ROBERT SOUTHEY AS A NARRATIVE POET:
A STUDY OF HIS FIVE LONG POEMS

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A STUDY OF HIS FIVE LONG POEMS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North
Texas State Teachers College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

By

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Fort Worth, Texas
August, 1942

100510
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. JOAN OF ARC</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. MADOC</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THALABA THE DESTROYER</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.  THE CURSE OF KEHAMA</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. RODERICK, THE LAST OF THE GOths</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Robert Southey, born in 1774 at Bristol, was a very precocious child, especially in his choice of reading matter. At a very early age he read The Arabian Nights and started creating in his own youthful mind dreams almost as exciting as those about which he read. From this time in his life books were to be his chief source of inspiration. Before he was eight years old, he had started reading Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Fletcher. When he was about eight, he read Spenser's The Faerie Queene and even dreamed of finishing it.

At the age of fourteen Southey was sent to Westminster school. Judging by the standards of the teachers of that school, one would say that he learned very little while there. At Westminster, however, a very important influence came into his life. He discovered some old folios that likely would not have interested any other boy of his age. He was fascinated, especially by Picart's "Religious Ceremonies." Most of his future verse grew from the seed sowed in the reading of this old folio. Southey said later,

Before I left school, I had formed the intention of exhibiting all the more prominent and poetical forms
of mythology which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the ground work of an heroic poem.\textsuperscript{1}

By the time Southey was twenty-one, he was practically through the period of dreaming of Pantisocracy.\textsuperscript{2} In 1796 he went to Spain and Portugal to study Spanish life and literature. Here he experienced a flare of zeal for Mohammedanism and again spoke of his plan to write a series of epics dealing with the religions of the world. Following his return to England he wrote and worked so persistently that he broke his health and in 1800 had to return to Portugal to rest. In 1801 he published the first of his religious epics, Thalaba, the Destroyer.

Before this second trip to Portugal, Joseph Cottle, learning of Robert's ambition in the field of the epic, instructed him to write as he had dreamed of doing, and promised that he would pay the expense of publishing as many epics and as many copies as the young poet desired.

In 1803 Southey moved to Greta Hall near Keswick and near Wordsworth. There he settled himself to writing. In 1813 he was given the coveted office of Poet Laureate, which

\textsuperscript{1}Quoted by C. H. Herford in \textit{The Age of Wordsworth}, p. 206.

\textsuperscript{2}In 1794 Southey, Coleridge, and a few other young admirers of the French Revolution formed a scheme for the regeneration of society. Their plan was to establish a pantisocratic society on the banks of the Ohio. This ideal community was to be maintained on a thoroughly social basis. For very practical reasons the dream was never realized.
he held the remainder of his life. He continued to be an active and a prolific writer of both prose and poetry until his death in 1843.

In high school, college, and university courses in English literature Southey is rarely given more than mere mention. Usually the following facts are given concerning him: that he was Poet Laureate of England before Wordsworth, that he wrote some good poetry and prose which were rather popular in his day, and that he was a most industrious writer and an honorable man. Perhaps three or four of his lyrics are read, and the poet is passed by with no more attention. In reality he was one of the most talked-of literary men of his age. No English writer of his day was more prolific; and his works, especially his narratives, were widely read and highly praised by contemporaries, who, if we judge them by their lasting literary fame, were in a position to know good poems when they read them. Yet they were read also by many who did not find them praiseworthy. The Edinburgh Review never aimed more fiery darts at any other literary works than those aimed at the narrative poems of Robert Southey. It is worth while to note that Southey was important enough to have many pages of literary magazines

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\(^3\)All articles on Southey in the Edinburgh Review are credited to Jeffrey. Although these articles are not signed, all references to them by critics credit Jeffrey with their authorship, because he was editor of the Review at the time of their appearance.
devoted to him on the appearance of each long poem. Even if those pages were not always complimentary, their very appearance indicates something of his importance. In spite of these facts, most students of English literature do not know that Robert Southey was a narrative poet, and the average teacher knows no more than the titles of these narratives, never deeming it worth while to discover the contents. The poet is usually condemned without trial as unreadable.

Why has he been thus consigned to oblivion? This question may be answered when we find out what quality of narrative poet he was. In other words, What are the characteristics of his narratives? and Why does one seldom find these works even mentioned in the histories of English literature? To the foregoing questions I shall add this: Do these narratives merit more attention and better treatment than they have received at the hands of the literary critic? To indicate the answer to these questions is the purpose of this thesis.

This study of Southey as a narrative poet will be based on an analysis of the five long poems, sometimes called epics, on which the poet laid his claim to fame in the

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4These poems are not epics, but they do possess epic characteristics. These characteristics will be disclosed in the course of the thesis.
field of narration. There follows a list of these poems with their dates of completion and publication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date of Completion</th>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joan of Arc</td>
<td>1793</td>
<td>1796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madoe</td>
<td>1799</td>
<td>1805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thalaba, the Destroyer</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>1801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Curse of Kehama</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>1810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roderick, the Last of the Goths</td>
<td>1814</td>
<td>1814</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these poems will be discussed in a separate chapter. As an approach to this analysis it seems fitting to give a brief account of the writing, publication, and general public reception of each poem. This introduction to each chapter is followed by a discussion of the poem from the usual viewpoint of setting, plot, characterization, and style. In this study facts, opinions, and conclusions are presented to the reader. It is hoped that a perusal of these successive chapters will enable the reader to discover for himself the answer to our questions. General conclusions based on the study of the poems will be incorporated in a final chapter.

It is the intention of the writer of this thesis to present an unbiased discussion of the topic, whether favorable or unfavorable to the fame of Robert Southey. However, in all fairness to the reader, it probably should be stated that in the final analysis the writer hopes to sway opinion in favor of Robert Southey.
CHAPTER II

JOAN OF ARC

According to Southey's own story, in July, 1793, he happened to be in conversation with a schoolmate on the story of Joan of Arc, and it flashed upon him that this was singularly well adapted for a poem. Shortly afterwards he formed his plan and wrote about three hundred lines. Then, on August 13, 1793, the next day after his nineteenth birthday, he resumed work, and in six weeks finished what he called an epic poem in twelve books. When he showed it to the friend with whom he had originally conversed concerning the design, the friend remarked, "'I am glad you have written this: it will serve as a store where you will find good passages for better poems."1 In 1794 Joseph Cottle, a Bristol bookseller, "offered [him] fifty guineas for the copyright, and fifty copies for [his] subscribers."2

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2Ibid.
When in 1795 the printing actually started, Southey could see how full of flaws his work was and started making changes and corrections. Thus for six months the poem was recast while the printing went on. Southey himself later marveled at the favorable reception of his poem. In 1837 he wrote,

a work of the same class, with as much power and fewer faults, if it were published now, would attract little or no attention. . . . Some of the most influential writers of the day bestowed upon the poem abundant praise, passed over most of its manifold faults, and noticed others with indulgence.  

With succeeding editions of the poem Southey continued to see faults and to make changes. Concerning the poem in its fifth edition, he said,

I had become fully sensible of its great and numerous faults, and requested the reader to remember, as the only apology which could be offered for them, that the poem was written at the age of nineteen and published at one and twenty.  

In his Preface of 1837 he stated also that before editing the collection of his complete works he made as many more changes and improvements as were possible without writing an entirely new poem. He desired that the poem retain the characteristics which "may generally be regarded as hopeful indications in a juvenile writer."  

In The Poetical Works of Robert Southey, collected by himself in 1837, Joan of Arc leads the way with ten books of blank verse.  

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3Ibid., p. 5.  
4Ibid.  
5Ibid., p. 6.  
6In revising the poem Southey cut the length from twelve to ten books.
The five months of action which Southey depicted in *Joan of Arc* were lifted from that dreadful period of French history known as the Hundred Years War, which in reality lasted nearly two centuries, from 1296 to 1492.\(^7\) It was in the latter year that the Treaty of Etaples was signed, putting an official end to that long struggle between England and France. "In 1414 Henry V of England formally demanded as the heir of Isabella, mother of his great-grandfather Edward, the crown of France."\(^8\) This demand was followed by French opposition, negotiations, battles, losses on both sides, and finally, October 24, 1415, the victory of the English at Agincourt. France at this time had on her throne Charles VI, who was subject to periods of insanity and who finally became almost totally insane. This condition meant that the country was at the mercy of individual dukes who were ambitious to further their own private interests. After this victory at Agincourt, the English withdrew temporarily from France, and France was thereafter torn between two internal factions -- the followers of the Duke of Burgundy and those of Count Bernard of Armagnac. When these two factions were in struggle against each other in Paris, Henry V again landed in

\(^7\)F. Funck-Brentano, *The Middle Ages*, p. 529.

Normandy, August 1, 1417, with no one to oppose him. While terrible slaughter was going on among Frenchmen in Paris, the English king was successfully besieging nearly all of the important towns of Normandy -- Caen, Bayeux, Falaise, and many others. In the winter of 1418-1419 he besieged Rouen with its 150,000 population. The conditions were so bad that 12,000 old people and children were sent out of the city in order to conserve the city's meager supplies for the fighting men and the women helping them. These 12,000 died from hunger and exposure while roving around the neighboring country. After a siege of five months the city surrendered on January 13, 1419.

Henry V was so imperious in his demands that the Burgundians and Armagnacs found it necessary to come to agreement in order to deliver the kingdom from the enemy. Under the pretense of this desire the dauphin and the Duke of Burgundy met in July and went through the form of reconciliation. In September, 1419, at a second meeting the Duke of Burgundy was assassinated in the presence of the dauphin, who was controlled by the Armagnacs.

After the assassination of the Duke of Burgundy his son, Philip, took a definite stand on the side of the English. Further events in favor of the invaders led to the Treaty of Troyes of May 20, 1420, wherein King Henry V asked that at the death of Charles VI the crown and kingdom of France be conveyed to him and his heirs forever. The feeling was
so keen against this demand that many towns even of Burgundy refused to agree to it. The dauphin, later Charles VII, found many who were ready to continue the war against the English, the latter led by Henry and Philip of Burgundy.

