or consternation:
Bishop: Stop his mouth.

Voices: Away with him to the fire!
He is mad with rage!
He despairs, he despairs!
The devil hath his soul!
Blessed be God for the good man's word!
Blessed!
He does not know what he says!

(Part II, p. 200)

Cranmer is about to run after his Executioners when the Skeleton relentlessly stays him, and urges him to "say one more thing before the world," to "say all." He then makes a final admission: "If the Pope had bid me live, I should have served him." This reinforces the idea that Cranmer's suffering and death are necessary to his redemption. He rushes eagerly out to the flames, the Skeleton and other characters rushing after him. The play ends on this sensational note, the Singers closing the action with the singing of the Gloria, like a vindication of God's ways to man.

Cranmer's determination to put the hand that had offended first into the fire is highly symbolic. He whose faith had resided so much in the mind, finally demonstrates its reality in a very physical action. The hand that had offended by signing the recantations is the same hand that penned his great writings. In biblical imagery fire is symbolic of the presence of God representing his glory, his righteous judgement and zeal. It is also a symbol of purification and vitality. Word and action finally come together in a moment of consummation through destruction, fulfilment through sacrifice, birth through death. One wonders why Williams refrains from depicting the burning. Perhaps it is because he fights shy of showing actual physical violence on the stage. This contrasts sharply with more modern playwrights, such as Edward Bond, who refuse to shirk unpleasant elements, and are concerned to confront the audience with the fact of violence in extremely direct and physical terms.
Williams's interpretation of history, like T S Eliot's, is extremely personal and relates to his religious beliefs. He was a deeply convinced Christian, and a respected lay theologian with definite views on Christian doctrine. I want now to consider some of his beliefs as they relate to the play, since Williams's interpretation of history is so closely bound up with his theology. As is evident from the play, Williams revels in images. We are assailed throughout with verbal and visual images of all kinds. God is reflected in his creation and man seeks him in images for, as the Skeleton says, "how else can man see?" (Part II, p. 195) But the danger lies in making any of these images absolute, for they are imperfect images of the divine. They do not and cannot mirror the total reality, and thus are both true and false at the same time. For Williams believes "we can never know the glory in itself." At the height of all knowledge - "This also is Thou" - all knowledge drops - "Neither is this Thou."²⁸

This formula of Williams derives from ideas first propounded by Dionysius the Areopagite, the fifth-century Greek mystic, concerning the way in which man seeks to know God. There is the Way of Affirmation and the Way of Negation. All things created by God bear certain images of the divine patterning. Thus "God is known in all things and yet apart from all things; and He is known through knowledge and through ignorance. On the one hand, He is apprehended by intuition, reason, understanding, touch, sense, opinion, imagination, name and so on; while on the other hand He cannot be grasped by intuition, nor can He be uttered or named, and He is not anything in the world, nor is He known in any existent thing."²⁹

Most Christian ascetics and mystics have chosen the Way of Negation, the rejection of all images save God himself. Williams emphasises the following of both ways as equally necessary. The Way of Affirmation, alone, can lead to idolatry, the Way of Negation, alone, to the rejection of
the material world, which God created and found "very good." Of all images it must be said, "This also is Thou; neither is this Thou."

This belief of Williams underlies the play, which is centrally concerned with spiritual truth and discovery. To apprehend the pattern, you must be prepared to break down all patterns. Thus the Skeleton asks you to "beckon your image, call and repel it, serve and slay it."

(Part I, p. 158) In time of broken illusions and emotional perplexity, he continually attempts to draw the audience's and characters' attention to himself:

*Turn your eyes; look at me. I am the broken image, the bones of the image, the image, taken away from me and I from the image.*

(Part I, p. 154)

The point of truth, of conformity, he says, is Christ.

This is because Christ is both the image and the imaged. Dorothy L. Sayers, discussing the word 'image' in relation to Christian theology, explains this clearly. Referring to St Paul's phrase - "God ... hath spoken to us by His Son, the brightness of His glory and express image of His person" - she comments:

*Something which, by being an image, expresses that which it images ... There is something which is, in the deepest sense of the word, unimaginable, known to Itself (and still more, to us) only by the image in which it expresses itself through creation; and, says Christian theology very emphatically, the Son, who is the express image, is not the copy, or imitation, or representation of the Father, nor yet inferior or subsequent to the Father in any way - in the last resort, in the depths of their mysterious being, the Unimaginable and the Image are one and the same.*

Christ is both the image and the reality. Yet ironically he himself was not recognised as the Messiah because he did not fit the image in men's minds. The human propensity to limit and codify, and to presume certainty of knowledge and judgement, is decried in the
play. The Protestant Preacher at one point rebukes Cranmer for his lenience towards the Catholic Priest, who on this occasion represents the historical Vicar of Stepney brought before Cranmer for persisting in Catholic practices. He is splendidly answered:

Be off, good fellow; do we serve Christ by running around with torches, bludgeons, and oaths?

Who was it the torchbearers once found in the garden?

the bludgeon-brandishers brought into court?

the oath-takers smote and smothered?

I am troubled often because, in my jurisdiction, I have signed and sent obstinate men to the fire. Amen your life; love all; make your communion on love and peace - this is the body of the Lord.

(Part II, p. 181)

These are Williams's words and not the reply of the historical Cranmer, who merely asserted on this occasion that they had no law to punish the man by. However, Cranmer did indeed have a gentle compassionate nature, and hated rigour and cruelty. When criticised by his friends for his lack of severity in dealing with Romanists, he replied:

What will ye have a man do to him that is not yet come to the knowledge of the truth of the Gospel, nor peradventure as yet called, and whose vocation is to me uncertain? Shall we perhaps, in his journey coming towards us, by severity and cruel behaviour overthrow him, and as it were in his voyage stop him?

I take not this way to allure men to embrace the doctrine of the Gospel.31

It is this spirit of love and mercy that the play affirms, though, as can be seen in his treatment of this historical incident, Williams deliberately gives an ironic edge to events to startle us into a disquieting consciousness of the truth.

He works continually to shock us out of complacent, inflexible, tradition-bound ways of looking. It is therefore always the unexpected that breaks in on us: "God shall be honest with you and play you fair. God help you in the hour when He plays you fair." (Part I,
"Heaven is gracious but few can draw safe deductions on its method." "The price of heaven or hell or the world is similar - always a broken heart, sometimes a broken neck." (Part I, p. 154) Christ often used unsettling analogies, with their negative moral associations, to startle men into an awareness of the truth. The Skeleton refers to one of these, likening himself to Christ:

The Son of Man comes as a thief in the night. After my mode I have gathered many souls; who shall prevent me, coming swiftly for all?

(Part II, p. 198)

This relates to Williams's belief that Christ is certainly to be trusted, but only after his own manner. He is his own interpreter, for "no one else could begin to think of his interpretations." 32

This is driven home in the play. What comes through is the idea that men all too often try to put God in a slot, and walk with no revelation. They fix and confine, instead of being open and receptive to God's presence in its boundless grace and mystery. Thus the figure or image replaces the free dwelling spirit, the scholar replaces the prophet or visionary, and men, frantically caught up with the business of living, lose out on Life. The Skeleton, with an intimation of Christ and the Second Coming thus goads the audience:

How I speed, how heedfully I speed! Can you wait? Can you see me coming? Can you wait? For a little while and here am I; spin, spin each of you his brave platter, his work, his life: how it topples and falls! No matter; spin, platter! spin, world; spin, air and prayer, without and within, but one twirling twy-flash dazzle of soul and sun down the hangman's way on the hangman's day; can you pray now or be shut-eye dumb? Can you pray: Even so, Amen, Lord, come?

(Part I, pp. 176-7)

The Skeleton who comes "in the name of the Lord," and continually identifies himself with Christ, is Williams's device for mirroring the divine active in human life. A haunting extraordinary figure, he defies precise analysis,
but is open to multiple interpretations. Throughout the
play he provides innumerable definitions of himself, most
of them worrying or startling. He is the "Judas that
betrays men to God." He is "an indweller," "a copier-
out, a carrier-about of works and words, an errand-runner."
He is "a moment's geometrical formation of fate, a function-
ing spectrum of analysed eternity." (Part I, pp. 174-5)
He is "the thing that lives in the midst of bones, the
thing with no face that spins through the brain on the edge
of a spectral voice." (Part II, p. 196) "You shall see
Christ," he assures Cranmer, "see his back first - I am
his back." (Part II, p. 195) We recall that Moses, who
wanted to see the glory of God, is only permitted to see his
back, for man in his unrighteousness cannot look upon the
face of God and live. The Skeleton presents a reverse
view of God, a side not normally considered. He warns
that he will "remember your prayers and meet you in the
core of the brain, in the coasts of the heart, drawing
apart, doubling and troubling you." (Part I, p. 176) He
is the voice of conscience in the bizarre song of an "un-
known singer in the street." Through him, men are driven
to honesty, to "the point of conformity, of Christ."
(Part I, p. 195) He is called "anything, everything;
fellow friend, cheat, traitor." He is "the delator of all
things to their truth." (Part I, pp. 174-5)

To men, the Skeleton suggests, God seems unjust, a
perpetrator of cruel ironies, who it appears "thrives upon
moans." (Part II, p. 196) But it is because God is true,
and men are not, that our perspective is inverted. Williams
jolts us into an awareness of our own duplicity through
ironic reversals which register the chronic distortion that
has taken place. Men have to double back, as it were, to
face up to themselves and their self-deception. Thus we
are constantly confronted with the image of backtracking.
Christ "goes backward on a running way." Cranmer's heart
which was "double with God and the Devil must be choked by
a heart double with the Devil and God." (Part II, p. 189)
The Skeleton talks of "backward-running speech, / the derision that issues from doctrines of grace through the division man makes between him and his place." (Part I, p. 195) There runs a vein of mockery throughout the play that has humanity as its victim. God seems to deride man in his grief:

Where Abraham dies and King David moans,
my head with Job is bowed to my knees,
Dry is the green, brittle the tree
Where the Lord sits to throw taunts at me.

(Part I, p. 149)

Cranmer, hounded and baited by the Skeleton, is allowed no respite, until he is forced to face the truth about himself. It is man who has brought about this state of moral ambiguity. In a vitiated world his vision is obscure. There "blows a darkening wind over soul and mind."

(Part I, p. 146) The bones dance in the "darkening air." Against this atmosphere of spiritual ambivalence God himself can appear to man the contrary of good. Truth and falsehood are so profoundly intermixed that who can be sure of his own motives. The Skeleton in the play alludes to Christ's famous parable of the tares and the wheat:

O tares! O wheat; that grow together to harvest:
I run with you, O my people, through the dark air.

(Part II, p. 189)

At another point he warns:

Some men deny, some declare; unless I,
who shall try the denial and the declaration?
I shall try it my way, not yours, nor any man's else.

(Part II, p. 195)

This relates to Williams's belief that it is not our business to judge ourselves and despair, "for even if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things." He asserts that Christ himself, in the parable of the tares and wheat, condescended to encouragement: "Sow good seed, but when good and evil spring up together, and all a mixed growth in the heart, do not fret, do not go hunting among motives for blades of wheat here and blades
of tare there. I will separate all. I will save these
and annihilate those; be at peace, be glad, leave decision
to me. Only sow, work, while it is yet day."

We are never allowed to feel removed and judgemental
in relation to Cranmer. His dilemma is presented as a
universal one. Thus the Skeleton often directs his warn-
ings straight at the audience:

And you, whose hands are still, lying now
so quiet,
one day against your will, I may bid them move
in their own life; then shall they crawl
slowly up sides, shoulders, and heads,
till each spreads
palms and fingers there, and waggles assent
to all sins I call against them.

(Part I, p. 172)

The spectators are made to feel they have the same capacity
for self-deception. For Williams believes that it is
impossible to be certain of our unconscious motives and
intentions. He writes:

St. Paul feared the danger that Messias implied:
"they who say Lord, Lord, and do not the things
that I say"; "lest when I have preached to
others, I myself should be a castaway."
Christendom has demanded the closest examination
of conscience to avoid that retrogression, but
our motives slide down, one below the other,
and the schism of intention is deeper than any
other; where is certainty? who can be sure of
any motive in any act? Yet the choice, the
wish that may become the will, may be there,
whatever our ignorance; to desire to follow
the good is important, to desire to follow the
good from the good is more important.

Cranmer is Williams's portrayal of a man who desired
to follow the good, but lacked the will "to follow the good
from the good" when faced with the debilitating force of
adverse circumstance. Thus, when he begins to realise the
suffering that following the Way involves, the Skeleton
standing over him declares:

When the heart has no motion, the brain no thought,
we shall see what we shall see;
he shall find into what plight he was brought
when we bade his desire be.
He had his way; if he trod his way,
where there's a way there's a will;
many there be that find the way,
few that find the will.

(Part II, p. 188)

Yet to desire the good is important. Through the strange influence of the Skeleton intruding upon events, Williams shows that God is strenuously active for the rest, infiltrating every facet of Cranmer's life and experience to bring about his redemption. He is no half-sleeping deity, seen through the lapse of time, who can be placated with fine words and kept remote from the affairs of men. God is not a historical anachronism. He is "the word no words can quell." He is love, eternally present, eternally active. However it must be stressed that the love of God, as Williams understands, it is quite different from most people's conception of it. The word 'love' he regards as having suffered heavily from popular use or, rather, abuse. "Through the famous saying 'God is love,'" he writes, "it is generally assumed that God is like our emotional indulgence, and not that our meaning of love ought to have something of the 'otherness' and terror of God."35 The play suggests something of this terror and 'otherness' in the nature of the divine reality it is attempting to portray.

It does not pretend to be able to explain the marvellous and unknowable. Thus meaning is not coherently developed, but registered in hints and flashes. Our understanding is sometimes sharp, sometimes blurred, but always we are left with a sense of the partly revealed, the partly understood. By ritualising the action, Williams actualises the notion of a dual reality. The mixing of the realistic and ordinary with the symbolic and fantastic communicates a sense of the known world invaded by the unknown. The strong ritual element helps to project an extraordinary spiritual reality underlying the prosaic and mundane. The non-realistic action, the choric movements, the theatrical use of antiphonal worship, the blend of colloquial and incantatory language, excerpts from the psalms and
traditional Christian prayer, hypnotic chants and refrains, bizarre songs and strange dance movements, all combine to produce a haunting disturbing effect, suggesting another dimension of being. They become a means of reaching beyond the level of present consciousness into unconscious levels of experience, into the deepest layers of the interior life. Williams thus confronts us with a hidden 'submarine' world, even as we would turn from it because of the troubling nature of what it might reveal. The world is "full of a threat that forms not yet."

There is constantly the suggestion of a subterranean spiritual consciousness that works on the nerves of an audience through disquieting rhythms and images, as in the verse:

The Priest: Roar, Antichrist: reach a ravin of hands.

The Preacher: Rage, Antichrist: wrap the Lord in bands.

The Priest: Here is Christ, in a secret sacrificed.

The Preacher: Here, the Word witnessing, here is Christ.

(Part I, p. 144)

The verse in the play is cryptic and ceremonial, and has an energy and orgiastic quality which help to express inner areas of experience inaccessible to the rational mind alone. This is interwoven with bits of racy colloquial dialogue. In this way Williams suggests partly the world of time and partly the world of timeless poetic symbolism, providing a sense of the temporal and the eternal together.

The use of the psalms, a traditional part of Anglican worship, is particularly effective in universalising the experience, and making the personal public, and the public personal. Thus Cranmer's desolation of spirit, as he struggles to come to terms with inner and outer reality when facing degradation and death in the reign of Mary, is expressed in the highly emotive words of psalm 88 sung by the Singers in the background:
O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried
day and night before thee: O let my
prayer enter into thy presence, incline
thine ear unto my calling.
For my soul is full of trouble: and my life
draweth nigh unto hell.
Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit: in a
place of darkness, and in the deep.

... 
My lovers and friends hast thou put away
from me: and hid mine acquaintance
out of my sight.

(Part II, pp. 190-1)
This psalm, the utterance of a very personal feeling of
grief made public and traditional in time, would evoke an
immediate sense of identity from the audience. Therefore
it is an ideal vehicle of expression, because it is both
personal and public, particular and traditional, and
brings together the plight of the individual and our
common humanity at one and the same time.

But while we are made to recognise the pattern of
experience in human affairs, Williams does not allow us to
rest complacent in established rite and the sense of order,
stability and control it may provide. He continually sets
up an expectation, only to shatter it. "O how amiable are
thy dwellings thou Lord of Hosts," hymn the Singers, when
what is happening on the stage is far from amiable. We
are denied the relief and security which often accompany
participation in a prescribed form of prayer or worship.
We are constantly turned outwards to the rite as it is
manifested in life and inwards to its expression in our­selves. The need for an ordered framework is continually
frustrated. There is no simplistic making-sense of a
fractured reality. Unity of meaning is not easily come
by. It calls for openness and flexibility, and a depth
and sensitivity of response.

Williams's deliberate stylisation of the proceedings
is a way of maintaining a continuous parallel between what
happened and what is happening. The characters are at
once themselves and representative. Group and individual
voices - the Priest, the Preacher, the Singers, the Commons, Cranmer, Henry, Anne - all convey a sense of multitudinous humanity, and help to unite the action with the audience. Apart from Cranmer, the other characters are dehumanised, because they are not realised in completely naturalistic terms, and are not wholly developed as historical individuals or human beings. They are expressionist figures who can be seen as extensions or projections of the nightmare world of Cranmer's inner experience. Yet, in contrast to Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, there are no distances, no shadows and half-lights in presenting the spiritual interior realm. As C S Lewis has said, Williams's world is one of "blazing colours, hard outlines and bell-like resonance." Both dimensions are conveyed with equal clarity and concreteness. For Williams, there is no sharp division between the material and spiritual world. This relates to his basic orthodoxy, and in particular to his belief in the Incarnation. The doctrine implies a belief in the relevance and dignity of the material creation and in the possibility of its ultimate redemption. For since "the operations of matter are a means of the operation of Christ," says Williams, "the body has not fallen a good deal further than the soul." Thus in the play he projects the material and the spiritual world very much co-inhering, "the natural moving all ways into the supernatural" and the "things that are below as those above." (Part I, p. 167) When Cranmer cannot see how the flesh can absorb spirituality, the Skeleton significantly addresses him as "incredulous Thomas, bringing to mind the doubting apostle of Christ who wished to feel the wounds in Christ's hands and side before he would believe in the Resurrection, with the accompanying suggestion that Christ had some kind of material form even after death. We are referred to moments when the material glowed with spiritual energy as when "the woman Joan came out of the tavern and her face was moulded of heavenly fire." These are moments when "flesh and spirit are one" and the question is posited, "are they ever separate, but
by a mode?” (Part II, p. 183)

This idea is reinforced in terms of language, where we find the spiritual expressed in very physical terms. Cranmer wants to pen a ritual, a "diagram clear, a ladder runged and tongued," which will be as "muscles and veins to Christ's spirit bringing communion." (Part I, pp. 171-172) There is perpetual reference to extremely concrete images, like the ladder, the rope, the scale, the anatomy, for the abstract. The stage action too, as has been shown, takes the very concrete form of physical metaphors in action. In fact Cranmer's whole spiritual struggle comes through as a very physical experience. "The way he treads," says the Skeleton, making a motion of throwing an imaginary rope, "is turning into a rope/under my hands; he pauses; I pick it by a trick/from under his feet, and fling it to these hands that fling it to those;/each time circling his body: he feels the pain/constrict his rich arteries - love, faith, and hope/tight round his drawn muscles, the pressure grows./ Did he gird himself to tread my way? he is girt/now by the way, and born therein to his hurt/by my multitudinous hands." (Part II, p. 182)

Cranmer's experience of spiritual crisis is expressed in terms of great physical pain and violence. He is "nailed, impaled," and feels "the beak of the King's falcon" fly through his sleep, and a "slither of wings" beat on his face and bring a "hot iron" to his heart. (Part II, p. 187)

The recurrent image is of someone pursued, racked, torn:

And we,
we ever reform our books and not ourselves,
but the storm in the streets is whipping our books from their shelves,
stripping torn pages, driving white-breasted prayers,
to swoop and stoop and trouble the day,
blinding and stunning us running on a sloping way.

(Part II, p. 179)

The spirit takes an almost physical punishment from the storm raging within Cranmer and without. It brings to mind a religious experience of the Hopkinsean sort:
Thou mastering me
God! giver of breath and bread;
World's strand, sway of the sea;
Lord of living and dead;
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me
fastened me flesh,
And after it almost, what with dread,
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.
I did say yes
O at lightning and lashed rod;
Thou hearest me truer than tongue confess
Thy terror, O Christ, O God;
Thou knowest the walls, altar and hour and night:
The swoon of a heart that the sweep and the hurl
of thee trod
Hard down with a horror of height:
And the midrift astrain with leaning of, laced
with fire of stress.

(The Wreck of the Deutschland)

Williams's play provides the same sense of an intensely personal experience of God as a very tangible force and presence. He is immanent as well as transcendent, and is closer to Cranmer than Cranmer is to himself.

Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury is a tantalising, an immensely troubling play. The past is illuminated and the present intensified, but in terms of a very personal vision. Historical truth is seriously regarded, and the play offers an unusual and interesting treatment of history, but Williams's focus is on the eternal operating in human events; extraordinary demands are made upon an audience unfamiliar with the historical facts. In contrast to playwrights like Berkeley, Bax and Daviot, who deal with the outer social world to the neglect of the inner spiritual reality, Williams concentrates on the inner world at the expense of the outer. In T S Eliot we see the master who is able to maintain a subtle balance between the two. It is evident that Williams does not attain a similar balance; however, his play is an artistic achievement of considerable dramatic power. It is a dynamic piece which proved aurally and visually exciting in the theatre. We are taken into a world that is both daunting and challenging, and made to
experience the pain and danger, but also the exhilaration and grandeur, of search and adventure in the spiritual realm.
Notes to Chapter V

10. All quotations from the text will be cited from the following edition: Four Modern Verse Plays, ed. by E Martin Browne (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1957)


22. Ibid., p. 186.


28. He came down from Heaven, p. 146.

29. As defined by Thomas Aquinas in his commentary on the Book of the Blessed Dionysius Concerning the Divine Names.


32. He came down from Heaven, pp. 142-3.

33. Ibid., p. 147.

34. Ibid., pp. 146-7.

35. Ibid., p. 11.


CHAPTER VI

Robert Bolt - A Man for All Seasons
Peter Shaffer - The Royal Hunt of the Sun
John Osborne - Luther

The three plays of the 1960s dealt with in this chapter - Robert Bolt's A Man for All Seasons, Peter Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun and John Osborne's Luther - have been selected because they illustrate different concerns and different levels of imagination in approaching history. Robert Bolt and Peter Shaffer provide two examples of popular playwrights, and two popular treatments of history. They can be seen going to history merely for a source. In Thomas More, Bolt finds a protagonist of compelling stature and humanity, around whom to build a play that is essentially a character study. Shaffer, on the other hand, is obviously attracted to the historical phenomenon of the mysterious Inca world with its sun king conquered by rapacious Spanish conquistadors, because of the opportunities it affords for exotic spectacle, romance and sensation. Here history is used in a shallow way for finding a source to suit their purpose; these two playwrights do not go much further. There is a sharp contrast between minor playwrights like these and major playwrights like Shaw, T S Eliot, and Edward Bond, who are highly conscious of the intellectual possibilities of their subjects, and register a sense of both the deep undercurrents and the broad sweep of events in history.

Yet there are elements that make these two plays interesting and worthy of attention. There is the moving quality of the character portrait in A Man for All Seasons, the ability to portray convincingly a great man who was first and foremost a good man. Bolt's achievement is that he is able to make such goodness attractive in an age when the modern sensibility is apt to dismiss such views as sentimental. The penchant is for a debunking of the
heroic, a sardonic though not necessarily unsympathetic perspective on the hero as an ironic, equivocal compound of spirit and flesh, imagination and instinct, intellect and humanity.

Bolt presents us with a man of immovable faith, of disarming wit and candour, a man with a great capacity for life, for sympathy, integrity and commitment, who stands for the possibility of being real in an inhuman environment. Yet with all his idealism there is an extremely practical side to his character. There are points of lively interchange in the play, as More strives, by every legal trick his subtle mind can employ, to evade disaster. Hence he adopts a resolute silence regarding certain crucial issues, even in the face of his wife's incomprehension at his resigning his position as Chancellor of England:

Alice: Poor silly man, d'you think they'll leave you here to learn to fish?

More: If we govern our tongues they will! ... Look, I have a word to say about that. I have made no statement. I've resigned, that's all. On the King's Supremacy, the King's divorce which he'll now grant himself, the marriage he'll then make - have you heard me make a statement?

Alice: No - and if I'm to lose my rank and fall to housekeeping I want to know the reason; so make a statement now.

More: No - Alice, it's a point of law! Accept it from me, Alice, that in silence is my safety under the law, but my silence must be absolute, it must extend to you.

Alice: In short you don't trust us!

More: (impatient) Look - (advances on her) I'm the Lord Chief Justice, I'm Cromwell, I'm the King's Head Jailer - and I take your hand (does so) and I clamp it on the Bible, on the Blessed Cross (clamps her hand on his fist) and I say: 'Woman, has your husband made a statement on these matters?' Now - on peril of your soul remember - what's your answer?

Alice: No.

More: And so it must remain.

(Act I, p. 164)
Bolt proceeds to convey with effect, the swift build-up of events which strip More of every legal safeguard and bring him to an open ultimate position.

With regard to Peter Shaffer and *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, what is compelling is the visual spectacle, the ability to create atmosphere and bold physical action. A wonderful moment is when the Inca sun world opens up on the stage. As one reviewer of the original production describes it, "The stage bursts into glorious life when the Spaniards finally reach the Inca capital, and a huge golden motif backstage suddenly opens out, petal by petal, like a great sunflower, to reveal the immobile form of Atahuallpa, the Inca Sun King, a scintillating figure in white and gold." Another riveting moment is the much-awaited meeting between the Spaniards and the Inca royal court. The audience is hit by an explosion of sound and colour as the Peruvian Indians make their majestic ceremonial entry in their separate ranks. The stage cascades with exotic costumes and fantastic head-dresses, ablaze with vibrant colours. This is accompanied by pulsating drum beats and strange plaintive music from reed pipes, cymbals and giant maraccas. The music builds to a violent crescendo as the Spaniards suddenly sound the call for battle and the Indians scatter in hysterical confusion. Wave upon wave, they are cut down by the relentless Spanish troops and a gigantic bloodstained cloth finally bellies out over the stage to signify a great massacre. (Act I, pp. 36-9) The aural and visual effect is overwhelming.

These two plays by Bolt and Shaffer were extremely successful in their time and illustrate the putting over of history in a popular way. In striking contrast John Osborne's *Luther*, a play of much greater weight and character, provides an irreverent treatment of a controversial historical figure. Luther is presented in anything but noble, edifying or exotic, romantic terms. The play is audacious and challenging. Fraught with tension and anxiety, Osborne's anarchical, obsessive
Luther is physically and spiritually racked by a daemon of truth and doubt. The physical and spiritual crises he experiences are shown to be inextricably linked. His anguished struggle for spiritual truth is seen to relate directly to the physical torture to which he is subjected by violent fits and chronic constipation. The climax of an attack is often the moment of spiritual doubt or revelation. Thus in the play Luther's first outburst of protest occurs during a religious service when he is hurled to the ground by gagging convulsions and strangled words are forced out by him, one at a time - "Not! Me! I am not!" (Act I, Sc. I, p. 23).

This intensely private interior conflict is placed against a wide backdrop - the social and religious world Luther caused to overturn. Osborne draws in broad sweeping lines here. Historical characters like Tetzel, the notorious hawker of indulgences, and Pope Leo X are lively caricatures. The scatological invective indulged in by both sides is balanced by arguments of considerable weight, marshalled in support of individualism and the private conscience on the one hand, and catholicism and the unity of the Church on the other. The play focuses on the individual of remarkable stature who is both prime mover and victim of social and religious forces. It is a forceful rhetorical piece moving towards expressionism and a more poetic and violent form of theatre.

All three plays dealt with in this chapter reveal a distinct preoccupation with the question of selfhood and identity. In a sense a person's view, irrespective of its rights or wrongs, is the person himself, his claim on existence, the fact that he is. Luther in Osborne's play is driven to the point where he is impelled to cry, "Here I stand; God help me; I can do no more." (Act III, Sc. I, p. 85) The Inca king, Atahuallpa, when he accuses the Spanish commander, Pizarro, of having no word to pledge, stands for selfhood in the same way. For Bolt too, Thomas More became "a man with an adamantine sense of his own self."
He knew where he began and left off, what area of himself he could yield to the encroachments of his enemies, and what to the encroachments of those he loved.5

The predicament of the individual within the context of a complex society, is how to give meaning to his existence, with his overwhelming sense of the severely limited area for exercise of will, conscience, reason and identity. Thomas More is blessed with an extremely strong sense of self, of wholeness of being. What is of moment in the play is the conflict that arises when a world of violence and unrest is set against him. Pizarro and Luther possess no such self-assurance. In them is projected the human personality rent by schism. Osborne registers in a much deeper way the profound human agitation resulting from the sense of multiple fracture within. Shaffer and Osborne both show a distinct interest in the psychological domain, the pivotal rôle of childhood in the transfer of positive or negative emotions and values, and the way in which adverse childhood experience can breed a deep guilt and mistrust towards the universe. Shaffer's perception, however, is much more limited than Osborne's and his imaginative treatment of this dimension is crude and superficial in comparison. Shaw's influence can be seen in all three plays, in that their characters are psychologically outside the climate of their own age, and a twentieth century consciousness and perspective is openly brought to bear.

All three playwrights reveal a common interest, in their various ways, in religious motivation. It is religious experience, not history, that engrosses them. This certainly separates them from Brecht, in whose terms most critics usually consider them. But, unlike Brecht, they subordinate social and historical issues to historical personalities whose private religious needs and conflicts are of central dramatic interest. These playwrights also differ from T S Eliot and Charles Williams in that they do not work from a basis of religious belief.
They suffer from the characteristic dilemma of numerous twentieth century writers whose works, as H F Smith points out, reflect a metaphysical awareness, but an awareness which "is no longer sustained by positive faith or intellectual conviction, so that it survives only as a feeling, something which can be undeniably sensed, but no longer confidently affirmed." Thus, unlike Eliot and Williams, these playwrights cannot profess belief in "an intelligible heaven," to use Sartre's phrase, but are still prey to a religious consciousness which has lost the support of positive belief. But whereas, being lesser playwrights, Bolt and Shaffer are unable to provide more than a surface impression of spiritual unrest and division, Osborne, a playwright of much greater calibre, is able to convey in his play deep undercurrents of existential disquiet and anxiety. A collective neurosis is expressed in Luther's fear and anguish at the weight of a metaphysical loneliness: "I am alone. I am alone, and against myself... How can I justify myself?... How can I be justified?" (Act I, Sc. I, p. 20)

This chapter therefore deals with three plays which vary greatly in their imaginative nature and approach to history, and in their levels of achievement and quality. I shall begin with Bolt's play and then proceed to Shaffer's, departing from my procedure of observing chronological order by treating Osborne's play last, even though it was produced and published before Shaffer's. This is because, in order to bring out the contrast, I want to conclude with the work of greater weight and force. A Man for All Seasons was the first of Bolt's plays to be set in the past, and by far his greatest popular success. First broadcast on radio in a condensed form in 1954, it was then televised in 1957, and subsequently produced at the Globe Theatre, London, on the 1st July 1960, with Paul Scofield in the title role, and published in the same year. It met with outstanding success and was hailed as a play of integrity and distinction. A
"most accomplished drama," comments one reviewer. A Man for All Seasons "is not merely an accurate historical chronicle: it breathes the stuff of drama, it makes the familiar Tudor characters pulse with life, and it makes its hero's predicament relevant to our own time." Another reviewer applauds the play for the fact that "Mr Bolt resists all temptations to invent theatrical effects that would be foreign to More's gentle, lowly and affable temperament, but he provides Mr Paul Scofield with plenty of material out of which he makes a fascinating picture of a man who has always the intellectual measure of his opponents, who takes a serene delight in answering fools according to their folly, and who is grave only when considering his duty as he conceives God sees it."

The production ran in London for almost a year till April 1961. It was then taken to New York the same year, where it ran for 637 performances, and was equally acclaimed by New York theatre critics: "In conception and execution it is a masterpiece, a splendid tribute to the author, to Noël Willman who directed it both here and abroad, and the excellent Anglo-American cast." "A Man for All Seasons is Wonderful ... It's a stimulating and stirring, beautiful and noble play about a great man." Bolt "has fashioned a distinguished and moving drama, one of enormous emotional impact and a vehicle for accomplished actors." Yet another reviewer declares that "A Man for All Seasons is a drama of stature and absorbing interest, which deserves the triumph here it had in England, and Mr Scofield is one of the best actors in the world."

There is no doubt that one reason for the play's overwhelming success was the superb performance by Paul Scofield, a powerful actor who was able to realise a deep humanity and a luminous charm, intelligence and nobility in the part. He gave a "hypnotic performance" and was commended for the "bright truth of his portrayal of More." A whole range of emotion was registered through his remarkably expressive face and controlled delivery.
"In the calm yet forceful and stubborn portrayal of the part by Mr Scofield, there is the suggestion of human frailties, of a sly humor, a simplicity which adds belief to his sincere dedication to his god. Here is an actor of truly noble stature."\textsuperscript{14} "He catches all the facets of the many-sided More magnificently. He knows the meaning of nuance."\textsuperscript{15}

As a result of the play's popular triumph on the stage, in 1966 it was made into a film, which won six academy awards. The play has since been produced in many countries, and frequently revived in Britain, but without anything like the original impact. Although it is not a play of major importance, it has considerable interest as an indication of the nature of popular taste and response. Further reasons for my selecting it are, that it is Bolt's best play, it carries a certain conviction, and it is an example of the strong attraction Bolt felt for history.

Bolt, who graduated from Manchester University with a degree in history, has shown a recurrent interest in historical subjects. In 1962 he wrote the screenplay for \textit{Lawrence of Arabia}. \textit{Vivat! Vivat Regina!} (1970) focuses on the conflict between Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots. Bolt describes its essential theme as "the pressures and the penalties of Power, the gap between the fine appearance which Power makes and the shameful shifts by which it is sustained" and above all "the unnaturalness of Power, the impermissible sacrifice of self which Power demands and gets and squanders."\textsuperscript{16} He has written a screenplay on \textit{Lady Caroline Lamb} (1972) and \textit{State of Revolution} (1977) is his first political play set in the twentieth century. It treats the rôle of Lenin in the Russian Revolution, and in an interview, Bolt states that he was drawn to this subject because he is "a political animal" and the "Russian Revolution is the formative political event of this century."\textsuperscript{17} He has also said, on more than one occasion, that he goes to history because it
enables him to make his characters "theatrically big without embarrassment." "The only reason I write about historical figures is not because I think history more interesting than now. Indeed history is only interesting if now is interesting. It's just Dutch Courage, it enables you to write in a grand manner." History is "both a pledge of actuality and a release from it." This is a shallow reason for turning to history, especially after the revolutionary impact of Brecht. It reflects a diffidence in the playwright. He requires the support of history before he feels free to be blatantly theatrical.

