

TENNYSON'S CHRONOLOGICAL PRIORITY OVER BROWNING IN USE OF THE DRAMATIC MONOLOG BEFORE 1836

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Uninitiated students of Victorian poetry often take for granted that Alfred Tennyson imitated Robert Browning in use of the dramatic monolog—a *genre* vividly and rightly identified with Browning's name. The assumption might be that when Browning's two brilliant short monologs appeared in 1836, followed by his volume of dramatic lyrics in 1842, Tennyson tried the same form, his own *Poems* of 1842 featuring "Ulysses" and "St. Simeon Stylites," and later volumes offering ambitious specimens like "Tiresias." One anthology editor, for example, in referring to the monolog *genre* states that Browning's "contemporaries borrowed it freely; Tennyson . . . made excellent use of it"¹; a standard handbook of literary terms once asserted, in its entry about the dramatic monolog, "The credit for developing this type is generally given to Browning who used it in such poems as 'Andrea del Sarto.' Tennyson also used the dramatic monolog."²

This condescending master-pupil image of the two young poets Browning and Tennyson is refuted by examination of some dates of composition and publication. Many readers may be surprised to learn that Tennyson had composed at least *fifty* objective monologs—including some of his finest—before Browning's *first* notable short specimen, "Porphyria's Lover," appeared in print in 1836.³

Such a statistic may raise some eyebrows. If the term "dramatic monolog" be limited to a type of poem as mature, am-

biguous, and psychologically complex as Browning's "The Bishop Orders His Tomb," obviously this figure is incorrect—unless a heretofore overlooked cigarbox full of manuscript has been uncovered in a Farringford attic.⁴ But Browning's own monologic poems (numbering approximately 100 out of his over 230 titles) also range from amazingly subtle pseudo-dialogs like "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Bishop Blougram's Apology" down to wispy and psychologically perfunctory lover-utterances like "One Way of Love." Similarly, Tennyson's (in number about one-fifth of his over 450 titles) monologs range from the ambitious pyrotechnics of "Rizpah" and the agonized tensions of "Lucretius" down to a dainty lover's-address like "Lilian," which ends with the threat, "Like a rose-leaf I will crush thee, / Fair Lilian." Can there be established, then, a theoretic base-line for the definition and perimeter of such a term as "dramatic monolog"?

I have offered the following definition of the *genre*: An objective monolog is an isolated first-person poem embodying signals of intention to simulate the utterance not of the conscious poet himself but of another individual speaker whose words reveal his involvement in a localized dramatic situation, and usually imply an auditor.⁵

By "speaker" no exclusion of epistolary monologs need be assumed; actually verse-letters usually stress "oral" tone and often compass "internal drama," with the addressee visualized as a virtual listener.⁶ Also, by the term "auditor" no exclusion of soliloquies (if they constitute entire poems) need be postulated; often plenty of implied "auditor-focus" occurs even when the speaker is not directly apostrophizing God or an absent loved one.⁷ By the term "isolated," an actor's long solo speech within a drama is indeed excluded; a monolog by definition is literally or virtually self-sufficient.⁸

The basic requirement for the *genre* is signalled *objectivity*: cutting of "the navel-string" between the poet and the speaker

in his poem. *Internal drama* in the poem's localized contextual situation is almost as basic. *Oral realism* with convincing naturalness of diction are qualities often distinguishing "good" monologs from dull and perfunctory ones. *Auditor-focus* is an important factor, though not essential. Finally, the degree of *psychological self-revelation* (including unintended self-betrayal) is an ultimate criterion for testing the caliber (but not the basic classification) of a dramatic monolog. With all deference to recent subtle and learned disquisitions in disagreement with the above presentation, I maintain that the term "dramatic monolog" becomes a warped and technically almost-useless label if it is pruned and refined until applicable to only eight or ten of Browning's most casuistic monologs and one or two of Tennyson's.⁹

There is, however, a continuum of refinement and skillful technique rising from the skeletal minima for the *genre*—a first-person poem which the poet specifically assigns to other lips than his own, with a focus upon a localized dramatic situation—up to the "pure" apex of the *genre* at its highest virtuosity (as in "The Bishop Orders His Tomb"): A *psychodramatic* monolog is an isolated and satisfactorily self-contained poem successfully simulating a spoken utterance by a specific and subtly delineated individual clearly not the poet, uttered on a unique occasion and involving a particular localized dramatic situation of perceptible intensity, usually directed toward an individualized and responsive auditor, and affording the reader rich opportunities for insight into the speaker's personality.¹⁰

It appears almost fruitless to seek biographical or epistolary evidence that either of the two poets acknowledged influences from the other in poem-construction, at least until midcentury. I have unearthed no data to indicate that either Browning's *Pauline* of 1833 or his first short monologs receiving magazine publication in 1836 elicited any reaction from Tennyson. Browning's earliest praise of Tennyson is predictable, in his letter to Alfred Domett

of July 13, 1842: "—how good when good he is—that noble 'Locksley Hall,' for instance—and 'St. Simeon Stylites'—which I think perfect." Yet the first recorded meeting between Tennyson and Browning occurred as late as 1851, and the strengthening social ties between the two families did not make for overt criticisms by one poet of his rival's poems. In 1870 Browning did take sharp issue with Tennyson's long non-monologic *The Holy Grail*: "We look at the object of art in poetry so differently. Here is an idyll about a knight being untrue to his friend and yielding to the temptation of that friend's mistress after having engaged to assist him in his suit. I should judge the conflict in the knight's soul to be the proper subject to describe: Tennyson thinks he should describe the castle, and effect of the moon on its towers, and anything *but* the soul....the old 'Galahad' is to me incomparably better than a dozen centuries of the *Grail*."¹¹