In 1422 Henry and Charles both died, and the Duke of Bedford took possession of the regency in the name of England and continued his effort to break the resistance of the handful of nobles still loyal to the dauphin. After a decided victory over the French at Verneuil on August 17, 1424, Bedford concentrated the armies of England and France, the latter under Burgundy, around Orleans. This city was defended by some thousands of partisans of the dauphin, these comprising almost all that remained of the kingdom of France. While the country was hanging by this one slender thread, Charles, the young dauphin, was in retirement in Chinon with his mistress, Agnes Sorel. The young man had early showed signs of a degenerate, indolent, and pleasure-loving nature. Weak and susceptible to flattery, he was easy prey to parasites. He could be awakened to the plight of his faithful followers who were fighting at Orleans for his kingdom, but he was afraid of action, and found it easier to let the situation take care of itself. The situation at Orleans looked hopeless before the divinely commissioned maid, Joan of Arc, came forth from the obscurity of a little Lorraine
town called Domremy to lead the French to victory over their hitherto successful enemies.

Southey was accurate in the geographical setting for his story. In the poem Joan of Arc made her first appearance in Vaucouleurs, where she had gone to petition Sir Robert to introduce her to Charles that she might tell the story of her divine call and hasten the execution of her commission. Her next major stop was at Chinon, where she was received by Charles. After proving the genuineness of her call she was given an army and then marched to Orleans, the besieged city. From Orleans she and her army operated against the nearby English forts. The forts of St. Loup, St. John, and London were taken one by one and then burned. The next objective was the Tournelles, and then finally near Patay, a city just a short distance northwest of Orleans, there was a pitched battle between the English and the French under Burgundy on one side and the French led by Joan on the other. She next appeared in Rheims, where Southey left her after the coronation of Charles. Joan’s successful military career lasted from February 23, 1429, when she set out from Vaucouleurs for Chinon, until July 17, 1429, when after the coronation of Charles she declared that her mission was fulfilled.

The poet did not deviate from the historical account of the military exploits of the Maid of Orleans, so familiar
to every student of French history. While the girl tended her father’s flock around her native Domremy on the Meuse River, she had a vision in which she learned that she was divinely appointed to lift the siege of Orleans, to break the power of the English in France, and at Rheims to crown the young king, Charles VII. It was fairly easy to convince three — her uncle, Sir Robert of Vaucouleurs, and Charles — that she had really been thus delegated, but the doctors of theology were not willing to believe her until she miraculously revealed that her armor awaited her in a certain tomb. Six days after her departure from Chinon with her army, she camped in sight of Orleans and waited for the morning. Charged with patriotism, love for the suffering French in Orleans, and complete faith in and loyalty to their feminine leader, her men fought valiantly and successfully, putting the English to flight in each new attack on their strongholds around Orleans. Her final and greatest victory was at Patay, where the English leader Talbot determined to redeem himself of the insult of being defeated by a peasant girl on the field of battle. The English and their French allies fought desperately, but their efforts were in vain, for, as Joan said, God had ordained that she and her forces should be victorious. It was in this battle that the brave English Talbot mortally wounded Conrade just before the latter slew him. Conrade
had been Joan's faithful leader, warrior, and protector in all her battles. There remained only the familiar conclusion of the story, her coronation of the king.

The story of Joan of Arc, with its series of heroic deeds, bears little if any resemblance to what we ordinarily think of as plot. It is almost totally lacking in those devices which go to make up a well-constructed plot, such as feeling, motivation, surprise, and suspense. Joan knew what she was expected to do, and except for the question raised by the theologians concerning the authenticity of her call (and the author quickly dispensed with that question by means of the supernatural), she proceeded without opposition to the accomplishment of her mission. The English themselves gave her some trouble, but there was never any doubt concerning the outcome of a single combat. When she rode alone into the camp of the enemy, she was sure to return without any injury whatever. Throughout the entire poem the reader never feels any misgivings concerning her safety or the outcome of her efforts. For the most part, the story is told event by event -- one not necessarily preparing for the next. The poet probably meant for the coronation of Charles at Rheims to be the climax of his story, but it has none of the force or effect of a climax.

With Conrade’s disappointment over Agnes and with the story of Isabel and Francis, the love element enters but is
inadequately developed. In the disguise of Theodore we have another familiar device, but it too displays the author's immaturity.

A very poor characteristic of the plot of the poem is found in the way the poet tells of the fall of the soldiers. His desire was that this part not be a mere cataloguing of deaths, yet his own method was hardly a more pleasing one. The following is an example of his favorite method. Notice the author's reminiscences of the fallen one:

Conrade the next foe
Smote where the heaving membrane separates
The chambers of the trunk. The dying man
In his lord's castle dwelt, for many a year,
A well-beloved servant: he could sing
Carols for Shrovetide or for Candlemas,
Songs for the wassail, and when the boar's head,
Crowned with gay garlands and with rosemary,
Smoked on the Christmas board; he went to war,
Following the lord he loved, and saw him fall
Beneath the arm of Conrade, and expired,
Slain on his master's body. 9

Another fault of the structure of the poem is the author's excessive use of the flash-back device to tell earlier history. These stories are too long and have a tendency to confuse the reader. Furthermore, they are too obviously the author's means of delaying the narration of the main story. The author should have devoted fewer lines to previous events and then have been more deliberate in recounting the battles in which Joan participated. The

descriptions of the battles then would be less confusing and less difficult to unravel.

Now the actors of the story should be considered. In Joan of Arc it would seem that Southey had one aim, simply to tell the story of Joan's accomplishing what she was divinely called to do. To further this aim, he used characters that seemed to be stationed along the way, waiting to be called into action. These characters, with possibly only one exception, show little change or growth. However, it must be remembered that the action of the poem covers a very brief period in the lives of these people. Furthermore, Southey drew rather hasty but fairly accurate sketches of historical characters.

The young Charles is the same degenerate character that history records. During Joan's brief stay in his court she reminded him that more pressing matters demanded her attention than his gaiety and feasting, while he simply replied, "This is no time for cares." 10 Conrad said to him,

"It is pleasant, King of France,"
Said he, "to sit, and hear the harper's song.
Far other music hear the men of Orleans:
Famine is there; and there the imploring cry
Of Hunger ceases not." 11


11 Ibid., p. 37.
To this the monarch had no answer except the exclamation:  

"Cease to interrupt  
Our hour of festival. It is not thine  
To instruct me in my duty."\(^{12}\)

When the real situation of the country was impressed upon him, he was ready to fly with his low-class favorites to Dauphiny. His mistress, Agnes, reproved him for his indifference toward the cries for help coming from Orleans and his willingness to evade the issue by running away. Even in the coronation hour the Maid of Orleans felt it necessary to counsel him on the right attitude toward his duties and the just and righteous conduct of the affairs of France.

Of the lad Theodore, Southey made an interesting character, yet he fell short of the possibilities of this young sweetheart of Joan. When he first entered the story, Joan had not yet received her call. At that time he was quite unaware of the price of the peace and safety of a fireside in France.

"And I am content to dwell in peace,  
Albeit inglorious, thanking the good God  
Who made me to be happy."\(^{13}\)

Yet before Joan left Chinon, Theodore made his appearance, desirous of fighting beside her for France. The Maid asked him to return to his aged mother, and, although she thought that he did so, he did not. He disguised himself and, in

\(^{12}\)Ibid.   \(^{13}\)Ibid., p. 14.
accord with an agreement with Conrade, fought dauntlessly beside Joan, each shielding her as much as possible from the blows of the enemy. In the attack on the Tournelles under fierce fighting he met his death, and under cover of night was borne from the battlefield by the gentle Conrade. He had asked Conrade not to let him lie among the slain on the field where Joan might find him and thus discover his gentle deceit. Joan, however, had recognized him when he fell, and was already beside him when Conrade came to take away his body.

Conrade, loyal to France, had no feeling of respect for the king, because of the latter's many undesirable qualities of character. Moreover, Charles had lured the chaste and innocent Agnes, fiancee of Conrade, into his court to be his mistress. So it was for France and for Joan only that he fought untiringly by her side, foremost in every attack. When, in the battle of Patay, Conrade received the death blow, he requested Joan to see that his estate be given to a loyal and struggling young couple, Francis and Isabel, that these two might spend their lives in peace and safety. Conrade, in his scorn of evil, his fidelity to right, his fearlessness in battle, bears a resemblance to the heroes of *The Faerie Queene*.14 Furthermore,

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14Spenser, especially in *The Faerie Queene*, was a major source of inspiration to young Southey.
his protective attitude toward Isabel and Joan, his sincere religious nature, his last act of benevolence, and his courageous death accentuate this resemblance.

Of the array of brave French warriors who fought beside Joan, one other deserves special mention. Dunois, Bastard of Orleans, gave himself to the cause of the dauphin's men because, fighting beside the English were the hated Burgundians, traitors to France and enemies of the Armagnacs. His motive was partly vengeance for the death of his father, the Duke of Orleans, at the hands of the Duke of Burgundy. Furthermore, he had a brother whom he hoped to free from English captivity. Dunois entered the story at the same time that Joan did and fought fiercely to the end of the victory at Patay, only to be insignificantly lost in the crowd at the coronation in Rheims. In this character and in others it is clearly seen that Southey failed to make satisfactory disposal of his characters as he finished with them in the story.

Of the English leaders Southey treated one with sympathy and admiration — the brave Talbot. Talbot felt that in being defeated by a woman he had been disgraced and had brought shame to the English forces. Without thought of his own safety, he fought beyond his physical strength and applied his best knowledge of warfare to redeem this lost honor. Each time that he yielded ground, he did so with
admirable reluctance. The death that he finally met is one fitting for such a warrior. It was Conrade who slew him, but not before the former had himself received a death blow from the brave English soldier.