The fact that his plays generally lack an interior dimension is again due to a tendency to think in extremely limited terms. In his introduction to Vivat! Vivat Regina! he writes:

Freud likened the psyche to an ice-berg, nine-tenths of which is below the surface. Doubtless it is so; but we are not fish, to live below the surface. And psycho-analysis affords a very clumsy diving-bell; the light down there is uncertain. We live where we have always lived, up here in the air on this habitable tenth. And here most of our unconsidered words and deeds are truly insignificant, or might as well be so since we are unaware of their significance.

Most of his plays are restricted in orbit to this "habitable tenth," though Gentle Jack (1963) which he considers his best and most ambitious play, is an attempt to plumb below the surface of human behaviour. But it is a sphere he is obviously not comfortable in. Bolt is basically a conventional playwright and conventionally minded. He is aware of what is going on in the theatre, and his plays reflect the influence of major playwrights such as Shaw and Brecht, but he lacks the strength and quality of imagination to be bold and creative in his own right. Thus he is unable to produce drama of the first rank.

In his approach to history, Bolt shows a regard for historical accuracy and has definite views on the subject. The playwright, he says, does not have to bind himself to anything "constructed of cast iron" when he binds himself
“The writer of an historical play is a kind of playwright, not a kind of historian, but I think he is obliged to be as accurate, historically, as he can.” Bolt goes on to explain:

He has borrowed not only his story but some of his emotion from actual people who actually lived. He is in debt to them for their virtues and vices, imaginatively energized by the actual energy they expended. He owes them the truth and is a kind of crook if he doesn’t pay up. Then too, the audience brings a special credulity to a history play. They credit the events they see enacted with a degree of actuality not claimed for events—like Shylock’s bargain—which are purely theatrical. We are additionally moved when an actor plays out the noble death of a historical character by the knowledge that some such person did make some such death. Because everybody in the audience knows that Joan of Arc really was executed the playwright can take her to her death with an authority and an appearance of inevitability which he would otherwise have to work for. He can only honour this double debt to his character and to his audience by sticking to the facts.

Undoubtedly this debt is honoured in *A Man for All Seasons*. The play has a firm basis in historical fact. The principal source appears to be R.W. Chambers’s biography, *Thomas More* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1934). In an interview with Ronald Hayman, Bolt cites Chambers in support of a historical point; this is external evidence that he was familiar with Chambers’s work. But also, judging primarily from internal evidence, Chambers appears to have been Bolt’s chief source.

One indication is that Bolt’s rendering of historical personalities appears to follow Chambers’s interpretation of character. For example, Chambers sees William Roper as a trifle forward and pompous, a rather awkward young man to have about the house, whose writings reveal himself as not “quite understanding the man whose memory he later grew to revere.” This is exactly how Roper is portrayed in the play. Another indication of Bolt’s having drawn inspiration from Chambers’s account is that Chambers’s own private comments upon historical incidents feature in the
play at various points. Chambers relates how, after resigning the Chancellorship, More was compelled for lack of other fuel to resort to burning great bundles of bracken, and comments that one can imagine Mistress Alice Shore shivering over the embers of Chelsea bracken, reflecting that her husband had refused a sum from the Church for his writings which would have placed them all in luxury. Bolt dramatises precisely such a situation in Act II of the play with Alice sitting wearily on a bundle of bracken and demanding to know the reasons "why a man in poverty can't take four thousand pounds" from the Church when the money, "collected from the clergy high and low," was "charity pure and simple!" (Act II, pp. 172-3) Another instance where Chambers's own commentary gets incorporated in Bolt's portrayal, is in connection with More's trial. Relating the event of Richard Rich's perjury, Chambers reflects that, if Rich had really trapped More into uttering the incriminating words, "Rich would have instantly called upon Southwell and Palmer to witness them." Bolt uses this as one of the points which More makes in denial of it having happened:

If I had really said this is it not obvious he would instantly have called these men to witness?

(Act II, p. 203)

Chambers also quotes Robert Whittinton's encomium on More, from which Bolt derives the title of the play:

More is a man of an angel's wit and singular learning. I know not his fellow. For where is the man of that gentleness, lowliness, and affability? And, as time requireth, a man of marvellous mirth and pastimes, and sometime of as sad gravity. A man for all seasons.

History is, naturally, compressed in the play; characters and events are telescoped. More's family life is represented in his relationships with Dame Alice, Margaret, and William Roper, though his actual household was very much larger. Bolt is justified in emphasising More's
happy home life, for which he was renowned, as well as for his legal astuteness, and impartiality as a judge. In the play at one point Roper vehemently accuses More that he would give "the Devil benefit of law!" (Act I, p. 147) Even this is not an exaggeration, because Bolt has obviously derived the idea from an actual statement of More's that "if the parties will at my hands call for justice, then, all were it my father stood on one side, and the Devil on the other, his cause being good, the Devil should have right."27

The influence of Shaw is evident in Bolt's mixture of the colloquial and the formal, of historical data and an overt modernity. "The action of the play," Bolt says, "ends in 1535, but the play was written in 1960, and if in production one date must obscure the other, it is 1960 which I would wish clearly to occupy the stage."28 The play is written in modern colloquial language for the most part. "Nice boy ... terribly strong principles though." remarks More of his prospective son-in-law. (Act I, p. 126) Yet Bolt often blends More's own words with his dialogue, which is the practice of most of the playwrights dealt with in this thesis, and reflects the much greater demand in our time for documentary evidence. Twentieth-century playwrights are more aware of the need to back up with research the views they present, however bold and free their interpretation and treatment of history may be, as in the case of T S Eliot and Edward Bond.

Bolt draws freely upon More's writings and recorded sayings and includes them at affective points, only slightly modifying the language actually used by More. For example, historically, in response to Richard Rich's perjury, More said at his trial:

If I were a man, my Lords, that did not regard an oath, I needed not, as it is well known, in this place, at this time, nor in this case, to stand here as an accused person. And if this oath of yours, Master Rich, be true, then pray I that I never see God in the face; which I would not say, were it otherwise,
to win the whole world. He then gave his own version of what had passed, which has not been preserved, and concluded, "In good faith, Master Rich, I am sorrier for your perjury than for my own peril."^{29}

In the play all look at More after Rich has made his damning statement, but More looks at Rich:

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More : In good faith, Rich, I am sorrier for your perjury than my peril.
Norfolk: Do you deny this?
More : Yes! My lords, if I were a man who heeded not the taking of an oath, you know well I need not be here. Now I will take an oath! If what Master Rich has said is true, then I pray I may never see God in the face! Which I would not say were it otherwise for anything on earth.
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(Act II, p. 202)

A reviewer of the 1976 production of the play at the Young Vic, describes Alfred Lynch in the title rôle as rising "to a fine level of dignity" "when he has More's own words to say after his condemnation."^{30} Part of More's speech at this point - "I am the King's true subject, and pray for him and all the realm ... I do none harm, I say none harm, I think none harm. And if this be not enough to keep a man alive, in good faith I long not to live ... I have, since I came into prison, been several times in such a case that I thought to die within the hour, and I thank Our Lord I was never sorry for it, but rather sorry when it passed. And therefore, my poor body is at the King's pleasure. Would God my death might do him some good." (Act II, p. 205) - was actually spoken by the historical More at one of Cromwell's interrogation sessions in the Tower.^{31} Bolt inserts them into More's final speech at the trial, where their emotional force adds to the climactic nature of the scene.

More's bearing on the scaffold is probably unique in history. He is recorded to have made many light-hearted jests, which historians give credence to since such humour
was characteristic of More. As he mounted the shaky steps of the scaffold, he turned to the Lieutenant, "I pray you, Master Lieutenant, see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself." He is reported to have moved his beard from the block with the remark that "it had never committed treason," and spoken the following words of encouragement to the executioner after embracing him:

Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thine office; my neck is very short, take heed therefore thou strike not awry, for saving of thine honesty.32

It is highly revealing of Bolt that he uses the tamest part of these words, but leaves out More's extraordinary humour at such a tragic moment. Instead he substitutes a feeling expressed by More on various previous occasions. In a letter to a fellow prisoner in the Tower, Dr Nicholas Wilson, More says, "For I can never but truste that we who so long to be with hym (God) shalbe wellcome to hym..."33 Then again, in his Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation, he writes that "he that so loveth him (God), that he longeth to go to him, my heart cannot give me but he shall be welcome..."34 In the play this sentiment features in More's last words to the executioner:

Friend, be not afraid of your office. You send me to God... He will not refuse one who is so blithe to go to him.

(Act II, p. 99)

Bolt waters down the event in leaving out the humour, tremendous at such a dark moment, and so characteristic of More and full of period flavour. A playwright with a stronger imagination, such as John Osborne or Edward Bond, would have leapt at it. The humour that Bolt attributes to More in the play has a refined, ironic quality, but is bland and antiseptic in comparison to More's actual vital earthy brand of humour. As K Tynan remarks, Bolt "has indulged in a lot of simplification" where More is...
concerned. He "has banished More the scurrilous pamphleteer" and "More the vernacular comic, whom C S Lewis has called 'our first great Cockney humorist.'"35

Bolt sees More as the perfect human being:

What's amazing about More is the perfection of his behaviour - both in detail and overall. A nearly faultless performance, but without any recourse to a transcendental explanation. And his style was so good. He was a perfect gentleman - a breathtaking performance as a human being. He knocked off Utopia, cleaned up the law courts, ran this house where he entertained all the celebrities of his day, kept up his friendships with noblemen and people like Colet and Erasmus and behaved like John Bunyan. This is why people like the play... And he didn't do anything that you and I couldn't have done. St Francis talked to the birds, but anyone at his best could do what More did. He had taste, wit, courtesy, consideration - he was marvellously witty....36

This is an extremely simplistic reductio ad absurdum of an extraordinary and complex human personality.

In his concern to make More "a man for all seasons," Bolt leaves out aspects characteristic of the man and the period which a modern audience might not find readily comprehensible or acceptable. More was by no means always the "perfect gentleman" as Bolt sees him, showing taste, courtesy and consideration on all occasions. In controversy he could be coarse and virulent, as was the habit among scholars and theologians of the time. Thus More answered Luther's scurrilous attack on Henry with equal asperity and frequent lapses into vulgarity. Then again, there is More's unchivalrous treatment of the fallen Wolsey when, in his opening speech in Parliament on receiving the Chancellor's Seal, he is reported to have made a bitter attack on his ruined predecessor. These details are excluded in the play, which concentrates on the endearing aspects of More's character, and fails to tackle the disagreeable sides. Bolt's portrait rigorously suppresses such awkward elements of inconsistency, which would have provided an interesting counter-weight and
added depth and complexity to his picture.

Then again, Bolt tones down the religious side of More's character. He had an amazing faith and was a man of no ordinary mettle. Contrary to the opinion of Bolt quoted above, there is most certainly a "transcendental explanation" of More's behaviour; his Christian faith was the mainspring of his life and it enabled him to live and die as most people could definitely not have done. Despite his social grace and ease, and the happiness of his home life, the rigours of a monastic existence had a distinct appeal for More. In early years he seriously considered joining the monastic order of the Carthusians, and even after he decided against it, it was his practice to wear a hair shirt and scourge himself, facts he revealed only to his daughter Margaret. These exercises were undertaken in a manner of quiet discipline, for there was no trace of morbid religiosity in More.

In the same spirit, he took the trials of prison life as a means of attaining a higher spiritual life. Chambers informs us that "tales of More's bearing during his last days in prison seem to show that both his austerities and his humour were already becoming somewhat legendary. We are told that he scourged himself and meditated upon death, wrapping a linen sheet round him like a shroud." During one of Margaret Roper's visits to her father in the Tower, More remarked:

I believe, Meg, that they that have put me here ween they have done me a high displeasure. But I assure thee on my faith, my own good daughter, if it had not been for my wife and you that be my children, whom I account the chief part of my charge, I would not have failed long ere this to have closed myself in as straight a room, and straighter too... Me thinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on his lap and dandleth me.37

Bolt leaves out this ascetic side to More's nature, possibly because he wanted to give his protagonist an all-round appeal, and this extreme tendency might have been jarring and alienating to a modern audience. Indeed a
reviewer enthuses that "what places Thomas More among the most human and appealing of martyrs is that he lacked the zealot's eagerness of a Becket to welcome death as a demonstration of his love of God." Yet, though More, unlike Becket, in no way courted martyrdom, he had a quite extraordinary faith and considered it "a happy and blessed thing" "for the love of God to suffer loss of goods, imprisonment, loss of lands and life also." During the time of his retirement, as troubles began to increase, he would say to his family that "if he might perceive his wife and children would encourage him to die in a good cause, it should so comfort him that, for very joy thereof, it would make him merrily run to death."

Bolt neutralises the vitality of More's religious faith and fails to capture its unique distinctive character. In the play More at one point remarks of God in "very bitter" tones: "But I find him rather too subtle ... I don't know where he is nor what he wants." (Act I, p. 39) It is hard to imagine the historical More thinking and speaking in those terms. He continually expresses trust that God will give him strength to take any suffering he may have to bear, patiently "and peradventure somewhat gladly too." He assures his grieving daughter:

Mistrust him, Meg, will I not, though I feel me faint. Yea, and though I should feel my fear even at point to overthrow me too, yet shall I remember how Saint Peter with a blast of a wind began to sink for his faint faith, and shall do as he did, call upon Christ and pray him to help. And then I trust he shall set his holy hand unto me, and in the stormy seas hold me up from drowning.

Bolt portrays More as a religious man, but dilutes the tremendous vibrant quality of his faith in the apparent concern to make him a popular hero.

In his preface to the play, Bolt apologises for treating "Thomas More, a Christian Saint, as a hero of selfhood." This has been a target for criticism. In a talk on the BBC Third Programme, Anthony Kenner argued that
Bolt's equations at certain points in the play, of self with soul and self with the love of God, are unhistorical, and that Bolt's More uses the word 'conscience' in a sense it did not have in the sixteenth century. Ronald Hayman, in his book on Bolt, agrees, stating that:

"Taken out of context, many of More's pronouncements can give the impression that he anticipated Kant in holding that the individual must make his own moral decisions, but in their context, they show that More followed Aquinas's doctrine of conscience, seeing it not as an arbiter but as an opinion about God's law. By this reasoning, it's possible to follow your conscience and still be acting immorally, for your conscience can be mistaken."

He says that in "using More to adumbrate an individualism which didn't exist in the sixteenth century, Bolt tends to isolate More from his historical context." 42

In an interview with Hayman, Bolt replies that "any intelligent Christian in his day would have equated soul with self" and refutes the idea that More's occupation with selfhood was anachronistic:

"I would have said that this business of trying to draw an outline around yourself was very much a Renaissance concept. To thine own self be true. Raleigh and Marlowe were both flirting very seriously with atheism - Faustus makes experiments in trying to find himself. And selfhood becomes a preoccupation with Lear and Hamlet...There's a sense of precariousness overtaking the medieval world order which defined a man from outside."

Hayman expresses the reservation that all these examples Bolt quotes are not Christian. 43 But surely what is of real importance is that Bolt does no violence to history in portraying More as a hero of selfhood, because the historical More gives Bolt substantial grounds for dramatising him as such.

That More had an extremely strong sense of himself as an individual is undeniable. When pressed by the commissioners on refusing to swear the oath to the Act of
Succession he says that he leaves "every man to his own conscience" and thinks in good faith that every man should leave him to his. And, as Chambers states, More was obviously nettled at a suggestion that his obstinacy was due to the example of Fisher, Bishop of London. He tells his daughter in a dialogue recorded in a letter:

For albeit that of very truth I have him in that reverent estimation, that I reckon in this realm no one man, in wisdom, learning, and long approved virtue together, meet to be matched and compared with him, yet that in this matter I was not led by him, very well and plain appeareth, both in that I refused the oath before it was offered him, and in that also that his Lordship was content to have sworn of that oath (as I perceived since by you when you moved me to the same) either somewhat more, or in some other manner than ever I minded to do. Verily, daughter, I never intend (God being my good lord) to pin my soul at another man's back, not even the best man that I know this day living: for I know not whither he may hap to carry it.

To an imputation made by the subsequent Lord Chancellor, Lord Audley, that his obduracy was due to a desire to rule, More answers that God and his own conscience knew that among those that sought to rule no man could truly reckon him. But he says whoever sought to rule and whoever did not "our Lord make vs all so wyse as that we may every man here so wiselie rule our selfe...." There are points when he does seem to equate self with soul. In a letter to Dr Nicholas Wilson also imprisoned in the Tower he states,

Fynally as I sayed vnto you, (before the) othe offered vnto vs whan we mett in London at (adventure) I wold be no parte taker in the matter but for myne (own) selff folow myn owne consyence, for which my selff muste m(ake) answer vnto God, and shall leve every man to his o(wne)....

Hayman states that the historical More would never have said, as Bolt's More does in the play:

What matters to me is not whether it's true or not but that I believe it to be true, or rather not that I believe it,
but that I believe it.  

But a similar sentiment lies behind the historical More's reply to Margaret, when she begs him to follow the example of so many eminent people in the realm and swear the oath. More answers her in the form of a tale of a suit between a Londoner and a Northerner which had to be settled by a jury of twelve men. The jury was made of Northerners, with the exception of one Southerner called Company, who dissented from the verdict the rest were agreed upon. Asked to play the 'good companion' and go along with them for company, he replies, "But when we shall hence, and come before God, and he shall send you to Heaven for doing according to your conscience, and me to the Devil for doing against mine, if I shall then say to you, 'Go now for good company with me,' would ye go?" 

To More, what a man believed was definitely less important than that he believed it, for his salvation rested on that ultimately:

And this is the last point that any man may with his salvation come to, as far as I can see, and it is bounden if he see peryll to examine his conscience surely by learning and by good counsaile and be sure that his conscience be such as it may stande with his salvation, or els reforme it. And if the matter be such, as both parties may stande with saluacyon, then on whither side his conscience fall, he is safe enough before God....

The clinching fact is that he could finally turn round to his judges at his trial and say,

...that though your Lordships have now here in earth been judges to my condemnation, we may yet hereafter in Heaven merrily all meet together, to our everlasting salvation.

Thus More does seem to see the individual conscience as an arbiter, though it is not so much a question of it being right to do what you yourself believe is right, but that in the last resort your conscience is all you have to fall back on.

Hayman is the only critic to have devoted a whole book to Bolt. Major critics have not been drawn to him and few
have dealt with him substantially. For, as has been said, "the extreme limits of his style are marked at one end by the complete realism of The Critic and the Heart and at the other by the discreet adventure into impressionistic staging, half-Brecht, half BBC historical documentary, of A Man for All Seasons."\(^{51}\)

Inevitable comparisons have been made between A Man for All Seasons and Brecht's Galileo which was produced with great success at the Mermaid Theatre, opening two weeks before A Man for All Seasons on the 16th June 1960. Bolt invites the comparison, aiming at Brechtian effects through his use of an episodic structure, brief summaries of historical events through the device of the Common Man, a wily humorous character and commentator on the action who assumes many roles - steward, boatman, jailer, foreman of the jury, executioner. He also helps to change and set the scene, fishing out relevant items from a huge property basket which he pushes conspicuously about the stage. The original production had "bits of scenery and noticeboards descend on the stage and rise again quite in the Brechtian manner."\(^{52}\) Bolt himself describes the style he used as a "bastardized version of the one most recently associated with Bertolt Brecht."\(^{53}\)

The play was found to suffer in comparison with Galileo. "It takes a Brecht to be Brechtian," states T Milne. "Brecht very firmly ties the issues involved in Galileo's denial of his own discoveries to the state of society" and it is a limitation in Bolt's play that we are not told why More refuses or what "effect this will have on the growing Tudor State and its people."\(^{54}\) K Tynan asserts that Bolt "looks at history exclusively through the eyes of his saintly hero" while "Brecht's vision is broader: he looks at Galileo through the eyes of history."\(^{55}\)

But Bolt is not bound to approach his subject in the manner of Brecht, and though his play has Brechtian features the borrowings are a matter of superficial externals. The play is not Brechtian in its essential spirit and concern.
Its interest is not in historical or social process, but in a historical personality who is made the centre of the play. As Bolt himself says, "What first attracted me was a person who could not be accused of any incapacity for life, who indeed seized life in great variety and almost greedy quantities, who nevertheless found something in himself without which life was valueless and when that was denied him was able to grasp death." Bolt prises More free from his social historical background, and concentrates on the private nature of the man rather than the public figure. He is preoccupied with religious experience rather than history. This greatly distances him from Brecht. Even the Common Man, overtly a Brechtian alienation device, "is intended to draw the audience into the play, not thrust them off it." Rather than encourage critical detachment, he is meant to directly involve the audience by inviting recognition, Bolt wishing him "to indicate 'that which is common to us all.'"

A ubiquitous protean figure, the Common Man is a versatile, economical instrument since he fulfils many functions. He introduces the various characters, indicates the passage of time, comments on the action, and facilitates the swift setting and changing of scenes. He also brings a touch of humour, sometimes comic, sometimes ironical, into the proceedings. The play opens with him. When the curtain rises, the set is in darkness except for a single spot which descends vertically upon the Common Man, who stands in front of a large property basket. He is clad from head to foot in black tights which delineate his pot-bellied figure. He addresses the audience:

It is perverse! To start a play made up of Kings and Cardinals in speaking costumes and intellectuals with embroidered mouths, with me. If a King, or a Cardinal had done the prologue he'd have had the right materials. And an intellectual would have shown enough majestic meanings, coloured propositions, and closely woven liturgical stuff to dress the House of Lords! But this! Is this a costume? Does this say anything? It barely covers one man's nakedness! A bit of black
material to reduce Old Adam to the Common Man. Oh, if they'd let me come on naked, I could have shown you something of my own.

(Act I, p. 109)

Backing towards the basket, he says, "Well for a proposition of my own, I need a costume." He takes out and puts on the coat and hat of a steward, announcing his rôle - "Matthew! The Household Steward of Sir Thomas More!" The lights come swiftly on. From the basket he takes out five silver goblets and a jug with a lid with which he proceeds to furnish a table. A burst of conversational merriment is heard off-stage. Pausing, he indicates: "There's company to dinner." He finishes laying the table and then declares:

All right! A Common Man! A Sixteenth-Century Butler! (He drinks from the jug)
All right - the Six - (Breaks off, agreeably surprised by the quality of the liquor, regards the jug respectfully and drinks again) The Sixteenth Century is the Century of the Common Man. (Puts down the jug)
Like all other centuries. And that's my proposition.

(Act I, p. 110)

The Common Man, who slips in and out of innumerable little rôles like this one, is reflective of the general facelessness of the times. He is a likeable rogue who knows how to adapt himself to his environment and looks after himself. Shrewdly pragmatic, he is wary of committing himself too deeply in anything. He is not averse to compromising his integrity in small ways and making a little money on the side, but, acutely sensitive to danger, he knows exactly where to draw the line. The great thing, he tells the audience, is "not to get out of your depth ... Oh, when I can't touch the bottom I'll go deaf, blind and dumb." (Act I, p. 113) Spectators have found him an engaging figure. Of the original production, one reviewer comments that "it is this character - or rather George Rose's assumption of it in place of Leo McKern, who created it - which has drawn us once again to
see A Man for All Seasons. It is a rewarding rôle for the actor, and George Rose plays it with no less relish than its creator, with a natural clown's humour and with a most endearing air.\(^5\)

The sixteenth century, straddled between the medieval and modern world, was a period of uneasy flux. Assailed by revolutionary currents, the pervasive atmosphere was one of crumbling absolutes, shifting footholds. The form of the play reinforces the mutability and amorphousness that is the texture of the times. Each Act is broken up into innumerable little episodes which dissolve and blend into each other, registering the impression of life as nebulous. Lines blur and merge and the scene changes easily from dry land to water, providing an uneasy sense of impalpability and impermanence. For instance, in Act One, after a midnight interview during which Wolsey has failed in his attempt to gain More's support for his efforts to secure a papal dispensation to enable King Henry to divorce Queen Catherine, More turns to go when Wolsey calls after him, "More! You should have been a cleric!" More looks back, amused, and replies, "Like yourself, your Grace?" He leaves, and Wolsey is left staring after him in contemplation. Then he too exits with candle, taking most of the light from the stage as he does so. The whole rear of the stage now becomes patterned with webbed reflections thrown from brightly moonlit water, while a strip of light descends along the front of the stage to provide the acting area for the next scene, where More is hailing a boatman to take him home up the river. (Act I, p. 121) In such ways, lighting is skilfully used to effect cinematic shifts of place and time.

In the short exchange between More and the boatman, the idea surfaces that in a world deprived of firm lineaments, man is apt to lose his identity:

**Boatman:** (mournful) People seem to think boats stay afloat on their own, sir, but they don't; they cost money. Take anchor rope, sir, you may not believe me for a little skiff like mine, but it's a penny a fathom. And with a young wife,
sir, as you know ....

More : (abstracted) I'll pay what I always pay you ... The river looks very black tonight. They say it's silting up, is that so?

Boatman: Not in the middle, sir. There's a channel there getting deeper all the time.

More : How is your wife?

Boatman: She's losing her shape, sir, losing it fast.

More : Well, so are we all.

Boatman: Oh yes, sir; it's common.

(Act I, pp. 123-4)

Amidst the dangers and incertitudes of the time, there is a lack of structure to life. Society no longer provides order and security within the larger context man inhabits, what Bolt calls "the terrifying cosmos." "As a figure for the superhuman context," he says, "I took the largest, most alien, least formulated thing I know, the sea and water. The references to ships, rivers, currents, tides, navigation and so on, are all used for this purpose. Society by contrast figures as dry land." The scene shifting as it does between water and dry land, conveys a sense of the fragility of the shelter society provides.

The passage of time and events is suggested with great economy. Wolsey's death for example is portrayed symbolically. The stage is dimmed, and then a bright light descends below. Into this light from the wings are thrown the great red robe and hat of the Cardinal. The Common Man enters from the opposite wing and roughly piles them up into his basket. He then takes a pair of spectacles from his pocket and a book from his basket, and proceeds to read:

'Whether we follow tradition in ascribing Wolsey's death to a broken heart, or accept Professor Larcomb's less feeling diagnosis of pulmonary pneumonia, its effective cause was the King's displeasure. He died at Leicester on 29 November 1530 while on his way to the Tower under charge of High Treason.

'England's next Lord Chancellor was Sir Thomas
More, a scholar and, by popular repute, a saint. His scholarship is supported by his writings; saintliness is a quality less easy to establish. But from his wilful indifference to realities which were obvious to quite ordinary contemporaries, it seems all too probable that he had it.

(Act I, p. 128)

This provides the first example in this thesis of a playwright actually quoting a historical source out to the audience. Bolt again is using the Brechtian technique of continually breaking the illusion and keeping the audience conscious of the fact of history. The Common Man therefore often presents a brief summary of historical events, as in this instance.

A future perspective is also sometimes provided. When More is about to be interrogated in the Tower by Cromwell, Norfolk, Cranmer and Rich, the Common Man as the jailer, expresses commiseration for the prisoner, "I'd let him out if I could but I can't. Not without taking up residence in there myself... You know the old adage? 'Better a live rat than a dead lion,' and that's about it."

An envelope descends swiftly before him. He opens it and reads:

'With reference to the old adage: Thomas Cromwell was found guilty of High Treason and executed on 28 July 1540. Norfolk was found guilty of High Treason and should have been executed on 27 January 1547 but on the night of 26 January, the King died of syphilis and wasn't able to sign the warrant. Thomas Cranmer. (Jerking thumb) That's the other one - 'was burned alive on 21 March 1556.' (He is about to conclude but sees a postscript.) Oh. 'Richard Rich became a Knight and Solicitor-General, a Baron and Lord Chancellor, and died in his bed.' So did I. And so, I hope (pushing off basket) will all of you.

(Act II, p. 183)

The notion of time rolling inexorably forward and catching up with all concerned is thus conveyed. Made conscious of the evanescent nature of people and events, the audience is driven to question the significance of the immediate reality presented before them, and to consider the ultimate meaning of human life and action.
For More, the issue finally is not support for any political cause or religious institution, but what he stands for in himself, the very ground of his being. Revolting against his son-in-law's suggestion that he has "made a noble gesture" in resigning the Chancellorship, he turns to his family in consternation:

A gesture! It wasn't possible to continue, Will. I was not able to continue. I would have if I could! I make no gesture! My God, I hope it's understood I make no gesture! Alice, you don't think I would do this to you for a gesture! That's a gesture! (Thumbs his nose) That's a gesture! (Jerks up two fingers) I'm no street acrobat to make gestures! I'm practical!

(Act II, p. 163)

More has no time for bogus sentiment or false heroics. "This is not the stuff of which martyrs are made," he reassures his family. (Act I, p. 35) He has "no taste for hemlock." (Act I, p. 49) All his legal cunning and experience are employed in his determined attempt to evade disaster. But he faces the strain and solitude of misunderstanding even from those he is closest to. His friend Norfolk upbraids him for his allegiance to the Pope as the Vicar of Christ's Church on earth:

Norfolk: Does this make sense? You'll forfeit all you've got - which includes the respect of your country - for a theory?

More : (hotly) The Apostolic Succession of the Pope is (stops: interested)... Why, it's a theory yes; you can't see it; can't touch it; it's a theory. But what matters to me is not whether it's true or not but that I believe it to be true, or rather not that I believe it, but that I believe it ... I trust I make myself obscure?

Norfolk: Perfectly.

More : That's good. Obscurity's what I have need of now.

Norfolk: Man, you're sick. This isn't Spain you know.

More : Have I your word, that what we say here is between us and has no existence beyond these walls?

Norfolk: (impatient) Very well.
More: And if the King should command you to repeat what I have said?
Norfolk: I should keep my word to you!
More: Then what has become of your oath of obedience to the King?
Norfolk: (indignant) You lay traps for me!
More: No, I show you the times.
Norfolk: Why do you insult me with these lawyer's tricks?
More: Because I am afraid.

(Act II, p. 161)

More finally has to move beyond the bonds of family and friendship. Essentially what is at stake is integral to his sense of his self, as he tries to explain to his anguished daughter who pleads with him to swear to the Act of Succession:

When a man takes an oath, Meg, he's holding his own self in his own hands. Like water (cups hands) and if he opens his fingers then - he needn't hope to find himself again.

(Act II, p. 191)

The situation closing in on More is effectively brought out, as each safeguard he relies on is stripped from him. His legal acumen leaves his accusers far behind and he dismisses Cromwell's initial charges scathingly: "They are terrors for children, Mr Secretary, not for me!"

(Act II, p. 177) This closely follows the actual words spoken by More in history: "My Lords, these terrors be arguments for children, and not for me."61

There are moments of trenchant dialogue in the play, as when More faces the commission of enquiry into his case. He refuses to answer Archbishop Crammer's questions regarding the Act of Succession:

Norfolk: Thomas, you insult the King and His Council in the person of the Lord Archbishop.
More: I insult no one. I will not take the oath. I will not tell you why I will not.
Norfolk: Then your reasons must be treasonable!
More: Not 'must be'; may be.
Norfolk: It's a fair assumption!
More: The law requires more than an assumption; the law requires a fact.

Outmatched on every point, Cromwell finally resorts to open intimidation:

Cromwell: Yet the State has harsher punishments.
More: You threaten like a dockside bully.
Cromwell: How should I threaten?
More: Like a Minister of State, with justice!
Cromwell: Oh, justice is what you're threatened with.
More: Then I'm not threatened.

(Act II, pp. 185-7)

At the trial, law and justice are made a travesty of, as More's condemnation is ensured by Rich's obvious act of perjury. It is an arresting moment when, after holding so long to silence as his safety under the law, More suddenly interrupts Norfolk, as he begins to pronounce sentence when the verdict of guilty has been passed:

Norfolk: Prisoner at the bar, you have been found guilty of High Treason. The sentence of the Court -
More: My lord! My lord, when I was practising the law, the manner was to ask the prisoner before pronouncing sentence, if he had anything to say.
Norfolk: (flummoxed) Have you anything to say?
More: Yes. To avoid this I have taken every path my winding wits would find. Now that the court has determined to condemn me, God knoweth how, I will discharge my mind...concerning my indictment and the King's title. The indictment is grounded in an Act of Parliament which is directly repugnant to the Law of God. The King in Parliament cannot bestow the Supremacy of the Church because it is a Spiritual Supremacy! And more to this the immunity of the Church is promised both in Magna Carta and the King's own Coronation Oath!

... Nevertheless, it is not for the
Supremacy that you have sought my blood - but because I would not bend to the marriage!

(Act II, pp. 204-5)

Bolt keeps close to history in his portrayal of the trial, though it was Audley, the Lord Chancellor, who began to pass sentence without going through the formality of asking More if he had anything to say, and whom More interrupted with these assertions. Norfolk, however, was one of the Commissioners present and Bolt uses him in this capacity, probably because it increases the poignancy to have More's friend pronounce the sentence.

When Norfolk rises again to finally pass sentence, the scene change immediately commences. The stage directions are explicit. The trappings of justice are flown upwards. The lights are dimmed but for two areas spotlighted to the front, and an arch at the head of stairs which begins to show blue sky. "Through this arch - where the axe and the block are silhouetted against a light of steadily increasing brilliance - comes the murmuration of a large crowd, formalised almost into a chant and mounting, so that Norfolk has to shout the end of his speech." The foreman of the jury, the Common Man, doffs hat and goes to the area spotlighted on the left with Cranmer. More goes to the area spotlighted on the right. In the style of Brecht, these movements, the stage directions indicate, are to be made "naturally, technically."

Cromwell goes to the bottom of the stairs and beckons to the Common Man, pointing to the top of the stairs. The Common Man joins him reluctantly, shaking his head and indicating in mime that he has not the proper costume in his property basket, which he drags into the light. "Cromwell takes a small black mask from his sleeve and offers it to him. The Common Man puts it on, thus, in his black tights, becoming the traditional headsman. He ascends the stairs, straddles his legs and picks up the axe, silhouetted against the sky. At once the crowd falls silent." (Act II, pp. 205-6) Unlike Charles Williams,
Bolt does not shrink from showing the execution in keeping with the modern trend of depicting physical violence on the stage. But, typically, he handles it in an extremely discreet, conservative manner, without any ugly edge or shock to the violence. On mounting the scaffold, More kneels, after a few words of encouragement to his executioner. Immediately there is a harsh roar of kettle-drums and total black-out at the end of the stairs.