Tennyson is on record as having spoken approvingly concerning Browning's monologs: "...he has a genius for an intricate sort of dramatic composition, and for analyzing the human mind in intricate situations." Singled out by Tennyson as poems of "fine thought" were Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra," "A Death in the Desert," "Caliban upon Setebos," "The Englishman in Italy," and "A Grammarian's Funeral"; but he deprecated "Mr. Sludge the Medium" as "two-thirds too long."¹²

For the wife of a master-monologist, Mrs. Browning is, however, known to have made a ridiculously obtuse statement about "Amy" in Tennyson's "Locksley Hall," to wit: "I must either pity or despise a woman who could have married Tennyson and chose a common man!"¹³

Even before *Poems by Two Brothers* appeared in late 1826, the boy Tennyson was trying out the use of a *persona* in an imagined situation (acknowledgedly in imitation of Byron and probably Moore). A manuscript fragment titled "Armageddon," beginning "I stood upon the mountain..." and involving the visit

of a seraph who says, "O son of man, why stand you here alone...?" is a "projected" vision-monolog of 1824, incorporated later into the prize poem *Timbuctoo* of 1829. From a manuscript of 1826 is found Tennyson's "The Outcast," a monolog of three 10-line stanzas in which a youth declares, "I will not seek my father's [now deserted] halls..." A more playful experiment is "Milton's Mulberry" (in manuscript before 1830) wherein the tree humorously asserts, "I am Milton's mulberry.../ But they whipt and rusticated him who planted me..." Also from this period are two "projected" lover's-lyrics not in Tennyson's collected poems: "Marion" and "Lisette." "What Thor Said to the Bard Before Dinner" is a vigorously Browningsque monolog of three 9-line stanzas, written by 1832:¹⁴

"—Bang thy stithy stronger and stronger,
Thy rhyme-hammer *shall* have honour."

Though bearing the date 1827, *Poems by Two Brothers* was actually issued in late 1826, comprising over 100 poems written during the previous two or three years by moody school-boy Alfred and his brother Charles (a third brother, Frederick, contributed four poems). These teen-age Byronic effusions are quite in the vein of Romantic emotionalism; it should be no surprise to record, in an era which can be said to have seen the "establishment" of the *genre*,¹⁵ that almost 30 titles are objective monologs, of which about two-thirds were penned by Alfred. The "signalled" imaginary speakers fall largely into categories exploited by earlier English poets: exiles complain in three poems; a sinner's-plaint wails in another; a huntsman's song is another. Five of the 30 poems burst from the stiffening lips of five different individuals on their death-beds or otherwise facing imminent dissolution; another five are comments by various involved observers of situations pertinent to death.¹⁶ Of the half-dozen love-poems, most feature monologic appeals by various frantic lovers to basilisk maidens.

The titles of a number of these poems rather sharply "signal" or confirm their objectivity and indicate their internal drama: attributed to Alfred's pen are "The Old Chieftain," "The Druid's Prophecies," "The Vale of Bones," "On a Dead Enemy," "The Exile's Harp," "The Exile of Bassorah," and "The High Priest to Alexander."¹⁷ To them may be added "Antony to Cleopatra," climaxed by these "death-bed" lines from the Roman:

"And, dying, still I am thine own,
Thy bleeding Anthony....

"Nay—weep not—dry that burning tear....

"Shades of my fathers! Lo! I come;
I hear your voices from the tomb!"

Difficult now to read without risibility is the lugubrious meditation, "I wander in darkness and sorrow" wherein the forlorn monologist hectically complains:

"In this waste of existence, for solace,
On whom shall my lone spirit call?
Shall I fly to the friends of my bosom?
My God! I have buried them all!"

More successful, and virtually the only monolog among these for which a modicum of "psychodramatic" intensity may be claimed is Alfred's "Mithridates Presenting Berenice with the Cup of Poison," in which the defeated Pontic king urges his beloved to commit suicide rather than adorn the Roman triumph:

"Fill high the bowl! the draught is thine!
The Romans!—now thou need'st not heed them!"

With exultation at her compliance Mithridates clasps her dying form in a last farewell.¹⁸

In a niche by itself is young Tennyson's "The Lover's Tale," composed in 1827-1828. (Put in print as a part of his 1833 volume, copies were distributed to friends, but he withdrew it from publication then; a concluding later-written section, "The Golden

"Supper," was published in 1869; and the complete and now considerably altered poem saw print as late as 1879.) The lover, reciting his narrative to a group of friends, keeps perfunctory but not unskilful auditor-contact:

"Ye ask me, friends,
When I began to love. How should I tell ye...?"

"...Pass we then
A term of eighteen years. Ye would but laugh
If I should tell you how I hoard in thought
The faded rhymes...

"Did I love Camilla?
Ye know that I did love her: to this present
My full-orb'd love hath waned not..."

From a monologic standpoint the final form of the poem lapses, with the later-appended Part IV tagged "Another speaks" and beginning, "He flies the event; he leaves the event to me." (The original draft in 1827 had been wholly a narrative dramatic monolog.)

Among the *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* of 1830, the most controversial—and monologically the most ambitious—was Tennyson's cautiously-titled (and thereby consciously "signalled") "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind Not at Unity With Itself."¹⁹ Despite his safeguards, readers equated the speaker with Tennyson himself, and the poem was suppressed till 1884. In it an agonized immature youth mulls over his increasing lack of faith in God and redemption; he apostrophizes his dead mother, yearning for her assurance and comfort, then turns on himself angrily, asking,

"Why not believe then? Why not yet
Anchor thy frailty there, where man
Hath moor'd and rested..."