In his treatment of the heroine Southey neither confirmed nor denied the divinity of her call; he related the story with a seemingly unbiased opinion. However, in his original preface to the poem he presented argument to the effect that whether or not her call and leadership were divine, it was impossible for her to have acted by a pre-conceived human plot. His treatment of her is as honest as that of the ordinary French patriot. She had the tenderness native to her sex, and keenly felt her loss when her beloved Theodore was killed. Her grief, however, seemed to be that of a woman who had lost a childhood friend instead of a sweetheart. Southey failed to make clear strokes in his picture of the woman Joan; that of the warrior is better. On this phase of the character Southey said:

I have endeavored to avoid what appears to me the common fault of epic poems, and to render the Maid of Orleans interesting. With this intent, I have given her, not the passion of love, but the remembrance of subdued affection, a lingering of human feelings not inconsistent with the enthusiasm and holiness of her character.¹⁵

Joan had a gentle, sensitive religious nature, yet she was arrogant in the face of the doctors of theology who questioned her indifference to orthodox Catholic practices. Believing that her fate was divinely decreed, she dared the bravest and the fiercest of the English warriors, as if she thought herself possessor of a charmed life. Her faith in her own dexterity was her faith in God. Again the reader sees Southey's lack of skill in painting clear-cut pictures of his characters in his lack of details or his use of inappropriate details. The poet leaves Joan in her supreme hour of triumph, yet the scene is not a climactic, triumphant one. It loses force by the didactic speech of the heroine to her king. While she clasped his knees in the attitude of the lowliest and humblest subject, she admonished him in the tone and words of a Hebrew prophet. The reader has the feeling that Southey's verbosity in this scene prevents his giving an artistic finish to his characterization of the heroine.

In his original preface to Joan of Arc Southey stated, "It is the common fault of epic poems, that we feel little interest for the heroes they celebrate." His poem does inspire interest in his heroine, yet his inadequate treatment fails to satisfy that interest. Neither is the reader satisfied with Southey's treatment of other characters. To

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16 Ibid., p. 3.
the "blameless queen" Mary, Agnes, Isabel, Francis -- all interesting characters -- Southey devotes just enough lines to arouse interest and curiosity. But he does not appease that interest. Further in his preface he stated:

Secondary characters should not be introduced merely to fill a procession; neither should they be so prominent as to throw the principal into the shade.¹⁷

He was consistent with the second part of that statement, but not with the first. The leaders of various divisions of the two armies have their parts to play, but those parts are not clearly defined. The jumble of historical names mentioned creates a melee in the mind of the reader equal to the real conflict on the battlefield. It is safe to conclude that any merit that this poem possesses does not lie in the general treatment of characters.

Joan of Arc contains many passages of description that indicate promise. The following description of nightfall, for example, might have come from the pen of a much more mature poet:

And now beneath the horizon westering slow
Had sunk the orb of day: o'er all the vale
A purple softness spread, save where some tree
Its lengthened shadow stretched, or winding stream
Mirrored the light of heaven, still traced distinct
When twilight dimly shrouded all beside.
A grateful coolness freshened the calm air,

¹⁷Ibid.
And the hoarse grasshoppers their evening song
Sung shrill and ceaseless, as the dews of night
descended.\(^\text{18}\)

And the soul and imagination of the most exacting critic
would feel the appeal of the following passage:

"... but in riper years,
When as my soul grew strong in solitude,
I saw the eternal energy pervade
The boundless range of nature, with the sun
Pour life and radiance from his flamy path,
And on the lowliest floweret of the field
The kindly dewdrops shed; and then I felt
That he who formed this goodly frame of things
Must needs be good, and with a Father's name
I called on him, and from my burdened heart
Poured out the yearnings of unmingled love.
Methinks it is not strange, then, that I fled
The house of prayer, and made the lonely grove
My temple, at the foot of some old oak
Watching the little tribes that had their world
Within its mossy bark; or laid me down
Beside the rivulet whose murmuring
Was silence to my soul, and marked the swarm
Whose light-edged shadows on the bedded sand
Mirrored their mazy sports, -- the insect hum,
The flow of waters, and the song of birds,
Making a holy music to mine ear.
Oh! was it strange, if for such scenes as these,
Such deep devoutness, such intense delight
Of quiet adoration, I forsook
The house of worship? -- strange that when I felt
How God had made my spirit quick to feel
And love whate'er was beautiful and good,
And from aught evil and deformed to shrink
Even as with instinct, -- father! was it strange
That in my heart I had no thought of sin
And did not need forgiveness."\(^\text{19}\)

Notice the romanticism in this passage. We can detect a
spirit strangely similar to the pantheistic spirit of Wordsworth.

\(^{18}\)"Joan of Arc," Poetical Works of Southey, p. 17.
\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 31.
An analysis of the two passages quoted above will disclose that Southey even in this poem attained a fair degree of skill in the use of blank verse. Notice the improvement of the second over the first.

Southey was right in maintaining that the work is full of flaws. The flaws are too numerous for detailed discussion in this study. The whole poem -- characters, action, scenes -- lacks finish. The poem is one great display of the immaturity of a very ambitious young writer. Still the poem possesses merit. To literary critics it has been a fertile field for practice in adverse criticism. One who reads narrative poetry solely for an entertaining story will not be greatly disappointed with it. To the reader of Southey's day it was a change from the stilted poetic tendencies of the age of Dryden. Viewed in the light of a study of all his poems it was to Southey himself a brave beginning of a long literary career that was looked on favorably by outstanding writers of his day. It was the poem that brought his first literary recognition. While he later realized that it was of little literary value, he continued to love the poem for what it had meant to him as a youth. Of a mature writer it would be most unworthy; of a nineteen-year-old boy who had previously written only a few lines of poetry, it possessed worth and promise of much worthwhile verse to follow. Whether or not the promise was fulfilled will be disclosed in succeeding chapters.
CHAPTER III

MADOC

MADOC was the second long poem written by Southey. It is neither so bad as Joan of Arc nor so good as Thalaba, Kehama, and Roderick. For that reason it has never had the bitter denunciation nor the high praise of Southey's critics. Yet a few have recognized in MADOC a very worthwhile piece of work. Let us for a moment consider a few of their remarks. The poet himself said, "Yesterday I finished 'MADOC,' thank God, and thoroughly to my satisfaction."1 He believed this to be the best poem written since Milton's Paradise Lost. Thomas Frognall Dibdin in his The Library Companion said, "MADOC, though full of wild imagery, and with verse of occasionally uncouth structure, is not destitute of some of the most brilliant touches of the poet."2 Beers made this statement: "The story is not badly told; the measure is correct if not distinguished; and the style is simple, clear, and in pure taste."3 It is true that MADOC is a mediocre piece of work and for that reason does not stand out in

English literature. Yet "Scott declared that he had read it
three times since his first cursory perusal, and each time
with increased admiration of the poetry."  

This poem was begun the year following the completion
of Joan of Arc (1794), but was not ready for publication for
eleven years. One reason for this delay was that the pub-
lication of Joan of Arc renewed his interest in that earlier
poem. After the favorable reception of Joan, he set to work
to improve the poem and prepare it for a second edition,
which came out in 1798. He finished Madoc in 1799, and
Coleridge advised him to publish the poem at once and to
defer making changes of any importance till a second edition.
But in the approximate four years since the publication of
Joan of Arc he had perceived many of his deficiencies as a
writer and was determined to avoid in Madoc faults such as
those of the earlier poem. He hoped to make this the great-
est poem that he would produce. It was this desire that led
him to Wales in 1801 to become better acquainted with Welsh
scenery, manners, and traditions. He spent practically all
of the year 1804 in diligent reconstruction of the poem. In
its original form Madoc consisted of fifteen books or six
thousand lines. The improved version, an enlargement of the
first, consisted of two books, each divided into shorter
cantos. The entire poem contains forty-four cantos. This

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4 Edward Dowden, Southey, p. 190.
improved version was published in 1805, and in 1807 a second edition was brought out. This latter showed very few additional changes.

The first book of the poem is based on a very interesting chapter of the history of Wales. Southey studied the historical background for this part, according to Beers, "from Giraldus Cambrensis, Evans' 'Specimens,' the 'Triads of Bardism,' the 'Cambrian Biography,' and similar sources." From the middle of the fifth century, when the Romans withdrew from Britain, the little country of Wales, except for a few brief intervals of comparative peace, knew nothing but war -- war against the Scots of Ireland and the Saxons, ecclesiastical war with the Roman Church, internal wars among the people of her three territorial divisions, war against the Danes, and war against the Normans. Hated most by the Welsh were the Saxons and the Normans. Gwynedd was the strongest of the three territorial divisions and held out most obstinately against Anglo-Norman power and influence.

Anglo-Norman successes and acquisitions were frequently wiped out, for the time at any rate, by the unconquerable tenacity of the Welsh people, while every now and again some great warrior arose who rolled the whole tide of alien conquest, . . . back again pell-mell across the border, and restored Wales, panting, harried,

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5Beers, op. cit., p. 237.

6Southey spelled the word Gwyneth. It is the old Welsh name of the present North Wales.
and bloody, to the limits within which William the Norman found it.  

In the year 1156, the time of Henry II of England, Prince Owen of Gwynedd arose in power. His life was one long career of successful and almost unabated warfare against the enemy. On Owen's death his son, the poet-Prince Howel, took up the rule of Gwynedd. He was killed soon afterwards by his half-brother, Dafydd. It was at this point in Welsh history, 1169, that Madoc, also son of Owen, grew weary of the struggles in his native land, and, as Bradley wrote,

manned a small fleet and sailed out over the western seas for many months till he discovered a strange country, good in all things for the habitation of man. From this venture, so the legend runs, Madoc returned [9], and, collecting a following of three hundred men in North Wales, again safely crossed the Atlantic and there founded, in what is supposed to have been Mexico, a colony of Welshmen, from whom sprang the royal dynasty of Montezuma.  

There has been much speculation concerning the truth or fiction of this tale about Madoc. Arthur Granville Bradley made this comment:

If this were merely a fairy tale it would certainly be out of place here; but as regards the Welsh colony it has been considered not wholly unworthy of the attention of some serious ethnologists. It may further be

7Arthur Granville Bradley, Owen Glyndwr, p. 42.
8Southey spelled the name Hoel.
9Southey's poem opens with this return of Madoc.
10Bradley, op. cit., p. 47.
remarked, without comment, that a comparatively modern and (in the vulgar sense) popular short history of Wales treats the whole story as authentic fact without even a suggestion of any legendary attributes! There we will leave it.\textsuperscript{11}

Dafydd,\textsuperscript{12} the usurping Prince, did not continue the traditional enmity with the Saxons. He became friendly with Henry of England and married Emma, the sister of this Saxon king.