(Act II, p. 207)

Bolt is obviously aware of what is going on in the theatre, as can be seen from his use of mime, an overtly theatrical means of switching from one locale to another, and his trying for stark visual effects. Yet, despite the surface modernity of *A Man for All Seasons*, it clearly emerges that Bolt is basically a conventional playwright. His work has all the classic ingredients of the traditional dramatist: a coherent neatly developed plot leading up to a climax, well-placed carefully wrought dialogue, realistic characterisation with a substantial part for the leading actor. Bolt tries hard to be modern in his treatment of history, as can be seen by his adoption of the Shavian approach in presenting an overtly modern perspective, and by his use of Brechtian devices for fashionable effects. But he is extremely cautious in his experiments with ideas gained from playwrights of such stature, and he is unable to come up with anything bold and inventive of his own. What we observe in Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* is a popular playwright putting over history in a popular way.

The play dealt with next, Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, provides another example of a popular treatment of history but, where Bolt goes for the personal detail and the subdued effect, Shaffer looks for the public encounter and the exotic spectacle. Unlike Bolt, Shaffer is not often drawn to history and when he is, it is because of the opportunity history affords for romance and sensation. Apart from *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, the more recent, *Amadeus* (1980), is his other play based on history. It
attempts to explore the nature of creative genius through the lives of Mozart and Salieri, but this is dealt with superficially and Shaffer's focus is the violent tensions between these two personalities, which he shows ending in the murder of Mozart by Salieri.

The Royal Hunt of the Sun dramatises a tale of epic adventure - the invasion of Peru by the Spanish under Francisco Pizarro. Their surmounting of awesome physical obstacles, in the quest for gold, eventually brings about the total desecration and destruction of a great civilisation. The play dwells upon the strange attraction between the aging embittered agnostic Spanish commander and the magnificent young Inca king, revered in his realm as a god, the Son of the Sun. Pizarro falls under his spell and undergoes a momentary conversion, seeming to recover lost faith, hope, innocence and the capacity for worship. However, he is forced eventually to agree to the killing of his god in order to secure the safety of his men. The play functions on two levels. It presents the clash of two alien worlds, and attempts to explore religious forces that spring from primitive layers of being. However, it is only on the exterior spectacular level that the play really succeeds.

The Royal Hunt of the Sun was first produced on the 7th July 1964 by the National Theatre Company at the Chichester Festival, and published in the same year. The original production, directed by John Dexter, with Colin Blakely as Pizarro and Robert Stephen as Atahuallpa, was a phenomenal success. "The result of wonderful teamwork from author, director and designer, Peter Shaffer's new play had an overwhelming reception on the occasion of its première," reports Theatre World magazine. "Magnificent in the sweep of its intention," the play is "none the less able to reach the heart." "There are many unforgettable moments of visual splendour, including the symbolic treacherous massacre of three thousand unarmed Incas, the ritual robing of the King, and the death vigil, when mourners, wearing strangely haunting golden masks, wail
with growing alarm as the body of their lifeless Sun King fails to respond to the rays of the sun for his expected resurrection."^62

Bernard Levin in The Daily Mail (8/7/64) calls it "the greatest play of our generation." The reviewer in The Daily Express asserts that "it is a play written out of the well of deep indignation, and its extraordinary sweep and power embraces nothing short of the dilemma of man, and his eternal quest after power and personal destiny. On the surface it is a gaudy kaleidoscope account of the conquest of the ancient Inca empire of Peru by Spain. Beneath the golden, ritualistic surface, however, it is a cry of rage against all men who, with a Bible in one hand and a gun in the other, would destroy the simple, splendid tribalism of ancient lands, in order to superimpose their own terror, their own unsolicited morality."^63 The Times reviewer, appropriately, finds the play lacking in depth of argument, but comments that "its externals are magnificent - not only in the prodigal displays of treasure and the blazing feathered costumes, but in the exotic movement of the production and panache of writing."^64

The play was one of the National Theatre's most outstanding popular successes. From the Chichester Festival it transferred to the London Old Vic where it ran for 122 performances over a period of 3 years. The play opened on the 26th October 1965 in New York, where it had another long run of up to 261 performances. In 1969 a film version was produced with Robert Shaw as Pizarro and Christopher Plummer as the Inca. But, as with A Man for All Seasons, subsequent revivals of the play have not been received with anything like the initial enthusiasm, which indicates that the original productions were extremely flattering to the text. They played up the spectacular element, and the lack of that element on the same scale in later productions, accentuated the play's defects. Reviewers of the 1973 Prospect Theatre Company production refer to the "frail and bony structure in which the author encloses his huge themes,"^65 and the encounters between Pizarro and the Inca, "muddied with washes of pidgin
English" and "surrounded by vast frames of verbiage."  

The main criticism that has been launched against the play is that its language lets it down. Shaffer's prose is described as "workmanlike," and elsewhere as "Fryian and portentous."  

The failure of the play's language is undeniable, as well as the simplistic quality of its characters and the shallowness of its thought. But it succeeds as a boldly theatrical piece which uses costumes, masks, mimes, dance, music and enactment to evoke an atmosphere of mystery and excitement. As J R Taylor states, anyone who saw the original productions will remember "the extraordinary impression they created of a meeting of two worlds in a dead, empty space brought to life by the magic of the theatre, long after any argument about the philosophic profundity of the words (or their culpable lack of it) has been forgotten."  

Shaffer was clearly drawn to this historical subject because of the opportunity it provided for marvel, romance and spectacle. The play represents, he says, the sort of theatre he "long dreamed of creating, involving not only words, but also mimes, masks and magics; a ceremony to be ultimately created by the audience, whose task it will be to create for themselves in the dark, with our help, the fantastic apparition of the pre-Columbian world, and the terrible magnificence of the Conquistadors."  

Shaffer shows no serious interest in history as such, for he appears to have come across his source almost by accident. Discussing his play in an interview in October 1964, he says,

You see, I first came on the subject some years back when I had to while away the time reading some big heavy Victorian book. The book I chose was Prescott's Conquest of Peru and I was absolutely riveted by it. The whole drama of the confrontation of two totally different ways of life: the Catholic individualism of the invaders, and the complete communistic society of the Incas... A complete communistic society, you see, and one which had been working for more
than a 100 years... Well, my play might have been about that, but it isn't, or only very slightly. When I first wrote it it was much more historical, much too historical; I was so excited by the material that I tried to put too much in... I started out with a history play; I hope I have ended up with a contemporary story which uses history only as a groundwork in the expression of its theme. What is that theme? Briefly, it is a play about two men, one of whom is an atheist, and the other is a god.71

What Shaffer is obviously attracted to is the sensational and religious possibilities of the story of that historic confrontation.

This passage, in which Shaffer relates how he happened to pick on Prescott, when to while away the time he had to read "some big heavy Victorian book," is highly revealing of the playwright's mentality, and the superficiality of his concern with history. W H Prescott's The Conquest of Peru, first published in 1847, is a classic of history. It was the first comprehensive account in English of the civilisation of the Incas. Prescott based his work on all the original documents available to him. They included records and manuscripts of contemporary chroniclers on Peru, and private and official correspondence of the period, drawn mainly from the archives of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid.

Since Prescott's time vast stores of material have come to light forming the basis for more modern accounts. These Shaffer does not seem to have been interested to read. Subsequent authorities in the field include Sir Clement Markham, the British historian who translated many Spanish chronicles into English and wrote A History of Peru (1892), The Incas of Peru (1910), and the American Peruvianist, Philip Ainsworth Means, who did important work in the area, and published The Ancient Civilisations of the Andes (1931) and Fall of the Inca Empire and the Spanish Rule in Peru: 1530-1780 (1932). Other later studies of the Inca civilisation and Peruvian history include G H S Bushnell's.

Though Prescott's work is regarded as a classic by historians, its information in many respects has been superseded. Sir Clement Markham writes in 1910, "Since Prescott's book, a great deal of subsequently discovered material has quite altered our view of some things, and thrown entirely new light on others. Yet Mr Prescott's work can never lose its high position as a carefully written and very charming history." More recently, John Hemming, in his book, The Conquest of the Incas (1970), asserts that Prescott was a masterly critical historian, and he had access to the manuscripts of all the best eyewitnesses of the Conquest. He wrote an immortal narrative of the Conquest itself and of the Spaniards' civil wars until 1548 ... Since Prescott's time the archives have yielded their treasures. The Spaniards had a passion for keeping records and notarising every aspect of their lives. Countless thousands of documents have been published in modern collections that sometimes run to over a hundred volumes but have no sequence or index. Historical journals have also proliferated, and there have been many fine specialised studies by professional historians. Almost none of these sources was available to Prescott.

Prescott's account of the conquest was also, of necessity, limited, in that it was largely based on contemporary Spanish chroniclers such as Pedro Pizarro, Miguel de Estete, Francisco de Xerez and Pedro Sancho (official secretaries of the expedition), and Hernando Pizarro, who describe events from the Spanish point of view. He also drew on the writings of such sixteenth-century observers and historians as Juan de Sarmiento, the Licentiate Polo de Ondegardo, and Pedro de Cieza de
León (who were keenly interested in the Indian world), Agustín de Zárate, the jingoistic Francisco López de Cómara and Antonio de Herrera Tordesillas (Philip II's official historian of the Conquest). Indian sources are few and later in time, because the Incas had no knowledge of the written word before the Spanish arrived.

Prescott did draw substantially on the famous works of Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1619), son of an Inca princess, who wrote *Commentarios reales* on the Inca civilisation, and *Historia general del Peru* which describes the Spanish Conquest and its consequences. His works dominated knowledge about the Incas for a considerable time, but their credibility has since been seriously questioned. Garcilaso, J Alden Mason states in his book, *The Ancient Civilizations of Peru* (1957), "long enjoyed a reputation as the foremost authority. Many modern critics, however, consider Garcilaso unreliable, especially as regards pre-Conquest history and religion. Garcilaso wrote his 'Royal Commentaries' long after he had returned to Spain, and based much of his historical accounts on the writings of the now discredited Jesuit Blas Valera." More recent studies refute the value of Garcilaso too. Nathan Wachtel in his book, *The Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes 1530-1570* (first published in French, 1971, English translation, 1977), writes that "Garcilaso (despite his own assertions) does not exactly offer the point of view of an Indian, so much as a reconstruction of the past by an émigré mestizo in Spain, in the light of a thoroughly assimilated European culture." J Hemming states that Garcilaso forfeited his confidence as a historian, because "he meanders, forgets, romanticises or blatantly distorts too often to remain authoritative."

The importance of other Indian sources has been emphasised during this century, such as the narrative of Titu Cusi Yapanqui, who reigned over the dissident State of Vilcabamba from 1557 to 1570, and dictated his report of the Conquest to the Spanish missionary, Diego de Castro, for the benefit of the Spanish King; Juan Santa Cruz.
Pachacuti's chronicle which dates from the early seventeenth century, and the chronicle of Guaman Poma de Ayala. Another most interesting form in which this historic confrontation was recorded by the Indian people, was through the oral tradition of poems and of plays which re-enact the events of the Conquest in dialogue, song and dance. These plays still exist and are performed annually in some regions, but are extremely difficult to date. Nathan Wachtel asserts that "in some cases they seem to be very old, possibly even going as far back as the sixteenth century; they are evidence of the preservation of the past in the collective memory of the Indian people." A very complete text, of The Tragedy of the Death of Atahuallpa, transcribed in Chayanta in 1871, was published by Jesús Lara in 1957. Another version was collated at Oruro in 1942 and published by C H Balmori in 1955. This would have been an exciting source for a dramatist to consider, but Shaffer does not seem to have gone much beyond the outdated account he found in Prescott.

However, Prescott's depiction of the actual Conquest itself, which Shaffer was chiefly interested in, is sound in the main, based as it is on the most important available eye-witness accounts of the event. Prescott quotes frequently from these original sources. But the story is romantically told, with a distinctly Victorian perspective and Victorian attitudes and value judgements brought to bear. It provides an example of the old romantic style of writing history. As such it is not in the same class as some of the historical sources used by other playwrights considered in this thesis. Thus Shaffer's choice of Prescott as his primary source is indicative of the superficiality of his interest in history. He was obviously drawn by the romantic tone and flavour of Prescott's account.

Francisco Pizarro, Prescott writes, "was an illegitimate child, and that his parents should not have taken pains to perpetuate the date of his birth is not surprising. Few care to make a particular record of their transgressions." "But little is told of Francisco's early years, and that
little not always deserving credit. According to some, he was deserted by both his parents, and left as a foundling at the door of one of the principal churches of the city. It is even said that he would have perished, had he not been nursed by a sow... It seems certain that the young Pizarro received little care from either of his parents, and was suffered to grow up as nature dictated. He was neither taught to read nor write, and his principal occupation was that of a swineherd.78

This is a good illustration of the old-fashioned romantic style of history, and shows that this dated account is not in the same category as some of the historical sources used by other playwrights I have discussed. Prescott weaves into his narrative, without pinning it down as such, the legend that Pizarro was a foundling brought up among pigs. According to J Hemming, "the legend was started by Francisco López de Gómara, a personal enemy of the Pizarros, and was repeated by Prescott and other modern historians. It is entirely disproved by various documents that have come to light in recent years... Although he was illegitimate and poorly educated, there was nothing otherwise discreditable about Pizarro's upbringing." Porras Barrenechea, Hemming says, did much to explode these myths by his publications in the 1940's.79

The use of myth, as I have argued in my introduction, is quite legitimate in a history play, since myth is an inevitable part of the writing of history. But it is interesting to observe how Shaffer pounces on Prescott's romantic account of Pizarro's origins and exploits it for sensational effect. The play takes the form of a story narrated by Old Martin, last surviving member of the original band of conquerors, who joined at the age of fifteen as page and secretary to Pizarro. Old, tired and embittered, he comments on the shining idealism of his youth as he introduces himself and his tale to the audience:

Save you all. My name is Martin. I'm a soldier of Spain and that's it. Most of my life I've spent fighting for land, treasure and the cross. I'm worth
millions. Soon I'll be dead and they'll bury me out here in Peru, the land I helped ruin as a boy. This story is about ruin. Ruin and gold. More gold than any of you will ever see even if you work in a counting house. I'm going to tell you how one hundred and sixty-seven men conquered an empire of twenty-four million. And then things that no one has ever told: things to make you groan and cry out I'm lying. And perhaps I am ... But grant me this: I saw him closer than anyone, and had cause only to love him. He was my altar, my bright image of salvation. Francisco Pizarro! Time was when I'd have died for him, or for any worship!

(Act I, Sc. 1, p. 1)

This speech sets the tone of the play and illustrates its chief concern - to dramatise a tale of high adventure.

Our first introduction to Pizarro is to a man in late middle age, "commanding, harsh, wasted, secret," who makes contact at gut level: "I was suckled by a sow. My house is the oldest in Spain — the pig-sty." The insecurity and abandonment of his childhood and early manhood have bred a deep-rooted cynicism and mistrust towards existence. He received nothing, so he has nothing to give. Once the world could have had him for a song, but now it is going to know him as a name to be sung for centuries in ballads "out there under the cork trees where (he) sat as a boy with bandages for shoes." He describes himself bitterly as "the old pigherd lumbering after fame," where others inherited their honour he had "to root for (his) like the pigs." (Act I, Sc. 1, pp. 1-7)

Prescott credits Pizarro with an indomitable spirit and reckless courage, which enable him to surmount awesome obstacles unaided by government. He sees him as totally unscrupulous in his dealings with his fellow Spaniards, as well as the Peruvian Indians. His name, Prescott asserts, "became a byword for perfidy." In mitigation, he cites the deprivation of his childhood and early youth. Shaffer has used this as the mainspring for his interpretation of the adult psychology of the man.
In the play, Pizarro confesses to Hernando de Soto, his second-in-command, that he is a totally disillusioned man. "Time cheats us all the way," he says. "I've been cheated from the moment I was born because there's death in everything." (Act I, Sc. 10, pp. 30-2) Young Martin's and De Soto's faith in God and King is too simple for Pizarro. He pours scorn on Young Martin's glowing idealism:

You belong to hope. To faith. To priests and pretences. To dipping flags and ducking heads; to laying hands and licking rings; to powers and parchments; and the whole vast stupid congregation of crowners and cross-kissers. You're a worshipper, Martin. A groveller. You were born with feet but you prefer your knees. It's you who make Bishops - Kings - Generals. You trust me, I'll hurt you past believing.

(Act I, Sc. 5, pp. 17-8)

Yet for all his professed cynicism, Pizarro is a frustrated romantic at heart. He admits to Young Martin: "You own everything I've lost. I despise the keeping, and I loathe the losing. Where can a man live, between two hates?" (Act I, Sc. 5, p. 18) He is a solitary, emotionally maimed individual, beset by a sense of social and cosmic homelessness and resultant dread of the universe. When first he began to think of a world in Peru, there was a longing in him "for a new place like a country after rain, washed clean of all badges and barriers, the pebbles men drop to tell them where they are on a plain that's got no landmarks." (Act I, Sc. 10, p. 31)

In the play, Pizarro is a curious enigmatic mixture of cynicism and romanticism. On learning about Atahuallpa, he is fascinated by the notion of a man like himself, illegitimate, illiterate, and a warrior, arrogating to himself, godhead: "It's silly - but tremendous ... You know - strange nonsense: since first I heard of him I've dreamed of him every night. A black king with glowing eyes, sporting the sun for a crown. What does it mean?" Pizarro is driven on by a sense of personal destiny,
convinced that "of all meetings I have made in my life, this with him is the one I have to make. Maybe it's my death. Or maybe new life. I feel just this: all my days have been a path to this one morning." (Act I, Sc. 10, p. 33)

Shaffer stresses Pizarro's contempt for the Church in order to build up this romantic fascination with the Inca. Here he diverges from his source. Pizarro was much more conventionally religious-minded, according to Prescott. He continually worked on the religious zeal of his men, vaunting the propagation of Catholicism as the prime goal of the expedition. Before the hazardous crossing of the Andes, he urged his company, "Let every one of you, take heart and go forward like a good soldier, nothing daunted by the smallness of your numbers. For in the greatest extremity God ever fights for his own; and doubt not He will humble the pride of the heathen, and bring him to the knowledge of the true faith, the great end and object of the Conquest," Prescott's source for this quote is the chronicle of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo who wrote a general history during the decades after the Conquest. This history is highly accredited by a modern historian because Oviedo "was an important official in the West Indies and interrogated travellers returning to Spain, so that much of his material came from eyewitnesses." Prescott also relates how, once the Inca had been made captive, "Pizarro did not neglect the opportunity afforded him of communicating the truths of revelation to his prisoner, and both he and his chaplain, Father Valverde, laboured in the same good work." The account of Xerez, Pizarro's private secretary, is Prescott's source for this information. The Inca showed an intelligent interest in religious questions, but remained unconvinced by the Christian doctrines they propounded to him.

Shaffer makes Pizarro a self-professed agnostic with no time for pretences of any sort so that he contrasts sharply with the rank hypocrisy of the salvation-mongering ecclesiastics who vaunt the lofty nature of the mission:
We are going to take from them what they don't value, and give them instead the priceless mercy of heaven. He who helps me lift this dark man into light I absolve of all crimes he ever committed.

(Act I, Sc. 1, p. 5)

On one level the play satirises the human propensity towards partisanship, and its exploitation by religious and political institutions for their own acquisitive and ideological ends. Peter Shaffer has said:

To me the greatest tragic factor in history is man's apparent need to mark the intensity of his reaction to life by joining a band: For a band, to give itself definition, must find a rival or an enemy. The neurotic allegiances of Europe, the Churches and flags, the armies and parties are the villains of The Royal Hunt of the Sun. The play is a critique of the propaganda of ideological systems. On another level it attempts to probe beneath institutionalised forms of deification, to explore the latent subliminal forces in man that respond to party, cult, worship, ritual. Their expression often involves a combination of freedom and discipline, adventure and tradition. Even where men are led to repudiate and destroy, this is rarely done without some form of obedience, some solidarity, some hanging on to elusive values. These are religious forces that go far deeper than law or morality, springing from inner experience and even more primitive layers of being. Instinct with creative and destructive possibilities, they may be exploited for progressive or regressive alternatives. In the play, we see an attempt to show this compulsive urge to worship manifested in both its positive and its negative aspects.

Fray Marcos de Nizza, a Franciscan friar, and Fray Vincente de Valverde, a Dominican, represent the ecclesiastics who accompanied the expedition. De Nizza is a man of greater maturity and serenity of temper than Valverde. He tells the men before they set out:
You are the bringers of food to starving peoples. You go to break mercy with them like bread, and outpour gentleness into their cups. You will lay before them the inexhaustible table of free spirit, and invite to it all who have dieted on terror. You will bring to all tribes the nourishment of pity. You will sow their fields with love, and teach them to harvest the crop of it, each yield in its season. Remember this always: we are their New World.

(Act I, Sc. 2, p. 8)

The irony is that they find in Peru a world of teeming plenty and gentle hospitality, and bring to it poverty, slavery and darkness.

Initially the impression created is of a journey into the interior where no sanctions exist. "Do you know where you're going?" demands Pizarro of Young Martin. "Into the forest. A hundred miles of dark and screaming. The dark we all came out of, hot. Things flying, fleeing, falling dead - and their death unnoticed. Take your noble reasons there, Martin. Pitch your silk flags in that black and wave your crosses at the wild cats. See what awe they command." (Act I, Sc. 2, p. 11) Pizarro stumps out, and the boy is left alone on the stage.

Then the Inca world opens up with an aura of great mystery and splendour. "The stage darkens and the huge medallion high on the back wall begins to glow. Great cries of 'Inca!' are heard." "Exotic music mixes with the chanting. Slowly the medallion opens outwards to form a huge golden sun with twelve great rays. In the centre stands Atahuallpa, sovereign Inca of Peru, masked, crowned, and dressed in gold. When he speaks, his voice, like the voices of all the Incas, is strangely formalized." What is achieved is a bold unearthly effect of an exotic alien other world and a sense of familiar footholds removed. Atahuallpa is a masked, stylised, ubiquitous presence, in the first part of the play. His physical reality on the stage brings home the sensation the Spaniards have of being watched, and intensifies the discomfiture and suspense. In the original
motive to honest industry, that of bettering one's lot was lost upon him. The great law of human progress was not for him. As he was born, so he was to die.86

This comment of Prescott illustrates his distinctly Victorian viewpoint. He sees 'self-help' as the greatest good. Many of Prescott's statements could not be made today without acute embarrassment as, for example, the following:

It was indeed a fiery cross that was borne over the devoted land, scathing and consuming in its terrible progress; but it was still the cross, the sign of man's salvation, the only sign by which generations and generations yet unborn were to be rescued from eternal perdition.87

Prescott's conclusion is that the Peruvian government was the "most oppressive though the mildest of despotisms" because "the power of free agency - the inestimable and inborn right of every human being was annihilated in Peru." "The laws were carefully directed to their preservation and personal comfort. The people were not allowed to be employed on works pernicious to their health, not to pine - a sad contrast to their subsequent destiny - under the imposition of tasks too heavy for their powers. They were never made the victims of public or private extortion; and a benevolent forecast watched carefully over their necessities, and provided for their relief in seasons of infirmity and for their sustenance in health. The government of the Incas, however arbitrary in form, was in its spirit truly patriarchal." But he goes on to state,

Where there is no free agency there can be no morality. Where there is no temptation there can be little claim to virtue. Where the routine is rigorously prescribed by law, the law, and not the man must have the credit of the conduct. If that government is the best which is felt the least, which encroaches on the natural liberty of the subject only so far as it is essential to civil subordination, then of all governments devised the Peruvian has the least claim to our admiration.88
This curious Victorian view is a phenomenon in itself. Shaffer reacts against it by attributing it in the play to De Nizza who sees Peru as "a sepulchre of the soul" (Act II, Sc. 10, p. 72), and the Inca system of government as a particularly insidious form of tyranny. It denies man's right to freedom and hunger, necessary spurs to change and self-improvement. Pizarro appears astounded by this view:

Pizarro: You call hunger a right?
De Nizza: Of course, it gives life meaning. Look around you: happiness has no feel for men here since they are forbidden unhappiness. They have everything in common so they have nothing to give each other. They are part of the seasons, no more; as indistinguishable as mules, as predictable as trees. All men are born unequal: this is the divine gift. And want is their birthright. Where you deny this and there is no hope of any new love; where tomorrow is abolished, and no man ever thinks 'I can change myself', there you have the rule of Anti-Christ.

(Act II, Sc. 4, p. 52)

What comes across in the play is the intransigence of the indoctrinated individual. The Peruvian way of life is not portrayed without its limitations. Shaffer emphasises, through the highly ritualised nature of their speech and action, the intense organisation and relentless uniformity imposed on the Peruvians by their social structure. The play demonstrates the inability of human beings to appreciate the sincerity of an ideological system different from their own. We are prone to see the oppression which operates in another system, and find it difficult to believe that the indoctrinated individual of that system may feel as free and productive in his ideological captivity as we may feel in ours. Wider social contact reveals a world of disquieting cultural relativities. Our own ideological system tends to deter a fundamental questioning of its structure in order to maintain the fiction that we are free to believe what we choose to believe and have chosen to
believe as we do. Basically, Shaffer says, he "saw the active iron of Spain against the passive feathers of Peru" as the "conflict of two immense and joyless powers." But he handles his huge themes without much subtlety or depth. His emphasis throughout is on the showy and spectacular and broad physical images. Until the Inca's fateful meeting with Pizarro, Atahuallpa remains in the huge golden sun hung above the stage, watching and commenting on the approach of the Spaniards. As Old Martin describes the ordeals experienced in the great ascent of the Andes, the action is mimed of a terrible, stumbling, tortuous climb over ledges and giant chasms, "performed to an eerie, cold music made from the thin whine of huge saws." (Act I, Sc. 8, pp. 25-6) A reviewer describes it as "a tense theatrical experience," which indicates that the mime effectively conveyed the hazards and great physical feats involved in crossing the Andes. The climax of the first part of the play is the traumatic confrontation between the Spaniards and the Indians.

The apocalyptic nature of the event is registered in the terrific aural and visual impact of the scene. The tension and suspense is built to almost breaking point as the men await the arrival of the Indians at the mountain resort of Cajamarca. Finally strange music is heard faintly in the distance and grows louder and louder. "The music crashes over the stage as the Indian procession enters in an astonishing explosion of colour. The King's attendants - many of them playing musical instruments: reed pipes, cymbals, and giant marraccas - are as gay as parrots. They wear costumes of orange and yellow, and fantastic head-dresses of gold and feathers, with eyes embossed on them in staring black enamel. By contrast, ATAHUALLPA INCA presents a picture of utter simplicity. He is dressed from head to foot in white: across the eyes is a mask of jade mosaic, and round his head a circlet of plain gold."

Silence falls as he glares about him, and then the Spanish priests come forward to address the Inca. Their
exchange with Atahuallpa is a mere formality and they wait for the first pretext to sound the call for battle. A violent drumming begins and the great massacre is mimed:
"To a savage music, wave upon wave of Indians are slaughtered and rise again to protect their lord who stands bewildered in their midst. It is all in vain. Relentlessly the Spanish soldiers hew their way through the ranks of feathered attendants towards their quarry. They surround him. SALINAS snatches the crown off his head, and tosses it up to PIZARRO, who catches it and to a great shout crowns himself. All the Indians cry out in horror. The drum hammers on relentlessly, while ATAHUALLPA is led off at sword-point by the whole band of Spaniards. At the same time, dragged from the middle of the sun by howling Indians, a vast bloodstained cloth bellies out over the stage. All rush off; their screams fill the theatre. The lights fade out slowly on the rippling cloth of blood."
(Act I, Sc. 21, pp. 37-9) The impact is violently jarring, in keeping with the shocking nature of what has been perpetrated.

Shaffer continually goes in for gaudy sensational effects. The desecration of Peru is symbolised by the plundering of the giant sun emblem. The sun gives out deep groans, "like the sound of a great animal being wounded," as the Spaniards with their daggers greedily dismantle it. They "tear out the gold inlays and fling them on the ground, while terrible groans fill the air. In a moment only the great gold frame remains; a broken blackened sun." (Act II, Sc. 6, p. 56) Of the Rape of the Sun, one reviewer writes, that "to watch the gold of the Inca Empire being torn loose from its majestic moorings" is "to be faintly sickened. The language of the play has less impact than the boldly literal image." 91

Young Martin's response to the slaughter of the Indians essentially embodies Pizarro's own predicament, stemming from his childhood experiences:
Jesus, we are all eased out of kids' dreams; but who can be ripped out of them and live loving after?

(Act II, Sc. 1, p. 40)

The heinous treachery of the Spaniards earns Atahuallpa's lasting outrage and contempt. His first reaction to Pizarro is that he "has no word for him whose word is evil."

(Act II, Sc. 2, p. 42) Even when he relents towards Pizarro, Atahuallpa's reading of him is that he is a man who has no self to pledge, "no swear to give."

(Act II, Sc. 3, p. 44) Atahuallpa's bearing, even in captivity, displays the most "entire dignity and grace. Even when he moves or speaks, it is with the consciousness of his divine origin, his sacred function and his absolute power."

(Act II, Sc. 2, pp. 41-2) Pizarro is drawn irresistibly to him:

Yes. He has some meaning for me, this Man-God. An immortal man in whom all his people live completely. He has an answer for time.

(Act II, Sc. 3, p. 45)

Shaffer departs from his source in his depiction of the relationship between Pizarro and Atahuallpa. According to Prescott, it was Francisco Pizarro's half-brother, Hernando Pizarro, who was drawn to the Inca and who established a certain rapport with him. The "haughty spirit of this cavalier," Prescott writes, "had been touched by the condition of the royal prisoner, and he had treated him with a deference which won for him the peculiar regard and confidence of the Indian."  

Hernando de Soto was also on terms of greater familiarity with the Inca than was the commander of the expedition. Shaffer switches the emphasis, excluding the figure of Hernando Pizarro, and building up the relationship between Pizarro and Atahuallpa, to enhance the momentous nature of their encounter. How Pizarro recovers the savour of life a little through meeting Atahuallpa, Shaffer says, "is the personal substance of the play. The strange adoptive relationship between a dying Spanish general and a young Indian king forms its
emotional heart: a relationship between an atheist and a self-acknowledged God." By this divergence from his source, Shaffer adds an exotic religious and romantic interest to the play, for the instinctive bond between these two men leads to the mysterious conversion of Pizarro by the Inca. There is no historical evidence that anything of this nature occurred.

In the play, Atahuallpa is shown momentarily reuniting Pizarro to the world from which he has withdrawn himself. He dances for Pizarro. It is the "ferocious mime of a warrior killing his foes" and is "very difficult to execute, demanding great liteness and physical stamina." (Act II, Sc. 5, p. 55) The dance of Atahuallpa is pristine, vulpine and has a powerful elemental appeal. One reviewer of the play in production describes it as the "physical high spot of the evening" and the point when Pizarro's "bombastic resistance to the Inca's fascinating magnetism begins to soften." He is openly affected by this display of "flowing grace and muscular athleticism," and "the audience, too, burst into spontaneous applause."94 Atahuallpa forces Pizarro to dance in turn. Pizarro attempts to copy the Inca's dance, fails miserably, and ends up laughing at himself. He turns to Atahuallpa in wonder and amazement: "You make me laugh! You make me laugh!" The scene closes with Pizarro extending his hand to Atahuallpa, who takes it; the two of them then go off quietly together. (Act II, Sc. 5, p. 55)

The relationship between Pizarro and Atahuallpa is strange yet compelling. One reviewer describes Colin Blakely in the original production as a "grizzled limping veteran who bodies out the figure of Pizarro as a desperate man risking everything on the last throw" and says that Robert Stephens, "facially impassive as a carved idol, gives the sun-ruler a hieratic androgynous dignity." "The coming together of this oddly related pair is at times extraordinarily touching."95 Another theatre critic finds the "final moral hassle between Pizarro and Atahuallpa "both overwritten and over-scrutinized. What has been a
clash of cultures and a conflict of temperaments becomes, through over-concentration, a kind of homosexual, Genet-like, master-servant imbroglio, and suddenly epic drama dwindles into closet drama and loses in the exchange."\(^{96}\) But this is too narrow a reading of the play, for there is a hint in the text of all these, and other possibilities in the relationship—father-son, ego-alter ego, worshipper-worshipped. Shaffer himself sees the play as centred around "the relationship, intense, involved and obscure, between these two men, one of whom is the other's prisoner: they are so different, and yet in many ways - they are both bastards, both usurpers, both unscrupulous men of action, both illiterate - they are mirror images of each other. And the theme which lies behind their relationship is the search for God - that is why it is called 'The Royal Hunt of the Sun' - the search for a definition of the idea of God. In fact, the play is an attempt to define the concept of God."\(^{97}\)

Though the play falls far short of this immensely ambitious aim, the rough-hewn relationship between Pizarro, the earthbound Spanish adventurer, and Atahuallpa, the god-like Indian savage, has a strange charm. Atahuallpa makes a spontaneous, unreasoned choice of Pizarro and Pizarro finds himself drawn out from the destitution of his non-involvement, through this act of being singled out, accepted, affirmed. He experiences an inner joy and meaning that arises only in relation, — an expansion of the self from its contraction and paralysis. Atahuallpa helps him to relocate a part of himself violently excised by the traumas of his early childhood, that have resulted in a dessication of the spirit. The transference from one to the other of a vital portion of his nature, whether one calls it love or sympathy, holds out the possibility of grace and communion, reconciliation and harmony in the universe.

It makes Pizarro's dilemma all the more excruciating when, after Atahuallpa has fulfilled his part of the bargain and paid the ransom he promised for his freedom,
Pizarro is divided by his loyalty to his friend and his responsibility to his men. He is pressurised on the one side for the Inca's release, and on the other for his execution. De Soto, who at first did not dream that Christ could be here in Peru, now sees that Christ is love, and there is love in Atahuallpa. "He trusts you, trust him. It's all you can do," he tells Pizarro. (Act II, Sc. 10, p. 69) The ecclesiastics, consumed with "great zeal to see the devil in a poor dark man," confront Pizarro with the opposing view. "Peru is a sepulchre of the soul. For the sake of the free spirit in each of us it must be destroyed." Pizarro is both outraged and distraught:

Pizarro: So there is Christian charity. To save my own soul I must kill another man!