After a momentarily calmer state, indecision grips him again and he concludes,

“...Ay me! I fear
All may not doubt, but everywhere
Some must clasp idols. Yet, My God,
Whom call I idols? Let thy dove
Shadow me over....
“O weary life! O weary death!
O spirit and heart made desolate!
O damned vacillating state!”

A modern reader of this soliloquy appreciates the contrived characterization of “sad young man” in this sequence of murmur and exclamation. Yet even as astute a critic as Emerson in his journals for 1842 was negligent enough to state:

“Who that has read the....‘Confessions of a sensitive mind’...when reading it does not need some effort to attention to find the thought of the writer, which is also rather poor and mean?”

Actually Emerson here pays unconscious tribute to Tennyson’s detached *tour de force*, its maunderings intended (*vide* the title “signal”) to be undistinguished. Of course, the possible secondary infiltration of Tennyson’s own mind-state in 1830 into the poem is another matter, open to discussion but not to be totally equated with the poem *per se*.²⁰

Other poems in the 1830 volume are not notable as full-fledged examples of monolog, except for “Hero to Leander” in which the girl speaker holds her lover from his inevitable swim across the Hellespont, fearing his death, urging him to wait till the calmer morning, and except for “The Ballad of Oriana,” featuring a bereaved knight who at first rehearses bitterly to himself the tragic accident of his arrow piercing the breast of his betrothed as she watched a fight from the castle wall, and then appeals in apostrophe to the dead girl’s spirit.²¹

Part of the volume is given over to Tennyson’s several experiments, ranging from vapid to vivid, in “projected” lover-addresses featuring a succession of amorous *personae* declaring

themselves to languorous yet potent maiden auditors such as "Lilian," "Adeline," "Madeline," and (in the subsequent 1833 volume) "Eleanore," "Rosalind," "Margaret," "Kate," and perhaps "Isabel." When a poet, without sharply signalling the objectivity of his monologist, contrives a *probleme d'amour* into which he "projects," as it were, his "lover"-*persona* as speaker addressing a specific receptive or coy girl-auditor, he is operating in a borderline category of the dramatic monolog. Tennyson and Browning, needless to say, were only the latest in a gallery of poets who have tossed off such monologs of gallantry or woe—the convention was especially popular and overt in Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* (1557) and other Elizabethan collections where titular signals banally underlined the *genre*: "The louer declares his loue for his beloued" or "The complaint of a louer with sute to his loue for pitye," etc.²²

In *Poems by Alfred Tennyson* (dated 1833, actually issued in late 1832) are approximately a dozen titles classifiable broadly as objective monologs or "projected" lover-plaints. Female monologists take their isolated stages in such poems as "Fatima," where a sultry tropic woman, awaiting her lover, feels herself "whirl like leaves in roaring wind," and concludes,

"My whole soul waiting silently,
All naked in a sultry sky,
Droops blinded with his shining eye:
I *will* possess him or will die..."

The revenge of another woman on the earl who betrayed her with own sister is gruesomely recited in a terse ballad monolog, "The Sisters," the refrain-lines of which accentuate rather than mar the mordant effect:

"I rose up in the silent night:
I made my dagger sharp and bright,
The wind is raving in turret and tree.
As half-asleep his breath he drew,
Three times I stabb'd him thro' and thro'.

O, the earl was fair to see!"

The notorious opening lines of the "May Queen" poems ("You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear...") have unduly inhibited modern readers' serious examination of a monolog sequence in which the girl's liltingly hectic and overtense merriment hides inner remorse and heartache, darkening to death-expectation in the second and third sections (the conclusion was added in 1842); there are evidences of not entirely ineffective character-deepening to couple with auditor-contact, internal drama, and increasing oral realism in this poem.²³

"The Miller's Daughter" portrays a husband recalling to his wife the detailed circumstances of their early childhoods and later courtship and life together—as his musings end he asks her, "Arise, and let us wander forth / To yon old mill across the wolds..."

The pastoral tradition has included monologic treatment ever since Theocritus,²⁴ and it is no surprise to find (after the first 21 nonmonologic scene-setting lines) the hapless nymph in "Oenone" bewail the estrangement of Paris as Ovid's letter No. 5 in the *Heroides* did, and finally resolve to "rise and go" to "Talk with the wild Cassandra," since for the lonely speaker it now appears

"That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire."

Also classical in its subjectmatter is the languorous "Choric Song" sequential to "The Lotus Eaters" but separated and easily self-sufficient; here the *choragus* of the lotus-hypnotized group murmurs hedonistically "O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more." One among the three sisters in "The Hesperides" also carries the burden of their "song" addressed to each other and to "Father Hesper," guarding the golden apple fruit.²⁵

The "ten year silence" of Tennyson before the publication

in 1842 of his epoch-making two volumes of *Poems* would seem to carry us, at this point, beyond the chronological scope of a survey abruptly ended with the publication of Browning's two monologs in 1836. Actually the most impressive and significant monologs of Tennyson's production were first composed during 1832, 1833, and 1834 but not published until 1842 or later; citation of these forms the climax of the present essay's thesis. "St. Simeon Stylites," for instance, printed in 1842, was completed in manuscript before October, 1833. As Jerome Buckley says, this "vigorous dramatic characterization of a self-satisfied martyr who has enjoyed his suffering" is indeed "Browningesque before Browning."²⁶ The casuistic mendacity of this pillar-ascetic rivals that of Browning's Bishop who is ordering his tomb; but Tennyson's work antedates his rival's by a dozen years.