Part One of Southey's poem opens with Madoc's return to Wales shortly after this marriage. Immediately after landing he came upon his good old foster-father Urien. After their greetings were over, Madoc inquired concerning the members of his family, and Urien told him of many atrocious acts of King David against his father's race. Madoc determined if possible to avoid hostilities with his brother. In order to do that, he would speedily set about the accomplishment of his purpose -- to find men, women, and children to take back to his colony in America.

At the feast that evening with his brother and the courtiers Madoc related the story of his voyage to the new continent and of his experiences among the natives. Landing on the strange shore, he fortunately had gained the confidence of one of the natives, who conducted him to an inland settlement. There he was well received by the queen

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., footnote.

\textsuperscript{12}Southey spelled the name David.
and her people. He learned that this tribe, the Hoamen, had been conquered by the Aztecas\textsuperscript{13} and were living under heavy vassalage. The heaviest tribute that they had to pay was in having their children taken for sacrifices to the gods of the Aztecas. Aided by his few men and their superior knowledge and weapons, he led the Hoamen to victory against the Aztecas. He then entered into agreement with the king and the people of Aztlan to the effect that the Hoamen were no longer vassals of the Aztecas and that there would be no more human sacrifices made to their gods. Settling his little colony in a snug valley, he had set sail for Wales.

David and his guests were greatly interested in the wonderful things that Madoc had to tell, but after that night the latter lost no more time with them. On the other hand, he spent his time visiting familiar places in Wales, telling his story, and inspiring interest in his American settlement. A comparatively short time later he was ready to embark with his company, which was large enough to fill six ships. Llewelyn,\textsuperscript{14} son of Yorwerth, and Rodri, Madoc's brother, who lately had escaped from imprisonment imposed upon him by David, preferred to remain in Wales, where they would work gradually toward an open rebellion against the

\textsuperscript{13}Southey used this spelling all the way through the poem.

\textsuperscript{14}Yorwerth was the heir to Owen's throne, but because of a facial defect, he was set aside and finally killed. Llewelyn, therefore, was the rightful heir to the throne.
usurper. Included in the sailing party were the young illegitimate child of Hoel, the child's mother, and Madoc's sister Goervyl. The first part of the poem ends with the departure of the six ships, and no further reference is made in the poem to events prior to the departure.

It was not possible for Southey to be as sure of the authenticity of the second part of the poem as he was of the first. For the background of the Aztec portion of his poem he studied "old Spanish chronicles of the conquest of Mexico and the journals of modern travellers in America."\(^5\)

Efforts to ferret out historical facts relative to the setting of this part of the poem have revealed contradictions too numerous to recount. It is a pretty well known fact that the Aztecs, called Mexicans, arrived in the Valley of Mexico in 1196. They moved about in the section until approximately 1325; in that year they settled on the present site of Mexico City and gave rise to an empire ruled over by the Montezumas. A question that has puzzled historians, archaeologists, and ethnologists through the centuries is where they came from before they arrived in the Valley. It seems rather certain that they came from Aztlan, a city of considerable culture, but no one probably will ever determine where this city was located. It has been placed in various sections of the territory now occupied by Southwestern United

\(^5\)Beers, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 237.
States. The real answer to the question was erased by the destructive conquest led by Cortez in the sixteenth century.

Southey himself gave the following historical information:  

The historical facts on which this Poem is founded may be related in a few words. . . . Madoc . . . sailed west in search of some better resting-place. The land which he discovered pleased him: he left there part of his people, and went back to Wales for a fresh supply of adventurers, with whom he again set sail, and was heard of no more. Strong evidence has been adduced that he reached America, and that his posterity exist there to this day, on the southern branches of the Missouri, retaining their complexion, their language, and, in some degree, their arts.

About the same time, the Aztecas, an American tribe, in consequence of certain calamities, and of a particular omen, forsook Aztlan, their own country, under the guidance of Yuhidhtiton. They became a mighty people, and founded the Mexican empire, taking the name of Mexicans, in honor of Mexitli, their tutelary god. Their emigration is here connected with the adventures of Madoc, and their superstition is represented as the same which their descendants practised, when discovered by the Spaniards. The manners of the Poem . . . will be found historically true.

A careful study and comparison of the foregoing quotations from Bradley and Southey and the contents of the poem itself will reveal glaring contradictions. It would have been impossible for the poet to make his poem agree with the various

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16 The historian Clavigero was one of Southey's leading sources of material for the American setting of Madoc.

17 Southey, Preface to Madoc, reprinted in Poems of Robert Southey, edited by Maurice Fitzgerald, p. 460. (This book contains Southey's prefaces to the first nine volumes of the ten-volume edition of 1837-8 and the following four poems used in this study: Madoc, Thalaba the Destroyer, The Curse of Kehama, and Roderick, the Last of the Goths. All future references to Southey's prefaces or poems will be made to this book unless a statement is made to the contrary.)
statements of historians who do not agree among themselves. So he quite justifiably placed the entire action of Part Two in and near the Valley of Mexico. Though we cannot say exactly how many years the action of the poem covered, we do know that it all took place in the last decade of the twelfth century. The story ends immediately after the close of the century.

In the opening of the second part Madoc arrived at his colony, which his friends had loyally named Caermadoc in his honor. Soon afterwards he learned that there was trouble again with the Aztecas. The priests, claiming that their offended gods were demanding human sacrifices, had planted dislike of the white Stranger in the minds of the Aztecas. Even some of the Hoamen had been shaken in their affection by the tribal priests. Madoc set himself courageously to fight these signs of rebellion. On one occasion an evil Hoamen priest overruled the wishes of the queen and sacrificed a child to a huge snake. Erillyab, the queen, called Madoc, and a long fight ensued. He quickly killed the priest, but it was only after a hard struggle that the white men together succeeded in killing the snake. The death of the snake convinced the Hoamen that the Snake God was false and that the God of Madoc was the real one. A mass conversion of the Hoamen followed.

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18 Southey used this form for the singular and the plural.
The Aztecas of Aztlan, especially the priests, were highly displeased with the turn of events in the Hoamen village. Two Azteca warriors were sent to catch one of the Strangers to sacrifice to their angry deity. It happened that the young son of Hoel was the victim. Madoc, trying to save his nephew, followed the kidnapper and was led into ambush and captured. Little Hoel was not killed but was thrust into a cave to starve (that the water-god might be appeased). While Madoc was chained and his life was in direst jeopardy, word was spread among the Aztecas that the enraged white Strangers, his companions, were at the gates of Aztlan. The people then had to turn attention to the defense of their city. While the fight was in progress, a tender-hearted priestess released Madoc and led him to the child Hoel. In a short time the baby was with its mother and Madoc was in the battle. By that time the Hoamen had come to assist their friends against the Aztecas.

The victory fell to Madoc, and the Aztecas retreated to Patamba, across the lake, leaving Aztlan to the victors. The Aztecas made one attempt to retake their city, but were unsuccessful. When they were planning another attack, a neighboring mountain burst forth in volcanic eruption, pouring forth a deluge of lava. Almost simultaneously an earthquake heaved up the waters of the lake, and Patamba with nine tenths of its inhabitants was swept away. Madoc did
what he could to relieve the survivors. He rescued many from the water, sent food and clothing, and offered shelter to the king until the latter could decide on the next move. In the midst of this catastrophe a bird called to the king, telling him to depart. The king believed that the gods willed that he go westward to seek a dwelling place for himself and those remaining of his tribe. A few preferred to remain at Aztlan; others remained because they were incapable of making a journey. Madoc received all of these with kindness and incorporated them with his own people.

So in the land
Madoc was left sole Lord; and far away
Yuhidhtiton led forth the Aztecas,
To spread in other lands Mexitli's name,
And rear a mightier empire, and set up
Again their foul idolatry; till Heaven,
Making blind Zeal and bloody Avarice
Its ministers of vengeance, sent among them
The heroic Spaniard's unrelenting sword.\(^{19}\)

Thus Southey concluded his poem, which, he said, "assumes not the degraded title of Epic." While Madoc is not without merit, it falls pathetically short of the author's estimate. The most obvious fault in the entire poem lies in the two divisions of the plot. A narrative poem of considerable merit could be constructed on a plot involving Prince Owen and his warring sons and grandson. Here the criticism of the Edinburgh Review is justified.

\(^{19}\)Madoc, Part II, Canto XXVII, ll. 386f.
The adventures of Madoc in Wales have little interest or coherence in themselves, and bear no relation whatsoever to his exploits among the savages. The European story, moreover, is not only quite unconnected with the American one, but it is unfinished and imperfect. After attempting to interest us, for eighteen sections, in the fortunes of Owen's children, Mr. Southey snatches us away from them, just as their destiny appears to be approaching a crisis; -- one of the captive brethren has newly broken out of David's dungeon, and a picturesque personage of a nephew, who walks upon the moonlight beach, with a boat on his back, and an oar in his hand, has vowed to drive him from the throne of his father. The Saxon princess too, seems very much in the humor for elopement, and the bishop in no small danger of lapidation. It is rather injudicious in the author, we think, after having compelled his reader to study the complicated politics of this unhappy family, to drop the curtain upon them, at the very time when their story begins to be interesting and easily understood. 20

The adventures of Madoc in Aztlán is a subject broad enough for a long poem. The situation in Wales would need to be merely mentioned to account for his being in America. After reading of the hero's preliminary exploits in the New World, the reader has a feeling of annoyance when he is made to ramble with Madoc around over Wales and to dip into the unfamiliar lore vaguely touched but not fully explained in the poem. It is with a sigh of relief that the reader finally follows the hero back to the seashore where he is preparing to depart for the country with which the poem is primarily concerned.