De Nizza: To save love in the world you must kill lovelessness.

Pizarro: Hail to you, sole judge of love! No salvation outside your church: and no love neither. Oh, you arrogance!... (Simply) I do not know love, Father, but what can I ever know, if I feel none for him?

(Act II, Sc. 10, p. 72)

Atahuallpa saves Pizarro's position by professing that he cannot be killed before his time, and he will demonstrate the reality of his faith by returning from the dead. Pizarro's blind credulity in the face of this declaration is the desperate exhausted hope of a man who would stake all on a final winning stroke. His emotional state is projected in direct physical terms. With the same rope with which he bound himself to Atahuallpa to defend his life, he breaks into a frantic gallop round and round the Inca, the rope at full stretch; Atahuallpa turns with him, somersaulting, then holding him as if breaking a wild horse, his teeth bared with the strain, until the old man tumbles exhausted to the ground. Silence follows, broken only by deep moaning from the stricken man. The Inca slowly pulls in the rope. Then at last he speaks:
Pizarro. You will die soon and you do not believe in your God. That is why you tremble and keep no word. Believe in me. I will give you a word and will fill you with joy. For you I will do a great thing. I will swallow death and spit it out of me.

(Act II, Sc. 11, p. 76)

The crude analogy with Christ is apparent. Pizarro is faced with a crisis of faith, asked to make the leap between the rational and the non-rational.

Shaffer draws from the stuff of myth here. Prescott relates the Peruvian belief in the divine ancestry of the Inca, as one of the many traditions which grew up to explain the origin of the Peruvian monarchy. This legend had it that "the Sun, the great luminary and parent of mankind," in his compassion sent two of his children, Manco Capac and Mama Oello Huaco, to rescue the people from the barbarism in which they were immersed, and gather them into communities and teach them the arts of civilized life. Again, the elaborate obsequies that were celebrated on the death of the Inca, and the careful preservation of his body by skilful embalming, were the result of the popular belief that the soul of the departed monarch would return after a time to re-animate his body on earth. Shaffer presumably uses this as the basis for steeping Atahuallpa in an illusion of his own immortality, which leads him to declare ultimately that as a god he cannot be killed by such evil men. His father, the Sun, would not permit it, and he would demonstrate the reality of his faith by rising at daybreak with the first touch of the sun. (Act II, Sc. 11, p. 74)

The belief in the divine ancestry of the Inca, and the eventual return of his soul, was deep-rooted in Peruvian culture. Victor Wolfgang Von Hagen in his book, *The Ancient Sun Kingdoms of the Americas: Aztec, Maya, Inca* [1962], says that "the Inca empire was a functioning theocracy: the Inca being god and man, any crime was at once disobedience and sacrilege." The Peruvian dead became *huaca*, that is godlike and mysterious. The Inca's
body was partially mummified. "Mummification was a magico-religious act, and its object in Egypt or in Peru was to keep the body as it was during life for the eventual return of the soul." The Inca was the incarnation of the life-principle for the Peruvians, and Atahuallpa's death had enormous implications for them. John Hemmings in his fairly recent account of the Conquest writes that "Atahuallpa's immediate followers were stunned by his death. 'When he was taken out to be killed, all the native populace who were in the square, of which there were many, prostrated themselves on the ground, letting themselves fall to the earth like drunken men.'" Hemmings quotes one of the conquistadors, Pedro Pizarro, recalling that after Atahuallpa's death, two of his sisters remained and "went about making great lamentations, with drums and singing, recording the deeds of their husband. Atahuallpa had told his sisters and wives that if he were not burned he would return to this world. They waited until the Governor (Francisco Pizarro) had gone out of his room, came to where Atahuallpa used to live, and asked me to let them enter. Once inside they began to call for Atahuallpa, searching very softly for him in all the corners... I disabused them and told them that dead men do not return."

Nathan Wachtel tells us that a future Messianic hope exists in Indian folklore. "A myth spread secretly among the Indians of Peru and Bolivia says that after Atahuallpa's death his head was cut off, carried to Cuzco and buried. But under ground the head is alive and a body is growing on to it. When it is wholly reconstituted, the Inca will rise out of the earth, the Spaniards will be driven out, the ancient Empire will be restored." The message of the Indian play, The Tragedy of Atahuallpa, also carries this Messianic hope, he says. "The return of the Inca is confidently expected; an Indian victory at some future date is forecast as a real possibility." "It is significant that at Oruro, after the Inca's death, the chorus prays for his resurrection. At La Paz, according to the evidence of Dr Vellard, the performance used,
indeed, to end with the resurrection and triumph of Atahuallpa.\(^{101}\)

Thus Shaffer's emphasis on Atahuallpa's death and expected resurrection is in keeping with these mythic-historical traditions. The last scene of the play is a mixture of farce and pathos. Old Martin relates details of a summary trial, in which Atahuallpa is found guilty on absurd charges. The Inca is taken out to be executed, and on Pizarro's insistence, agrees to be baptised a Christian, so that he escapes death by burning and his body remains intact. But immediately after the short baptism, he raises his head, tears off his clothes and intones in a great voice: "INTI! INTI! INTI!" Pizarro intones after him, "The Sun. The Sun. The Sun." Spanish soldiers haul Atahuallpa to his feet and he is garrotted, while the Spaniards recite the Latin creed, and great howls of "Inca!" come from the darkness around. When the body falls slack, the soldiers carry the corpse to the centre of the stage and drop it at Pizarro's feet. Then they all leave the old man, who stands as if turned to stone. A drum beats, and slowly, in semi-darkness, the stage fills with Indians, robed in black and terracotta, wearing huge ceremonial funeral masks of ancient Peru. Over the prostrate body they whine, whisper, hoot, howl, a strange chant of resurrection in the darkness before sunrise. (Act II, Sc. 12, pp. 78-80)

In the original production, this scene was "hauntingly staged." "A ring of celebrants converge chanting over the dead king, wearing fantastic golden masks fixed in expressions of expectation that miraculously grow to bewilderment, as the sun comes up and the body remains inertly supine on the floor."\(^{102}\) The masked Indians finally melt away in grief and despair. Pizarro is left alone, cradling the dead Inca, weeping. The play ends with him lying there beside the body of Atahuallpa, and singing quietly to it a verse of the harvest song the Inca king once sang for him:
She is cut up, O little finch.
For stealing grain, O little finch.
See, see the fate, O little finch,
Of robber birds, O little finch.
"The sun glares at the audience" before it is extinguished by the final black-out.  (Act II, Sc. 12, pp. 79-81)

In short, as I have said, The Royal Hunt of the Sun is in fact a romantic play, providing an example of another popular treatment of history. It is not seriously concerned with history as such, and has no great intellectual depth. Shaffer finds in Prescott's romantic historical narrative a tale of epic adventure, and he exploits the opportunities it provides for marvel and sensation. He does not go beyond the outdated source he finds in Prescott by reading up more modern historical studies. History is used in a shallow opportunistic way for its spectacular and theatrical possibilities. But my definition, established in the introduction, postulates a serious concern for historical truth or historical issues, as the essential requirement for a history play. The Royal Hunt of the Sun is therefore not a history play, evaluated by this criterion.

To conclude this chapter I turn now to a consideration of John Osborne's Luther, which provides another instance of a playwright being drawn to a historical subject for its religious interest. Yet, as has been said, Osborne's approach and achievement vary significantly from Bolt's and Shaffer's; and his play, an arresting psychological study of a revolutionary turbulent individual, at odds with himself and the social and religious institutions of his time, is one of considerably greater force and depth. Like Bolt, Osborne incorporates many of his central historical character's recorded sayings into the dialogue of his play, but, unlike Bolt, he is able to match them with urgent vital language of his own. This often results in impressive flights of rhetorical virtuosity or sequences of balanced arguments. Like Shaffer, he uses striking physical images, flamboyant spectacle and theatrical posture to create telling moments, but, where Shaffer indulges in these for their own sake, Osborne uses them with purpose, to reflect
inner meaning or make a broad public point.

*Luther* is not the only time we find Osborne going to documentary sources for material and inspiration. His television play, *A Subject of Scandal and Concern* (1960) is based on events in the life of George Holyoake who in 1842 was the last person in England to be imprisoned for blasphemy. Another play, *A Patriot for Me* (1964) is about Colonel Redl, the homosexual Austrian intelligence officer, who was blackmailed by Russian agents into betraying secrets to them in the period before the First World War. *Luther* has been selected for consideration because of its greater weight and impact, and because its concern with religious motivation links it with the other two plays dealt with in this chapter. It has also been chosen because it illustrates the kind of history play, discussed in my introduction, which explores the relationship between the exceptional individual and his social political environment.

*Luther* at first was severely censored by the Lord Chamberlain's Office—eighteen passages, including whole speeches, were blue-pencilled. Osborne furiously refused to concede the excisions required, in an indignant letter to George Devine:

> I cannot agree to any of the cuts demanded, under any circumstances. Nor will I agree to any possible substitutions. I don't write plays to have them rewritten by someone else. I intend to make a clear unequivocal stand on this because (a) I think it is high time that someone did so, and (b)... the suggested cuts or alternatives would result in such damage to the psychological structure, meaning and depth of the play that the result would be a travesty.

The Lord Chamberlain's Office finally gave in, and apart from a few small verbal changes, *Luther* was presented intact.

The play was first produced by the English Stage Company on the 26th June 1961 at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, and it was published in the same year. Though the language of the play did create a stir, *Luther* made an immediate impact; it was referred to by theatre critics
as an "excellent play which combined strength and clarity,"\(^{104}\) "the most solid guarantee yet given of Mr John Osborne's dramatic stamina."\(^{105}\) It transferred to London to the Royal Court Theatre in July 1961, and then to the Phoenix Theatre in September for a fairly long spell, and continued to run in London till the end of March 1962. Opening also in Paris in 1961 at the Théâtre Des Nations, the play was described by Kenneth Tynan as "the most eloquent piece of dramatic writing to have dignified our theatre since Look Back in Anger." "It was beguiling to observe," he notes, "that the lines by which a presumably sophisticated audience was most shocked were nearly all direct translations from the hero's own works."\(^{106}\)

This production was also a considerable popular success in New York, opening on the 25th September 1963 at St James Theatre, where it ran for 211 performances. It was also greeted with acclaim by New York theatre critics, who hailed it as a "brilliantly acted historical drama,"\(^{107}\) "a work of power and integrity,"\(^{108}\) "an overpowering massive play of ringing authority - bold, insolent and challenging."\(^{109}\) A drama that has "size and distinction," it "makes the theater ten feet tall."\(^{110}\)

The play offered a splendid opportunity to Albert Finney, who gave a magnetic performance in the title rôle and made his name as an actor of international repute. "He makes it clear by this one performance," states a New York theatre critic "that he is an actor of extraordinary skill and endless potentialities."\(^{111}\) Says another; "Finney gives a brilliant performance as the volatile, earth-shaking Luther. He and John Moffatt, as a suave Prince of the Church, bring off a battle of ideas and wits triumphantly."\(^{112}\) The drama centres around the personality of Luther and the inner and outer forces he had to contend with. It was an extremely exacting rôle to play, both physically and emotionally. Walter Kerr writes in his review:

We meet a spiritual epileptic. As a playwright Osborne indicates him, and as an actor Albert Finney articulates him, this
Luther is a vessel possessed of more fire than it can contain, more self-hatred, more guilt, more surging fury that is also in some way love. The image is not shirked on stage at the St James. Out of the sweetest plain-song, in a small forest of cowls, comes a strangled sound that can neither be released nor repressed. This swallowed howl rises as Mr Finney breaks towards us, severing the neat little pattern of religious life around him, until he has been hurled to the floor in a tongue-locked seizure, gasping to let the genius out of him ... We are confronted with an intestinal and/or spiritual force that is at once volcanic and unreleased, irresistible and unrealized. Something beyond his own intelligence drives, shatters, and then pacifies this hero, Mr Finney elaborates it for us with magnetizing energy.¹¹³

John Osborne was drawn to the subject of Luther, not for its historical but for its religious interest:

> It is difficult to pin-point just how Luther started. It's been brewing over a long period. I wanted to write a play about religious experience and various other things, and this happened to be the vehicle for it. Historical plays are usually anathema to me, but this isn't costume drama. I hope that it won't make any difference if you don't know anything about Luther himself, and I suspect that most people don't. In fact the historical character is almost incidental. The method is Shakespeare's or almost anyone else's you can think of.¹¹⁴

It is ironical and oddly amusing that one of the plays I have chosen to consider as a history play is written by someone who detests history plays! But, though historical plays may be anathema to Osborne, he shows a serious regard for historical truth in treating history. In spite of what he says, historical knowledge obviously does make a difference to him, since he is careful to base his play on the facts, and make frequent use of Luther's actual sayings. Thus the historical character cannot be regarded as purely incidental. He is also quick to defend his play on historical grounds. John Russell Taylor recalls that "Osborne and his supporters rapidly pointed out to the tender-minded, who quailed at the dramatist's obsession..."
with constipation and defecation," that the playwright had used Luther’s own words whenever possible. This historical line of defence is one which Shakespeare would have felt no inward or outward pressure to adopt, and again reflects the much greater demand in our time for documentary evidence to support a view. Luther qualifies as a history play according to my definition, because it reveals a serious concern for historical truth, and is adequately based in history, as I intend to show.

Critics have tended to downgrade the play for isolating Luther from his social historical context, and for not presenting the specific issues of the period. Alan Carter’s comment is that "Luther's real problem - the nature of faith - is hardly even discussed, and surely the Reformation was essentially an intellectual movement." Laurence Kitchin asserts that "the historical Luther became a public figure and Osborne's Luther doesn't." The tone of the play, "emotional and satirical by turns, is inadequate to what's going on - which is the collapse of the medieval world order, no less." Simon Trussler calls the play "an exercise in scatology," and writes of its "failure to realize Martin's society - and more particularly the causes and effects of his impact upon it." It is interesting to find all these critics attacking Osborne with regard to history. They probably were unsettled by Osborne's violent neurotic Luther, his controversial psychological portrait of this great religious leader. This concentration on the personal interior aspect of the man is Osborne's particular focus of interest, and in considering the play as a history, what is ultimately of importance is that Osborne has a historical basis for his view.

Many critics fault the play as a history by comparing it with Brecht's plays. Ronald Hayman goes so far as to say that,

Compared with Brecht's Galileo or John Whiting's The Devils, for instance, Osborne's Luther isn't a history play at all. In their different ways, Brecht and Whiting both devote a great deal of time and energy and love to
recreating a solid historical actuality, and whether the details are accurate or not, the stage is effectively steeped in period atmosphere and filled with a wide-angle view of people doing business, practising their religion, eating, suffering, doubting, fighting. Osborne misses out completely on the social element. And whereas Galileo and Grandier are both presented as products of their period - rebels against it, certainly, but still conditioned by it in the way they think and feel - Osborne starts with what he sees as a neurosis and then perfunctorily sketches in a period background ... Luther emerges as a rebel against everything including history.120

But Osborne did not intend his play to be a history play and certainly not along Brechtian lines. What if he does extricate Luther from his social background, causing him to emerge as a "rebel against everything including history"? Osborne says that so does Shakespeare! The lack of period atmosphere and social detail which, as Hayman admits, may not be authentic anyway, for the playwright cannot be expected to have a specialist's knowledge of the period, does not necessarily reduce a play as a history, since this added 'historical' colour would not make it more genuinely historical. As has been argued in the introduction, history is both the observer and the observed. One cannot escape the limitations of one's own temperament and environment. Each generation necessarily rewrites history in its own image. In adopting an overtly modern psychological view, Osborne is following in the tradition of Shaw and twentieth-century historians who tend openly to interpret historical characters and events in terms of themselves and their own experience and environment. They believe that this process will in any case take form, and it is far better that it should be done consciously.

Critics have, understandably, considered the play in terms of Brecht; it was fashionable to make the comparison with Brecht, and Osborne was aware of Brechtian stage techniques and undoubtedly influenced by them. There are features in the play that are Brechtian, such as the episodic structure, and the use of the medieval Knight figure to
announce the time and place of the action. But these are superficial outward resemblances, and Osborne's play is not essentially Brechtian in spirit or concern, nor is there any reason why it should be. Osborne's focus is much narrower, more personal and concentrated than Brecht's. Unlike Brecht, who works for a degree of critical detachment in his spectators, Osborne is interested primarily in engaging the feelings of his audience:

I want to make people feel, to give them lessons in feeling. They can think afterwards.\textsuperscript{121}

As for the nature of the Luther he presents, the use of Luther's Christian name throughout suggests an emphasis on the personal inward dimension of the man and his experience, rather than the social public figure. Osborne registers a mental and spiritual climate of doubt, uncertainty and disarray; it is this which takes precedence over the broader social canvas of historical religious issues and developments. Finally it needs to be re-emphasised that, though Brecht's approach to history has been revolutionary and cannot be ignored, it does not mean that all other treatments of history in the twentieth century are unacceptable or fall short.

The other criticism launched against Osborne's treatment of history, is with regard to his use of Erik H. Erikson's \textit{Young Man Luther} (London: Faber and Faber, 1959) as his principal source. Simon Trussler claims that Osborne "fails to assimilate all his available source material - mainly garnered from the psycho-analytical study \textit{Young Man Luther}, by Erik H. Erikson two years before Luther was first staged."\textsuperscript{122} Ronald Hayman states that Osborne "seems to have done hardly any reading" outside this one book.\textsuperscript{123} But this is not the case, since he also appears to have drawn substantially upon another source which has not been noticed by critics - Roland Bainton's concise but authoritative biography, \textit{Here I Stand: The Life of Martin Luther} (New York: Mentor, 1950). I shall be turning to this later, to illustrate Osborne's use of Bainton. But even if Erikson's study had been Osborne's only source, this
would not matter, since it is well documented and based on a sound reading of collated evidence and the most important modern books on the subject.

E Gordon Rupp, a well-known modern Luther scholar, indicates this in an extremely lucid article, "John Osborne and the Historical Luther," in The Expository Times, volume 73 (February 1962) and published under the title, "Luther and Mr Osborne," in The Cambridge Quarterly, volume 1 (1965-1966). The articles are the substance of a lecture delivered at the University of Aberdeen on the 31st October 1961, after the play had aroused much public discussion as to the validity of its view of Luther. Rupp cites Erikson's Young Man Luther as the book of the play. "The themes of the play, all its main points, and almost all the key quotations are from the book of Erikson." He says that,

Erikson brings to this highly intelligent study not only his clinical experience but a wide reading which includes all the more notable modern books of Luther study. His work is a psycho-analytic commentary on Martin Luther's development. It is not the first such study, but is perhaps the most effective. Thirty years ago Preserved Smith (who also lost a chair for being an angry young Professor) tried to interpret Luther in terms of an Oedipus complex. Martin Werner has tried to show that a conflict with his father, Hans Luther, lay at the root of his rebellion against the Church. Then in 1941 a Danish medical man and a Catholic, Paul J Reiter, wrote two volumes on Luther's World, his character and psychosis. His picture of Luther as a tipsy manic-depressive is not very convincing, but his second volume puts together almost all the available evidence about Luther's physical and spiritual troubles and is very useful. On this and the valuable collection of historical documents by Otto Scheel, Erikson has drawn, so that this study of first-hand evidence has been to Mr Osborne's advantage.124

Rupp points out the vastness of the material on Luther - the great spate of Luther's own writings, and the immense international field of Luther study, which has caused attention to be turned to "histories of the histories of Luther" - and admits that "one of the refreshing and
valuable points of Osborne's play is that he does pry Luther loose, so to speak, from his orthodox framework - from theology and piety as Protestants have conceived it, and gives us a kind of 'existential' Luther who is really disturbingly and excitingly alive." However, he maintains that "we have very little really reliable evidence about Luther's home and childhood," and "there simply is not enough evidence to say whether Hans Luther was a kind of Michael Kierkegaard, exerting deep pathological influence on his son." He ultimately sees the play as a "highly complicated psychological interpretation read into or out of chancy little bits of historical evidence which have haphazardly survived."125

But a dramatist is not interested in evidence. What the historian sees as 'evidence' the dramatist might see rather more as 'material'. As has been emphasised in the introduction, it is the historian's, not the playwright's, function to weigh the evidence. The playwright is not obliged to look for evidence and, as long as he keeps within certain bounds, his imagination must be allowed full play over his material. And of course Osborne did not set out to write a history play. He probably would not accept it as one, but I am calling it a history play because it fulfils the conditions required by my definition. It reveals a serious regard for historical truth, which, as has been stressed in the introduction, is more than history or the available evidence. We cannot be sure we have the whole truth, no matter how ingeniously the evidence is piled up. Only a fraction of the whole can ever be known, and in the attempt to recover it the certain, the probable and the speculative will co-exist. Historical truth is thus dis- engaged from any single person's view of it, but each has his own light to bring. The historian's torch is systematic controlled inquiry and scholarship. The dramatist's is imaginative sympathy and insight, which must be freely exercised over his material, as long as no violence is done to history, and there are reasonable grounds for his portrayal. Luther meets my requirements
for a history play because there is a more than adequate historical basis for the vision presented.

Rupp finds "the story that Luther had some kind of fit during Mass," "more than suspect. In the form in which it takes place in the play it was never put forward in Luther's lifetime." He asserts that the story comes from four Catholic writers who were Luther's enemies. An examination of these sources shows that "they are four separate accounts but each is repeating the other, adding a few corroborative details intended to give an air of artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative." Erikson accepts the story, he says, because "it fits with his pre­fabricated psychological pattern - the interpretation of Luther's troubles as a persistent identity crisis." Yet, though Rupp insists that "this is rather important since it is in fact the only evidence that Luther ever had any attacks of this kind," there is no trace of epilepsy before or after; he goes on to say that Luther's "first psychosomatic attacks show themselves in his forties, 1527-8, and are connected with his heart, dizziness, palpitations, and fainting fits. That as a monk he had desperate moments and occasional anxiety states is beyond doubt." Here we see the historian's necessary care over accuracy of a precise narrow type, which a playwright would not be concerned with. Osborne is not a historian, and he naturally pounced on the wonderful dramatic possibilities of the story of the fit during Mass, which vividly epitomises the kind of intense psychological ordeals Luther was so prone to.

Rupp's criticism of the play as history is on rather narrow, selective and inconsistent lines:

Now it is a valid point of Erikson that 'nobody who has read Luther's private remarks can doubt that his whole being always included his bowels.' But since so much is made of this in the play, in the end to a comic and rather nauseating degree, and since it seems to me to damage the play as an historical chronicle, let it be firmly said that there is no evidence whatever that Luther had troubles like this as a monk, or indeed before the autumn of 1521... To harp on this and show it as a constant factor in Luther's career from beginning to end, is quite unhistorical and the only use it
serves is as a debunking device at those periods in the play when we might be in danger of thinking of Luther along the lines of the conventional Protestant hero.

But Rupp admits nonetheless that "Luther's illnesses are important and from 1521 onwards there is a long list of them, deafness, noises in the head, dizziness, fainting, ophthalmia, hardening of the arteries, stone, bladder trouble, angina, so that when he died perhaps of a coronary thrombosis at the age of 63 he had been for some years a really old man." 127

Osborne's emphasis on Luther's physical debilities, his projecting them as a dominant factor Luther had to contend with, and suggesting a possible correlation between his physical and spiritual condition, has a strong historical basis; it is an irrefutable fact that Luther did suffer long and acutely from such ailments, and was continually prone to states of neurotic doubt and anxiety. As another historian, Roland Bainton, states, the recurrence of Luther's severe depressions "raises for us again and again the question whether they had a physical basis and the question really cannot be answered." 128 Osborne's "harping" on this surely is in keeping with the new psychological perspective of our age, which sees the mind and body as inseparable, and stresses the indivisibility of the human personality.

Osborne allows his imagination full play over his material, but there is a sound historical core to give shape and control. Luther's conflict with his father on entering the monastery, the psychological ordeal of his first mass, his prodigious imagination, his force of rhetoric and often bitter scatological invective, his physical maladies and periods of intense religious doubt and anguish which hounded him all his life, are firmly attested facts. If Osborne includes incidents that are historically suspect — the fit in the choir, the nailing of the ninety-five theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg, the celebrated statement at the Diet of Worms: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise" — the fascination of these, even
for those who disavow them, is immense, and they have been repeated by innumerable historians to become an irresistible part of the legend around the man. For, as Erikson states, "the making of legend is as much part of the scholarly re-writing of history as it is part of the original facts used in the work of scholars. We are thus obliged to accept half-legend as half-history, provided only that a reported episode does not contradict other well-established facts; persists in having a ring of truth; and yields a meaning consistent with psychological theory."\textsuperscript{129}

Rupp is impressed when Osborne keeps "marvellously close to the details"\textsuperscript{130} of actual dialogue and incident, and dubious when he does not. But Osborne is not a historian and, though it is the duty of the historical playwright to be properly instructed regarding the facts, he is not obliged to keep narrowly within their bounds, but must be free to render the spirit of the situation as he sees it. He might bring to it a twentieth-century vision and perspective, but that is part of the historical interest and reality. History is the observer and the observed, and this holds true whether it is being approached by historian, playwright or psychologist. The subjective element makes of history something of an art, just as the objective element makes it something of a science. A certain balance has to be achieved, but neither aspect can be denied. It is necessary, as Erikson states, "to contemplate (if only as a warning to ourselves) the degree to which in the biography of a great man 'objective study' and 'historical accuracy' can be used to support any total image necessitated by the biographer's personality and professed calling." But he continues, "a man's historical image often depends on which legend temporarily overcomes all others; however, all these ways of viewing a great man's life may be needed to capture the mood of the historical event."\textsuperscript{131}

It cannot be denied that Osborne draws considerably on Erikson for his projection of a psycho-physiological dimension, but it is by no means the whole view of the human condition presented. Osborne brings these factors into
play as part of the dilemma of the man and the complexity of the human personality and experience. But he is not, like Erikson, attempting a clinical psychological case study and is not concerned to pin things down narrowly, as Katharine Worth points out:

In an essay of some years before, Osborne had played with the idea that the 'prize neurotic' need not necessarily be revealed by introspective, withdrawn behaviour: the intense productive activity of apparently normal people might be serving as an outlet for 'deep-rooted anal preoccupations.' If this were true, Luther's public activities in the second 'blaspheming' part of the play could be interpreted in terms of neurotic symptoms quite as well as his evident self-torturing in the first 'praising' part. Osborne concludes, however, that this kind of analysis reduces history to the spectacle of Napoleons and Lenins 'busily staring down the lavatory pan.' This does not suggest that he would have decided to simplify Luther's story along such lines. The psychological factors are given their place - but they are not put forward as accounting for all that Luther was. His terrible sense of insecurity can be seen as stemming from an unsatisfactory filial relationship, but it is also true, as he is made to emphasise in his sermon, that life is insecure for everybody, and that every imaginative person must feel this: it is part of the human condition.\textsuperscript{132}

Though mirrored essentially in a particular man and individual who epitomised in himself a revolution in his time, the play registers a state of spiritual crisis that reflects the climate of Luther's own age as it does ours. Erikson states that "in some periods of history man needs a new ideological orientation as surely and sorely as he must have air and food" and Luther, "a young man (by no means lovable all the time) faced the problems of human existence in the foremost terms of his era."\textsuperscript{133} It is this Luther that not surprisingly caught the imagination of John Osborne.

As I have already mentioned, apart from Erikson, Osborne also seems to have used another source which none of the other critics have noticed - Roland Bainton's
biography, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. It seems to me Osborne must have used this work of Bainton; the internal evidence is overwhelming. One of the strongest elements that points to this is that Osborne clearly drew inspiration from drawings and woodcuts of the period, like those of Dürer, and there are numerous illustrations of these in Bainton's book. In the play Osborne states in a note on decor:

> After the intense private interior of Act One, with its outer darkness and rich, personal objects, the physical effect from now on should be more intricate, general, less personal; sweeping, concerned with men in time rather than particular man in the unconscious; caricature not portraiture, like the popular woodcuts of the period, like DÜRER.

*(Luther, p. 46)*

For Act II, Scene 4, which dramatises Luther's interview with Cajetan, Osborne specifies as a backcloth "a satirical contemporary woodcut, showing for example, the Pope portrayed as an ass playing the bagpipes, or a cardinal dressed up as a court fool. Or perhaps Holbein’s cartoon of Luther with the Pope suspended from his nose." *(Luther, p. 64)* Illustrations of all these woodcuts are given in Bainton's biography, and it seems obvious that Osborne found a ready source in Bainton.

Referring to Dürer, Bainton talks of the artist's profound disquiet over the futility of all human endeavour, and gives a graphic description of Dürer's engraving, *Melancolia*:

> There sits a winged woman of high intelligence in torpid idleness amid all the tools and symbols of man's highest skills. Unused about her lie the compass of the draftsman, the scales of the chemist, the plane of the carpenter, the inkwell of the author; unused at her belt the keys of power, the purse of wealth; unused beside her the ladder of construction. The perfect sphere and the chiseled rhomboid inspire no new endeavour. Above her head the sands in the hourglass sink, and the magic square no matter how computed yields no larger sum. The bell above is ready to toll. Yet in sable gloom
she broods, because the issues of destiny strive in the celestial sphere. In the sky the rainbow arches, sign of the covenant sworn by God to Noah, never to bring again the waters upon the earth; but within the rainbow glimmers a comet, portent of impending disaster. Beside Melancolia, perched upon a millstone, sits a scribbling cherub alone active because insouciant of the forces at play. Is the point again, as with Erasmus, that wisdom lies with the simplicity of childhood, and man might better lay aside his skills until the gods have decided the issues of the day? What a parallel have we here in quite other terms to Luther's agonizing quest for the ultimate meaning of life? Osborne seems to have been influenced by Bainton's description of Dürer's Melancolia, and the parallel he goes on to draw with Luther, for this passage brings inescapably to mind a similar idea and picture in the play. Martin encounters a child, dirty, half-naked, and playing intently by himself, on the steps of the Castle Church at Wittenberg. It is the year 1517 and Martin is just about to nail up his ninety-five theses on the Castle Church door, that historic act that was to propel him into the vortex of international conflict. Martin 'puts out his hand to the child, who looks at it gravely and deliberately, then slowly, not rudely, but naturally, gets up and skips away sadly out of sight.' (Act II, Sc. 3, p. 61) Bainton also prints a reproduction of a drawing of Christ the Judge sitting upon a rainbow with a lily protruding from one ear and a sword with its point piercing the other. Beneath him on one side there are figures being lifted up to heaven, and on the opposite side there are others being dragged down to hell. Bainton comments that, "The Christ upon the rainbow with the lily and the sword was a most familiar figure in illustrated books of the period. Luther had seen pictures such as these and testified that he was utterly terror-stricken at the sight of Christ the Judge." Osborne portrays Luther as being haunted by this particular image of Christ on a rainbow judging the world. In the play, just before Martin is to
celebrate his first Mass, he falls to his knees crying out in desperation:

Oh Mary, dear Mary, all I can see of Christ is a flame and raging on a rainbow. Pray to your Son, and ask Him to still His anger for I can't raise my eyes to look at Him.

(Act I, Sc. 2, p. 30)

This strongly suggests that Osborne used Bainton, since he picks on the very drawing of Christ the Judge that Bainton chooses to illustrate the same point.

Then again, Osborne's representation of Pope Leo X relates directly to Bainton's delineation of him:

The pontiff at the moment was Leo X, of the house of Medici, as elegant and as indolent as a Persian cat. His chief pre-eminence lay in his ability to squander the resources of the Holy See on carnivals, war, gambling and the chase. The duties of his Holy Office were seldom suffered to interfere with the sport. He wore long hunting boots which impeded the kissing of his toe.

This figure springs to life in Osborne's play. He enters "with a HUNTSMAN, dogs and DOMINICANS. He is indolent, cultured, intelligent, extremely restless, and well able to assimilate the essence of anything before anyone else. While he is listening, he is able to play with a live bird with apparent distraction. Or shoot at a board with a cross-bow. Or generally fidget..." As Miltitz kneels to kiss his toe, he dismisses him impatiently, "I should forget it. I've got my boots on. Well? get on with it. We're missing the good weather." (Act II, Sc. 5, p. 75)

The episodes in the play involving the Pope and Tetzel, the notorious seller of indulgences, come over with great effect as caricature with their broad but incisive lines of depiction. For these public figures, Osborne creates the effect of a caught attitude or impression, very much in the style of satirical cartoons of the period of which Bainton provides numerous examples. It is intriguing to find Osborne making telling dramatic use of the source material supplied by this whole tradition of popular criticism in the form of polemical woodcuts, drawings, engravings and
There are other indications that Osborne drew inspiration from Bainton's account. In the early half of the play, Luther's conversations with Staupitz, Vicar General of the Augustinian Order, show the older man coping with the young man's importunate questionings, and gently reproving him for his obsession with various mortifications. "All these trials and temptations you go through," he admonishes Martin, "they're meat and drink to you." (Act II, Sc. 2, p. 53) There is a distinct parallel in Bainton who gives accounts of such theological discussions, with Luther beside himself when Staupitz did not understand his torment:

Was then, Luther the only one in the world who had been so plagued? Had Staupitz himself never experienced such trials? 'No,' said he, 'but I think they are your meat and drink.' Evidently he suspected Luther of thriving on his disturbances. The only word of reassurance he could give was a reminder that the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins. But Luther was too obsessed with the picture of Christ the avenger to be consoled with the thought of Christ the redeemer.

Osborne similarly uses Staupitz to strike the note of reason and sanity in the play. His balance and moderation serve as a foil to Martin's inordinacy and obsession.

Luther's final dialogue with Staupitz in the play also seems to take tone and direction from Bainton, who relates how Luther, grown famous and rather imperious in later years (having angered Henry VIII, infuriated Duke George and estranged Erasmus) was concerned that perhaps he had also hurt Dr Staupitz who had not written for some time. Bainton quotes Staupitz's reply to Luther's letter of inquiry:

My love for you is unchanged, passing the love of women ... but you seem to me to condemn many external things which do not affect justification. Why is the cowl a stench in your nostrils when many in it have lived holy lives? There is nothing without abuse. My dear friend, I beseech you to remember the weak. Do not denounce points of indifference which can be held in sincerity, though in matters of faith.
be never silent. We owe much to you, Martin. You have taken us from the pigsty to the pasture of life. If only you and I could talk for an hour and open the secrets of our hearts! I hope you will have good fruit at Wittenberg. My prayers are with you.

Shortly after he had received this letter news reached Luther that Dr Staupitz was dead.  