"Ulysses" (1842) is more widely known to have been in manuscript at least by Oct. 20, 1833, and its position as at once the most honored and the most controversial short poem modern students find in Tennyson renders unnecessary extensive discussion of it here.²⁷ It was upon "Ulysses" (when it first saw print in 1842) that R. W. Emerson based his prescient discernment of the monolog *genre* as "a high class of poetry, destined to be the highest, and to be more cultivated in the next generation."²⁸

Also harking back to this period of Tennyson's creative fertility is an early draft, titled "Tithon," of what was first published in the *Cornhill Magazine* for February, 1860, as "Tithonus" and included in Tennyson's 1864 volume; once ambiguously referred to by Tennyson as a "pendant" to "Ulysses," the monologic artistry and word-magic of this unique poem have given it a status not presaged during the nineteenth century. "Tiresias" also, though not published until 1885, was written in the early 1830's—"many a year ago" as Tennyson's own poem dedicatory to the 1885 volume puts it—and adds yet another

complex philosophically-involuted specimen of dramatic monolog to those pre-dating Browning's publications in 1836.²⁹

Incidentally, one of Tennyson's most eerie short poems, dating 1833-1835 but never published by him deserves reprinting here as evidence of the poet's dextrous experimentation with a ghost-monologist; note the quietly mordant final line of "The Mother's Ghost":³⁰

"Not a whisper stirs the gloom,
It will be the dawning soon,
We may glide from room to room to room,
In the glimmer of the moon:
Every heart is lain to rest,
All the house is fast in sleep,
Were I not a spirit blest,
Sisters, I could almost weep!

"In that cradle sleeps my child,
She whose birth brought on my bliss:
On her forehead undefiled
I will print an airy kiss:
She, she dreameth happy dreams,
Her hands are folded quietly,
Like to one of us she seems,
One of us my child shall be."

Of "Sir Galahad," another poem first printed in 1842 but drafted by Tennyson as early as 1834, Browning has already been quoted in specific admiration. The penchant of monologically uninitiated anti-Tennysonians to sneer at it provoked Alfred Noyes to retort, "The method in 'Galahad' is that of objective lyrical poetry....to regard it from a self-conscious personal point of view is....absurd." A successful "female" monolog in manuscript by September, 1833, "St. Agnes," is perhaps more convincingly intense in its mysticism than its so-called partner poem, "Galahad."³¹ "The Gardener's Daughter," paralleling Browning's "My Last Duchess" in its use of a monologist's climactic unveiling of a portrait (though of course leagues apart in other respects)

is another poem printed first in 1842 but composed during the summer of 1833. Far more ambitious in its monologic technique is "The Flight," composed "very early" according to Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir* (thus presumably in beginning 1830's) yet not published till 1885. One sister, on the point of a forced marriage to an arrogant landowner, cries out,

"Why—rather than that hand in mine, tho' every pulse
would freeze,
I'd sooner fold an icy corpse dead of some foul disease.
Wed him? I will not wed him, let them spurn me from
the doors..."

and pleads for advice and encouragement from the listening sister—

"Speak to me, sister, counsel me; this marriage must not be....
"...the hand points five—O me!—it strikes the hour!
I bide no more, I meet my fate, whatever ills betide!
Arise, my own true sister, come forth! the world is wide."

Finally, "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," written in 1833 but published in 1842, comprises the bitter retort of a rural ex-suitor to the aristocratic beauty who has been the death of one previous lover.

This paper has not proposed to be the arena of extensive subjective re-evaluations of the caliber of Tennyson's monologs versus Browning's. No attempt is made to dislodge Robert Browning from his "pastmaster" acme as practitioner of this *genre*. But it has been demonstrated that Browning is far from "pioneer" in the dramatic monolog, and that his contemporary Alfred Tennyson had completed several dozen poems of this type years before Browning's work could have made any impact upon Victorian poetry.³²

FOOTNOTES

¹Paul S. Wood, editor, *Masters of English Literature*, 1943, Vol. I, p. 783. Hiram Corson, *Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning's Poetry*, Preface, p. v, claimed that the poet's "favorite art-form . . . is quite original with himself." George Sampson, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 711, calls Browning "the inventor, and, indeed, the proprietor, of that form."

²Thrall and Hibbard, editors, *A Handbook to Literature*, 1st ed., 1936, p. 136. Note, however, that fuller awareness in recent years concerning the history and status of the dramatic monolog is evidenced by a revised—though still misleading—statement in the 1960 edition of this able handbook, p. 155: "Although a quite old form, the dramatic monolog was brought to a very high level by Browning, who is often credited with its creation. Tennyson used this form on occasion . . ." (Yes— "on occasion"—on over fifty occasions *before* Browning's initial short published specimen!) Even more confusing is this statement (following a chapter IV on "Browning: the Psychologist and His Invention of the Dramatic Lyric") from Chapter V, p. 134, of A. Allen Brockington, *Browning and the Twentieth Century*. Oxford, 1932: "After all, the stress of newness in Browning's description of his monologues as dramatic lyrics is on the word 'lyric.' Tennyson and Rossetti had both made successful use of the dramatic monologue, but Browning in giving the thoughts and feelings of the speaker turned the soliloquy into a colloquy [sic!]." Rossetti, of course, was only eight years old in 1836! And Brockington seems to ignore intense "thoughts and feelings" of a dozen Tennysonian monologic "colloquies" written before Browning's "Porphyria's Lover." Brockington, citing Browning's praise in 1870 of Tennyson's "Sir Galahad," states that therein the poet "does describe the knight's soul . . . more or less in Browning's way by letting the knight speak throughout. There is even a conflict in Galahad's soul. . ." In terms of time-priority the sentence should be re-written "Tennyson's way"—since "Galahad" was composed as early as 1834, and published the same year as Browning's first collection of *Dramatic Lyrics*, 1842.