Notwithstanding this criticism Southey made some progress in plot development. He gratified the reader with a

little more human interest than he did in Joan of Arc. We shall see that he improved in this element to the point of real skill, as displayed in Roderick. It is in the pathetic love of Coatel and Lincoya that he best provided this element in Madoc. In this poem he employed more skillfully the device of the disguise. He made more interesting use of Senena's disguise than of Theodore's in the earlier poem. However, it was with the element of suspense, a most important device in any narrative, that he made the greatest improvement. From the evil Amalahta the reader knows to expect some treachery, probably against Goervyl, on whom he early cast lustful glances. There is only the question of when it will come and what the outcome will be. During the absence of the men, fighting in Atzlan, this evil Hoamen with a few other disloyal members of his tribe made his appearance at Gaermadoc, where he thought he could easily overcome any opposition that he might encounter from the defenceless women. The fight that ensued was a good one, well told and filled with much suspense for the reader. Other examples of very effective use of the suspense element are found in the capture of young Hoel, Madoc's fight for his life against the strongest warriors of Aztlan, and Coatel's trial as traitress. In Madoc Southey made a little use of motivation, but not to the extent that he used it in Thalaba, as we shall see in the next chapter.
Southey has been accused of calling the supernatural to aid the machinery of his plots. He seemed to foresee that criticism when he justified his use of the volcanic eruption and the call of the bird in determining the next course of the king of the Aztecas. In a note at this point the poet explained that, in order to be consistent with the manners of the Aztecas he had to use this well-known legend. No better defense of the poet's use of this legend could be made than has been made by the editor of the Quarterly Review.

In Madoc, the next great poem which Mr. Southey produced, we have a series of human adventures and natural difficulties. Madoc is opposed to those who have every advantage on their side, subtlety, impetuous courage, a knowledge of the country, and overwhelming numbers. But he conquers as often by his mildness and forbearance as by his fortitude. The influence of superstition has all the effect upon the minds of his savage enemies which the actual presence of superior agents could bestow on them. Here neither nature nor historical truth is violated. The tribes of Aztlan are impelled by that which is to them a divine power: oracles and omens in the hands of their priests are to them the voice of the gods; and though even here something like machinery is employed, yet it is apparent only through the medium of the passions and purposes which it excites in their breasts. There it acts with demoniacal energy: but our good sense is never shocked by the absurdity of preternatural interference, in favour of either party. The pure faith of Christianity could not be subjected to such profanation, and the unseen influence of the gods of Aztlan yields to the virtue and the wisdom of Madoc.  

21 "Southey's Roderick," Quarterly Review, XIII (April, 1815), 85. (This article is unsigned and the author cannot be identified. The same is true of the article "Southey's The Curse of Kehama," which will be referred to later in this thesis.)
The Edinburgh Review, in its criticism of Madoc, was often too harsh and made too much of minor points. However, the following criticism of the characters of the poem is not exaggerated.

There is scarcely any discrimination of character in all [the part of the poem dealing with North Wales]; every one we hear of is a warlike chieftain, more or less generous or ferocious; and the incidents, being all confined to high life, have in them so little to characterize a race of Celtic mountaineers, that, were it not for the occasional introduction of harps and bards, and names full of 's and 's, we should be apt to forget that the scene was laid in the recesses of North Wales. . . . The American personages are somewhat more varied and discriminated, though there is scarcely any attempt at the delineation of individual character -- that ideal portrait painting, which gives so strong an impression of reality. The pictures are almost all marked only with the general attributes of the class, not with the peculiar features of the individual; -- there are gloomy bigots, and ferocious warriors, and patriotic sovereigns, and grateful adherents, arrayed, skilfully enough, in the costume of their country, but not introduced as real persons to our imagination.22

On the other hand, against that background of indiscriminate characters is an interesting array of individual women who stand out in the story. It was the gentle Saxon Emma, wife of David, who took Madoc's cause to heart and approached her stern, prejudiced husband in behalf of the brothers. With only slight variations in the story she could have been left out altogether, but her presence adds a bit of softness to the court of David. Senena, who disguised herself as Coervyl's page in order to be near the

22Jeffrey, op. cit., p. 10.
lad she loved, and Llaian, loyal mistress of Hoel and mother of his child, did little to further the plot; yet once the reader has met those two, he would dislike having them taken from the story. Two other interesting characters are the gentle yet courageous Coervyl,23 sister to Madoc, and the persevering, kind, and religious Brillyab. The good queen was so loyal to what she thought was best for her people that she could not greatly regret the death of her evil-minded son. The best feminine character in the poem, however, is Coatel, assistant in the Temple of the Gods of the Aztecas. It was she who secretly released the Hoamen Lincoya, held for sacrifice to the gods of her people, and who later warned the Hoamen of the growing dissatisfaction of the Aztecas over the agreement with Madoc. It was also she who went secretly to the cave to comfort the child Hoel, and who released Madoc to fight against her people because they had broken their agreement. Because of her loyalty to her aged father priest she had refused to leave the tribe to be the wife of Lincoya, whom she loved. For her disloyalty to the Aztecas she paid with her life.

Coatel, a very necessary character in the poem, was well developed with all necessary details, even to her inevitable fate.

23See reference to Coervyl, p. 4.
In addition to these feminine characters Southey has a few male characters that are prominent in the second part of the poem, but as was true in Joan of Arc, he failed to develop them well, and to make proper disposal of them at the close of the story. Cadwallon, for example, was one of Southey's most promising characters; yet he was "lost in the crowd" at the conclusion.

Concerning the hero, The Edinburgh Review made this statement:

Madoc himself has the vulgar and inexpiable fault of poetical heroes, that of being too perfect; -- he is more pious than the pious Aeneas himself, and considerably more correct in his deportment to the ladies. He seems to be quite invulnerable indeed to the shafts of Cupid; and testifies no sort of amorous propensities either towards the ruddy damsels of Wales, or the olive princesses of America. In short, he is as sober, prudent, resolute, able-bodied, and fortunate a person, as any poet could wish to have the management of: he sets about all his undertakings like a man who knows perfectly that he can accomplish them, and never fails to get through them, without much discomposure to himself or the reader.24

It is true that the poet endowed his hero with the qualities enumerated above, but the sympathy that the young writer felt for Madoc certainly presented him in a light far different from that shed by the biting sarcasm of the Review. If one were to set about discrediting all the near perfect poetical heroes, it is likely that our library shelves would come to show many rows of empty space now filled with

24 Jeffrey, op. cit., p. 10.
literary works that have thrilled many generations of readers. It is true, however, that the Welsh Prince Madoc, with all his chivalrous traits, brings a slight shock -- not an unpleasant one -- to the reader who ordinarily expects to see a Spanish conquistador stalking through the scenes described in this poem.

The careful reader will find many flaws in this poem, in addition to those already mentioned in connection with characters and plot. It is common knowledge among students of English literature that Southey aspired to great epics, any one of which would make his star bedim that of any earlier epic poet. The very greatness of his ambition often caused some incongruity between his language and his subject matter, the former being of a too lofty nature. For example, when the Hoamen and the Europeans had gathered around the feast, we find the following lines concerning the Welsh mead:

And now Madoc, pouring forth
The ripe metheglin, to Erillyab gave
The horn of silver brim. Taste, Queen and friend,
Said he, what from our father-land we bring,
The old beloved beverage. Sparingly
Drink, for it hath a strength to stir the brain,
And trouble reason, if intemperate lips
Abuse its potency. She took the horn,
And sipt with wary wisdom . . . Canst thou teach us
The art of this rare beverage? quoth the Queen,
Or is the gift reserved for ye alone,
By the Great Spirit, who hath favour'd ye
In all things above us? . . . The Chief replied,
All that we know of useful and of good
Ye also shall be taught, that we may be
One people.25

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25Madoc, Part II, Canto IV, ll. 27f.
To the above criticism of excessive loftiness and elevation might be added obscurity as well as exaggeration, as exemplified in Madoc's description of the storm he had experienced on his first voyage.

Ye who dwell at home,
Ye do not know the terrors of the main!
When the winds blow, ye walk along the shore,
And as the curling billows leap and toss,
Fable that Ocean's mermaid Shepherdess
Drives her white flocks afield, and warns in time
The wary fisherman. Gwendidwy warn'd
When we had no retreat! My secret heart
Almost had fail'd me. . . . Were the Elements
Confounded in perpetual conflict here,
Sea, Air, and Heaven? Or were we perishing,
Where at their source the Floods, for ever thus,
Beneath the nearer influence of the moon,
Labour'd in these mad workings? Did the Waters
Here on their outmost circle meet the void,
The verge and brink of Chaos? Or this Earth . . .
Was it indeed a living thing, . . . its breath
The ebb and flow of Ocean? And had we
Reach'd the storm rampart of its Sanctuary,
The insuperable boundary, raised to guard
Its mysteries from the eye of man profane?\(^{26}\)

The meticulous critics have found many more flaws than those mentioned in this paper. On the other hand, there are more merits to the work than have been or will be pointed out here. Madoc forcefully reveals Southey's gift of narration, description, and creative imagination. No radio sports commentator could surpass this poet as he thrills his readers with the fast-moving play-by-play description of Madoc's fight with the mighty Snake God.\(^{27}\) No details are needed to

\(^{26}\) Ibid., Part I, Canto IV, 11. 178f.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., Part II, Canto VII.
complete the picture of the innocent young Hoel as he was

carried from the Temple to the place of Sacrifice.

Now from the rush-strewn temple they depart.
They place their smiling victim in a car,
Upon whose sides of pearly shell there play'd,
Shading and shifting still, the rainbow light.
On virgin shoulders is he borne aloft,
With dance before, and song and music round;
And thus they seek, in festival array,
The water-side. There lies the sacred bark,
All gay with gold, and garlanded with flowers;
The virgins with the joyous boy embark;
Ten boatmen urge them on; the Priests behind
Follow, and all the long solemnity.
The lake is overspread with boats; the sun
Shines on the gilded prows, the feathery crowns,
The sparkling waves. Green islets float along,
Where high-born damsels, under jasmin bowers,
Raise the sweet voice, to which the echoing oars,
In modulated motion, rise and fall.
The moving multitude along
Flows like a stream; bright shines the unclouded sky;
Heaven, earth, and waters wear one face of joy.
Young Hoel with delight beholds the pomp;
His heart throbs joyfully; and if he thinks
Upon his mother now, 'tis but to think
How beautiful a tale for her glad ear
He hath when he returns. 28

With the beauty of the above passage may be contrasted the
awful, loathsome, but not less vivid scene of the Terrible
God before whom the warriors Tlalala and Ocellopant drank of
their mingled blood before going forth to take a Stranger to
be sacrificed to their god.