Staupitz's fatherly attachment to Luther, his firm kind advice, and the note of nostalgia, sadness and gentle reproach struck in this letter, characterises his rôle in the final scene of the play. Osborne resurrects Staupitz (in historical reality by now dead many years) and has him return in 1530 to the monastery which is now Martin's household. He is the same benevolent spirit, but grown tired and old. In a final exchange with Luther, part of the sentiment and substance of that letter quoted by Bainton, finds expression. As Martin begins to dogmatise in his usual strident fashion, Staupitz gets up to retire:

**Staupitz:** I'd better get off to bed.

**Martin:** They're trying to turn me into a fixed star, Father, but I'm a shifting planet. You're leaving me.

**Staupitz:** I'm not leaving you, Martin. I love you. I love you as much as any man has ever loved most women. But we're not two protected monks chattering under a pear tree in a garden any longer. The world's changed... You've taken Christ away from the low mumblings and soft voices and jewelled gowns and the tiaras and put Him back where He belongs. In each man's soul. We owe so much to you. All I beg of you is not to be too violent. In spite of everything you've said and shown us, there were men, some men who did live holy lives here once. Don't - don't believe you, only you are right.

(Act III, Sc. 3, p. 100)

Though open and receptive to the need for reform, Staupitz is a moderating force, the voice of balance in the play.
Further, Bainton asserts that,

The Scriptures assumed for Luther an overwhelming importance, not primarily as a source book for antipapal polemic, but as the one ground of certainty. He had rejected the authority of popes and councils, and could not make a beginning from within as did the prophets of the inward word. The core of his quarrel with them was that in moments of despondency he could find nothing within but utter blackness. He was completely lost unless he could find something without on which to lay hold. And this he found in the Scriptures. He approached them uncritically, from our point of view, but not with credulity. Nothing so amazed him as the faith of the participants: that Mary credited the annunciation of the angel Gabriel; that Joseph gave credence to the dream which allays his misgivings; that the shepherds believed the opening of the heavens and the angels' song; that the Wise Men were ready to go to Bethlehem at the word of the prophet.140

To provide an example of Luther's feeling of marvel and wonder at such faith, Bainton quotes his portrayal of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham which is conveyed with much power and poignancy in one of his sermons.

It is precisely this sermon which Osborne uses in the play: Luther preaches it after the massacre of the peasants, in a desperate attempt to reconcile his faith with the catastrophic suffering. He expresses awe and wonder at Abraham's obedience:

And he spoke softly to the boy, and raised the knife over his little naked body, the boy struggling not to flinch or blink his eyes. Never, save in Christ, was there such obedience as in that moment, and, if God had blinked, the boy would have died then, but the Angel intervened, and the boy was released, and Abraham took him up in his arms again. In the teeth of life we seem to die, but God says no - in the teeth of death we live. If He butchers us, He makes us live.

(Act III, Sc. 2, p. 92)

Osborne has rearranged and adapted the words a little to blend them with his own modern prose style, but kept
close to the simple vigour of the original as quoted in Bainton:

The father raised his knife. The boy bared his throat. If God had slept an instant, the lad would have been dead. I could not have watched. I am not able in my thoughts to follow. The lad was as a sheep for the slaughter. Never in history was there such obedience, save only in Christ. But God was watching, and all the angels. The father raised his knife; the boy did not wince. The angel cried, 'Abraham, Abraham!' See how divine majesty is at hand in the hour of death. We say, 'In the midst of life we die.' God answers, 'Nay in the midst of death we live.'

Bainton emphasises the fact that Luther was assailed by doubt all his life. "This man who so undergirded others with faith had for himself a perpetual battle for faith." The content of his "depressions was always the same, the loss of faith that God is good and that he is good to me. After the frightful Anfechtung of 1527 Luther wrote, 'For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation and blasphemy of God.' His agony in the later years was all the more intense because he was a physician of souls, and if the medicine which he had prescribed for himself and for them was actually poison, how frightful was his responsibility." Luther held that the way of man with God cannot be tranquil:

David must have been plagued by a very fearful devil. He could not have had such profound insights if he had not experienced great assaults.

Bainton comments that "Luther verged on saying that an excessive emotional sensibility is a mode of revelation. Those who are predisposed to fall into despondency as well as rise into ecstasy may be able to view reality from an angle different from that of ordinary folk ... Luther felt that his depressions were necessary. At the same time they were dreadful and by all means and in every way to be
avoided and overcome. His whole life was a struggle against them, a fight for faith."\textsuperscript{142} This is the angle that Osborne too takes in the play, for, as Katharine Worth points out,

The dramatic emphasis rests on the question of faith, historically the central issue, as in a different aspect, it is for our time. Osborne does no violence to history in dwelling on the struggle for, rather than the achievement of faith. The historical Luther, who said that despair had once reduced him to wishing that he had never been created a man, provides the playwright with reasonable grounds for dramatising him as, above all, a man tormented by doubt. This aspect of Luther is well described in Cajetan's phrase: 'a man struggling for certainty, struggling insanely like a man in a fit, an animal trapped to the bone with doubt.'\textsuperscript{143}

Thus we find in Osborne and Bainton a similar approach and emphasis in numerous points. Very strong internal evidence suggests that Osborne drew substantially on Bainton as a historical source. I have gone into the parallels at some length because Osborne's use of Bainton has not been observed before.

Many names could be given to Luther - great religious leader, rebel, scholar, preacher, iconoclast, publicist, poet. In his play, \textit{Luther}, John Osborne draws attention to all these facets of the man, but, perhaps more than anything, focuses on an aspect many people might be inclined to resist - as victim or patient. Erikson, in his book, \textit{Young Man Luther}, quotes a statement made by Søren Kierkegaard in his diary, \textit{The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard} (1938) - "Luther is a patient of exceeding import for Christendom" - and comments that Kierkegaard saw in Luther "a religious attitude (patiency) exemplified in an archetypal and immensely influential way."\textsuperscript{144} The full text of what Kierkegaard says is that Luther "confuses what it means to be the patient with what it means to be the doctor. He is an extremely important patient for Christianity, but he is not the doctor; he has the patient's passion for expressing and describing his suffer-
ing, and what he feels the need of as an alleviation. But he has not got the doctor's breadth of view." What Kierkegaard seems to mean by this is that Luther expressed in himself the symptoms or consequences of what was wrong in the Church. His was the subjective response to the problem, but, not possessing the doctor's objective overall view, he was not in a position to prescribe the cure.

Osborne might have been influenced by Kierkegaard's statement quoted in Erikson, or even been familiar with the original passage itself, because he did read Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and Sartre in the 1940's, when he says "existentialism was the macro-biotic food of the day." At any rate in his play Luther embodies this subjective, 'patient' side of life. The intellectual side of Luther's impact and achievement is not dealt with so much as the felt experience, the crisis of identity and belief.

In the play, Luther is presented equivocally, which is fitting, considering the continuing controversy over this complex towering figure, enigmatic to admirers and detractors alike. He can be seen as the hyper-conscious individual, the artist, the prophet, the Christ-like figure who takes on the tensions and torments of his age because he feels more acutely than others - "Am I the only one to see all this and suffer?" But his agony can also be taken as symptomatic of a personal neurosis of some sort. The sense of being singled out and hounded is prevalent:

Somewhere in the body of a child, Satan foresaw in me what I'm suffering now. That's why he prepares open pits for me, and all kinds of tricks to bring me down, so that I keep wondering if I'm the only man living who's baited and surrounded by dreams, and afraid to move.

(Act I, Sc. 2, p. 30)

His condition can thus be seen as an aberration from the norm, or indicative of "an overstimulated conscience," as it is dismissed by fellow monks. Luther is also accused of megalomania by Cajetan, the papal legate: "Why, some deluded creature might even come to you as leader of their
revolution, but you don't want to break rules, you want to make them." (Act II, Sc. 4, p. 73) Even Staupitz, who immediately recognises a greatness of mind and spirit, discerns a definite leaning towards the theatrical: "One thing I promise you, Martin. You'll never be a spectator. You'll always take part." (Act II, Sc. 2, p. 56) Then again, Martin's predicament could reflect the inner tumult of the man of creative intensity who wrestles with experience, and sees in his own imaginative terms. The Knight, who bitterly confronts Luther at the end, regards him as out of touch with reality in his exaltation of 'the Word':

Word? What Word? Word? That word, whatever that means, is probably just another old relic or indulgence, and you know what you did to those! Why, none of it might be any more than poetry, have you thought of that, Martin. Poetry! Martin, you're a poet, there's no doubt about that in anybody's mind, you're a poet, but do you know what most men believe in, in their hearts - because they don't see in images like you do - they believe in their hearts that Christ was a man as we are, and that He was a prophet and a teacher, and they also believe in their hearts that His supper is a plain meal like their own - if they're lucky to get it - a plain meal of bread and wine! A plain meal with no garnish and no word. And you helped them to begin to believe it.

(Act III, Sc. 2, pp. 90-1)

Osborne presents all these alternate perspectives of the man and leaves the questions open-ended.

The play opens on a compelling note, with Martin being received into the Augustinian Order of the Eremites at Erfurt. In the original production the "setting is dominated by an agonized Christ hanging from a crucifix bent as if by the burden of humanity's crime." An "atmosphere of reverence that amounts to awe" is created by prayer, music, ritual, as Martin proceeds to take his vows. In the presence of the assembled convent, Martin is undressed to represent divestment of the former man, and rerobed in the habit and hood of the order, to signify
investment of the new man in Christ. Martin kneels, and swears the oath of obedience. Then he prostrates himself, while the prior prays over him. A newly lighted taper is put in his hands, and he is led up the altar steps to be welcomed by the monks. Indistinguishable in their midst, he marches with them slowly in procession and is lost to sight. (Act I, Sc. 1, pp. 13-4) The powerful symbolism in the ceremony of Martin's inception into the Augustinian Order conveys the idea of the absorption of the individual into the communal.

Martin's experience in the monastery is presented as a tremendous struggle for self-denial and subjugation. He is overscrupulous in his attempts to conform to the rigours and dictates of a highly disciplined life. Yet an exaggerated sense of being bound down and closed in gets the better of him, in spite of all his efforts at self-abnegation. This again is communicated in striking visual and physical terms, in the form of a violent fit which suddenly grips Martin during Mass. When at first the office commences he is lost to sight in the ranks of the monks. Presently there is a quiet moaning, just distinguishable amongst the voices. It becomes louder and wilder, the cries growing more frantic and there is some confusion in Martin's section of the choir. The singing goes on with only a few heads turned. Finally Martin appears staggering between the stalls. "Outstretched hands fail to restrain him, and he is visible to all, muscles rigid, breath suspended, then jerking uncontrollably as he is seized in a raging fit. Two brothers go to him, but Martin wriggles with such ferocity, that they can scarcely hold him down. He tries to speak, the effort is frantic, and eventually, is able to roar out a word at a time, "Not! Me! I am not!" He finally collapses, and is dragged off. "The office continues as if nothing had taken place." (Act I, Sc. 1, pp. 22-3) The idea of the suppression of the individual by the institutional is put across vividly. The all-unifying
world of the 'participation mystique' is set against the self-aware and self-imposing. The loss of uniqueness or identity takes on magnified proportions for Martin, who experiences it as abysmal self-loss.

The trammels of his environment - home, monastery, Church - all contribute to the sense of being fractured, dispersed and separated from himself. Hans Luther is an oppressive father-figure, affronting the dignity of the child, undermining his sense of himself and presiding as a dominant factor in Martin's adult psyche. Osborne registers the complexity of the bond between father and son who have a deep emotional investment in each other and yet are bound to disappoint each other continually. Hans, who feels no less threatened than his son, is continually asserting himself to cover up his own sense of inadequacy and insecurity. There is great strain and aggression in the relationship, as both play for the upper hand and manoeuvre to keep the advantage, shrink from direct contact, yet strive to make connection. This inescapably brings to mind a Pinter-type situation. Osborne dramatises in the relationship between Hans and Martin the archetypal father and son conflict. Martin has to fight free from the identity of being Han's son to the creativity of his own manhood. At the very close of the play, we hear Martin telling his own son, Hans:

You know, my father had a son, and he'd to learn a hard lesson, which is a human being is a helpless little animal, but he is not created by his father, but by God. It's hard to accept you're anyone's son, and you're not the father of yourself... You should have seen me at Worms. I was almost like you that day, as if I'd learned to play again, to play, to play out in the world, like a naked child. "I have come to set a man against his father" I said, and they listened to me. Just like a child.

(Act III, Sc. 3, p. 102)

Martin here recalls his experience at Worms as a rare moment of contact with his spontaneous untouched self.

This self is symbolised in the poetic image of the
child which dominates the play. Osborne probably derived inspiration for this from both Erikson and Bainton. Erikson talks of man as being bound in the loves and rages of childhood - the child is in the midst - and refers explicitly to the idea of "childhood lost" in connection with Luther. He states that,

Psycho-analysis has tended to subordinate the later stages of life to those of childhood. It has lifted to the rank of a cosmology the undeniable fact that man's adulthood contains a persistent childishness: that vistas of the future always reflect the mirages of a missed past, that apparent progression can harbour partial regression and firm accomplishment hidden childish fulfilment.

Bainton relates how Luther was amazed by the simple trust and faith of his four year old daughter, Anastasia. She was prattling away of Christ, angels and heaven, and Luther said, "My dear child, if only we could hold fast to this faith." "Why, papa," she replied, "don't you believe it?" Luther commented:

Christ has made the children our teachers. I am chagrined that although I am ever so much a doctor, I still have to go to the same school with Hans and Magdalena, for who among men can understand the full meaning of this word of God, "Our Father who art in heaven?" ... And while I am affirming this faith, my Father suffers me to be thrown into prison, drowned or beheaded. Then faith falters and in weakness I cry, 'Who knows whether it is true?'

Bainton also refers more than once to Erasmus's view that wisdom lies perhaps with the simplicity of childhood. "His patron saint was ever the penitent thief because he was saved with so little theology." "That simple philosophy of Christ which he so vaunted did not allay ultimate doubts, and that very program of scholarship which he trusted to redeem the world was not immune to wistful scoffing. Why inflict upon oneself pallor, invalidism, sore eyes, and premature age in the making of books when perchance wisdom lies with babes?"

In the play, the child is used as a powerful leitmotif
to suggest both a child's simple trust and wisdom, and Martin's sense of wrested childhood, of having lost something that at root he is, underneath the demands and distortions of his environment. Wordsworth's lines come to mind:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy! Shades of the prison-house begin to close Upon the growing boy...

In the case of Martin, it is as if he was deprived of that blissful world of unconscious childhood, and awoke prematurely to the tragic realities of life. He is haunted by the image of the lost body of a child.

Martin's troubled interior state is forcefully conveyed in Act II, Scene 1, partly by the expressionistic setting of the scene, with its huge knife suspended above, and the torso of a naked man hanging over its cutting edge. Below this is "an enormous round cone, like the inside of a vast barrel, surrounded by darkness" which suggests the deep corridors of the subconscious. "From the upstage entrance, seemingly far, far away, a dark figure appears against the blinding light inside, as it grows brighter. The figure approaches slowly along the floor of the vast cone and stops as it reaches the downstage entrance. It is Martin, haggard and streaming with sweat." He cries out from some deep dimension of himself:

I lost the body of a child, a child's body, the eyes of a child; and at the first sound of my own childish voice. I lost the body of a child; and I was afraid, and I went back to find it. But I'm still afraid. I'm afraid, and there's an end of it! But I mean ... (shouts) ... Continually! For instance of the noise the Prior's dog makes on a still evening when he rolls over on his side and licks his teeth. I'm afraid of the darkness, and the hole in it; and I see it sometime of every day! ... The lost body of a child, hanging on a mother's tit, and close to the warm, big body of a man, and I can't find it.

(Act I, Sc. 2, p. 24)

The image of "the lost body of a child, hanging on a mother's tit and close to the warm, big body of a man" derives from Erikson, who relates how the historical Luther once said that
he did not know the Christchild any more; in characterizing the sadness of his youth, he had lost his childhood." But later he could say that "Christ was defined by two images: one of an infant lying in a manger, 'hanging on a virgin's tits'" and "one of a man sitting at his Father's right hand." Osborne thus can be seen to keep close to history even in his depiction of the kind of image that mentally could possess Luther.

Martin's tortured self-consciousness brings home the idea that man is the centre of his own experience and subject to an inescapable narcissism of outlook. Man relates with others, but only from within a consciousness of which he is centre. Society might present a picture of selves together, but essentially it is each alone in his own tragedy. This is brought out strikingly in Act I, Scene 1, when the monks are depicted at communal confession. They all prostrate themselves beneath flaming candles, and the stage directions indicate that the scene throughout should be "urgent, muted, almost whispered, confidential, secret like a prayer." The formal confession of trifles by the other monks is punctuated by Martin's wrenched outcries: "I am alone. I am alone, and against myself." "I am a worm and no man, a byword and a laughing stock. Crush out the worminess in me, stamp on me." (Act I, Sc. 1, pp. 19-20) The close physical presence of the other monks going through the motions of the office, oblivious of Martin's anguish, emphasises his essential isolation.

The fact that Martin suffers from an excessive emotional sensibility, and that his condition is felt to be partly of his own making, contributes to his dilemma. He confesses to an oppressive dream:

I was fighting a bear in a garden without flowers, leading into a desert. His claws kept making my arms bleed as I tried to open a gate which would take me out. But the gate was no gate at all. It was simply an open frame, and I could have walked through it, but I was covered in my own blood, and I saw a naked woman riding on a goat, and the
goat began to drink my blood, and I thought I should faint with the pain and I awoke in my cell, all soaking in the devil's bath.

(Act I, Sc. 2, pp. 19-20)
The nightmare conveys the experience of being incarcerated in a self-enclosed world and assaulted with feelings of overwhelming terror and guilt.

Luther's frightening sensation of being encased, closed in, dominates his personal sense of dilemma in the play. Osborne probably derives the idea from Erikson, who talks of this sensation in relation to the historical Luther's traumatic visionary experience in a thunderstorm, just before he became a monk:

Before the thunderstorm, he had rapidly been freezing into a melancholy paralysis which made it impossible for him to continue his studies and to contemplate marriage as his father urged him to do. In the thunderstorm, he had felt immense anxiety. Anxiety comes from angustus, meaning to feel hemmed in and choked up; Martin's use of circumvallatus - all walled in - to describe his experience in the thunderstorm indicates he felt a sudden constriction of his whole life space, and could see only one way out: the abandonment of all his previous life and of the earthly future it implied, for the sake of total dedication to a new life. This new life, however, was one which made an institution out of the very configuration of being walled in. Architecturally, ceremonially, and in its total world-mood, it symbolized life on this earth as a self-imposed and self-conscious prison with only one exit, and that one, to eternity.

Osborne seems to have taken up this idea and built on it. The whole play dramatizes this agonised thrust to break free. Luther is man making a bid for independent judgement, and experiencing a guilt which is very closely associated with freedom. It is the sense of being accused by some enclosing whole or order - family, Church or more radically, the psychic womb - from which the independent self seeks to break out. This guilt grows with self-consciousness, and inheres in any free as opposed to 'being
part of action. Its gravamen is not merely non-conformity but independence, and it is inseparable from loneliness—"Am I the only one to see all this and suffer?"

(Act I, Sc. 2, p. 30)

Tormented by thoughts of judgement and hell, Luther finally breaks through to some sort of release, in the sudden revelation he receives of the profound implications of St Paul's affirmation that "The just shall live by faith."

Throughout the play, Luther's sensation of being hemmed in by spiritual fear and tension is significantly connected with his physical struggles with constipation—'I am blocked up like an old crypt.' (Act I, Sc. 2, p. 29) Accordingly, Luther's great moment of spiritual inspiration, when he is freed from the plague of this deep besetting fear in the subconscious, occurs at a time of relief from acute physical and emotional stress caused by this chronic disability:

It came to me while I was in my tower, what they call the monk's sweathouse, the jakes, the john or whatever you're pleased to call it. I was struggling with the text I've given you "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith." And seated there, my head down, on that privy just as when I was a little boy, I couldn't reach down to my breath for the sickness in my bowels, as I seemed to sense beneath me a large rat, a heavy, wet, plague rat, slashing at my privates with its death teeth. I thought of the righteousness of God, and wished his gospel had never been put to paper for men to read; who demanded my love and made it impossible to return it. And I sat in my heap of pain until the words emerged and opened out. "The just shall live by faith." My pain vanished, my bowels flushed and I could get up. I could see the life I'd lost.

(Act II, Sc. 3, p. 63)

As Kenneth Tynan points out, in dramatising "the celebrated 'revelation in the tower,'" Osborne takes his cue from Erikson who asserts that "a revelation is always associated with a repudiation, a cleansing."

Luther is driven to this spiritual discovery by his pervasive anguish at the unbearable destiny of being human and hence totally vulnerable and susceptible. In making the moment of spiritual release coincide with the physical,
Osborne brings home the indivisibility of the human personality. Mind, body and spirit are inextricably connected. Throughout the play, there is a great emphasis on the physical as well as the spiritual. The reek and weight of the body are continually registered. Martin often appears pouring with sweat, as if suffused with the sense of his own mortality. He feels let down and betrayed by his body:

If my flesh would leak and dissolve, and I could live as bone, if I were forged bone, plucked bone, warm hair and a bony heart, if I were all bone, I could brandish myself without terror, without any terror at all — I could be indestructible.

My bones fail. My bones fail, my bones are shattered and fall away, my bones fail and all that's left of me is a scraped marrow and a dying jelly.

(Act I, Sc. 1, p. 21)

His father tells him, "You can't ever, however you try, you can't ever get away from your body because that's what you live in, and it's all you've got to die in, and you can't get away from the body of your father and your mother!" (Act I, Sc. 2, p. 41) It is as if Martin is terrified of his own animality, and this relates to his emerging conviction that all men fall inescapably short of God's law, because God requires assent from the heart and concupiscent man cannot give obedience with total spontaneity. Body and spirit, will and appetite cannot be separated. This dilemma is epitomised in one of the monk's confessions:

I did ask for a bath, pretending to myself that it was necessary for my health, but as I lowered my body into the tub, it came to me that it was inordinate desire and that it was my soul that was soiled.

(Act I, Sc. 1, p. 21)

After Act I, the emphasis shifts radically, from the concentration on an intense private interior landscape to the focusing on the external world, "men in time rather than particular man in the unconscious." Osborne is concerned to achieve the effect of "caricature not
portraiture." (Décor Note, p. 46) The fast-moving episodic scenes provide sweeping cinematic flashes, a telescopic view of the personalities involved. The accent is on the public figure rather than the private individual. John Tetzel makes a flamboyant picture in himself. Osborne, in his stage directions, indicates that the actor requires to be "splendidly equipped to be an ecclesiastical huckster, with alive silver hair, the powerfully calculating voice, range and technique of a trained orator, the terrible riveting charm of a dedicated professional able to wrinkle coppers out of the pockets of the poor and desperate." (Act I, Sc. 1, p. 47) This is necessary, since the actor has to hold the stage in a scene that is pure monologue. It is one of the most arresting scenes of the play.

Tetzel's arrival is a spectacle in itself. There is the sound of loud music and bells, as a procession approaches the centre of the market-place at Juterbög which is covered in the banners of welcoming trade guilds. "At the head of the slow-moving procession, with its lighted tapers and to the accompaniment of singing, prayers and the smoke of incense, is carried the Pontiff's bull of grace on a cushion and cloth of gold. Behind this the arms of the Pope and the Medici. After this, carrying a large red wooden cross, comes the focus of the procession, John Tetzel, Dominican, inquisitor and most famed and successful indulgence vendor of his day." (Act II, Sc. 1, p. 47) With the rhetorical flourish and histrionic flair of the born salesman, he comes into his own as lord of the market-place:

... won't you for as little as one quarter of a florin, my friend, buy yourself one of these letters, so that in the hour of death, the gate through which sinners enter the world of torment shall be closed against you, and the gate leading to the joy of paradise be flung open for you? And, remember this, these letters aren't just for the living but for the dead too. There can't be one amongst you who hasn't at least one dear one who has departed - and to who knows what? Why, these letters are for them too. It isn't even necessary to repent. So don't hold back, come forward, think of your dear ones, think of yourselves! For twelve
groat, or whatever it is we think you can afford, you can rescue your father from agony and yourself from certain disaster. And if you only have the coat on your back to call your own, then strip it off, strip it off now so that you too can obtain grace. For remember: As soon as your money rattles in the box and the cash bell rings, the soul flies out of purgatory and sings!

(Act II, Sc. 1, p. 50)

The speech ends with Tetzel flinging a large coin into the open strong box, where it rattles furiously. There follows the sound of coins clattering like rain into a great coffer as the light fades. This scene came over remarkably well in the first production. Tetzel was played by Peter Bull who turned this speech "into a juicy theatrical turn," says one reviewer.154 "Corpulent under his mitre and hawking indulgences to a rattle of tambourine and drums," he speaks "with a jolly, sleazy mission-week intimacy that is lovely caricature," comments another.155 Peter Bull "provoked a sudden round of applause after his big scene as Tetzel," reports yet another.156 Gaudy spectacle is used with purpose here to convey the prostitution of the Church - the corruption of the truth for cheap commercial ends.

Pope Leo X is presented as another florid figure in plumed hat and hunting costume, accompanied by his Afghan hounds. Shown receiving Martin's final appeal to the Church, he reads the young monk's plea for judgement and correction of his views as mere attitudinising, and lets loose the full weight of his secular and ecclesiastical powers. His attitude is cold and unequivocal: "There's a wild pig in our vineyard, and it must be hunted down and shot." (Act II, Sc. 5, p. 78) But it is Thomas De Vio, known as Cajetan, urbane, subtle, the practised diplomat, who puts forward the strongest arguments for the Church. He is "Cardinal of San Sisto, General of the Dominican Order, as well as it's most distinguished theologian, papal legate, Rome's highest representative in Germany." His "shrewd, broad outlook" is meant to contrast with "the
Cajetan's arguments for the Church cannot be easily dismissed. In an interview, he tries to convince Martin:

**Cajetan:** All right, Martin, I will argue with you if you want me to, or, at least, I'll put something to you, because there is something more than your safety or your life involved, something bigger than you and I talking together in this room at this time. Oh, it's fine for someone like you to criticise and start tearing down Christendom, but tell me this, just tell me this: what will you build in its place?

**Martin:** A withered arm is best amputated, an infected place is best scoured out, and so you pray for healthy tissue and something sturdy and clean that was crumbling and full of filth.

**Cajetan:** Can't you see? My son, you'll destroy the perfect unity of the world.

**Martin:** Someone always prefers what's withered and infected. But it should be cauterized as honestly as one knows how.

**Cajetan:** And how honest is that?

(Act II, Sc. 4, p. 72)

Cajetan makes an eloquent plea for the authority and unity of the Church: "Don't you see what could happen out of all this? Men could be cast out and left to themselves for ever, helpless and frightened!" "We live in thick darkness, and it grows thicker. How will men find God if they are left to themselves each man abandoned and only known to himself?" He predicts a time of great social upheaval and disquiet when there will be "frontiers, frontiers of all kinds - between men - and there'll be no end to them." (Act II, Sc. 4, p. 74) His anticipation of what is involved in the kicking away of traditional supports prefigures the state of things to come - schism in the Church and schism in the world with no all-embracing structure to provide anchorage and direction.

As Katharine Worth has pointed out, the trial scene in Shaw's *Saint Joan* "must surely have been in Osborne's mind when he constructed the argument in *Luther* between Luther
and Cajetan, the representatives of papal authority. Like Cauchon, Cajetan argues with moderation, civilised wit and understanding. He warns Luther of the far-reaching consequences of his 'heresy,' consequences which Luther himself, like Saint Joan in her play, has not envisaged. Although "Osborne is more concerned to stimulate feeling than thinking" and in his "emotional involvement with his characters" shows a "distinctly un-Shavian trend, he has at the same time some of that capacity for detachment, the ability to distribute argumentconvincingly, on which the dramatic life of rhetorical drama depends." Then again, as I have already said, Osborne follows in the tradition of Shaw in presenting an overtly modern view of history, interpreting character and event in terms of himself and his own age. Thus, again and again, we find Shaw exerting a dominant influence on the modern English historical playwright.

At the Diet of Worms, Martin finally takes an irrevocable stand in irresistible expression of self-truth, identity and freedom:

Unless I am shown by the testimony of the Scriptures - for I don't believe in popes or councils - unless I am refuted by Scripture and my conscience is captured by God's own word, I cannot and will not recant, since to act against one's conscience is neither safe nor honest. Here I stand; God help me; I can do no more. Amen.

(Act III, Sc. 1, p. 85)

The stress with Osborne, as it is with Bolt, is on the self as the point of reference. Thus Martin admits later, with reference to this historic moment: "I listened for God's voice but all I could hear was my own." (Act III, Sc. 3, p. 101) This harmonises with the fact that he made the subjective element overt and central in the question of faith, taking religion away from the monopoly of Church or institution. As Staupitz tells Martin, "You've taken Christ away from the low mumblings and soft voices and jewelled gowns and the tiaras and put Him back where He belongs. In each man's soul." (Act III, Sc. 3, p. 100)
From Martin's heroic moment at Worms, there is a sudden ironic shift in time and place to the uprising of the peasants in 1525 and its ruthless suppression, which Martin supported. The massacre is represented symbolically. The scene opens with marching peasants singing a valiant hymn, the sound of cannon and cries of mutilated men. There is "smoke, a shattered banner bearing the cross and wooden shoe of the Bundschuh, emblem of the Peasants' Movement." In the centre of the stage is a "small handcart, and beside it lies the bloody bulk of a peasant's corpse." (Act III, Sc. 2, p. 86) This dismaying shift of mood and perspective brings a shocked realisation of the far-reaching social consequences of Luther's action. This was vividly conveyed in the original production:

In Tony Richardson's staging, this transition from Luther's boldest moment into one in which he seems to be abandoning the very peasants he has roused to rebellious wrath is managed with impressive effect. Mr Finney stands there in the foreground against a rich tapestry, proudly holding aloft one of the books he has refused to disown as a glowing light irradiates him. Then a light comes up in the background making the tapestry transparent and showing the peasants with their tattered banners marching to the fray. It is as if hero and anti-hero were revealed in a flash to be one, like Luther's strength and weakness.

A Knight steps out from among the carnage and fiercely upbraids Martin, expressing the bitter disillusionment of many of his followers after the Peasant War. The débâcle that has ensued after he lets loose the floodwaters of change threatens to sweep everything away including what Martin upholds himself. He stands accused from all sides:

Martin: The princes blame me, you blame me and the peasants blame me -

Knight: You put the water in the wine didn't you? The Knight places his hand deliberately, ritually, on the body of the peasant lying in the cart and smears Martin with the blood from it. "You're all ready now," he says, "You even look like a butcher - " Martin cries out in despair, "God is the butcher - " (Act III, Sc. 3, pp. 88-9)
Martin attempts to reconcile his faith with the reality of the broken lifeless bodies round about him. From his pulpit he preaches a sermon with great effort, almost collapsing in the process. He movingly relates the story of Abraham's obedience in the face of the order to sacrifice Isaac, another ethically dubious situation. He concludes the tale:

Never, save in Christ, was there such obedience as in that moment, and, if God had blinked, the boy would have died then, but the Angel intervened, and the boy was released, and Abraham took him up in his arms again. In the teeth of life we seem to die, but God says no - in the teeth of death we live. If He butchers us, He makes us live.

(Act III, Sc. 2, p. 92)

He can only offer blind faith, a leap in the dark, in the face of the inexplicable horror of the violence and suffering.

In the play, doubt and self-questioning are ultimately affirmed as the means to truth, since they allow for openness and flexibility. Staupitz, in his final reappearance at the monastery, now Luther's home, speaks for this view. He has always been open and receptive to Martin's beliefs, but he refuses to express unqualified support for his position. "We're not two protected monks chattering under a pear tree in a garden any longer," he tells Martin, "the world's changed... We owe so much to you. All I beg of you is not to be too violent. In spite of everything you've said and shown us, there were men, some men who did live holy lives here once. Don't - don't believe you, only you are right." (Act III, Sc. 3, p. 100) Staupitz does not deny Luther's essential contribution to a vital reformulation of faith, but his warning is against Luther's setting himself up as an infallible authority, against the dangers of intransigence.

Staupitz in a way puts forward the Christian's only viable position in a new world perspective. God is groped for through a nightmare of uncertainty. His world deprived of firm lineaments, man walks uneasily with a
sense of shifting footholds. The contemporary wisdom now lies in openness, toleration, flexibility. The play ends quietly. Martin is shown speaking to his sleeping child: "A little while, and you shall see me. Christ said that, my son. I hope that'll be the way of it again. I hope so. Let's just hope so, eh?" With the child still asleep in his arms, he walks off slowly. (Act III, Sc. 3, p. 102) We are left on that pregnant note of mixed hope and doubt.

Thus, like Bolt and Shaffer, Osborne is drawn to a historical subject for its religious interest, but treats it with much greater depth and force of imagination. He is experimental in a vital individual way, combining his gift for rhetoric with vivid aural, visual and physical elements to convey both an inner state of tension and unrest, and an outer state of public conflict and debate. Music was effectively employed in the original production to help define the mood, becoming monastic or primitive by turns in the first half of the play, and public and strident in the second. The historical Luther's great hymn, A Mighty Fortress, was movingly introduced at key points, at first whispered to a lone drum beat, then sung out triumphantly.

The bold use of dialogue, ritual, expressionistic settings, striking visual and physical effects, all point to a more poetic and dynamic form of theatre. Running through the play is a chain of subconscious images drawn from memories, dreams, nightmares such as the lost body of a child, the monstrous rat assailant, the goat drinking blood, the people reduced to their clothes all "neatly pressed and folded on the ground." This is in keeping with the play's emphasis on a condition of spiritual lostness, fracture and uncertainty. These images are rationally placed to fit in with a picture of a personal and collective neurosis.

From Luther, with its roots in psycho-analysis, Edward Bond's Early Morning seems an almost inevitable next step. It is a powerful surrealistic drama where rationality in artistic form is denied, and dreams intrude fantastically into waking life to depict a world of political madness.
Notes to Chapter VI

1. All quotations from the text are cited from the edition in the following collection: *Three Plays* (London: Heinemann, 1963).


3. All quotations from the text are cited from the following edition: *The Royal Hunt of the Sun: A Play Concerning the Conquest of Peru* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964).

4. All quotations from the text are cited from the following edition: *Luther: A Play* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961).


8. The Times, 2/7/60.


20. Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv.
24. Ibid., p. 32.
25. Ibid., p. 338.
26. Ibid., p. 177.
27. Ibid., p. 268.
30. B A Young, "A Man for All Seasons," The Times, 20/10/76.
32. See Chambers, Thomas More, p. 347.
40. Ibid., p. 312.
41. Preface, A Man for All Seasons, p. 96.
42. Robert Bolt, pp. 44-5.
43. Ibid., pp. 80-1.
44. Rogers, The Correspondence, p. 516.
47. Robert Bolt, p. 44.
49. Rogers, The Correspondence, p. 547.