³Never published during Browning's lifetime, and not discovered until 1913 (first printed in Kenyon's *New Poems by Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, London, 1914, pp. 3-12, 18) are two manuscript effusions by a not yet 15-year-old Browning, verses known to be extant in May, 1827:

"The Dance of Death" (rhythmic chants in succession by speakers named Fever, Pestilence, Ague, Madness, and Consumption); and "The First-Born of Egypt" (an eyewitness's report of the final Egyptian plague). The existence of these (the rest of young Robert's juvenile volume *Incondita* was destroyed) intriguingly suggests abortive monologic experimentation on Browning's part similar to that of young Tennyson—each, totally unknown to the other, under the influence of Byron; according to Mrs. Orr's *Life*, p. 31, "Byron was his chief master in those early poetic days."

Though the speaker in Browning's *Pauline* (1833) begins dramatically, "Pauline, mine own, bend o'er me . . .," yet (as Park Honan, *vide infra*, p. 16, judges) this poem "is either a very weak dramatic monologue or not a dramatic monologue at all, for the 'presence' of its central figure is not firmly established." Technically an objective monolog, cautioned by Browning himself as one of his "so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine," yet *Pauline* (as admitted in Griffin and Minchin, *The Life of Robert Browning*, London, 1910, p. 33) "must be accepted in its main lines as distinctly autobiographical"—and it was so read by Browning's contemporaries. I am therefore positing the publication in 1836 of Browning's two short monologs (strictly speaking, soliloquies), as arbitrary cut-off point for this paper's demonstration of Tennyson's achievement in monolog "before" Browning. Actually, no evidence exists that Tennyson saw these *Cornhill Magazine* poems; and since (after several years devoted by Browning only to multi-voiced regular dramas or narrative poems) they were not republished till Browning's volume of 1842 (several months after Tennyson's 1842 volumes), it might have been valid to construct an even more impressive chronological priority in use of the *genre* by Tennyson "before" Browning in 1842. Yet Tennyson probably kept fairly careful tab on all the better magazines (he contributed "Tithonus" in 1860 to the *Cornhill*); hence the use of 1836.

Defining and delimiting the dramatic monolog has always been a controversial topic. H. A. Watt and J. B. Munn, *Ideas and Forms in English and American Literature*, 1925, Vol. I, p. 248, after assigning credit to Browning for developing the *genre*, threw up their hands—"To what type of poetry these belong is questionable . . . It is impossible then to assign such poems definitely to any specific type of poetry." Henry W. Wells, *New Poets from Old*, Columbia Univ. Press, 1930, Section 2, "The Heritage of Form," in-

cludes the monolog among a score of poetic *genres*, but confusedly interprets the adjective in "dramatic monolog" as "vivid, passionate," and tends to lump subjective and objective monologs together. J. Hankiss, "Les gens littéraires et leur base psychologique," *Helicon*, Tome II, fasc. 2-3, p. 118, decries generic justification for the *Rollenlyrik*. A University of Marburg dissertation by Karl Bleier, *Die Technik Robert Brownings in Seinen "Dramatischen Monologen,"* 1910 (not known to me at the time my monograph, *vide infra*, was published) subdivided a selection of Browning's monologs into "charakter-offenbarungsmonologe," "apologien," and "reflektionsmonologe." (See also footnote 5, *infra*.)

⁵This definition is reprinted in slightly modified form from page 10 of a discussion of the theory of the *genre* in Chapter I of my monograph, *Browning and His English Predecessors in the Dramatic Monolog*, State University of Iowa Humanistic Series, 1948, No. VIII, 96 pp. (The original dissertation, *The Dramatic Monolog Before Browning*, July, 1942, 338 pp., State Univ. Iowa, is unpublished, but listed by title in *PMLA's* "American Bibliography," 1944, Vol. LIX, Suppl., Part 2, p. 1195. There is also my published lecture, *The Poet and His Mask*, Park College Press, Parkville, Mo., 1954, 26 pp.)

While my monograph of 1948 was in press, an article by Ina Beth Sessions, "The Dramatic Monologue," *PMLA*, LXII, No. 2 (June, 1947), 503-516) appeared; its author had not apparently encountered my dissertation of 1942. The article's discussion of the attributes of the dramatic monolog differs significantly from mine.

The most recent full-length treatise on the *genre* is by Park Honan, *Browning's Characters: A Study in Poetic Technique*, Yale, 1961. In this perceptive and scholarly publication one chapter examines most earlier analyses of the dramatic monolog: Chapter 4. The Solitary Voice, pp. 104-128 (a number of references not cited by Honan, however, may be found in Fuson, *op. cit.*, Chapter I). My 1948 monograph is quoted and criticized not unsympathetically (on pp. 107, 109, 115-116, 131), but deprecated as over-mechanical and limited in its definitions (*vide infra*). He dismisses Ina Beth Sessions' article (*op. cit.*) even more summarily (p. 116). He also finds unsatisfactory Bleier's classification (*op. cit.*) since many of Browning's monologs may fit into two, or into all three, of Bleier's categories, so ambiguously are they defined.