On a blue throne, with four huge silver snakes,
As if the keepers of the sanctuary,
Circled, with stretching neck and fangs display'd,
Nexitiلى sate; another graven snake
Belted with scales of gold his monster bulk.

28Ibid., Part II, Canto XII, 11. 91f.
Around the neck a loathsome collar hung,
Of human hearts; the face was mask'd with gold,
His specular eyes seem'd fire; one hand uprear'd
A club, the other, as in battle, held
The shield; and over all suspended hung
The banner of the nation. They beheld
In awe, and knelt before the Terrible God. 29

Here the dreadful priest stabbed the warriors' arms, received
their blood in a golden vase, held it toward the Idol, and
exclaimed,

_Terrible God! Protector of our realm!
Receive thine incense! Let the stream of blood
Ascend to thee delightful._ 30

After this and further acts of consecration of the blood, he
gave the vase to Ocellopán.

_Chiefs, ye have pour'd
Your strength and courage to the Terrible God,
Devoted to his service; take ye now
The beverage he hath hallow'd. In your youth
Ye have quaff'd manly blood, that manly thoughts
Might ripen in your hearts; so now with this,
Which mingling from such noble veins hath flowed,
Increase of valour drink, and added force.
Ocellopán received the bloody vase,
And drank, and gave in silence to his friend
The consecrated draught; then Tlalala
Drain'd off the offering. Braver blood than this
My lips can never taste! quoth he; but soon
Grant me, Mexitli, a more grateful cup, . . .
The stranger's life!_ 31

After such a gruesome picture it is especially pleasant to
recall the peace and tranquillity of lines like the following concerning Madoc's voyage:

29_Ibid., Part II, Canto X, ll. 143f.
30_Ibid., Part II, Canto X, ll. 171f.
31_Ibid., Part II, Canto X, ll. 189f.
But we sailed onward over tranquil seas,  
Wafted by airs so exquisitely mild,  
That even to breathe became an act of will  
And sense and pleasure. Not a cloud by day  
With purple islanded the dark-blue deep;  
By night the quiet billows heaved and glanced  
Under the moon.\textsuperscript{32}

It has been suggested that the popularity of Southey's poetry in his own day might have been due partly to the desirable traits of personality and character of the author. The observing reader can usually detect in a piece of literature clues that will give him knowledge of the kind of person who wrote it. Thus \textit{Madoc} reveals the poet's own personal ideals of religious sincerity, his tenderness for the weak and unfortunate, his admiration for the courageous, and his respect for the rights of the individual to life, liberty and happiness.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, Part I, Canto V, ll. 110f.
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CHAPTER IV

THALABA

As was stated in an earlier chapter, early in his life Southey conceived the idea of writing a great epic featuring each of the major mythologies of the world.

I began with the Mahomedan religion, as being that with which I was then best acquainted myself, and of which every one who had read the Arabian Nights' Entertainments possessed all the knowledge necessary for readily understanding and entering into the intent and spirit of the poem. ¹

Thalaba the Destroyer, therefore, was the first of these mythological poems. Hardly had the last line of Madoc been written when the first line of Thalaba was begun. It was with great vigor that he started this new poem. He was in the home of his friend Charles Danvers when he finished this, his American narrative, and in his preface to the fourth volume of his collected works he said:

When Charles Danvers came down to breakfast on the morning after Madoc was completed, I had the first hundred lines of Thalaba to show him, fresh from the mint. ²

But in the very next paragraph the poet added:


But this poem was neither crudely conceived nor hastily undertaken. I had fixed upon the ground, four years before, for a Mahommedan tale; and in the course of that time the plan had been formed and the materials collected. It was pursued with unabating ardour at Exeter, in the village of Burton, near Christ Church, and afterwards at Kingsdown, till the ensuing spring, when Dr. Beddoes advised me to go to the south of Europe, on account of my health. For Lisbon, therefore we set off.3

A week after landing at Lisbon he resumed work on Thalaba, his favourite work, and completed it at Cintra, in July, 1800, a year and six days after the day of its commencement. The poet, pleased with his poem, called it "a good job done." Then came the task of correcting the manuscript for the press. He read the poem aloud to get the effect upon the ear and made many alterations before it pleased him.

As with Joan of Arc, so with this maturer poem the correction was a rehandling which doubled the writer's work. To draw the pen across six hundred lines did not cost him a pang.4

A transcript of the poem was sent to his friend Rickman in England, and he made arrangements with Messrs. Longman and Rees for its publication. It was printed at Bristol by Biggs and Cottle, and said Southey, "The task of correcting the press was undertaken by Davy and our common friend Danvers, under whose roof it had been begun."5 Concerning

3Ibid.
4Dowden, Southey, p. 70.
5Southey, op. cit., p. 9.
the public's reception of the poem, we have these words from the author:

I was in Portugal when Thalaba was published. Its reception was very different from that with which Joan of Arc had been welcomed: in proportion as the poem deserved better it was treated worse.6

In 1809 Longman published a second edition, a considerable improvement over the first.

This edition is more heavily stopped than that of 1801, to the great improvement of the scene; and the variations from the 1801 text are numerous and important. The mottoes to the different books also appeared first in the 1809 edition, and the notes were much amplified and placed at the end of each book, instead of at the bottom of the page.7

The third edition, appearing in 1814, differs from the second in that the stanzas are numbered and the lines are given the lapidary arrangement that we know today. When Southey prepared the poem for the 1837 collection, he made only minor corrections.

It is impossible to place the exact setting of Thalaba. It is certain that the hero spent his childhood and early youth in the desert wastelands, possibly in Arabia. The execution of his mission carried him by an undetermined route from the ruins of ancient Babylon across the Mediterranean to the North African Coast, where he entered a legendary submarine cavern called Domdaniel. This cavern

6Ibid. (Compare this statement with Dibdin's statement, p. 70.)

is of uncertain locality, though it is said to be near Tunis. I shall dispense with the question of time by placing the story somewhere in that vaguely distant past glorified by the Arabian Nights.

The whole host of Domdaniel, the center of evil magic, had agreed on one aim -- to exterminate the entire race of the good Arab Hodeirah, because from this race was destined to come the Destroyer. Burning in Domdaniel were nine candles, one for each living member of this family, and as long as a single candle was burning, the evil tribe was in danger. The magician Okba, in one murderous visit, extinguished all but two of those candles, one for the young son, Thalaba, and one for his mother. Both of these persons managed to escape his dagger. Shortly afterwards another candle was extinguished by the Death Angel Azrael, and only Thalaba remained to threaten the safety of Domdaniel. Plans were therefore laid by the sorcerers for the death of Thalaba, their mortal enemy.

The story opens with Zeinab, wife of Hodeirah, and her child Thalaba as they trudged wearily through the desert, wondering where they would find sustenance and shelter. The mother had little hope of ever finding comfort, either physical or spiritual, after the loss of her husband and children. Suddenly they came upon a beautiful palace that appeared in the desert as if by magic. Here the good Aswad
took them in and gave them relief from their long journey. While they were here, the Death Angel visited them and took away Aswad and Zeinab. Although Thalaba begged to be taken, Azrael told him that he had a mission to fulfill before he should join his mother.

'Thou art chosen forth
To do the will of Heaven;
To avenge thy father's death,
The murder of thy race;
To work the mightiest enterprize
That mortal man hath wrought.
Live! and remember destiny
Hath mark'd thee from mankind!' 8

Thalaba was found in the desert by the good Arab, Moath, and taken to live with him and his daughter. Life was pleasant for the youth as he grew up under the genial guidance of his foster father and the tender love of Oneiza. Moath taught him the things that every young Arab should know.

A few years later the first attempt was made on Thalaba's life by the magician Abdaldar. When he came to Moath's tent, the good old man believed him to be an honest traveler, and offered him hospitality. While the magician was bending over the sleeping youth to stab him, a simoom struck him and left him dead. Thalaba took from the dead man's hand a magic ring, asked God to hallow it, and put it on his own hand. The ring became a talisman of protection to him, and as long as he had it, no evil could

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8Thalaba, Book I, Stanza 54, 11. 65f.
come to him. By virtue of the ring he learned from a demon spirit that it was the magician Okba who had killed his father and brothers and that the reason for this murder was that they were dangerous for the whole tribe of sorcerers. He also learned that his father's sword was in Domdaniel, surrounded by fire; this was the sword that the Destroyer would use in the execution of his mission. It was soon after receiving this information that the lad had to leave his foster father's tent and undertake the task destined for him. His mother's spirit appeared to him and told him to go to Babylon, where he would learn from the Angels Haruth and Maruth what talisman his task would require.

Before he reached this destination, one other attempt was made on his life. But the magic ring protected him, and another sorcerer, Lobaba, disguised as a wise old man, was destroyed. Near Bagdad were the ruins of Ancient Babylon; and in a cave near these ruins the two Angels were chained for the expiation of a great sin. With difficulty Thalaba reached them and learned that he already possessed the coveted Talisman -- Faith. In possession of this knowledge, the youth set out to accomplish his mission: vengeance for his family's murder, and the destruction of Domdaniel.

"The Masters of the Spell," however, were not to let him proceed without attempts to stop him. Their next attempt was to tempt him to sin and forgetfulness of his
purpose. Near the ruins of Babylon he found a beautiful steed. He mounted the steed and was carried over hill, dale, and stream on a two-day ride which ended in a Garden of Paradise. Here was everything that a man could wish to satisfy his physical desires -- music, dancing, beauty, food, girls. Among the bevy of beautiful girls, here for the delight of the men, he found his own Oneiza, held an unwilling prisoner. She told him that the Garden was a wicked place and that they should fly at once. Finding no way out of the valley, they decided that the only thing to do was to kill Alpaidin, the sorcerer who maintained the place by magic, and thereby break the spell. The destruction of the spell was followed by the shrieks and howls of demons, the trembling of the earth, and the demolition of the Garden. Believing that perhaps his mission was thereby fulfilled, he persuaded Oneiza to marry him. Although she remembered that his call was divine and that he was "set apart from mankind," she let him persuade her, and they were married. Immediately after the wedding Azrael visited the bridal chamber and Oneiza was taken. He felt such grief over his sin and his loss that he became almost mad. Only the appearance of his wife's spirit preserved his sanity and renewed his zeal for his mission.