52. *The Times*, 2/7/60.


55. Tynan *Right and Left*, pp. 28-30.


57. Ibid., p. 100.


60. I have not been able to trace the source of this in my reading.


63. Herbert Kretzmer, "Mr Shaffer finds Glory with the Incas," *The Daily Express*, 8/7/64.

64. *The Times*, 8/7/64.


70. "To see the Soul of a Man ...," *The New York Times*, 24/10/65.


85. C Marowitz, Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic, p. 89.
95. "Glittering Epic of Spanish Conquest," The Times, 8/7/64.
96. C Marowitz, Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic, p. 89.
100. The Conquest of the Incas, pp. 79-80.
102. The Times, 8/7/64.
105. "Best Guarantee Yet of Mr Osborne's Stamina," The Times, 28/7/61.
123. Contemporary Playwrights: John Osborne, p. 51.
125. Ibid., pp. 30, 42.
126. Ibid., pp. 32-3.
127. Ibid., p. 34.
129. Young Man Luther (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 34.
131. Erikson, Young Man Luther, pp. 33-4.
133. Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 20.
134. Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther, p. 100.
135. Ibid., pp. 22-3.
136. Ibid., p. 56.
137. See, for example, Here I Stand, pp. 160, 240-1.
138. Ibid., p. 44.
139. Ibid., p. 198.
140. Ibid., p. 288.
141. Ibid., pp. 289-90.
142. Ibid., pp. 281-3.
144. Young Man Luther, p. 7.


148. Young Man Luther, pp. 247, 95, 16.


150. Ibid., p. 98.

151. Young Man Luther, p. 115.

152. Ibid., p. 37.

153. Tynan Right and Left, p. 77.


...
CHAPTER VII
Edward Bond - Early Morning
In this chapter Edward Bond is singled out for consideration, as he is the most compelling playwright to have appeared on the contemporary English theatrical scene. Following my practice so far in this thesis, I intend to concentrate on one major play, and have selected Early Morning for close individual attention because it is an extraordinary achievement. Revolutionary in approach and intention, it opens up new possibilities for the treatment of history. Yet, as there is so much involved in relating a complex theatrical work like Early Morning to ideas about history, and since Edward Bond emerged as a new major playwright in the 1960's, it seems appropriate to spend a little time placing him in context. Therefore, before coming to Early Morning in particular, I shall be briefly considering some of his other plays in order to establish, in a more cursory way, his approach to drama and history.

Bond's whole attitude to drama seems to lend itself to the treatment of history. It springs from his belief in a theatre of change, related to politics. His preoccupation is with large-scale events and issues of crucial significance to human society. Referring to contemporary dramatists and the need for a new theatre in keeping with the present day, he says:

The bourgeois theatre set most of its scenes in small domestic rooms, with an occasional picnic or a visit to the law courts ... But we need to set our scenes in public places, where history is formed, classes clash and whole societies move. Otherwise we're not writing about the events that most affect us and shape our future.

What is required is a theatre that can analyse and explain our condition by showing the connection between things. "Chekov's plays," he comments, "have no beginning and no ending, all they have is a middle. But we have to do that highly subversive thing: tell a story with a beginning,
a middle and an end." Telling such a story, describing history, needs a new sort of acting. It requires "broad unfidgety acting that moves from image to image, each image graphically analysing the story. When the audience's attention has been won in this way it's possible to do very small, subtle things. This combination of large and small, far and near, is a visual language of politics."¹

Characteristic of Bond's style is this technique of focusing on reality through images which comment and analyse, and of presenting both the general and the particular, the broad view and the detailed close-up, to show that they are inextricably connected. His genius is for a poetic theatre where language, staging, dramatic tempo and brilliantly realised visual images are skilfully balanced. Ideas are transformed into potent metaphors, and a serious political and social concern into theatrical action which is electrifying on both an emotional and intellectual plane, for an audience is brought up short against a vision of the mind and character of whole societies. The modern predicament is seen as an extension or development of these, for Bond is primarily concerned with the plight of modern man and the future of our society. His plays, Bond has stated, "are about the quest for freedom of one man."² But he is interested in the individual in relation to his society, because he does not see man as existing separate from the society of which he is a part. Thus the individual's plight is always shown in the political and social context which has given rise to it.

Bond is able to involve an audience strongly so that it feels from within the human experience dramatised, and identifies with the protagonist's sense of entrapment and struggle to break free from the conflicts and ironies of his condition. Yet the audience's involvement is balanced intricately with an objectivity and critical detachment gained from techniques of presentation which allow an audience the space and room to become aware of the deep wrongs in society, and to recognise the urgent need for
change. Like Shaw, Bond is greatly concerned to jolt an audience awake to the pressing nature of the problems caused by adverse social arrangements, and to stir it to action. Men are shown to have no real political and economic control of their lives, and his plays demonstrate the destructive and dehumanising effect of unjust repressive social structures on all facets of human behaviour and experience. Bond seems to think and feel in political terms, and the fact that he relates everything to politics springs partly from his own personal conditioning. He "grew up in a political situation where everything was seen in terms of politics ... You were always involved in questions of necessity." Politics was "the way one experienced growing up." 3

Bond's art is his response to the world around him. His work reveals the urgent need to express the violent surge of the times, and the search for a vital and symbolic vocabulary. The destructive impulses unleashed in the war, the increasing fascism of a depressed Europe, and the disruptive shock of revolutionary political situations, impelled artists to answer social violence with a violence internalised in technique and imagery. In his response to the horrors of the times, Picasso said that painting is an "instrument of war" to be "waged against brutality and darkness." 4 Bond is motivated by a similar moral passion and urgency. Oppression must be made apparent. "You must tread on its toes and make it declare itself," he says. 5 His plays at first caused an uproar, because of the violent elements in them, but it is being increasingly recognised that a deep moral concern lies behind this preoccupation with violence. Bond states:

I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about manners. Violence shapes and obsesses our society, and if we do not stop being violent we have no future. People who do not want writers to write about violence want to stop them writing about us and our time. It would be immoral not to write about violence. 6
Bond sees violence as the dominant problem of our age. "Violence," he says, "has always been a human problem; but now it's become a technical and scientific problem. This is the important thing. People could always be cruel to each other; but now there exists the possibility of a total cruelty. Because of our technical advance, we are confronted with something which really does demand an answer." We can find modern historians expressing the same view. David Thomson, editor of the twelfth volume of the *New Cambridge Modern History* entitles the period it covers, 1898-1945, 'The Era of Violence,' and states in his introduction:

To label it thus is not to minimise the important rôle of violence in all earlier periods of history, nor to neglect the persistence of men and peoples in this half-century in seeking safeguards against the use of violence in human affairs. It is merely to emphasise that the capacity of modern nations and governments to generate power, to accumulate resources of power in more mighty agglomerations than ever before, has in these years far exceeded their ability to harness such power for creative and constructive ends alone. Violence may be defined as the abuse of power: and abuse of power can be defined only in relation to its proper use for promoting prosperity, welfare, security, freedom and justice. The capacity of science, technology and mechanisation to produce material wealth, the ability of administration and organisation to produce greater welfare and social justice, result also in the enhanced power of modern societies to destroy one another and in a greater facility for modern dictators to establish inhuman despotism.

It is the potential capacity of modern societies to subdue and destroy each other, and even to totally annihilate the human race, that gives rise to the impassioned nature of Bond's response and the scope of his plays. The subjects he deals with are "full scale." They are about the future of our society, the survival of the human species. Bond seems to have the artist's capacity for prophetic vision,
for, as one critic points out, "Since he began writing, 'technical advance' has been transformed in most minds from an election-winning slogan to a contributory cause of world crisis, and 'growth' is increasingly recognised as a polite euphemism for unchecked material greed, and wastage of precious resources." 10

But what gives Bond's plays their peculiar cutting edge is his ability to combine an epic vision with a minuteness of observation, so that, large and all-embracing as the issues loom, the personal and domestic is never lost, and the relevance of these issues for the audience is brought home in their application and consequence in everyday life. The audience is held riveted because it is allowed no emotional safety-valve. What is projected is immediately related to the sphere of their own personal lives. The scene in Saved (1965) which raised such a storm, where a baby is stoned to death, is so shocking partly because of the ordinary familiar context in which it is placed: a group of youths in a park on a Sunday evening indulge in a mindless act of violence. Bond drives home metaphorically what the weight of aggression in a society can do, through man's making his environment a hostile and unnatural one. Bond refers all troubles back to a social and economic basis. In Bingo (1973) Shakespeare's strained relations with his wife and daughter are inextricably bound up with the non-human values of a cruel acquisitive society. And again John Clare's madness in The Fool (1975) owes much to the bitter class conflict and oppression of his time. Bond feels that he must deal with problems "always more and more from a social point of view. The burdens of age and introspection which seem so overwhelming when you're twenty are really aspects of social problems. Our most private experiences are intermingled with our social life - and in the end an individual can only resolve his own conflicts by helping to solve those of society." 11
For Bond, therefore, art has an important social function. The "job of creative writing is to give rational direction to the changes that are occurring and to help provoke those changes." He uses theatre, he says, as "a way of testing reality," "a way of judging society and helping to change it."\(^{12}\) Katharine Worth has shown how Bond is "very close in some ways to the moralist playwrights in the Shavian tradition, to Osborne and even to Shaw himself." She points out that for both Bond and Shaw "unjust social arrangements are a root cause of the evils we suffer from." They both use prefaces and pamphlets to "drive home prophetic warnings" and continually draw attention to the social optimism of their plays.\(^{13}\) I would like to extend the comparison by indicating other ways in which Bond and Shaw are closely linked. Of all the playwrights considered in this thesis, these two stand out in their active political concern. Both see politics and economics as the basis of all social and individual life, and their stance is not that of a detached critic and observer, but of a passionate reformer and participant. Their plays present a moral analysis of contemporary society, and what can be seen continually asserting itself is a desire to jolt audiences awake to the evils they may be helping to perpetuate as unquestioning members of a system. Both playwrights work from a whole vision of life, but their ideas of history and evolution are markedly different. Bond is, essentially, a materialist in his view of the development of man and society. He rejects the notion of God or a creative consciousness behind the scheme of things. Shaw is implacably anti-materialist and conceives of an aspiring Life Force at the heart of being, striving towards self-development and fulfilment through its creatures. Then again, Shaw is a Victorian in origin and thus his idea of history demands strong heroic figures. His plays reveal an admiration for supermen, exceptional individuals whom he believes stand at the forefront of the evolutionary process and prefigure the superhumanity of the future.
Thus Saint Joan is presented as a forerunner of Nationalism and Protestantism. Though rejected by her own society, which can only see in the limited terms of its own age, she points the way of historical progress. Bond, on the other hand, a product of the twentieth century, with bitter memories of the human and social disasters caused by such soulless ironhand dictators as Hitler and Stalin, is highly suspicious of supermen. He sees too much authority and power in the hands of a single individual as all too frequently leading to an inhuman despotism. Victoria in Early Morning is presented as a superwoman indeed, but a terrible figure presiding over an uncultured savage world.

In treating historical subjects, both playwrights bring to bear a deep insight and wide reading. A close examination of their plays reveals their familiarity with historical records. But in Bond we observe a great leap of the imagination, and his fidelity to history is often obscured by the extraordinary nature of his treatment. Then again, Shaw and Bond are both masters of humour, but a humour motivated by deeply serious moral concerns. Their plays blend the serious and the jocular, and they can be found often bringing a situation to the verge of farce. Bond's comedy, however, is much more violent. Shaw tones down the humour in Saint Joan. It is in a much softer gentler vein than the brutal relentless drive of the humour in Early Morning which, even where it leads into slapstick, provides a biting comment on the world portrayed. Bond's theatre, as a whole, is much more violent and is centred in action rather than in words. As Katharine Worth states, the line "from Shaw through Osborne to Bond could almost be taken as the characteristic movement towards a more violent, more poetic theatre which has been developing during the period."14

The achievement of Bond certainly marks a definite move away from a theatre of discussion or analysis. With Bond the play is the analysis. It is the sub-text rather than the text that is dramatised, the interpretation of the
story rather than the story itself. Explanations are replaced by incidents fraught with implications, and his plays present us with a new and enigmatic system of poetic metaphor. Yet Bond's images are startling because they have their origin in the real world. There is a dualism in his work between a highly realistic style and a highly charged abstraction. For example, his first play to be produced, The Pope's Wedding (1962), begins with an absolutely realistic situation. Before you are quite conscious of it you are in a darker, less rational world, and the play leaves you at the end with a near abstract image of loneliness and despair. Bond works through images so that one finds continually in his plays a poetic dimension taking form, and meaning is registered at a deep imaginative level. Bond's plays negotiate a particularly difficult area between the political and the spiritual. They evoke both interior and exterior landscapes, and demonstrate, in compelling theatrical terms, his interpretation of the modern condition.

It is not surprising to find Bond turning to history so often, because he sees the present as bound up with the past: "Our age, like every age, needs to reinterpret the past as part of learning to understand itself, so that we can know what we are and what we should do." Again, he has said that "reaction likes to keep its hand on the past because it throws too much light on the present." His interest in history, though broad and searching, relates essentially to the probing of modern questions. The themes and subjects of his history plays have direct implications for our time. The nineteenth century, focused in both Early Morning (1969) and The Fool (1975), is an era Bond seems particularly interested in, for he sees it as the source for many of the tensions and aggressions of a violent modern society. The Fool has for its background the radical overtaking of England's rural world by an emerging commercial, industrial culture, and the destruction done to its art and traditions is embodied in the predicament of rural poet John Clare.
driven mad and institutionalised. For Bond art is the expression of moral sanity and robbing a people of this renders a society stagnant and inhuman. Bond is not interested in historical accuracy in a narrow way. The play is written in a Suffolk dialect, though Clare was a Northamptonshire poet. Three Irishmen are brought into a scene with Clare, not because of any known confrontation, but because the play is about the pauperisation and displacement of peasantry and the Irish suffered most acutely in this respect. The play analyses the effect of the Industrial Revolution on agricultural labouring classes. Typically, we find Bond going across boundaries of time and space, by integrating the story of John Clare, who was born in 1793 in Northamptonshire, and witnessed during his lifetime numerous injustices precipitated by early nineteenth-century Enclosure Acts, with the nineteenth-century Littleport food and enclosure riots in Cambridgeshire, which resulted in the hanging of several rioters at Ely and the deportation of numerous others. Despite the surface manipulation of facts and events, the play is a history play, since it is based on genuine historical experience. The Industrial Revolution brought about one of the most radical and violent changes in English culture, for until as late as 1850 most Englishmen still lived rural lives. In dealing with these changes Bond is concerned to explore the severe tensions and divisions created by the Industrial Revolution which set the origin for our own times. He is not interested in the story of Clare for its own sake - "I'm not asking for justice for Clare or anything like that. I'm only interested in it in that it's a paradigm for our own age, in the way it reflects our own problems." 

A similar concern or motivation lies behind his play, Bingo (1973), which dramatises the last days of Shakespeare. Bond states, "I wrote Bingo because I think the contradictions in Shakespeare's life are similar to the contradictions in us. He was a 'corrupt seer' and we are a
'barbarous civilization.' In Bingo we find Bond mixing legend and fact but, paradoxically, when Bond is being the most disconcerting, he can be found going to the known facts, such as they are. Shakespeare is portrayed as having betrayed his art, from the contradiction that emerges between his writings, and his actions when his own financial interests are at stake. Bond bases this conception on the surviving material evidence, meagre though it is.

Shakespeare's complicity in the Welcombe enclosures, his involvement with fellow landowners who were intent on enclosing Welcombe, is suggested by an agreement drawn up between him and William Replingham, to safeguard himself against any pecuniary loss that might result from the venture. That Shakespeare was petitioned by the town's citizens to aid them in the fight against the enclosing of Welcombe is indicated in an entry recorded in the diary of Thomas Greene, clerk of the Town Council. It is not known if Shakespeare took any action with regard to this appeal.

Bond sees Shakespeare as acting, when it came to his own business transactions, quite contrary to the moral priorities he asserts in plays like King Lear. Bond comments in a conversation before a production of Bingo in 1976: "Of course there's a lot of curfuffle about 'you have no evidence to prove this' - but that is my whole point: if he had behaved as he should have done, as Lear told him he should have done, you would have known." What is interesting to note is the demand for evidence to verify a point of view, on the part of the modern public, and we find Bond, in turn, taking pains to make it known that his vision is backed up by a responsible investigation of the facts. When the play was first staged at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter, in November 1973, this surviving contract of Shakespeare with William Replingham was quoted in the programme, as one critic reviewing the production notes.

In his introduction to the published text Bond indicates where he has made changes to the facts - altered dates, telescoped characters and events - for the sake of
dramatic concentration or convenience. He goes on to say: "I mention all this to protect the play from petty criticism. It is based on the material historical facts so far as they're known, and on psychological truth so far as I know it. The consequences that follow in the play follow from the facts, they're not polemical inventions." He even cites his source for the supportive documentary evidence.\(^\text{23}\)

Once again we see the modern historical playwrights' concern to show that their accounts are not arbitrary, but based on available documentary evidence, which is an indication of the much greater demand in our time for historical accuracy. The need to substantiate one's views in order to convince, is strongly felt, and can be seen in Bond's often prefixing his plays with long prefaces or introductions, which discuss the ideas and concerns behind them. **Bingo** is a history play not only because it has a reasonable basis in historical fact, but also because the play speaks as a public parable rather than just a personal drama. Shakespeare, as England's national monument, is representative of the society of his time and of ours. Through him Bond focuses a modern dilemma—the contradiction of progress and affluence in an age of cruelty and poverty.

Bond's plays, **Lear** (1971) and **The Woman** (1978), are illustrations of the kind of history play discussed in my introductory chapter, which deals with historical issues rather than actual historical events and figures. In **Lear** and **The Woman**, we find Bond using history or historical myth as a starting point to explore ideas about the nature of power politics in human society. He also brings a considerable background of reading on the ancient world to bear in his writing of **The Woman**, and with regard to **Lear** he has said, "Before starting **Lear** I read a certain amount of biology, quite a bit of history and politics ... I don't know whether it did any good, but somehow one wanted the confidence of its support before one made any general
The play has its beginnings in history, as Bond himself indicates by prefacing the play with a few lines of bare information regarding Lear, recorded by Holinshed and Geoffrey of Monmouth. It also embraces other historical dimensions. Bond's writing of Lear was influenced by the colossal impact of Shakespeare's King Lear on the western mind. He sees Shakespeare's Lear as "a sort of archetypal culture figure which lays down certain standards for civilised perception - the way civilized people ought to think and feel." He felt that this should be criticised. Shakespeare's Lear is part of the "dead hand of the past" which should be removed. We are also told by John Hall, who interviewed Bond before the opening production of his play, that "Lear himself is only an archetype" and Bond's character "is inspired equally by figures like Tolstoy, Leonardo da Vinci and Bertrand Russell - people who are important to the human race in so far as they feel it incumbent upon themselves to live out the problems of the species." The play thus is a history play because, though not based on historical facts and events, it deals with historical images and ideas which have had an immense influence upon human society.

Bond is iconoclastic in his approach to history, in the sense that he is aware how images can dominate a whole society, and how easily the past is mythologised. History creates myth and myth in its turn can create history. Historical ages, events, figures, become simplified and idealised. Their effective rôle becomes symbolic and they can shape and influence other events with far-reaching implications. For example, the French Revolution, a rich and complicated historical fact, had an escalating reverberating impact on the whole of Europe. The image of revolution as cataclysm was created, and became an independent force in itself. As one historian puts it, it roamed up and down the public life of Europe "like a beast of prey or, for a smaller but growing number of fanatics, like an avenging angel, for the myth of the
Revolution was cherished on both sides of the barricades."  

In his history plays Bond seems concerned to explode such images, which simplify and distort reality. "The past," he says, "often works as a myth on the present. It is like a burden on our back and from time to time we have to rearrange it so we can go on with our journey. Writers ought to spend some time dealing with the great ages of the past so that we don't fall into the error of believing in a golden age when all the answers were known...."  

Bond analyses the past and its effect on the present, because it is only by exercising our intelligence in such ways, he feels, that "we can escape the mythology of the past which often lives on as the culture of the present."  

In plays like Early Morning and Lear, what comes across very powerfully is this sense of a world dominated by myth, in which whole societies are condemned to live out the grotesque fantasies they have created. Through a surrealistic treatment of history in Early Morning, Bond demolishes pious legends about the influence of law and order, morality and religion, in the nineteenth century, and lays bare the operating principles of a society that thrives on strident competitiveness and aggressive acquisition. With regard to Bingo, Bond is only too well aware of the incalculable impact Shakespeare has made on the human imagination. He felt impelled to write his own Lear, since Shakespeare's play embodies an outlook on human suffering and action that has dominated the Western mind for centuries, and Bond felt the case needed restating in viable terms for our time. In a conversation with Howard Davies before the production of Bingo at The Other Place in November 1976, Bond states with reference to Shakespeare:

What is dangerous about him is that he is such a good artist, of course ... You know, we think that two people went up to the mountain and got things written on tablets, one was Moses and the other one was Shakespeare. He's the sort of great idol of the humanist West or whatever, and it's not true. As a guide to conduct, or to attitudes to work,
he's not so good for us. I object to the idea of him being for all ages in that particular sense.29

Bingo shatters the image by portraying Shakespeare as personally compromised within a corrupt social system. The play evokes the impression of a haunted genius, deeply alive to the horrors of an inhuman society, yet unable to act on the things that concern him most. His dilemma is the dilemma of a society which survives by destroying the values it professes to uphold. The past figures for Bond primarily as a revelation for the present, and it is this concern for balance and perspective, for sharper, more critical, more searching attitudes, that lies behind his treatment of history.

Bond has described his theatre by various names. The 'rational theatre' is one that is commonly known. In his notes on acting the play, The Woman, Bond makes a distinction between the plays of Chekhov and the sort of play he writes, which he calls 'the story play' or the 'theatre of history.' Addressing presumably the actors, he says that many of Chekhov's characters are on the sidelines - "They exist between the important events of history, and so they have very little else apart from their emotional life. We must be caught up in the events of history. But we must also be in control. We must analyse these events, not merely reproduce them."30 This relates to his concept of theatre as a way of analysing, rather than representing the world. Epic theatre is the theatre of destroyed illusion and wide-awake audiences. It must narrate events and compel an audience to examine and understand them. In a lecture Bond gave on 'Theatre as Education' at Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, on the 17th March 1982, he expressed the view that some form of epic theatre is the historically correct theatre for us. Human beings are creatures of history, of culture. No longer dependent on their environment, because they can change and create it, they bear the responsibility for freedom. The function of history, he said, is to put
reason into the world. He does not believe that golden ages are all in the past. He sees in history the increasing autonomy of the individual, and as individual autonomy increases, it becomes less possible to believe in myths.

History can develop an awareness of implications. Thus it has the potential to free men. A rational theatre is a theatre which will help create a sane human being in a world that is understood. Art can help build a rational society by contributing to the creation of human consciousness. Epic theatre, which provides a particular analysis of the world, of human events, demonstrates how people make things, how problems are created as well as how you solve them. The actor's business is not to become a particular character, but to portray that character, and show that human beings can play themselves in order to examine themselves. But his theatre, Bond said, is different from Brecht's epic theatre, in the sense that the actor's stance is not standing back in an abstract detached way. Bond's actor is not remote from his rôle but, like a child at play, enters into it with rapt pleasure and concentration. The actor is expected to approach his rôle critically, and the audience too is invited to make a similar critical response to what is being presented. Bond ends his play, The Sea (1973), in the middle of a sentence; this, he said, is a way of indicating that the author does not have the last word. The audience is left to finish it in their minds or their lives.

A detailed consideration of the plays reveals how all these ideas work out in theatrical terms. So now, having established the general nature of Bond's approach to drama and to history, I shall turn to make a detailed examination of the play selected for individual attention. Early Morning, first privately performed on the 31st March, 1968 at the Royal Court Theatre, London, and published by Calder and Boyars in the same year, was one of the most controversial plays of the 1960's. Prevented from having even a second Sunday-night private club performance by the
threat of police action, *Early Morning* was the last play to be banned in its entirety by the Lord Chamberlain, before his office was stripped of its powers of theatrical censorship. Bond openly invites controversy by prefacing his play with the statement - "The events of this play are true." And yet we are introduced to a Victorian England where Queen Victoria has two sons, Arthur and George, who are Siamese twins; Prince Albert continually conspires to overthrow his wife; Florence Nightingale is Victoria's lover; and Gladstone and Disraeli connive at each other's destruction and their own advancement like political hoodlums. Since the play so obviously distorts external historical facts, it might seem astonishing that it was seriously accused of slandering respected characters of history. The conducting of a ludicrous trial on a charge of cannibalism, the seemingly endless sequence of bizarre intrigues, the mass murder of nearly every character in the play, and their subsequent resurrection in a heaven where people devour each other interminably without apparent consequence, are integral parts of the play's action. Yet despite all this fantasy, the play was taken seriously by the Lord Chamberlain's Office, so seriously that it was banned. W A Darlington of *The Daily Telegraph* states that the shocks Bond administers in this play "are nothing like so violent as before and moved the Court audience in a much milder way; but they drove the Censor up the wall. He considered that Mr Bond had offered 'gross insults' to highly respected characters of recent history - Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Gladstone, Disraeli, Florence Nightingale - and, as that was the kind of thing his office had been empowered to stop, he stopped it."31 Peter Lewis in *The Daily Mail* asserts that for the Lord Chamberlain "to ban it as the offensive representation of historical and royal persons is solemn to the point of absurdity."32 Other newspaper reports give no fuller idea of the official reasons for the play being banned, and Richard Findlater in his book, *Banned!* (1967), a review of British theatrical censorship,
provides a very sketchy account of the event. I therefore wrote to the Lord Chamberlain's Office to obtain the full reasons for the banning of the play. I received a courteous reply, saying that a further letter would be sent when the writer had been able to ascertain what information they had available. Six weeks later I received another letter, notifying me that they could not give the reason why this play was not licensed for public production. It seems strange that there should be such secrecy over the matter; and it leaves us free to surmise that they saw the play as subversive, and even as posing some kind of threat to the establishment. However, though we may consider that they over-reacted, it is a tribute to their understanding if they consciously or unconsciously recognised that the play was making a very serious attack on the nineteenth century.

Ever since its first reception, the play has excited both high praise and virtual dismissal. When it was first produced, Irving Wardle of the London Times regretted that "the Royal Court's just and necessary fight for theatrical free speech should be conducted on behalf of a piece as muddled and untalented as this." On the opposite side Ronald Bryden declared vehemently that it was "a serious and passionately moral play" and that a country which forbade its performance was "unfree to an extent we should not countenance a day longer." Those unhappy about the play fasten on its oddity and quirkiness, its obscurity and inconsistency, its apparent lack of organisation or formal development, its repetitiously long and needlessly complicated plot. It has been described as a "demonstration of total anarchy." There is "no organisation, no formal development, no characterisation, no sense of artistic probability...." One critic finds it notable merely for being "bizarre and repulsive." But even among the plays' detractors, there is the admission that Bond has "something sane, moral and deeply felt to say in the play."
Those who commend it assert a serious moral purpose and powerful imaginative vision. It has been described as a "gargantuan Swiftian metaphor of universal consumption." Another critic likens "this horrific, funny and upsetting world in which 'angry gleeful ghosts' chase each other for their next meal" to "a world of Blake's crossed with Lewis Carroll's, a child's view of a baffling terrifying grown-up life." Yet another sees the social culture of our age "personified in Queen Victoria, the archetype of monarchy and repression." "We see, like in a fun-house mirror, the slaughter of our children to preserve a national image, the rebellion created by oppression, and the corruption of those who try to work within the system."42

There is no doubt that *Early Morning* is a difficult play, and makes considerable demands on directors, actors and audiences. Directors have found it hard to give it shape and focus, in terms of the story-line, or a thesis indicated, or values underwritten. Elements of bizarre fantasy are combined with commonplace details of everyday experience, and the text requires great technical expertise from actors, who are under constant pressure to maintain the fluidity of the multiple-plot action and yet retain clarity. The play's first director William Gaskill's feeling about it finally was that "you just have to live with it. It's one of the strangest experiences in the theatre." After the 1969 production Bond conceded some understanding of those who could not follow what was happening all the time, but said, "It goes through all I know about life and it was very difficult to get all that in one play."45

*Early Morning* is a challenge to our powers of assimilation — with its proliferating events, its grotesque distortions, its strange opposites of plausibility and farce, its continually shifting emotional climate caused by its serio-comic extremes. But, despite the harlequinade of events and emotions we are taken through, the play
is not just a context-less nightmare. If we accept it on its own terms, and attend to its bizarre sardonic tone and form, we find that the play does carry conviction as an artistic unity, that a serious moral purpose and a certain consistency of temper do bind it into a single imaginative experience. We are presented with a vision both terrifying and absurd, but it is not so grotesque a distortion of reality as, for the sake of humanity, we might wish.

"The events of this play are true," states Bond categorically, challenging us to consider the question of historical truth. Is Early Morning a serious imaginative exposé of the past, or is it a purely arbitrary invention of the mind? Critics and reviewers generally have dismissed the idea (supported by the Lord Chamberlain's allegations) that the play has any direct relation to actual historical persons and events. Martin Esslin states in an article that "the characters so named had no relation with their historical models beyond the fact that they bore their name, and that, in reality, they were archetypal figures that haunt the subconscious of our society." Michael Anderson asserts that the "unhistorical comic-strip extravagance of this fantasy was never likely to endanger or even offend the institution of the monarchy." In Early Morning," Irving Wardle comments, "Bond proceeds logically from a hatred of social order to a fully anarchic action, mixing up past and present and treating historical figures with a complete indifference to recorded fact." And Benedict Nightingale of the New Statesman talks of Bond, in Bingo, consistently aiming "at an authenticity he never contemplates in that mad fantasy, Early Morning." Yet Bond claims unequivocally that "the events of this play are true." There is a tremendous paradox here. The play is a mad fantasy, and yet it is in some way true. It is the nature of this truth and its basis in history, that I want to explore. Again, in this play we find Bond
irreverent and iconoclastic in his approach to history. And yet, typically, in the areas where he strains the limits of probability, he can be found dealing with historical truth of a very serious nature. An examination of possible historical sources reveals how close Bond keeps to history in many respects, and this is what I hope to demonstrate. For, though Bond uses his own theatrical form, he is treating central features of Victorian society, and is continually bringing in facets of character, social ideas and concerns, popular sentiments and attitudes, prevalent in the nineteenth century. It is all dealt with fantastically, taken to an outlandish extreme as a form of satirical comment. But despite the remorseless distortions, the blowing-up out of all proportion, as in bizarre lampoons or caricatures, there is a pith of truth that underlies the absurdity, and it is this that is driven home with fierce intensity.

**Early Morning** confronts us with an aggressive world of furiously competing entities. Albert and Disraeli scheme at Victoria's overthrow with unabashed zeal. Gladstone, with a mob of unruly disciples at his heels, is out to make his own bid for power and advancement. Victoria, in turn, determined to preserve the supremacy of her position, is bent on Albert's and the others' destruction. Treated in the vein of highly extravagant farce, these characters romp the stage as monstrous images of authority and repression. On one level it is clear, as Ronald Bryden points out, that Bond's "Victoria is no more the historical queen than his Disraeli, a darting-eyed Balkan conspirator, is the genuine Disraeli, or his Gladstone, a bluff TUC veteran who calls everyone 'Brother,' is the real people's William."50 These are obviously not fully rounded portraits of the actual historical figures, and yet the gross distortions should not blind us to the fact that they mirror a certain truth about these historical characters and their positions, as I intend to show.
For instance, we might be tempted to reject out of hand, Bond’s setting Victoria and Albert against each other, as totally absurd in the light of her adoration of her husband, which is now legendary. And yet there were times when Queen Victoria could be absolutely unyielding even with Prince Albert, as he soon discovered. Their first clash of wills occurred just before their marriage, over the formation of his household, which Prince Albert desired to be non-political, but he found the Queen intractable. A fairly recent biographer comments, “In the midst of affection and longing the iron hand appeared within the velvet glove, as had already been the experience of Lord Melbourne. As Lady Lyttelton, when governess to the royal children, remarked, ‘a vein of iron runs through her most extraordinary character’ and Prince Albert had no choice but to submit.”

Early Morning satirises both the velvet glove and the vein of iron underneath:

Victoria: Albert, dearest, where have you been since breakfast?

Albert: (Kisses her cheek) My love.

Victoria: Thank you. You’ve cured my headache. (She makes a formal address). Our kingdom is degenerating. Our people cannot walk on our highways in peace. They cannot count their money in safety, even though our head is on it. We cannot understand most of what is called our English. Our prisons are full. Instead of fighting our enemies our armies are putting down strikers and guarding our judges. Our peace is broken. You know that the Prince of Wales poses certain constitutional questions. Because of this the anarchists and immoralists say that the monarchy must end with our death, and so they shoot at us. They are wrong. Our son will follow in our footsteps, with his brother at his side, and in time his son will follow him. Our line began at Stonehenge, and we shall not fall till Stonehenge falls... We shall not abandon this kingdom to anarchy...

(Sc. 3, p. 14)
A vein of truth informs this speech. The country was restless, and often rent by industrial and agricultural uprisings and discontent during her reign. Chartism was the expression of revolutionary democratic agitation among the masses of the population clamouring for extension of the franchise. In his book, *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria*, published in 1935, Frank Hardie states of Queen Victoria that "certainly to keep her position was one of the ruling passions of her life." She mistook the main trend of the constitutional changes of her time, and felt that any threat to the House of Lords was in fact a threat to the Monarchy itself. She could not and would not be the 'Sovereign of a Democratic Monarchy,' she asserted on more than one occasion. "She was determined," says Hardie, "to hand on to her successors, unimpaired and undiminished, all the rights and privileges which she had acquired at her accession... So she seems always to have seen herself as fighting a rearguard action in defence of the institution of monarchy." Though treated in a highly exaggerated farcical manner, this is what is reflected in the broad action of the play, which suggests that Bond might have been familiar with Hardie's account.