Roma King, *The Bow and the Lyre: The Art of Robert Browning*, Michigan, 1957, exhaustively studied five Browning monologs; his handling is praised

by Honan (*op. cit.*, pp. 117-118) in part because King did not crystallize sharp definitions or classifications of the *genre*. Also published in 1957, Robert Langbaum's *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition*, New York, also more or less abandoned objective criteria for defining a dramatic monolog, stressing instead "the effect created by the tension between sympathy and moral judgment" as the "genius" of this *genre* (as Honan, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121, summarizes him). It is ironic that Honan then points out that Langbaum's criterion, insightful as it is, "may not be expected to distinguish the Browning dramatic monolog as such from other dramatic and lyric forms." Incidentally, Langbaum makes no reference to my monograph of 1948.

It should be made clear that until late in the 19th century the actual label "dramatic monolog" had not been coined. Honan (*op. cit.*, p. 105) has found no earlier employment of the word term than its appearance in 1878 in an article by A. Lyttelton, "Mr. Browning's Poems," *Church Quarterly Review*, VII (Oct., 1878), 73. Arthur Sidgwick earlier referred to "Ulysses" and "Tithonus" as "brief monodramas" of which "the handling is modern and original" (quoted, p. xix, in Hallam Tennyson's abridged memoir of his father prefaced to the Macmillan edition of Tennyson's *Works*, 1913); Tennyson himself used the word "monodrama" as subtitle to *Maud*, and used the single word "monologue" (with a different adjective, "lyrical") with the humorous poem spoken by Will Waterproof (1842). In 1886 Tennyson dedicated to his wife "this dramatic monologue" (meaning "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After"). The term "monodrama" was as early as 1792 affixed to his own monolog "Oswald" by the minor poet Francis Sayers (see Fuson, *op. cit.*, p. 69), prompting Arthur Symonds, *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*, p. 155, to suggest, "...who knows if we may not trace to Dr. Sayers, through Southey, the beginnings in modern English of a form which Landor made Greek and Browning made alive and his own?"

Unsatisfactory 19th-century treatments of Tennyson's work in the dramatic monolog include Chapter XIII, *The Dramatic Monologues*, pp. 431 ff., of Stopford Brooke's *Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life*, 1894, wherein Brooke, during an uneven discussion primarily of the poet's later monologs, suggests that Tennyson, "not conceiving so many types [of imaginary speakers] as Browning, is satisfied, on the whole, with one long six-accented metre." Review of the fifty monologs by Tennyson before 1836 shows the fallaciousness of this generalization; and one might likewise

accuse Browning of over-use of blank verse in monolog—for the same reason? Morton Luce, *A Handbook to the Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, London, 1897, p. 162, states, with reference to "Locksley Hall" and other poems which he freely terms "monologues," "Tennyson calls such poems 'dramatic monologues' [not till 1886, *vide supra*]: but is the one character a dramatic character at all? he is merely a portrait made to speak." Luce does not clarify this ambiguous distinction. When he, on page 165, suggests that "Southey, accepting a hint from the German idylls, wrote eclogues, which may be regarded as the precursors of Tennyson's idyllic poems," it develops that Luce has not specifically focused on the monolog *genre* in his generalized tracing of models (for Southey's role see Fuson, *op. cit.*, pp. 28, 70-71).

⁶Honan (*op. cit.*, 116) in complaining that my definitions exclude verse-letters has overlooked page 12 of my monograph where this subdivision is recognized; for this Ovidian tradition see also Fuson (*op. cit.*, pp. 23-25).

⁷Similarly, Honan (*op. cit.*, p. 116) in maintaining that my classification "does not quite describe . . . the soliloquy of *Caliban*," does not take into account my glosses (*op. cit.*, p. 11) on the *genre's* definition, together with my citing of Browning's twenty soliloquies.

⁸See Fuson (*Ibid.*). A neat point is raised in Honan's cavil (*op. cit.*, p. 116) that my *genre* definitions describe "none of the monologues that constitute *The Ring and the Book*"—presumably because said definitions specify "isolated, self-sufficient." Certainly each of the ten *Ring* monologs is "self-sufficient" and not woven into the fabric of a standard drama, albeit the reader may discern refractions among the successive cantos; just as certainly the *entire* poem is not itself a dramatic monolog but a series of ten utterances by nine speakers massively framed by non-monologic beginning and ending sections.

⁹The three fine recent volumes by Langbaum, King, and Honan (see footnotes 5-8 above, and related text) each choose from Browning a small group of his admittedly finest and subtlest monologs for their close analyses; each critic, more or less under the *aegis* of the New Criticism, evaluates his specimens in terms of their "depth, intensity, irony, paradox, wit, whimsy, and humor" and also of their "intellectual and psychological consistency" (I am quoting—as Honan does, *op. cit.*, p. 118—from Roma King, *op. cit.*, pp. 136, 131; it is interesting to note that even among his chosen

"five," Dr. King found Browning's "Saul" not as satisfactory as the other four). Langbaum also (*op. cit.*, p. 78) judged the monologs he analyzed (harking back to Edgar Allan Poe's "effect" criterion) by the impact upon the reader of the monolog's "tension between sympathy and moral judgment"; this *per se* is a subjective and impressionistic guidepost, though with a critic of Langbaum's sensibilities the result has been a brilliant book. (Honan's exception to Langbaum's criteria has been quoted above, in footnote 5. His excursus on "A Definition of the Poetic Form," *op. cit.*, pp. 121-125, is significant in the light of comments made in the present paper.)

¹⁰See Fuson, *op. cit.*, p. 22. Virtually all the Browning monologs appreciatively examined by King, Langbaum, and Honan would fall within the "psychodramatic" category, in terms of the glosses and explanations offered throughout my Chapter I, Orientation and Definitions.