Advised by an old Dervise, Thalaba set out to find the
Simorg\(^9\) to receive instructions for the mission. This was a most difficult journey, for the way was beset with traps placed for him by the enemies. To make matters seem worse, in the cave at Babylon he had discarded the magic ring. It was after many unhappy experiences that he was finally able to proceed unmolested. Continuing on his way to the Simorg, he had to pass through vast stretches of snow-covered country. He was guided by a beautiful Green Bird, the embodiment of the lovely lass Lila; and his transportation was by means of a sledge drawn by a team of sad-faced Dogs\(^10\) that had been placed for his convenience by an unseen Power. Finally he reached the valley of the Ancient Bird, where he received his directions.

'Northward by the stream proceed;
In the Fountain of the Rock
Wash away thy worldly stains
Kneel thou there, and seek the Lord,
And fortify thy soul with prayer.
Thus prepared, ascend the Sledge;
Be bold, be wary; seek and find!
God hath appointed all.'\(^11\)

\(^9\) Fitzgerald quotes in Poems of Robert Southey, p. 748, Fox's definition of Simorg. "Simorg Anka is a bird or griffin of extraordinary strength and size (as its name imports, signifying as large as thirty eagles), which, according to the Eastern writers, was sent by the Supreme Being to subdue and chastise the rebellious Dives. It was supposed to possess rational faculties, and the gift of speech."

\(^10\) These Dogs were reincarnations of unfortunate souls enslaved by the evil Masters of Magic. They willingly served Thalaba, for they recognized in him the destroyer of the power which maintained their captivity.

Continuing his way, he came to a boat on a rivulet. Here he found a beautiful melancholy Damosel who rowed him along the stream into a cavern where he found many poor souls held captive by the evil masters of Domdaniel, awaiting deliverance by the Destroyer. Overcoming all obstacles in his way, he went through the fire to his father's sword, striking terror to the hearts of all the inhabitants of the dreadful place. Armed with this sword, he made his way to the chief object of worship in Domdaniel -- a living image of Eblis, chief of the Domdaniel empire. The hero's mission was fulfilled thus:

Thalaba knew that his death-hour was come;  
And on he leapt, and springing up,  
Into the Idol's heart  
Hilt deep he plunged the Sword.  
The Ocean-vault fell in, and all were crush'd.  
In the same moment, at the gate  
Of Paradise, Oneiza's Houri form  
Welcomed her Husband to eternal bliss.  

With these lines Southey brought his poem to a close.

In the matter of plot, as Madoc is an improvement over Joan of Arc, so Thalaba is an improvement over Madoc. It is in regard to motivation that this poem shows greatest superiority over the two earlier poems. The plot of Thalaba, for a poem of this nature, was well motivated. Contrary to the criticism of the Edinburgh Review, each event is more than a space filler or the author's effort to use all the

\[12\text{Ibid., Book XII, Stanza 36, ll. 501f.}\]
material he had gathered. The following is an interesting but unjustified criticism:

The author has set out thus with a resolution to make an oriental story, and a determination to find the materials of it in the books to which he had access. Every incident, therefore, and description, -- every superstitious usage, or singular tradition, that appeared to him susceptible of poetical embellishment, or capable of picturesque representation, he has set down for this purpose, and adopted such a fable and plan of composition, as might enable him to work up all his materials, and interweave every one of his quotations, without any extraordinary violation of unity or order. When he had filled his common-place book, he began to write; and his poem is little else than his common-place book versified.  

On the other hand, each incident or episode has a definite part in the author's general purpose. If an incident does not seem to be a natural outgrowth of a previous one, its purpose will be found in the symbolism (or allegory) of the poem as a whole. For illustration I will take his experience in the Garden of Paradise and events growing out of it. There is no evident connection between this and the earlier experience with Haruth and Maruth, but it has a purpose. It is a scheme designed by the enemy to distract the Destroyer from his purpose. Here we find a much more subtle scheme than any tried previously. Formerly he was armed only with the magic ring, made effective for him by Allah. This was a sort of blind protection for the youth, and all he had to do about it was to wear it. But after he had grown older,

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had had more experiences, and had learned that Faith would lead him to the attainment of his goal, then the enemy would have to make different approaches, involving more craftiness. Taking him to the Garden of Paradise was an effort to make him forget his mission in satisfying the desires of his body. His faithfulness overcame this temptation. Then this very success gave rise to further temptation. The Sultan wanted to give him wealth, fame, and power as rewards for the destruction of the wicked Garden. But these would have interfered with the plan predestined for him. Even his beloved Oneiza unwittingly became a source of temptation. His marriage to her delayed his work but did not prevent it. Her death, here seemingly a supernatural intervention, brought him natural human grief; this grief for awhile seemed to make him lose faith. However, after the voice of his dead wife had come to him, he was soon on his way again with fresh zeal and greater determination than ever.

This discussion is not an attempt to explain any part of the elaborate symbolism of the poem, but, as stated above, it is to show that the poet planned and motivated the events in Thalaba. This more effective use of motivation led to more logical rising action and climax. In Thalaba the climax came with the destruction of the Living Image. Although this climax bears some resemblance to that of The Curse of Kehama, it is inferior to the latter in power, as we shall see in the next chapter.
As would be expected in a narrative involving the doings of magicians, the entire poem is full of disguise, magic spells, and enchantment; and thereby the interest is heightened. Notwithstanding the general improvement of Thalaba over Madoc, it must be admitted that in suspense the latter is better. In the element of human emotions, however, the poet made some advance, as exemplified in the love between Uneiza and Thalaba, the love between Okba and Laila, and the conversion of Haimuna. We shall see in a later chapter that in Roderick, the Last of the Goths he displayed his greatest skill in portraying human emotions.

The characters of Thalaba may be put into two groups -- those who are magicians and those who are not. We shall consider those of the former classification first. Southey presents an interesting view of the whole profession of magicians as they were believed in by the early Mohammedans. He gives a highly imaginative description of Domdaniel, the seat of learning or "seminar" for all the magic of the world. The central figure in this place was a huge Living Idol made in the likeness of Eblis, the Mohammedan Devil, whose chief place of abode was Jannah or Heaven. This Idol, a work of magic, was of flesh, blood, and bones. From Domdaniel the sorcerers and sorceresses went forth to work their evil in the world. These were ordinary people who had early in life been led from the way of Allah to the influence of Domdaniel.
Abdaldar and Lobaba were outstanding among this group, but their powers were rendered futile when they attempted to take the life of the divinely appointed Destroyer. Both lost their lives on the desert. Another magician was Mohareb, a very powerful and very interesting sorcerer, but finally a very sad and cowardly one. The sorceress Khawla had read in the stars that Mahareb's fate was irrevocably bound up with Thalaba's; so in order to prolong his own cowardly life, Mohareb secretly aided the escape of Thalaba, the destined Destroyer of his entire race.

Yet a more pathetic character was Okba, murderer of Thalaba's family. And he had reason for his sadness. He had a very beautiful young daughter, Laila, for whom he had the natural love of a father. In her birth-star he was warned of Hodeirah's race, and later a Spirit told him that either Thalaba or Laila must die. It was then that he took upon himself the destruction of the race of Hodeirah. When Thalaba escaped with his mother, Okba knew that Laila would have to be taken. There was great pathos in the scene in which the two men met. The magician seemed a very mortal father in the presence of his beloved innocent daughter on the one hand and his greatest enemy on the other. When Thalaba would have rushed on him to avenge the death of his family, he felt himself restrained by an unseen power.
'Thou dost not aim the blow more eagerly,`
Okba replied, 'than I would rush to meet it!
But that were poor revenge.
O Thalaba, thy God
Wreaks on the innocent head
His vengeance; . . . I must suffer in my child!'\(^{14}\)

After Laila's spirit had guided Thalaba safely to the Valley of the Simorg, she asked one favor of the Destroyer -- that he show mercy to Okba, her father, when he came to Domdaniel. In answer to this request Thalaba spared Okba's life and forgave him for his great sin. Okba's sentence was that his soul should abide in Al Araf, the Mohammedan purgatory where there was neither joy nor punishment. For this act of forgiveness Thalaba received a clear expression of divine approval.

There were also two interesting feminine characters from the Domdaniel, Khawla and Maimuna. Khawla was the "fiercest of the Sorcerer brood," and her hatred for Thalaba was intense; but he was protected from her evil designs by the magic ring. It was by Maimuna that the magic thread was spun which made Thalaba a prisoner. The magic ring protected his life, but it could not release him from the thread. The stars decreed that he could be released only by the one who had bound him. One night Maimuna went to a tomb for some Grave-Wax to use in a work of magic against Thalaba. While

\(^{14}\)Thalaba, Book X, Stanza 23, ll. 352f.
there, she became strangely conscious of her great sin and wept bitter tears of repentance.

And the Good Angel that abandoned her
At her hell-baptism, by her tears drawn down
Resumes his charge.  

After her conversion she and Thalaba returned to the cave where he had first fallen under her spell, and there she released him. When she had done so, she gave up all her evil power. Her magic youth and beauty then slipped away, and she stood before him, a poor ugly old woman. When the aged penitent was in her last hours, it was Thalaba alone who comforted her and then buried her in her snowy grave in the name of Allah.

Her death was like the righteous: 'Turn my face
To Mecca!' in her languid eyes
The joy of certain hope
Lit a last lustre, and in death
A smile was on her cheek.

Besides the "sorcerer brood" there were four other major characters in the poem. The first, Laila, did not belong to the profession of the magicians; yet her father had endowed her with enough power to produce the things that she needed to satisfy her physical needs. She did not know about Allah at all. She had grown up not knowing that her father's activities were evil. Because of this innocence, when she died, she was spared the ultimate fate of magicians. Because

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15Ibid., Book IX, Stanza 41, ll. 516f.
16Ibid., Book X, Stanza 2, ll. 11f.
she gave her life to save Thalaba, her soul was allowed to appear as a Green Bird to conduct him on his journey to the Simorg.