"Your mother's the first danger," Albert tells Arthur. "We must stop her before she causes the wrong revolution. She should have been a prison governess. She's afraid of people. She thinks they're evil, she doesn't understand their energy. She suppresses it." It is significant that Elizabeth Longford in her biography of Queen Victoria, *Victoria R.I.*, published in 1964, asserts that, like her ancestress, Elizabeth I, Victoria "thought prison the best place for public enemies." The similarity of idea or viewpoint in the play and in the biography indicates a strong possibility that Bond was familiar with Elizabeth Longford's book as well as Hardie's. In his book Hardie states that the Queen "never learnt to distinguish between the people and the mob," that she "never had any conception of the real meaning of the word
'Socialism' and apparently confused it with rioting: 'The Queen cannot sufficiently express her indignation at the monstrous riot which took place the other day in London, and which risked people's lives and was a momentary triumph of socialism and disgrace to the capital.'\(^5\) Such remarks could only arouse the satirist in Bond, and it seems highly probable that Bond read and was influenced by both these historical works. Though I have not been able to obtain any external evidence for this, there is strong internal evidence in the play, as I shall continue to show by making references to their accounts at relevant points.

In the play Prince Albert is portrayed vying for the dominance of his own position. At Arthur's scathing denunciation he protests:

No, you don't understand. I'm not doing this because I hate your mother. Hate destroys, I want to build. The people are strong. They want to be used - to build empires and railways and factories, to trade and convert and establish law and order. I know there'll be crimes, but we can punish them.

(Sc. 2, p. 11)

Again a substratum of truth can be seen to underlie this speech. According to Hardie, the Prince Consort's "main constitutional work had been that of establishing his own position" and his influence had not really begun to be felt when he died prematurely in 1861.\(^5\) (Albert is the first to be killed off in the play) And, though she claims there is nothing in it, Elizabeth Longford recalls Disraeli's gibe that "had the Prince lived he would have given England the benefits of absolute government." She also relates how "sinister in the eyes of the Conservatives was Prince Albert's appearance in the House of Commons, showing royal bias in favour of Free Trade. Such was the outcry among Protectionists that the Prince was forced to make his first his last appearance at a Parliamentary debate." Of the mid-Victorian creed of self-help, she states, that if Samuel Smiles was its publicist, Prince
Albert was its impresario. "To work is to pacify and to do both these things is to pray - this was Prince Albert's message to a world barely recovered from the fury of war and revolution. It was his own deepest religion."\(^56\)

The prevailing view of the England of that time was basically individualistic and moralistic. It rested on the notion of personal autonomy through self-help. It was a world view that derived from emergent industrialisation. The gospel of work and deference to authority was preached. The working man should be hardworking, thrifty and virtuous. Thus we find Bond embodying in his characters notable stances or attitudes that existed in history. His characters are not fleshed out to come through as the actual persons in their full humanity. They are cartoon-like figures which project salient views, attitudes, or aspects of personality, that Bond is concerned to satirise.

The nineteenth century was a new era of the big stick, and, in discussing Early Morning, Bond has talked of Arthur becoming so desperate under the pressures that everybody lives under, that "he becomes schizophrenic, he really goes mad, and he swallows the Victoria line, the law and order bit, completely, and he says, 'So we are violent, so what we must do is we must have law and more law and law enforcement and more and more pressure just to keep the animal in control....'"\(^57\) Bond's attributing an obsession with law and order to Victoria is well founded. In her letters, one often finds expressed, in reaction to public disturbances and riotings, an urgent desire for sterner, stronger measures of control:

...it seems to her a very unsatisfactory state of things that the law cannot be maintained, or the undoubted right of the Crown upheld, or the comfort of the people themselves consulted, without the danger of a collision with those who seem determined to set all law and authority at defiance.

(Letter to Mr Walpole, 1st Aug. 1886)\(^58\)

What is the use of trying to stop these outrages without strong means to enable us to punish these horrible people?
And is it right to wait till fresh outrages take place, and more innocent lives are sacrificed, before we resort to such measures?

(Letter to Mr Gathorne Hardy, 19th Dec. 1867) 59

In numerous sequences, the play can be seen reproducing, with distortions, actual views of the time, and it is probably because Bond keeps very close to history, that his play was taken so seriously by the Lord Chamberlain. Realising the fantastic element in the play, therefore, should not blind us to the fact that Bond was familiar with the style of various kinds of commentary and criticism current in the nineteenth century.

We find Bond turning to history of a different nature in the Victoria/Florence Nightingale/John Brown episodes. Florence Nightingale is portrayed as Victoria's lover, which we are bound spontaneously to reject. Then we see her later coming on disguised as John Brown. When she protests at having to wear a kilt, and complains that she "can't do the accent," Victoria implores:

Try. If they knew you were a woman there'd be a scandal, but if they believe you're a man they think I'm just a normal lonely widow.

(Sc. 12, p. 71)

We are brought back to history with a jolt, because the scandal caused by Queen Victoria's growing dependence on her Highland servant, John Brown, after her husband's death, is well known. She made him her constant personal attendant, and he became a new and formidable influence in her life. Biographers record the wild rumours this raised. Elizabeth Longford states that by the year 1867 it was widely believed that another 'King John' ruled. Rumours arose that the Queen had married, and in elegant drawing-rooms jokes were made about 'Mrs John Brown' and scurrilous cartoons and pamphlets went round. 60 Thus underlying the grotesque satirical distortion in Bond's depiction of the Victoria/Florence Nightingale/John Brown affair, is the marriage myth that continually surrounded
the Queen, because of her strong tendency towards infatuation or extreme attachments. Elizabeth Longford talks of the "Sovereign's infatuation with Lord Melbourne" of Disraeli coming to her like a "second bridegroom." Florence Nightingale, the Queen so greatly admired, that Elizabeth Longford refers to Victoria's "Florence Nightingale cult."

The Queen required intense undivided affection, yet this often led her into strong biases and intemperate opinions, which sometimes resulted in political indiscretions. More than once she let her "overwhelming emotions affect her judgement." Victoria herself admitted to Prince Albert that she had this quality. When they fell to discussing what had caused her 'unbounded admiration and affection' for Melbourne, she said that "she scarcely knew; she could only suggest it was her having 'very warm feelings' and needing to cling to someone." Bond satirises this trait of Victoria's in the play. We are confronted with her thoughtfully contemplating - "I wonder if we can make John Brown archbishop" - or wildly running after her lover, protesting:

I need you, Florrie! Fred! You'll be killed! You're all I live for. Again, again! Things seem to better, and then suddenly I lose everything. Freddie don't leave me! I'll let you do all the amputations. Don't! Don't!

(Sc. 12, p. 74)

Indeed this is not much of an exaggeration, when one compares it to similar expressions of impassioned feeling recorded in Victoria's journal, quoted by Elizabeth Longford, from which Bond obviously derived his style and tone:

All ALL my happiness gone! that happy peaceful life destroyed, that dearest kind Lord Melbourne no more my Minister!

Poor dear Albert, how cruelly are they ill-using that dearest Angel! Monsters! You Tories shall be punished. Revenge, revenge!

These passages in Victoria's journal, so clearly echoed by Bond, are also quoted by Elizabeth Longford. This suggests the possibility that Bond could have come across them in her account, rather than the actual journal.
It is evident, therefore, that a serious truth lies behind even the most bizarre distortions in the play.

Bond can be seen bringing in history of another dimension, when he weaves into the play this element of biographical gossip, which reveals something about the nature of popular criticism of the time, and the kind of social attitudes that were held. The following exchange between the Lord Chamberlain, Queen Victoria and Florence Nightingale (dressed as John Brown) is a vivid illustration:

Victoria : John keeps an eye on me. (Florence and Lord Chamberlain exchange nods. Victoria knits.) Lady Flora Hastings says you got her with child.

Chamberlain: Accidentally, Madam. It was dark. My wife and I don't converse during intimacy, apart from the odd remark about the weather. It was only afterwards that I discovered she was not my wife...

Victoria : (Knits) I won't have a divorce.

Chamberlain: O no, ma'am! We're a respectable couple. (Aside to Florence) What's up that kilt?

(Sc. 9, p. 55)

In a winning comical way Bond satirises the sanctimonious hypocrisy of the time.

A snippet of painful truth lies in the reference to Lady Flora Hastings, which directs us back to history yet again. The furore which broke out over Flora Hastings, who was falsely accused of being 'with child' when she was actually dying of a terminal cancer condition, caused the first major problem of Victoria's reign. It arose from unkind gossip in the Royal Court which Victoria herself was party to. This sort of libelling and malicious small talk was a dominant feature of Victorian life. Elizabeth Longford describes another incident which arose when "a member of the dreaded 'fast set', Sir Charles Mordaunt, brought a divorce suit against his wife, as a result of which the Prince of Wales was subpoenaed. Twelve letters from the Prince to Lady Mordaunt (who by now occupied a
lunatic asylum) were read in court. So patently innocuous were they as seriously to disappoint the garbage pickers, nevertheless a whirlwind of condemnation arose. The Lord Chancellor said 'it was as bad as a revolution as affecting (the Prince of) Wales'. In Dublin, the wife of the Lord Lieutenant spoke to Ponsonby about it with as little reticence as if it had been Gladstone's Irish Land Bill. London was black with the smoke of burnt confidential letters." In Victorian England scandal was revelled in and played a potent part in public affairs and Bond provides us with a lively sense of this in Early Morning.

There are numerous ways in which the play's dialogue reveals Bond's close adherence to historical material. Disraeli sympathising with Victoria - "Ma'am, you wear a crown of thorns" - points directly to a letter of Queen Victoria to Disraeli which expresses her deep humiliation at the government's abandonment of a particular standpoint that she favours. Her one first impulse, she writes, is "to throw everything up and lay down her thorny crown which she feels little satisfaction in retaining if the position of this country is to remain as it is now." It was an expression she had used on a previous occasion when she felt herself equally thwarted. In the play Disraeli's feint of compliance with royal wishes and flattery of Victoria is bitingly satirised - "Ah, ma'am. Having no teeth suits you." Disraeli's urbane charm and his flattery of Victoria are well known. His famous remark at the end of his life, to Matthew Arnold, is often quoted by historians and biographers:

You have heard me called a flatterer, and it is true. Everyone likes flattery and when you come to royalty, you should lay it on with a trowel.

Thus we find Bond attributing to the persons concerned attitudes and sentiments which are matters of historical record.

In the play Victoria towers over the other characters as a monstrous figure of demonic energy, which one might
find hard to reconcile with her diminutive physical size as portrayed in all contemporary documents. Yet historians and biographers all refer to her tremendous force of will and personality. Frank Hardie talks of her 'volcanic energy.' Cecil Woodham-Smith, in a more recent book, claims that it "was impossible for anyone even remotely acquainted with the Queen's character not to recognise it as formidable." Elizabeth Longford declares that "Thomas Carlyle, the biographer of strong men like Cromwell and Frederick the Great had failed to perceive the vein of iron in Victoria's character. She was like a tiny canary, he said, gazing in terror at a thunderstorm." Queen Victoria was "sometimes like a thunderstorm," Elizabeth Longford asserts, "never a canary." Gladstone is reported to have said, "The Queen alone is enough to kill anyone." And Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, retired from an interview with the Iron Queen, it has been said, "mopping his brow: 'That was a woman! one could do business with her!'." Her great age and physical endurance were in themselves a phenomenon and, writes Elizabeth Longford, it "seemed impossible that this living symbol of an era and an Empire should not be eternal." She embodied the character and spirit of her age, as Kingsley Martin, writing in 1926, comments:

If...it is the duty of the English monarch to be passive and impartial, the Queen was the least constitutional of sovereigns. That she retained the reputation of a model monarch was due to the fact that, though she strained the constitution almost to breaking point, her prejudices and her convictions were so exactly those dominant in her age that she seemed to embody its very nature within herself.

Early Morning explodes the notion of Victoria as a 'model monarch,' and any sentimental nostalgia one might be tempted to have about the nineteenth century, which was an age of European power and thrust. The certainty and self-confidence generated by its titanic material achievements, contrasts sharply with the anxiety and uncertainty of a crisis-ridden world a century later. Macaulay talks of
belonging to "the most enlightened generation that ever existed." The Wonderful Century is the title of a book by A R Wallace, the biologist, published in 1898. Though not without acute criticism of his age, Wallace claims that, not only is the nineteenth century "superior to any that have gone before it, but that it may be best compared with the whole preceding historical period. It must therefore be held to constitute the beginning of a new era of human progress." When Queen Victoria died at Osborne on the 22nd January 1901, her funeral was described as marking the end of a splendid epoch, "the most glorious one of British history." Orators and leader-writers indulged in wild outpourings of praise for the past, and anxious forebodings about the future. Yet past and future were indissolubly connected, for the nineteenth century was an age of revolution, which set in motion changes which can be said, without exaggeration, to have affected the whole human condition. To perceive the cause and consequences of these changes it is necessary to relate the nineteenth century to the twentieth. Bond is only too well aware how easy it is, to lose sight of causes essential to our understanding of why things are the way they are. In his plays his aim continually is "to show the connection between things, to show how one thing leads to another, how things go wrong and how they could be made to go well." As far as Bond is concerned, all his plays are about the present, but writing about the past is a "consequence that arises from one's attempt to understand the present." In order to carry out his analysis, he finds it "helpful to distance the subject sometimes and to try and look at things that go wrong when they begin to go wrong." Bond sees the nineteenth century as having bequeathed us many of the most pressing problems that confront us today. In reply to my letter to him regarding his treatment of history in Early Morning, Bond writes, "Obviously I knew about the history of Victorian England and its Iconography - both congratulatory and critical." But the imagery of the
play came from "a consideration of the disasters of my own time - which seemed to reflect the horrors of Victorian Imperialism." "By the calendar, we have passed that epoch - culturally we have not. If I were writing the play now I might include imagery from the Falklands fighting." In his introduction to The Fool, Bond states that "art is usually taken to be a very private experience. This goes back to the nineteenth century, the first age that tried to take art away from the masses of people." In an interview he elaborates on this:

The nineteenth century thought that Art was not a necessity, and was not an element in the sanity of ordinary people. I'm not saying that before the nineteenth century, society was moral, kind, generous. It wasn't, because the economic grounds for these things weren't there. But I am saying that it broke up communities on which culture was founded, pushed these people off into factory ghettos, and therefore destroyed the artistic consciousness of the people. And in that way, I think, it destroyed their self-integrity, which they then had to set about the long business of finding again.

This search for self-integrity can be seen embodied in the Arthur/George (as the product of Victoria) predicament in Early Morning. Arthur has to struggle against George, who personifies the limits and constraints imposed on human personality and behaviour by society, represented by Victoria. In another letter to me, Bond explains, "I wanted to show an individual divided into two selves - a 'socialised' self and a self that was trying to create its own freedom." The danger of a society which exists through the subordination of some of its members to others, he says, "is cultural and intellectual - and this means, also, emotional." The distortions and perversions of ideas and culture needed to maintain an unjust society" debase human personality and lead to violence and cultural waste. Through the play's imagery, exploitation and slavery are intended to come across as dominating features of Victorian life.
The events of this play are essentially true, for *Early Morning* is concerned with underlying truth and presents a radical uncompromising view of the operating principles of Victorian society. It is a mordant comment on an insane world of suicidal competition. Arthur's nightmare about 'the mill' focuses the illusion and the reality behind its economic aspirations:

There are men and women and children and cattle and birds and horses pushing a mill. They're grinding other cattle and people and children: they push each other in. Some fall in. It grinds their bones you see. The ones pushing the wheel, even the animals, look up at the horizon. They stumble. Their feet get caught up in the rags and dressings that slip down from their wounds. They go round and round. At the end they go very fast. They shout. Half of them run in their sleep. Some are trampled on. They're sure they're reaching the horizon.... Later I come back. There's white powder everywhere. I find the mill, and it's stopped. The last man died half in. One of the wooden arms dropped off, and there's a body under it.

(Sc. 11, p. 68)

This picture of the mill grinding all humanity to dust, with each person pushing and trampling on the other, eyes on a distant horizon which continually recedes before them, brings home the horror and futility of dreams of universal abundance, of social millennium through increased production by autonomous individual effort. An image, extremely close to this one, of people trampling, crushing and treading on each other's heels, is conveyed in an admission by John Stuart Mill:

I confess I am not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on; that the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other's heels, which form the existing type of social life, are the most desirable lot of human kind, anything but the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress.
Thus we find the play continually reproducing, in a remarka-
ably close way, types of social commentary or criticism
which actually were made in the nineteenth century.

In *Early Morning* individuals are seen quite literally
and physically to devour each other. They are disparate,
calculating, competing atoms in a society which operates on
the principle of eat or be eaten, or the survival of the
fittest. Bond is satirising the philosophy of a
materialistic mercantilist empire of which Queen Victoria is
the supreme symbol. The nineteenth century brought in an
age of competition and economic rivalry, and the operation of
the laws of capitalism. After the defeat of aristocratic
government the middle classes developed a system of indirect
domination. The traditional division into the governing
and governed classes, and the military method of open
violence, characteristic of aristocratic rule, were replaced
by the invisible chains of economic dependence. It was
the century of great trade profits, and had immense reper-
cussions for the twentieth century in the attitudes it
fostered, with its emphasis on aggressive individualism and
untrammelled enterprise. England, as the world's greatest
commercial power, its main exporter, customer and financier,
held the sceptre of an autocrat of trade. It was seen by
some as the citadel of laissez-faire or the free play of
economic forces. Commercial monopoly was the theoretical
foundation of its mercantilist empire. In Chesterton's
words, economic liberalism was the philosophy in power.
The often quoted motto of laissez-faire was, "Each for him-
self and God for all of us," as the elephant said when he
danced among the chickens. Nineteenth century philosoph-
ical ideas, derived from Darwin's theory of evolution, re-
forced the acceptance of the principle of the survival of the
fittest as an unalterable law of nature. Laissez-
faire was in accordance with the immutable laws which
regulate human existence. We see this notion parodied in
the play. "You were first in the womb," Albert informs
Arthur, "Your mother screamed and struggled and your
brother thrashed his way out in front." (Sc. 8, p. 50)
In striking disconcerting terms, Bond can be found getting
into the play ideas and theories that exerted a dominant
influence in the nineteenth century.

Political life in England was affected by this climate
of unbridled competition. In Early Morning Disraeli and
Gladstone are depicted as virtually indistinguishable power-
hungry gangsters, vying for supremacy of position. Through
them Bond registers the spirit of narrow class interest and
fierce party warfare representative of the time. In its
leading editorial of the 1st January 1880 the London Times
states, "...party spirit in politics has displayed a bitter-
ness which the most experienced politicians confess to
exceed anything within their remembrance." The Whigs and
the Tories in Parliament seemed to be motivated by the same
passions. William Morris, writing in 1888, comments:

This, therefore, is what Parliament looks
to me: a solid central party, with mere
nebulous opposition on the right hand and
on the left. The people governed; that
is to say, fair play amongst themselves
for the money-privileged classes to make
the most of their privilege, and to fight
sturdily with each other in doing so..."86

What clearly emerges is that behind what Bond does in
his fantastic way, are views which were held in the nineteenth
century, and these can sometimes be found to be the views of
twentieth-century historians as well. There were two
parties in competition and, as H M Lynd puts it in her book
published in 1945, "the habit of English politics was a
choice between two sensible versions of the same thing."87
No very considerable difference existed between them, for
they both represented property interest and defended "the
same principles of inequality and privilege in English life,
conceding to the People whatever concessions were unavoid-
able in order to maintain the existing social order."88
Another historian, L C B Seaman, in his book on Victorian
England published in 1973, describes Disraeli and Gladstone,
in terms dramatic enough to come close to the picture of
the scheming fiendish rivals in *Early Morning* itself:

Disraeli, he says, was England’s Louis Napoleon; “a man who came in from the outside and who, by an ingenious combination of intuition, charlatanism and courage, climbed to the top of a greasy pole.” Referring to the passing of the 1867 Reform Act manoeuvred by Disraeli, Seaman states, “If Disraeli’s *coup d'état* of 1867 was wholly bloodless, it was a *coup* all the same, and the work of a consummate political conspirator.”

He talks of “the domination of the political scene by Gladstone and Disraeli in the years after 1867, and the "histrionic character of their political behaviour." "On coming into office in 1868, Gladstone was obsessed with Irish and ecclesiastical affairs; on returning to it in 1880 his mind was so clouded with a messianic desire to purge the land of the evils of 'Beaconsfieldism' that he had few clear ideas about anything."  

Gladstone in the play flaunts himself as a popular man of the people, but is very much a part of the establishment: "Now, brothers, don’t get excited. Rules are made t’abide by. One foot off the straight an’ narrer an’ yer never know what yer’ll tread in. The proper procedure is vote an amendment. 'Ands up for castration." (Sc. 7, p. 44) In his whole stance and manner Gladstone comes across as a particularly obnoxious variety of trade union official. Again, it seems, Bond has got into the play a feeling regarding trade unionists that existed in the nineteenth century itself. In 1886 we find Tom Mann exclaiming to his fellow unionists in disgust, "... the average unionist of today is a man of fossilised intellect, either hopelessly apathetic, or supporting a policy that plays directly into the hands of the capitalist exploiter."  

We have Shaw declaring that trade-unionism was the ”capitalism of the proletariat.”  

In Bond's view the cause of human ill is not "an irredeemable natural fault but the class nature of society." This class nature distorts consciousness and is responsible for the myths that pervert culture.
what comes across powerfully is a sense of mutually hostile layers of leaders and followers, dominators and dominated, presided over by the imperious sovereign lady herself. Nobody has any loyalty to the other, within ranks or without. The royal family is seen divided against itself and followers are shown continually turning on their own leaders. This reflects the structure of Victorian society, which was a class society divided into mutually antagonistic layers, each united by a common source of income. An authoritarian class structure of leaders and followers, possessors and possessed, was fostered by the British way of life, and tacitly sanctioned by economic liberalism. Queen Victoria, who reigned from 1837-1901, can be seen as a symbol of its continuity. The interdependence of the British social hierarchy is demonstrated in an etching by George Cruikshank in 1867, called 'The British Beehive' and intended as propaganda against those demanding further reforms of the franchise. The Queen, the Constitution, the Law, and the Church, are shown resting on hard-working but happy labourers and tradesmen, and the whole structure is seen standing ultimately on the Bank and the Army. Elizabeth Longford, in her biography of Queen Victoria, also tells us that the Queen "relied on the aristocratic hierarchy to preserve her own magical balance on the point of the military pyramid." Early Morning dramatises this hierarchical and authoritarian class structure, with Victoria presiding as Queen Bee, fighting to preserve her precarious position in the face of continual harassment and designs upon her supremacy.

The play also explores the role of the family as a form of social control, a transmitter of accepted values. The image of the ideal family - happy, disciplined, moral - is a force of considerable social influence, and the royal family must present a model to the nation. "I will not permit family bickering in public!" Victoria admonishes her contentious brood. (Sc. 3, p. 15) We see Arthur struggling against the enormous pressures imposed on him by
mother, father and brother before he finally achieves his own freedom and truth. Again, in focusing on the tutelary rôle of the head of the family, Bond is highlighting a significant feature of Victorian life. "Family tradition and family life meant more to the Victorians than they do to the present generation," Hardie states, "and in most Victorian families there was some one person, usually some matriarch, exercising a kind of planetary influence, a person around whom the whole family circle revolved ... a person who was, in short, the head of the family." Such a person, it was claimed, was the Queen-Empress. Elizabeth Longford informs us that Victoria felt that their happy family life would keep the country morally safe. When Queen Victoria opened the new Royal Exchange in October 1844, her press had been so good that she writes in a letter:

They say no Sovereign was ever more loved than I am (I am bold enough to say), and this because of our domestic home, the good example it presents.

The Victorians, threatened by industrialism, urbanisation, and mass working-class protest, were almost obsessively interested in discovering the bases of social order. Strenuous efforts were made to establish influence over the lives of the poor, to ensure the 'right' interpretation of their situation, and the adoption of the 'correct' value system - appropriate attitudes to work, family life and civil authority, and acceptance of the particular state to which God had been pleased to call them. The Church was a crucial agency of control. Clergymen often used the sermon to reinforce the social order. They explained and often justified the existence of poverty and inequality in society, preaching the merits of due subordination, and discerning a divine basis for wealth and authority in society. The social system derived from God, who willed different grades and orders in society, and an inequality of rank, wealth and power. A modern historian points out that one of the principal reasons the Established
Church failed to embrace the 'dark uninstructed masses' was recognised by Charles Kingsley, who said, "It is our fault. We have used the Bible as if it was a mere constable's handbook - an opium dose for keeping beasts of burden patient while they were being overloaded." Religion and politics were interlinked more closely during the latter half of the nineteenth century than they have been at any time since. Religion was used as the support and preservation of the state. Elizabeth Longford quotes Victoria on what she calls "the Victorian version of the divine right of kings":

Obedience to the laws of the Sovereign,
is obedience to a higher Power, divinely
instituted for the good of the people,
not of the Sovereign who has equally
duties and obligations.

In *Early Morning*, in a parody of the Last Supper, we see Victoria, "head of the church," distort what Arthur died for, and use it to support the world she symbolises. "He told you not to eat each other," she tells his followers. "But he knew he was asking something unnatural and impossible. Something quite, quite impossible. And because he loved you - and he only attacked you out of love - he wouldn't ask you to eat yourself, as he did. So he died, to let you eat each other in peace." "His last words were 'Feed them.'" She signals Albert to come on with the hamper and it is a gruesome supper indeed.

(Sc. 21, p. 117) Through this grotesque picture Bond drives home, in startling theatrical terms, the bizarre fusion of politics and religion that took place in Victorian England.

Thus an amazing paradox consistently emerges, for where the play is most fantastic and outlandish, Bond can be found dealing with history of a very serious nature. What we might be sure to reject is the attribution of Siamese twins to Victoria. But again the play is conveying in unsettling metaphorical terms the racking problems and discontent created by the divisive nature of Victorian society. Bond
has spoken of the "explosive atmosphere of the nineteenth century where there was a great deal of economic injustice and a working class that really could have risen up and cut the landlords' throats."\textsuperscript{102}

The nineteenth century brought about the massive advance of industrial capitalism. E J Hobsbawm in his book, \textit{The Age of Capital 1848-1875} \textsuperscript{[1975]}, asserts that "the global triumph of capitalism is the major theme of history in the decades after 1848. It was the triumph of a society which believed that economic growth rested on competitive private enterprise, on success in buying everything in the cheapest market (including labour) and selling in the dearest."\textsuperscript{103} According to Bond, "capitalism creates a schizophrenic society of tension and aggression." "There is a discrepancy between what we have to do to keep our society running and what we're told we ought to do to be human. Our economy depends on exploitation and aggression. We expect business to be \textit{ruthlessly} aggressive. At the same time we expect people to be generous and socially considerate." Advertising incites the worker as consumer to be master without responsibility to anyone but himself. He must know his place in the factory and be a placid worker, but be an insatiable egotist, a rampaging selfish consumer outside it. We need anti-social behaviour to keep society running, but this behaviour destroys society. "The good citizen," he says, "must be schizophrenic."\textsuperscript{104}

In \textit{Early Morning} this schizophrenia is registered in the physical form of Arthur and George as Siamese twins, and a reckless rampaging consumer society bent on its course of self-destruction takes the haunting shape of a cannibalistic earth and heaven.

In his preface to \textit{The Fool} Bond states that the English slums of the nineteenth century "were like slow-motion concentration camps."\textsuperscript{105} It is interesting that a critic refers to the "concentration camp heaven" of \textit{Early Morning}.\textsuperscript{106} In an interview with Ronald Hayman, Bond asserts that the cannibalistic heaven of \textit{Early Morning} is
an allegorical denunciation of the exploitation that prevails on earth. "Actually every time you go on a bus, every time you strike a match," he says, "you're committing an act of cannibalism. You don't eat anybody physically but you eat their mental suffering, you eat their despair, you eat the waste of their lives ... Our economic relationship to the earth is through eating and destroying each other." 107

There is no doubt that marvellous strides in many spheres were made in the nineteenth century. But one was also confronted with the contradictions of progress - the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty. In 1884 it was stated on the basis of government reports that, in the wealthiest nation in the world, almost every twentieth inhabitant is a pauper, that according to poor-law reports, one-fifth of the community is insufficiently clad; that according to medical reports to the Privy Council, the agricultural labourers and large classes of working people in towns are too poorly fed to save them from what are known as starvation diseases, that the great proportion of our population lead a life of monotonous and incessant toil, with no prospect in old age, but penury and parochial support; and that one-third, if not indeed one-half of the families of the country, are huddled, six in a room, in a way quite incompatible with the elementary claims of decency, health or morality. 108

Slums were a characteristic feature of nineteenth-century industrial life. Child labour persisted into the last decades of the century. Of England of the 1880's it was written, "What a satire upon our boasted civilization that plenty should bring misery to many and that people should actually starve because of the very abundance." 109 In Bond's view capitalism creates such deep destructive ironies. Affluence "impoverishes and produces the social conditions of scarcity." The richer the organisation becomes, the more impoverished the schools, hospitals and welfare and social services. "Affluence isn't well-
being," he says, "but a form of aggression. It makes the greedy hungry and the warm cold."\textsuperscript{110} "I'm hungry! They're hungry! You're hungry! We're all dead and hungry!" exclaims Florence to Arthur in the play. (Sc. 19, p. 103) Arthur's answer to that persistent cry of hers is: "The dead are always hungry." (Sc. 20, p. 110) Bond sees us now as living "in a scientific barbarism, the most irrational society that's ever existed."\textsuperscript{111} We have created all the things that threaten us, he says, "our military giantism, moral hysteria, industrial servitude, and all the ugly aggressiveness of a commercial culture."\textsuperscript{112} Rather than having brought in a new enlightenment, Bond obviously sees the nineteenth century as having returned man to an uncultured savage state, his desires shrunk to the psychology of the market place. Thus cannibalism is the dominant image in the play.

Modern historians can be found presenting a similar view of the effects of nineteenth-century capitalism in Victorian England. E J Hobsbawm, a Marxist, states:

There is, of course, no dispute about the fact that relatively, the poor grew poorer, simply because the country, and its rich and middle class, so obviously grew wealthier. The very moment when the poor were at the end of their tether - in the early and middle forties - was the moment when the middle class dripped with excess capital, to be wildly invested in railways and spent on the bulging, opulent household furnishings displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851, and on the palatial municipal constructions which prepared to rise in the smoky northern cities.\textsuperscript{113}

L C B Seaman talks of the continuous expansion of traditional industries, and the export of surplus capital abroad, because it was believed that this would maximise profit for the investor, and extend the overseas markets for traditional British manufacturers and capital goods. "The effect of this was to starve the nation of social improvements (in relation to the scale of the need for it) and to reinforce the Victorians' obstinate resistance to investment in public health, housing and education."  "It might
have been better for the late Victorians and their
descendants," he comments acidly, "if, for instance, John
Chamberlain had sought to instruct his generation, not that
the Empire was 'an undeveloped estate,' but that much of the
United Kingdom had been turned into a slum."114

What clearly emerges is that there exists a substantial
basis in history for the vision of the nineteenth century
which Bond presents in Early Morning. The play is a very
severe indictment of Victorian society, and the legacy it has
left to the present. Actually the events of this play are
in a deep sense true, for though it assumes the form of a
bizarre dream-fantasy, it deals with dominant ideas and
features of Victorian social and political life. They are
all treated in the manner of some hideous cartoon which
magnifies the subject to absurdity, but contains within the
grotesque distortion a point of truth which is driven home
with frightening intensity. Early Morning thus qualifies
as a history play, since it reveals a very serious regard
for history. For, as has been established in my intro­
ductive chapter, the definition of a history play includes
plays which are not concerned with a realistic portrayal,
but seek to illuminate historical truth through a more
purely imaginative treatment of the facts. Early Morning
is a very fine illustration of this kind of history play.
I have devoted considerable time and attention to establish­
ing its historical basis, mainly because this is not easy to
perceive, owing to the play's unusual form and approach. It
remains now to consider the play as drama, and to examine the
theatrical structure and devices through which Bond conveys
his vision with such bitter potency.

Early Morning is the materialisation of a nightmare
vision. It projects a hideous truth about the nature of
social relations with all the disquieting force of a dream.
Everything is seen in terms of some anxious nightmare with
its sense of dream and disparate realities. Like a dream
what is so disturbing is that elements of the real,
features of our everyday experience, keep intruding to
mingle with the more obviously fantastic. Conflicts often revolve around a commonplace incident or situation before there is a sudden lurch into the macabre. Bond subverts common sense yet remains faithful to the condensed, vividly heightened and portentous symbolism of dreams, with their charge of anxiety. Everything has the too bright and disturbing clarity of actual dreams from which we seek release. The play works through fantastic image elaboration. The picture is continually enlarged until it becomes a gigantic tapestry of horror. We enter into a world of elbowing, jostling, competing entities and the horrors are incalculably compounded until we find ourselves in a heaven where men pursue and devour each other interminably. The play dramatises the dilemma of individuals in a society which has ceased to be compelled by humane values. The barely mitigated moral chaos the play embodies, projects the kind of living a moral universe such as that implies. Through a surrealistic treatment of history, Bond registers his vision of the underlying nature of human relations in Victorian society, and its enduring effect on the present. The play is a vivid ironic comment on a rampant and reckless consumer society. It is a protest against the insane spectacle of collective homicide, against the furious folly of our times.

We are plunged into a restless vehement world of cruel enthusiasm, wholly indifferent to the claims of morality, that in fact has created its own primitive morality out of strength, cunning and self-preferment. Albert and Disraeli plot Victoria's overthrow and strive for Prince Arthur's involvement to give their coup "the appearance of legality." They "must strike now" because Victoria is going to announce the Prince of Wales' engagement. "Victoria's not popular. She's frightened and she knows a royal wedding will pacify the people."115 (Sc. 1, p. 7) Bond is satirising the type of popular sentiment that such occasions arouse in the English people. Again he can be found echoing a view expressed in the nineteenth
century. Frank Hardie refers to Walter Bagehot rebuking "the childish enthusiasm of the English at treating the marriage of the Prince of Wales as a great political event when it was 'a very small matter of business.'"

Victoria stalks the stage like some monstrous predator. She in turn, with George as her stooge, is bent on Albert's destruction, determined that her line begun at Stonehenge "shall not fall till Stonehenge falls." At her throne-room in Windsor she formally announces that she has arranged a "normal marriage" for her son, George. His bride is to be Florence Nightingale - "Miss Nightingale is an expert sanitarian. We believe that to be a branch of Eugenics." As her name is announced Florence Nightingale comes into the room. She curtsies to Victoria and then to George. Victoria gives her a note and another to George. George reads his note - "Dear Miss Nightingale, I welcome you to Windsor and hope you will be happy here." Florence reads hers - "Thank you." (Sc. 3, pp. 14-5) It is all treated in a highly farcical vein. The characters have an intense life of their own, but less as personages than as vigorous plastic forms. They are like brilliantly animated puppets. In the first production Peter Eyre's performance as Prince Arthur was described as a beautiful blend of "caricature and pathos," and Moira Redmond's Victoria as a remarkable achievement of a "fairy-tale queen." Reviewers saw the characters coming across as "grotesque caricatures" or "bizarre lampoons."