¹¹Used for the above paragraph is Mason Long's "The Tennysons and the Brownings," *College English*, IX, No. 3 (December, 1947); see also an article, "Tennyson and Browning," *Canadian Magazine*, XXXIX (June, 1912), 120-132. Probably in answer to a query by Elizabeth, young Robert Browning wrote (in a letter of Feb. 26, 1845), "I know Tennyson 'face to face'—no more than that"—and then went on to write warmly of Thomas Carlyle. Griffin and Minchin's *The Life of Robert Browning*, 1910, reminds us that Tennyson's "Northern Farmer" predictably "took him by storm" (p. 235).

¹²Quoted in Long, *op. cit.*, p. 138., Browning dedicated to Tennyson a *Selection* volume of his poems (1865); Tennyson's *Tiresias and Other Poems* (1885) was dedicated to Browning. Their exchange of noble tribute letters on the occasion of the Laureate's 80th birthday is well-known.

¹³Quoted by Paull Baum, *Tennyson Sixty Years After*, 1948, p. 240, with this addendum by Baum: "One hardly knows whether to censure the naiveté of such readers or to praise Tennyson for the air of verisimilitude he gave the poem."

¹⁴These poems may be examined in Charles Tennyson's editing of *Unpublished Early Poems by Alfred Tennyson* (Macmillan, 1932), pp. 6-15, 28-29, 50, 52, 67, 75. For data on the monologic achievements of Byron and of Moore, see Fuson, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79, and 77.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, Chapter V, The Genre Established, 1750-1850, pp. 67-89. The survey of English poetry underlying this chapter covered 100 poets and

unearthed several hundred objective monologs, a far greater incidence than discovered during the four hundred earlier years of English poetry. See also Chapter IV, Monologs in English Poetry, 750-1750, pp. 48-66.

¹⁶ Browning's own "death-bed" monologs include, include, in addition to "The Bishop Orders His Tomb," two shorter ones, "Confessions," and "The Patriot." For citation of scores of death-bed monologs by poets throughout English literary history, see Fuson, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-43.

¹⁷ Also God purportedly speaks in Alfred's "God's Denunciations Against Pharaoh-Hophra, or Apries," and "Babylon." Accepted as within the *genre*, although exhibiting a continuum from successful specimens down to perfunctorily-signalled lovers'-plaints, are these further titles by Alfred from the 1827 volume: "Lamentation of the Peruvians," "The Duke of Alva's Observation on Kings," "O Ye Wild Winds," "Remorse," "Did Not Thy Roseate Lips Outvie"; and (from manuscript, reproduced in the facsimile edition of 1893) "The Dying Man to His Friends."

¹⁸ Banally thin as most of these teen-age monologs are, it is technically invalid for Allan Danzig (in his footnote, p. 577, of an otherwise perceptive paper on "The Contraries: a Central Concept in Tennyson's Poetry," *PMLA*, LXXVII (Dec., 1962), 577-585) to chortle thus concerning *Poems by Two Brothers*: "It is Charles who in successive poems kills off father, grandmother, sister, various lovers, and Lord Byron while Alfred is repeatedly horrified as he contemplates the destruction of Peru, Jerusalem, Druidical Britain, Babylon, Persia, Egypt, and Hindostan. All three confess to depths of depravity hardly to be expected in youths of such retired upbringing in a quiet Lincolnshire rectory." In many of the poems jokingly cited, imaginary or historical monologists are "contemplating" varied woes or exiles; the brothers Tennyson "confess" no depths of depravity whatsoever in their own persons. Critics are at liberty to make secondary deductions—but it is irresponsible criticism to ignore totally a poet's signalled separation from his speaker and descend directly to biographical generalizations, however hilarious. Robert Browning did not kill Elizabeth Barrett—despite his Duke of Ferrara; nor did Shelley—despite Cleanth Brooks' well-known assertion (see Fuson, *op. cit.*, p. 16) as to the poet's "sometimes embarrassing declarations—'I die, I faint, I fail'"—say what his Hindu lover said; nor did young Alfred, himself, denounce Pharaoh. (Lounsbury's sneers, in *Life and Times of Tennyson*, 1915, are misplaced for this reason—speaking of

a "well-brought up lad" using "strong language for a veteran sinner," etc., p. 50.)

¹⁹See Emerson's entry for October 19, 1842, p. 287 of Vol. 6 of the Cambridge edition, 1911. Possibly his careless quoting of the poem's title betrays inattention to Tennyson's signals of objectivity.

²⁰Interestingly enough, Tennyson's friend Arthur Hallam (in *The Englishman's Magazine*, August, 1831) praised the poem's "deep insights" and deprecated its title as "incorrect. The mood portrayed in this poem, unless the admirable skill of delineation has deceived us, is rather the clouded season of a strong mind than the habitual condition of one feeble and second-rate." It was also Hallam, who, in assessing Tennyson's 1830 volume, asserted that his friend should have "the laurels of an inventor," speaking of his "graft of the lyric on the dramatic" as a "new species of poetry" (see *Poems of Hallam*, ed. R. Le Gallienne, p. 133); however, this cannot be taken as pinpointing of the monolog *genre*.

²¹From this 1830 volume, under broad interpretation of the *genre's* perimeter, citations may be added for "Leonine Elegiacs," "The Merman," "The Mermaid," and (after the first six perfunctory non-monologic introductory lines) "The Sea-Fairies" (see footnote 25). On the negative side, note that the first-person poem "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" which in its whole sweep seems very exotic is carefully signalled at the beginning as subjective—"The tide of time flow'd back with me" (i. e., Tennyson acknowledges the musings as his). I regard also, from the 1833-volume, both "The Palace of Art" and "A Dream of Fair Women" as monologs signalled to be subjectively Tennysonian, with at the most a very transparent *persona* operating.