We are confronted with vivid active personalities, but these are obviously not fully humanised portraits of the actual historical individuals, but abstract images of authority and repression. It is not what these historical characters are in themselves as persons, but what they suggest or represent that Bond is concerned to project. They are the visible embodiment of certain values and attitudes, and Bond is inviting us to recognise their far-reaching implications. In an article in the New York Times in 1972, Bond is quoted as having said, with reference to
Early Morning:

I find it curious the way that an image can dominate whole groups of people and when one looks at the same image a little later, it's very very funny...I wanted to show how people are trapped by these myths and how they must shake them off if they're ever to be really free.119

Energy and exuberance are there in plenty, and the play is riotously funny, but the humour is continually turning black, as a grotesque character keeps asserting itself. The court's presiding over the trial of Len and Joyce provides a lively example. Len and Joyce explain how the crime took place while they were queuing up to see a film:

Len: We'd bin stood there 'ours, and me guts starts t'rumble. 'Owever, I don't let on. But then she 'as t'say 'I ain arf pecky'.

Joyce: Thass yer sense a consideration, ain it! I'd 'eard your gut.

Len: I 'ad an empty gut many times, girl. That don't mean I'm on the danger list. But when you starts rabbitin' about bein' pecky I -

Joyce: Now don't blame me, love.

Len: Truth ain' blame, love.

...

Look, we're stood outside the State for Buried Alive on 'Ampstead 'Eath' - right? - me gut rumbles and there's this sly bleeder stood up front with 'is 'ead in 'is paper - right? - so I grabs 'is ears, jerks 'im back by the 'ead, she karati-chops 'im cross the front of 'is throat with the use of 'er handbag, and down 'e goes like a sack with a 'ole both ends - right? - an she starts stabbin' 'im with 'er stilletos, in twist out, like they show yer in the army, though she ain' bin in but with 'er it comes natural, an 'e says 'Ere, thass my place', an then 'e don't say no more, juss bubbles like a nipper, and I take this 'andy man-'ole cover out the gutter an drops it on 'is 'ead - right? - an the queue moves up one.

(Sc. 4, pp. 21–2)

Despite the sickening ghoulish turn, the spirit in which it is discussed is very natural and matter of fact, as if it
is all quite the norm. Everyone in the queue and about
joined in to lend a hand - "Some a the fellas off the queue
give us a 'and, an' I 'as a loan a this 'atchet from some
'ol girl waitin' t' cross the street." So when they made
a meal of him they naturally had to share it around - "Yer
can't nosh an' not offer round, can yer?" The trial
presided over by Victoria is conducted in an equally
ludicrous fashion, and it is only Arthur who is consternated:

Arthur: Why did you kill him?
Len: 'E pushed in the queue.
Arthur: Why?
Len: It's 'is 'obby.
...

Arthur: Why did you kill him -
Len: I said it ain I? 'Is shirt! 'Is shoes!
'Is vest! (He kicks the exhibits at Arthur)
I done it! Get, mate, get! They're 'is!
'Is! I got a right a be guilty same as
you!...

(Sc. 4, pp. 25-6)

An everyday situation is suddenly transformed into a bizarre
one that speaks of underlying guilt, cruelty, anxiety, fear,
suspicion. One reviewer comments: "Mr Bond offers us
moral affront after moral affront, but without enough
expertise to get us fuming. However he does keep us laugh-
ing for the first two-thirds of a long afternoon." Yet
surely the humour is our road into the horror, but also
helps to control and contain it.

This scene leads into a maze of events in the political
arena treated in a vein of grisly slapstick. Disraeli and
Albert launch their offensive during a royal picnic at
Windsor Park. Their man, Len, disguised as a rustic, turns
on Victoria with a pistol after Albert has proposed and
drunk the loyal toast. But Victoria has had Albert's
drink poisoned and when he starts to feel the effects -
"I'm not well." - she finishes him off herself, strangling
him with his own garter sash, murmuring, "I don't like to
see them linger - I'm a patron of the RSPCA." Disraeli
comes in but, discovering Victoria very much alive and in possession of Albert's rifle, which she has trained on him, exclaims, "A counter-attack. I'll fetch reinforcements," and dashes out. In terms of graphic pictures we are made to see that the aggression committed by Len and Joyce, condemned as a criminal act of homicide, is perpetrated on a far greater scale by the state. The law of the jungle prevails, and justice and legality are merely an expedient façade.

At one point we are confronted by Gladstone leading a lynching mob comprised of Joyce, Jones and Griss. Len is in their midst, hobbling along with his feet shackled and arms tied behind him. The mob clamours to hang him instantly, but Gladstone insists that "Yer 'ave t' 'ave yer trial t' make it legal. Yer don't wan' a act like common criminals. Trial first death after; yer got a copy a the book." To "explain the legal situation" to Len they all start kicking him, but are again stopped by Gladstone, who proceeds to demonstrate how to kick with maximum efficiency, inflicting the greatest amount of injury, yet expending the least energy. It involves some degree of technical expertise:

The secret is: move from the thigh an' let the weight a the tool do the work. That economizes yer effort so yer can keep it up longer. (He demonstrates without touching Len) Watch that toe. Keep a good right angles t' the target. The other way looks good but it's all on the surface. Yer don't do your internal damage. Study yer breathin': in when yer go in, out when yer come out. Got it? (He swings his boot back) Out - thigh - toe - in! (He kicks Len once) Child's play.

(Sc. 7, p. 46)

In physical metaphorical terms, Bond drives home the fact of violence legalised in the form of officialdom, and torture developed to a science under the auspices of the state. People institutionise their violence, and people are institutionalised to express their pent-up frustrations.
and aggressions in the service of the establishment.

The play hurtles on its grisly larkish course in a seemingly endless turn-over of events, in which leaders continually ambush each other, and firing-squads keep turning around on their commanders with strenuous glee. Through this insane and ignoble spectacle, what comes across most strongly is the sense of people with no beliefs, and with no commitments except to self. Bond conveys meaning through theatrical incidents which become provocative symbols of the cruel reality of an age of aggressive competition. Despite a certain repetitiveness in the nature of the action, there are continually shifting moods in the play. The horror takes on different shades; we are confronted with a psychologically gripping complex of images and profiles, each more spectral than the last.

Arthur and George are confronted by their father's ghost beside his open grave and begged by him to "listen to it." "That's the pit," he says, "I lie there and you tramp round and round on top of me. There's no peace. The living haunt the dead. You will learn that." He lifts his arms and heavy chains are seen to run down from them into the grave - "I dragged these with me. Help me." (Sc. 8, p. 49) Enslavement is a dominant image in the play. It puts over forcefully the idea that people are not free. They are slaves of their social and technological environment. Again this is conveyed in concrete visual terms. Len and Joyce are handcuffed to each other during their trial. Len is seen later, hands and feet bound, kicked about by Gladstone and his mob. Ropes, chains, pulleys, abound on the stage. In the most wrenching image of the play, Arthur and George as Siamese twins are seen painfully yoked together, and we are forced to feel the emotional and physical weight of this enslavement. Even after George dies he remains attached to Arthur in the form of a skeleton, which continues to haunt Arthur.

Extraordinarily, in spite of the grotesquerie, there are moments of almost unbearable poignancy, as when Arthur,
weary and half demented, talks to the skeleton at his side:

I did not give your foot to the dog! - Well why say I did? The dog took it. - I did not give it to him! You want to quarrel again. I'd have given him a leg! (Pause) All right, I'm sorry. I lost my temper. I'm tired. You're not easy to carry. - I didn't say it's easy to walk on one foot. You could try a stick. ... You don't eat. That's your trouble... At least you can sleep. (He drapes a coat round George) You're good at that. And you're wrong about the dog. (Pause. Suddenly) I know I gave your clothes away. They were beggars! They were cold.

... I'm a limited person. I can't face another hungry child, a man with one leg, a running woman, an empty house. I don't go near rivers when the bridges are burned. They look like the bones of charred hippopotamuses. I don't like maimed cows, dead horses, and wounded sheep. I'm limited.

(Sc. 11, pp. 67-8)

It is a riveting moment. The audience is allowed no escape, but it is brought up short, to face with Arthur, the violence, the deformity, the poverty and waste in human life. Arthur's anguish and despair at the state of human affairs is profound. He decides that not many people rise to the heights of Hitler. Most of them nurse little hates. They kill under licence. But Hitler had the vision to know men hated themselves and each other, and so he let them kill and be killed. "Heil Hitler! Heil Einstein!" he cries. "Hitler gets a bad name, and Einstein's good. But it doesn't matter, the good still kill. And the civilized kill more than the savage. That's what science is for, even when it's doing good. Civilization is just bigger heaps of dead. Count them." (Sc. 11, p. 69)

The anachronisms force us to relate events and recognise that history creates history, and myths can bring about their own reality. The violence man attributes to himself and seeks to control by even greater violence is
brought about so that men who are not motivated by a personal desire to be violent, become the makers of H-bombs and the authors of holocaust. Anachronisms like this keep intruding to connect the present with the past in the play. In a note to William Gaskill, in relation to Lear, Bond writes that anachronisms "are rather important and part of my style." They are for the "horrible moments in a dream when you know it's a dream but can't help being afraid. The anachronisms must increase and not lessen the seriousness. They are like a debt that has to be paid ... like desperate facts."\(^{121}\) The anachronisms certainly do intensify an audience's response and involvement. They drive home the sense of historical consequence and continuity as past, present, and sometimes, future, are brought together in one burning point in time.

Arthur's conclusion that violence is a product of human nature leads him to the logical deduction that since the end of society seems to be mutual destruction, what is needed is the great traitor who will kill both sides, not just one. He approaches Victoria and Florence and finds them surrounded by corpses hanging on gallowsposts. Some have been blindfolded and shot. "They were all called Albert," Victoria explains, "I can't take chances." And Florence chimes in with the proud declaration: "I'm the first hangwoman in history - public hangwoman that is. It's part of our war-effort." (Sc. 12, pp. 71-2)

Historically, Florence Nightingale, the archetypal nurse, is the nineteenth-century ideal of womanhood. Queen Victoria in a letter to Florence Nightingale refers to her as "one who has set so bright an example to our sex."\(^{122}\)

In the play she epitomises complete submission to authority. She is married to the establishment. She accepts Victoria's arrangement of a marriage to George, the heir apparent. She is Victoria's ready tool in the poisoning of Albert. Again, she assents to an affair with Victoria against her own desires (she stands back from the edge of the cliff after the tug-of-war incident because
Victoria rushes forward.) In a scene that is a parody of the Lady with the Lamp legend we see Florence literally prostituting herself in the service of the war effort. She adds that "little touch of feminine sensibility" that is "very precious in war." (Sc. 12, p. 72) Tony Coult suggests that she is the "establishment's archetype of correct femininity, a gentle nurse symbolically mopping the fevered brow of an Empire." Another critic, Richard Scharine, rightly points out that "the image of the historical Florence, lovingly caring for wounded soldiers by the soft glow of lamplight, has been used for a hundred years to sentimentalize and glamorize warfare." As we have seen, in Reginald Berkeley's play, The Lady with a Lamp, this popular image is registered not satirically, but with some lapse into sentiment. Berkeley's concern, however, is to present the person behind the myth. In striking contrast, Bond is interested in the historical image or icon rather than the person. He focuses on the historical myth and its power to shape and influence the future. The image of Florence Nightingale is used to glorify and encourage warfare and it is interesting to note that Bond sees the first World War as "the myth of the nineteenth century."

Arthur lives out this myth of man's essential violence. He engineers his great betrayal to end all betrayals. The two sides are lined up in a massive tug-of-war near the edge of a precipice. When they are pulling full stretch, Victoria's side lets go of the rope and their opponents rush backwards over the cliff. As foreseen by Arthur, the victors do the "natural thing, the normal thing, the human thing." They rush over to the edge of the cliff to look down, cheer, laugh, wave. The cliff roars and gives way, and they all go crashing down to their deaths. Bond drives home the monumental irony of warfare, for it all takes place to such cries as "Freedom! Justice!" "Culture! Democracy!" "Science! Civilization!" "Fraternity! Brotherhood! Love! Mankind!" and the crowning
irony of them all - "Peace!" (Sc. 14, p. 80)

This tremendous tug-of-war is a mordant comment on the
standard of international morality of the time. The last
cry of "Peace!" is uttered by Victoria herself. In history,
we can find Victoria advocating war in the name of peace.
During the Eastern Crisis of 1876-8, the Queen wrote to
Disraeli: "The Queen thinks great progress is being
made with respect to a Congress, though she must own to
disbelieving any permanent settlement of Peace until we
have fought and beaten the Russians...." Frank Hardie
comments, "It was peculiarly fortunate that at this moment
of crisis, the Queen's views being what they were, her
favourite minister was in power. Is it altogether un­
fair to describe the foreign policy which she and he
favoured, as the policy of 'dazzling strokes ... of baffled
rivals and discomfited opponents; of perpetual shouting
of challenges and waving of flags', which in 1922 Curzon
was specifically to condemn in a minute to the Prime
Minister?"\(^{126}\)

In her letters, Queen Victoria can often be found
enunciating Palmerstonian sentiments:

If we are to maintain our position as
a first-rate Power ... we must, with our
Indian Empire and large Colonies, be
prepared for attacks and wars, somewhere
or other, CONTINUALLY.\(^{127}\)

28th July 1879

If only we had a really good large Army
properly supported by Parlt., not in the
miserable way it is at present ... we
could carry everything before us, all
over the world.\(^{128}\)

3rd April 1857

It is this spirit of Victorian imperialism that is attacked
in the play. Through the spectacular stage picture of a
great gleeful tug-of-war resulting in horror and catastrophe
for either side, Bond satirises the tragic ignorance of an
age of aggression and absurd self-certainty.

Arthur takes this sort of political madness to its
logical conclusion. We must definitely feel with him a
sense of overwhelming relief that the insanity is over. All that is left is for him to shoot himself, and he can now die in peace, he thinks. But before he can finish congratulating himself for setting everybody free, the nightmare lurches back in a form even more ghastly than before. A line of ghosts rises up from among the broken bodies. They stand close together in black cowls. They move apart, and we see that they are joined together, like a row of paper cut-out men. George detaches himself from the line, and starts to fasten himself onto Arthur. We enter into Arthur's thrashing despair as he shudders from the renewed enslavement, and groans: "No. No. No. No. No."

(Sc. 15, pp. 81-2)

We are continually drawn in to identify with Arthur's experience. Arthur carrying George around, and struggling to get free of him, is meant to be our dilemma too. Through the image Bond dissects a mental and emotional state. One is reminded of the schizophrenia of the split characters of Brecht's plays summed up by Mr. Peachum in The Threepenny Opera:

Who would not like to be a good and kindly person ... But circumstance won't have it so!

In Brecht's plays, the natural instinct of man to be good, kind, generous and loving is shown to be constantly thwarted by the harsh necessities of survival in a competitive world. Bond takes this dilemma of inner division, of being separated from one's natural self, a step further, projecting it in startling visual terms in the form of George and Arthur as Siamese twins, and the other characters strangely dehumanised. By distorting, even demonising, the human figure - using the spontaneity and irresponsibility of a dream as dramatic licence - Bond shows how people can cease to be human under certain conditions.

From a gruesome earth of wild and nervous excess, we are plunged into a heaven of rampant cannibalism. It is the philosophy of Victoria's world - eat or be eaten - taken to its literal conclusion. "Nothing has any
consequences here - so there's no pain," rejoices Victoria. "Think of it - no pain! Bon appétit." (Sc. 16, p. 88)
The world celebrated here is literally a world of unrestricted appetite. People fight like sparrows over torn-off human limbs which are voraciously devoured only to sprout again. As one reviewer of the play in performance describes the scene, except for Arthur all the characters are seen "gleefully gnawing away on each others' festering bones, distributed by the Queen from a heavenly hamper in gracious garden-party style. ('It's game: it's hung to give it flavour.')"

A sense of men's lives being fed into machines must emerge from the sight of men being strung up on a pulley and then deposited in hampers on trolleys to be wheeled around for corporate consumption - quite a supermarket. At one point a one-legged man starts to hop out from under the pulley while the others are fighting over his torn-off leg. The rope hangs from his neck and dances along behind him. The others suddenly catch sight of him escaping and tear after him. Arthur is left alone on the stage, with the leg which was thrust into his hands.

In stunning theatrical terms Bond conveys the horror of what has been called "an age of political materialism that aspires only to wealth." In his novel, Sybil, Disraeli writes, "If a spirit of rapacious covetousness ... has been the besetting sin of England for the past century and a half, since the passing of the Reform Act the altar of Mammon has blazed with triple worship." Shaw also saw the British Empire as standing for sheer Mammonism. In his book, Days with Bernard Shaw [1949], Stephen Winsten, recalling personal conversations with Shaw, says that "Shaw was not in the least deceived by the peace and prosperity of Victorian days. The peace was the peace of a lunatic living in the world of fantasy, and the prosperity was the prosperity of the vulture." It is interesting indeed that Shaw, a Victorian, sees nineteenth-century peace and prosperity in the same terms as Bond - as a kind
of mad political fantasy.

Bond creates an uncompromising imagery of human violence and affliction, which comments bleakly on the possibilities of resisting a cruel universe of economic rapaciousness, and exploding political evil. And yet hope lies in a persistent humanity which keeps reasserting itself. Arthur thought, to quote a phrase from Webster's play, The White Devil, that he would "cease to die by dying," but finds there is something in him that dies hard. In fact I am often reminded of that play of Webster's, where goodness too has scant chance of surviving, and yet even in the most unsympathetic characters, a humanity persists which the rest of their behaviour denies. Thus, says Flamineo, the least attractive of them all:

I have a strange thing in me, to the which
I cannot give a name, without it be
Compassion ...

(Act V, Sc. IV, 11. 110-112)

Arthur too finds that, in spite of joining the living dead, and participating in the eating of himself and others out of sheer desperation and futility, there is something he cannot quite kill:

I've tried but I can't die!
Even eating didn't kill me. There's something I can't kill - and they can't kill it for me.

(Sc. 19, p. 102)

Webster's play dramatises a similar dilemma of individuals in a society which has ceased to be constrained by moral values. Bond, perhaps, was influenced by that play. It is worth noting that he goes on to write an adaptation of The White Devil which was first performed in 1976 at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Old Vic theatre.

Arthur, in finally refusing to eat, becomes a catalyst in this world of mutual cannibalism. He soon starts to attract a ragged following, and is seen to have a humanising effect on the others. Even Florence, who is sent by Victoria to decoy Arthur into her hands, because he is a threat to the establishment, is affected. Where the norm in this world is a total disintegration of relationship,
we see, incredibly, a genuine bond beginning to grow between Arthur and Florence. Arthur tries to persuade Florence to run away with him:

Florence: What good is that? You still won't eat.
Arthur: We'll eat ourselves!
Florence: No!
Arthur: We'll eat each other!

Florence: You won't! You know you won't! You'll change your mind. You talk about life when you mean pain! That's why you cause trouble - you can't let them die in peace. The mob, your mother - wherever you go - someone will always want to kill someone, and they can't and so it goes on and on! I'm hungry! They're hungry! You're hungry! We're all dead and hungry! And it's the same wherever you go!

Arthur: You keep me alive.
Florence: You're not alive! This is heaven! You can't live or laugh or cry or be in pain! You can't torture people! Let me alone! You're a ghost. Ghost! You're haunting me - O stop it.

Arthur: You're crying.
Florence: No, no, no, no.
Arthur: My hand's wet.
Florence: Nothing to cry for. Too late. Why didn't you tell me this before? What d'you think I did while I waited? I'm not crying. Perhaps I'm alive, perhaps we needn't be like this ....

(Sc. 19, pp. 102-3)

Against all odds, in spite of the play's fantastic material, Bond is able to render it human and immediate at many points, as at a moment like this when the emotion is felt to be very real.

We see a change taking place in Florence, who had not been able to conceive the possibility of something better, an alternative to what seemed the inevitable nature of things. Florence is afraid of society, and her own impotence in it. Victoria is the controller and Florence
the controlled, both almost, as it were, trained to their rôles. When Arthur is finally captured and eaten by Victoria and her party, Florence joins in the eating because "Victoria was watching." (Sc. 20, p. 109) Arthur is an embarrassment to Victoria. His actions ought to be guided by his status as a member of the ruling order. He is expected to fulfil his rôle as the visible embodiment of authority, by his support of and participation in the social system. Only when he joined in the killing, and engineered all their deaths, could Victoria say: "for the first time I was able to call him son." (Sc. 16, p. 86)

But Arthur now finds that in not eating, even if they eat him for it, he is "alive" or "beginning to live."] I'm like a fire in the sea or the sun underground," he tells Florence after having been reduced to nothing but a head which she has hidden from the rest. When they discover his head and begin eating it too, Arthur laughs as they do. It is an extraordinary image of the triumph of life over the forces of death and destruction. In another of Bond's plays, The Sea (1973), a character expresses the belief that "all destruction is finally petty and in the end life laughs at death." (Sc. 8, p. 64) We see in Early Morning this verbal idea translated into startling physical form. It is in such ways that Bond's plays make for such compelling theatre. He is a poet not merely of words, but of words acted out.

The play ends with everyone sitting around Arthur's coffin, all cheerfully tucking into the food laid on top of it, except for Florence who sits a little to one side, crying silently, while Arthur, a Christlike figure in a white shroud, hands half-raised, rises silently into the air above them in obvious contradiction of Victoria's self-satisfied pronouncement - "There's no dirt in heaven. There's only peace and happiness, law and order, consent and co-operation. My life's work has borne fruit. It's settled." (Sc. 21, p. 120) Arthur resurrected over Victoria's world suggests powerfully that we can shake off
the domination of the past that imposes itself on the present. In order to recognise and rediscover the social and moral sanctions that help create a sane world, we have to make an effort of memory and imagination. Bond's choice of the play's title with its pun on "mourning" reinforces this meaning. It was chosen partly, he says, because he thought the play "might be taken to suggest something catastrophic and final" when just the opposite was meant. Bond's purpose, therefore, is ultimately optimistic. Arthur transcends Victoria's world and has planted the seeds of unrest and discontent. Florence's tears signal hope for the future. Bond has said that he is afraid of the past. He is not afraid of the future. "A man living in 1917," he says, "would have been wise to have been afraid of the past. And in a rapidly-changing technocracy it is important to throw some light on the future, so that people can say, yes, the future is chooseable and it is malleable, we can form it." Bond's history plays invite us to examine the past, so that the future is not created in its image. His view of history is not Marxist, since it is not fatalistic or deterministic. He takes a much more flexible stance. He believes in the power, the freedom and the responsibility of individuals to choose, to break down inhuman repressive social structures, and to build what he calls a rational society which exists for the equal good of all its members. His plays, which expose fallacies, provoke inquiry and criticism and stimulate the individual and social conscience, are intended as a contribution to this end. "Art," he says, "has to be the equivalent of hooliganism on the streets." It has to be "disruptive and questioning" if society is to be changed rationally and not by force. Bond's plays certainly are extremely disquieting, and shock us out of any tendency to complacent thinking and emotional glibness. They compel attention not only because we are confronted by questions that really demand an answer, but also because of the amazing force of Bond's imagination.
which realises them in brilliant theatrical terms.

In *Early Morning* we witness a great leap of the imagination revealed in its extraordinary treatment of history. What clearly emerges from this study is that Bond is not just taking perverse liberties with history. *Early Morning* is not an arbitrary invention of the mind, but a highly serious and imaginative vision of the past. Bond's use of the fluidity, spontaneity and irresponsibility of a dream structure to approach history, is very freeing. Yet I think it is important to note that he does not attempt to create the illusion of a dream, such as we find, for example, in the dream plays of Strindberg. Bond wants his audience wide awake and present, not blurred and transported into a different realm. The play confronts us like a remembered dream that haunts the waking consciousness with a macabre beauty and grandeur. *Early Morning* opens up new possibilities for the treatment of history. In a way, looking back to the past is a sort of fantasy, with potent hints and associations of things remembered or discovered adding to the mystery of what is irrecoverable in any total sense. Through the creation of a disturbing dream imagery of great power and intensity, Bond has also managed to capture the spirit of our age, to convey its sense of irremediable anxiety and uncertainty. The dream form is an eloquent vehicle, particularly suited to the modern psyche and our troubled times, and to the fact that our understanding of the past is, to a large extent, clouded, fragmented, intuitive and inextricably bound up with our apprehension of the present.
Notes to Chapter VII

10. Simon Trussler, Edward Bond (Essex: Longman Group, 1976), p. 34.
12. Ibid., p. 74.


29. Ibid., p. 57.


31. "Has Mr Bond been saved?" The Daily Telegraph, 15/4/68.


33. Letter to Niloufer Harben, 26/10/82.

34. Letter to Niloufer Harben, 13/12/82.


36. The Observer, 14/4/68.


41. Katharine Worth, Revolutions in Modern English Drama, p. 175.


43. See Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts, Bond: A Study of His Plays, pp. 84-8.


59. Ibid., p. 479.
61. Ibid., p. 170.
62. Ibid., pp. 109, 137.
63. Ibid., p. 376.
70. Ibid., p. 463.
71. Ibid., p. 506.
72. Ibid., p. 556.
73. Quoted in Frank Hardie, The Political Influence of Queen Victoria, p. 245.
79. Letter to Niloufer Harben, 10/6/82.
82. Letter to Niloufer Harben, 3/6/82.
83. In his letter to me (3/6/82), Bond agrees that he knows this passage from Mill, but it was not in his mind when he wrote Early Morning, since he thinks he only came to know it after he had written the play.
88. Ibid., pp. 233-4.
90. Ibid., p. 168.
93. See Hay and Roberts, A Companion, p. 75.
95. A drawing like this could only rouse the satirist in Bond, if he had come across it while he was writing Early Morning. But when I wrote to inquire if he had, Bond replied that he knew the etching but thought he only came to know it after he had written the play. *See final note.
105. Ibid., p. xvi.
107. "Bond is out to make them laugh," The Times, 22/5/73.
111. Ibid., p. viii.
112. Preface, Lear, p. xi.
115. All quotations from the text are cited from *Early Morning* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968).


118. See *The Critic*, 1, No. 8 (April 1968), pp. 6-9


* Further to note 95 above, which refers to George Cruikshank's etching, 'The British Beehive' (described on p. 482), the period was particularly rich in violently satirical, often grotesque, social and political cartoons and caricatures by James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson, George Cruikshank, Robert Seymour, Sir John Tenniel and many others. These might have been a stimulus for a playwright like Edward Bond with his strong visual imagination, and might account for the cartoon-like nature of his characters in *Early Morning*. I did therefore explore this area, but was unable to trace any unmistakable link between the drawings I came across and *Early Morning*. 
Conclusion

The history play is a most popular genre among English playwrights of this century. I was first drawn to the subject because of the distinctive power inherent in the form, arising from its tacit claim to be engaging directly with reality. An audience's involvement in what is presented on the stage is heightened and intensified by the sense of history, since they credit events enacted on the stage with a degree of factuality. The historical playwright thus has a responsibility not only to his subject but also to his audience, to be regardful of historical truth, since the audience is unable when emotionally strained to escape from distress by dismissing what is being presented on the stage as purely fictitious. Yet there is little criticism in the field of twentieth-century English historical drama as a whole, and there seemed a real need for an attempt to redefine the genre in terms of modern ideas of, and attitudes to, history.

In this study, plays of different concerns and different approaches have been closely examined in order to ascertain their particular use and treatment of history, and their regard for historical truth and historical issues, which I established in my introductory chapter as the basis of my definition of a history play. In making this examination I have found this definition to be both workable and satisfying. It has proved comprehensive and flexible enough to encompass plays of widely varying approaches and treatments, including some which are extremely imaginative and daring, even revolutionary, in their approach to the past, like Edward Bond's Early Morning. Yet it has also posed its own controls and been sufficiently discriminating and limiting to exclude plays which reveal a superficial and peripheral concern with history. Thus it disqualifies plays like Clifford Bax's The Rose without a Thorn, which is sentimental and romantic in its approach to history, revealing an ignorance of or indifference to the facts, and plays like Peter Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun which has only
faint pretensions to historical and political concerns, and exploits history for its sensational and theatrical possibilities.

In plays like these history is used in a shallow way. Their playwrights are content with superficial externals. They go for colour, atmosphere, pageantry, a mere veneer of history, in order to set their romantic stories of love and betrayal against a picturesque or marvellous backdrop. These were the dominating features of nineteenth century historical drama, from which Shaw made such a radical break. He revolted against this outward semblance of historical reality in the form of false period atmosphere, artificial impassioned sentiments and exotic colouring. He led the way for a very different kind of theatre, stimulating a new tradition of history play that was dynamic and alive, in touch with real human motives and characters, and concerned both with vital historical events and issues, and with their relevance to urgent social needs and problems of contemporary life. Shaw was clearly pivotal in the field of twentieth century historical drama, providing the 'germinal impulse' that awoke modern dramatists to the need to become researchers as well as playwrights.

This has resulted in a dominant feature of the twentieth century English play. Modern playwrights feel a much greater sense of responsibility in putting history on the stage. They can often be found making a vigorous scrutiny of the original sources, as in the case of T S Eliot. Most reveal a strong inner and outer compulsion to support the vision of history their plays present, in prefaces, introductions and notes appended to the text by drawing attention to the data on which they are based. This owes something to the intellectual climate of our time, the great zeal for documentation and much greater demand for evidence to support a view. Looking at the English history play of the twentieth century, as distinct from the nineteenth and preceding centuries, what seems to me to have increased significantly is this attitude of intellectual awareness.
Modern playwrights attempt to be sharper and more searching in their approach to history. Most of the playwrights dealt with in this thesis, even those who are comparatively minor and lightweight, like Robert Bolt, Reginald Berkeley and Gordon Daviot, reveal a reluctance to take over uncritically a received version of history. They strive for a distance from conventional and approved accounts, and attempt to shatter false historical myths or images. Where minor playwrights challenge but are unable to displace powerful historical images which dominate the human mind, as for instance those created by Shakespeare, major playwrights like Shaw and Edward Bond, great in their own right, are able to compete and impress vital historical images of their own upon the modern consciousness.

But, though the modern English historical playwright reveals a serious concern to examine historical sources and verify the facts, paradoxically, he is at the same time very free with history. Possessing a supportive basis for his vision, he then takes it as far as it will go. He is immensely audacious and challenging in his treatment of history. Thus we find Osborne's controversial psychological portrait of Luther stirring much inquiry and discussion, and Bond's deeply unsettling vision of the nineteenth century in Early Morning, with its enormous scale and relevance to the present, arousing a storm of journalistic and governmental censure on its first production. Thus this tremendous paradox emerges - modern English historical playwrights are both extremely regardful of and extremely free with history.

Then again another distinctive feature is the overtly modern perspective registered by these playwrights, stemming once again from Shaw's influence. Modern historical playwrights continually draw upon the present, which enables us to see history as knit into the fabric of our own time. The present is carried into the past as the past is sometimes carried into the future. Startling anachronisms are very much a part of the style of modern playwrights in their effort to drive home the connections between past and
present. They may appear to be departing violently from history by their apparent and deliberate inserting of the present into the past, but in fact they are reflecting a deep truth about the nature of history. All we can know of the past is largely a subjective interpretation, and each observer rewrites history according to the bias of his own age. This radical yoking of the past and present brings home the unity of human experience, though each successive generation may perceive some fresh aspect of the historical situation it alone can understand. We can see, for instance, the change that has taken place in the general attitude towards the exceptional individual or leader figure, from the various treatments of playwrights in this thesis. In Saint Joan, Shaw, a Victorian, explores the impact of the extraordinary individual upon her environment though her immediate society is unable to accept or comprehend the progress and inspiration she embodies. In stark contrast, Edward Bond, in the light of his own time, sees leaders of nineteenth-century society as terrible figures, the embodiment of savage inhuman social and political forces that enslave and devour men beneath a respectable, civilised exterior. Again, Osborne in Luther sees the exceptional individual primarily as a victim of himself and the mental and spiritual fracture that is the climate of his age, as it is equally of ours.

This brings us to another salient characteristic of twentieth-century English history plays. Playwrights tend to bring themselves and their consciousness right up to the threshold of history. In Murder in the Cathedral we can see the overflow of a personality that has made a particular appropriation of the past. Eliot appears to have found in history something of himself, a historical condition or dilemma which mirrored his own very private needs and experience at the time. This is fitting, since history is ultimately an extension of personal experience. Modern playwrights tend to emphasise the universe that lies within, the private man behind the public mask, the complexity and precariousness of personality. They register the great
unfathomable depths of the subconscious that lie beneath the social political exterior. Thus we find T S Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, Charles Williams's *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* and John Osborne's *Luther* with their disturbing renditions of a tormented interior state. Edward Bond too in *Early Morning* registers a troubling spiritual/political landscape in his surrealistic vision of the past. This reflects the new psychological perspective of our age, a post-Freudian era, with its awareness of the tremendous impact and implications of psycho-analysis. In his exploration of history the playwright is able to probe beneath and beyond the shell of evidence, and register the deep hidden dimensions of the human psyche.

A playwright thus can strive for the innermost attainable truth, and in some respects can give a fuller vision of the past than the historian. He gains something by his greater degree of independence in the imaginative appropriation of the past. A sensitive artist may reveal more of the essential truth of history than a historian, who is more strictly limited by the facts and must subdue his imagination to the controls of scholarship and accept the primacy of his evidence. This accounts for the unique power of the history play arising from its dual character. It is a form of fiction as well as a form of history, and its fictive nature is as vital a part of that power as its historical nature. It allows the playwright to go into large areas of imaginative conjecture closed to the historian, enabling him to engage with historical reality in a much more total sense. A play supplies what history cannot give. Infused with the spirit that quickens, it breathes life into the bare bones of history. A playwright is concerned with re-enactment, resurrection, of historical material in a vital, immediate way, because he has to deal ultimately, not with bloodless abstractions, but with people on a stage who are required to move and be. The actors bring their own reality and understanding to bear
and can make or break a dramatic situation. This is part of a play's essential truth and strength. A playwright flashes light upon the past in unexpected ways. He brings to it an artist's power of imagination and insight, his intuitive grasp of character and situation, and his genius for synthesis. Thus, in relation to history, the English historical playwright of the twentieth century at his best, emerges as no mere borrower from the past, but a poet, a prophet and a visionary.
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