²²For fuller theoretical discussion and illustration of this subclass of the monolog, see Fuson, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14, 16-17, 54-56. In similar, and sometimes overlapping "projected" semi-objective lyrics the "moi lyrique" may transfer to a soldier-*persona*, or a shepherd (Ransom, *The World's Body*, 1938, pp. 255, in comment relevant to this category, puts it that "the Elizabethan poets often said to themselves: let us play at shepherds").

Tennyson's early "projected" lover-addresses, in addition to those cited above, include "Love and Sorrow" (1830), "Sainted Juliet! dearest name" (1830); "Amy" (in manuscript, 1830); "Anacreontics" (contributed to

The Gem for 1832); the sonnets "Check every outflash" (*Englishman's Magazine*, Aug., 1831), "Me my own fate to lasting sorrow doometh" (composed in 1830, printed in *Friendship's Offering* for 1832), and "There are three things" (in the *Yorkshire Literary Annual*, 1832; Tennyson himself had had no idyll in "Bayona"); also "O beauty, passing beauty! sweetest Sweet!" (1833).

Of special relevance to the power of a title in signalling an intention of objectivity is the fact that although what appeared in 1833 as "The Two Voices" (carrying in the *Collected Poems* the notation "Written in a period of great depression consequent upon the death of his sister") seems pinpointed as subjective, an earlier shortened draft of this poem (in the Heath manuscript) was titled "Thoughts of a Suicide."

²³Ever since an unknown Anglo-Saxon *scōp* contrived "The Banished Wife's Lament," scores of English poets have exploited the definitive signal of a woman's voice to undergird objectivity in monolog (Browning's poems introduce seventeen female monologists). See Fuson, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-37, for citations. Tennyson's later "Rizpah" may be nominated as his most spectacular monolog by a woman speaker; but some dozen of his poems composed before 1836 also fall into this category.

²⁴For the background in English poetry of use of imaginary epistles in verse (of which Browning produced three), and of the pastoral *genre* in its interrelation to monolog, see Fuson, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-25 and 25-28 respectively.

²⁵First-person objective monologs whose speakers (though obviously single) speak for their group or colleagues (who sometimes join in on a refrain) using the pronoun "we" may be sub-grouped as "pluralogs." From Tennyson's pen in this category may be cited also the "Song" in "The Sea Fairies" and the rousing "English War-Song" and "National Song" (all 1830).

²⁶Jerome Buckley, *Tennyson, the Growth of a Poet*, Harvard, 1960, p. 146. Convenient data based on the Heath manuscript, a commonplace notebook wherein Tennyson's friend copied down in 1833 and 1834 a number of poems which did not see print till 1842 or later, is supplied in Joyce Green's article, "Tennyson's development during the 'ten years' silence, 1832-1842," *PMLA*, Sept., 1951, pp. 662-684. Arthur Waugh (*Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Study of His Life and Work*, London, 1902, p. 77), when referring to the 1842 volume, states that in it "the new poetry was foretold in many suggestive instances.

"St. Simeon Stylites" was the first of those dramatic monologues to which Robert Browning subsequently lent the vigour and unfettered strength of his imagination." That sentence incorporates a couple of errors of fact and timing, but the priority assertion is correct.

²⁷E. J. Chiasson's "Tennyson's 'Ulysses'—a Re-interpretation," *Univ. Toronto Quarterly*, XXII (July, 1954), 402-409 (reprinted in John Killham's indispensable *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson*, 1960, pp. 164-174) cites several prior revaluations and negative treatments of this poem (including those of Paull Baum and E.D.H. Johnson) before offering his own more positive analysis of it. Also in Killham's volume (pp. 155-163) is W. W. Robson's essay, "The Dilemma of Tennyson," 1957, on "Ulysses." Robert Langbaum (*op. cit.*) deals controversially with this poem. See also "Tennyson's 'Ulysses,' *Anglia*, LVIX (1935): 441-7. Walter Blair and W. K. Chandler, editors, *Approaches to Poetry*, 1935, p. 220, referring to the dramatic monolog, cite Tennyson as "usually believed to be the creator of this type, in 'Ulysses'"; they seem unaware of the *genre's* earlier history, or of Tennyson's prior monologs.

²⁸Taken from a critical article on Tennyson by Emerson in *The Dial*, April, 1943, reprinted in his *Works*, Concord ed., Vol. XII, p. 372.

²⁹See Mary Jane Donahue, "Tennyson's 'Hail Briton!' and 'Tithon' in the Heath MS.," *PMLA*, LXIV (June, 1949), 385-416. There is also an article on "Tithonus" in the *Classical Journal*, XXIV (Nov., 1928), 98-111. For this general period, see "Tennyson in 1833-5," *PMLA*, LXXVII (Sept., 1962).

³⁰For instances of monologs from the lips of ghosts, deities, non-human entities or even inanimate objects (like Tennyson's *jeu d'esprit*, "Milton's Mulberry"), see Fuson, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-47.

³¹Noyes, *Some Aspects of Modern Poetry*, London, 1924, pp. 168-169. "St. Agnes" was first printed in *The Keepsake* for 1837, and appeared in Tennyson's 1842 volume under title of "St. Agnes' Eve."

³²Incidentally, during the last decade of Browning's life Tennyson produced some 25 monologs compared to ten by Browning.