In Moath we find a normal average Arab. A loyal believer in Allah, he taught Thalaba the things that the lad would need to know as he grew older, including the story of Domdaniel and the enmity between the hosts of this region and other mankind. When Moath found Thalaba wandering among the graves in a condition of near madness, he tried to comfort him as a father would comfort a son. Southey does not tell of the death of this good old man, but we know that he died soon after his encounter with Thalaba in the graveyard, for his spirit came to cheer Thalaba as the latter was on his way to the depths of Domdaniel.

Oneiza, childhood playmate of Thalaba, is the most beloved character of the story. She, like her father, was more of the earth than the characters previously discussed; at least these two seem more like real people than anyone else in the story. As a young girl she could not understand why Thalaba should go away; and, sweetheart like, she longed for his return. After they were reunited in the Garden of Paradise, she seemed fully aware of the significance of his mission; and, notwithstanding her great love for him, she did not want to interfere with his mission by marrying him. On Thalaba's insistence she became his wife and immediately
was visited by the Death Angel. Even her spirit urged and encouraged him toward his goal.

The hero, Thalaba, reminds one of Joan of Arc in the divine nature of his call, and of Joan and Madoc in his near-perfect character. The weakness that he disclosed after his success in the Garden of Paradise detracts somewhat from his epic qualities, but it adds to the reader's interest in him. To complete the allegory, Southey had to make him only a near-perfect hero. By his life the poet presented the everlasting struggle between the good and evil forces in the life of man. It is his Faith that enables him to persevere to the attainment of his high goal in life. Furthermore, in Thalaba as in the other characters of this poem, Southey gives the ruling principle of the whole Mohammedan world -- the doctrine of predestination.

It is in Thalaba the Destroyer that Southey's readers make first contact with those half-human, half-unreal characters by which he is so well known. In The Curse of Kehama we shall see his wild imagination at its best in character creation. While the characters in Thalaba are such as belong only to the world of the Arabian Nights, they are all very appropriately drawn for the atmosphere and purpose of this narrative. Although Southey still falls short of skill in character development, it is evident that his personages are
gaining in interest for the reader. Here they are less static than any other group that we have met in this study.

The form and versification of the poem are noteworthy. This metrical romance consists of twelve separate books, numbered The First Book, The Second Book, etc., without separate titles. These books are then subdivided into stanzas, with lines varying in length from four syllables to eleven. Hardly any two successive stanzas are of the same length or present a similar appearance on the page. They vary in length from three lines to over a hundred, according to the subject and the purpose of the individual stanzas. There are seven long conversations in which the discourse is presented in dramatic form. In such cases the stanzas are exceedingly long. Not all conversation occurs in this form, but where it does occur, its use makes the effect more exciting and eliminates the necessity of explanatory words that interrupt the flow of conversation.

The versification of Thalaba is perhaps the source of the greatest objection that critics have to the poem. A few, however, find the versification one of its best features. John Forster spoke of its "many subtle and pleasing varieties of rhythm."¹⁷ Cardinal Newman in 1850 wrote:

Thalaba has ever been to my feelings the most sublime of English poems -- (I don't know Spenser) -- I mean

¹⁷John Forster, Walter Savage Landor, p. 129. (This quotation is taken from the Library of Literary Criticism, p. 405.)
morally sublime. The versification of Thalaba is most melodious too -- many persons will not perceive they are reading blank verse.\textsuperscript{18}

On the other hand, Jeffrey in the Edinburgh Review described the poem as a "jumble of all the measures that are known in English poetry (and a few more), without rhyme, and without any sort of regularity in their arrangement."\textsuperscript{19} Because of these "blank odes" Jeffrey has predicted a melancholy fate for Thalaba. The French writer Cazamian expressed his opinion thus:

In quest of prosodical novelty, and eager for an independence which to him appears as a kind of moral idealism, he writes Thalaba in a singularly jejune metre, a sort of cadenced prose with lines of very unequal length, the idea for which he borrowed from an obscure poet (Sayers), and which for a brief spell Shelley was to imitate. This form, no doubt, possesses great suppleness, but it lacks any vestige of art; the want of all perceptible regularity or symmetry stamps it with a wholly arbitrary character.\textsuperscript{20}

To indicate by name and illustration all the different forms of meter found in this poem would be to undertake an interminable task. It is easier to say with other critics that every form known to writers of verse is found here, and some more. However, the iambic foot prevails, as can be seen in the selection quoted below. The following three

\textsuperscript{18}Quoted by Fitzgerald in the Editor’s Preface, Poems of Robert Southey, p. iv.

\textsuperscript{19}Jeffrey, op. cit., p. 72.

\textsuperscript{20}Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature, II, 277.
stanzas are not quoted as examples of the best style of the poem, but merely as representative of his mixture of meter.

16
'Slave!' quoth Mohareb, and his lip
Quiver'd with eager wrath,
'I have thee! thou shalt feel my power,
And in thy dungeon loathsomeness
Rot piece-meal, limb from limb!'
And out the Tyrant rushes,
And all impatient of the thoughts
That canker'd in his heart,
Seeks in the giddiness of boisterous sport
Short respite from the avenging power within.

17
What a woman is she
So wrinkled and old,
That goes to the wood?
She leans on her staff
With a tottering step,
She tells her bead-string slow
Through fingers dull'd by age.
The wanton boys bemock her;
The babe in arms that meets her
Turns round with quick affright
And clings to his nurse's neck.

18
Hark! hark! the hunter's cry;
Mohareb has gone to the chase.
The dogs, with eager yelp,
Are struggling to be free;
The hawks in frequent stoop
Token their haste for flight;
And couchant on the saddle-bow,
With tranquil eyes and talons sheathed,
The ounce expects his liberty.21

Southey in his preface to the first edition of the poem made the following very definite statement concerning the meter that he used:

21Thalaba, Book IX, Stanzas 16-18.
It were an easy thing to make a parade of learning by enumerating the various feet which it admits; it is only needful to observe that no two lines are employed in sequence which can be read into one. Two six-syllable lines, it will perhaps be answered, compose an Alexandrine: the truth is that the Alexandrine, when harmonious, is composed of two six-syllable lines.\(^{22}\)

In this meter Southey saw this outstanding advantage -- that "the dullest reader cannot distort it into discord." Although it may be read prosaically, "its flow and fall will still be perceptible."\(^{23}\)

Perhaps the best way to understand Southey's meter would be to understand the verse of Sayers. Interested in irregular blank verse, this poet studied carefully the use made of it by earlier and contemporary poets. He observed the apparent failure of their efforts and perceived the reasons for such failure. Profiting, as he believed, by these observations, Sayers never employed a strongly-marked measure unless it was peculiarly appropriate, and then he constructed his verses so, (having the language at command,) that they required no humour from an indulgent reader, but that in the easy and natural pronunciation of the words, the accent should necessarily fall where the harmony of the lines required it. Neither did he [subject] his unrhymed lyrics to a rule of uniformity, rendering the composition more difficult, and the effect less pleasing. He arranged them, according to his own perception of metrical harmony, in lines of such length


\(^{23}\)Ibid.
and cadence, as, by suiting the matter and the passion, should at once satisfy the judgment and content the ear. 24

One of the most interesting and sympathetic treatments of Southey's irregular blank verse appears in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. To indicate the singular prose-like quality of some of the stanzas the author of this article reported an interesting little experiment -- the printing of some stanzas in continuous form like prose. The results were remarkable; the prose was perfect. In verse arrangement, however, these same lines were clearly iambic in meter. After quite a detailed discussion the following summary of the subject is made in this article:

... in most cases the sing-song is disagreeable; and ... when we escape from this unrhymed ballad metre, we fall into a strain so like to prose that it has very little other distinction than its mode of printing. There are passages, no doubt, where the flow of the metre is both agreeable and has the full effect of verse, but these passages are brief. We are either carried down a long stanza, where the ear has no resting-place, or else, in order to break up the monotony, we are teased with discords or with ballad tunes. 25

The above conclusion is justified if we consider only isolated stanzas. In Thalaba irregular blank verse was tried for the first time in a really long narrative. It clearly is not without its faults. But Southey, to a limited extent,


realized his desire to avoid the "Jew'a harp twing-twang of what has been foolishly called heroic measure," and to achieve not the "improvisatore tune, -- but something that denotes the sense of harmony, something like the accent of feeling, -- like the tone which every poet necessarily gives to poetry."²⁶ As a whole the poem achieves a very desirable effect. There is a harmonious flow of thought and metre not entirely unlike some of the most graceful verse of our present century. How pleasing are the lines describing the hero's voyage down the river in the bark moved gently along by the beautiful and melancholy Damosel.

He sate him on the single seat,
The little boat moved on.  
Through pleasant banks the quiet stream
Went winding pleasantly;  
By fragrant fir-groves now it pass'd,
And now, through alder-shores,  
Through green and fertile meadows now
It silently ran by.  
The flag-flower blossom'd on its side,
The willow tresses waved,
The flowing current furrow'd round
The water-lily's floating leaf,
The fly of green and gauzy wing,
Fell sporting down its course;  
And grateful to the voyager
The freshness that it breathed,
And soothing to his ear
Its murmur round the prow.
The little boat falls rapidly
Adown the rapid stream.²⁷

²⁶Southey, op. cit., p. 23.
²⁷Thalaba, Book XI, Stanza 34, ll. 423f.
When Thalaba the Destroyer was published in the first edition, Robert Southey was twenty-seven years old, and he had a sizable amount of literary work to his credit. By the time of the 1809 edition of the poem the poet, then thirty-five, was showing much more maturity in his writings. His growth in descriptive ability is as noticeable as his growth in narrative power. While there is nothing in this poem to compare with the fast-moving scene of the fight with the Snake-God, nor with the grotesqueness of the gods of the Aztecas, neither is there anything in Madoc to compare with the delicate appeal of scenes that Thalaba passes on his way to DomDaniel. Notice his first impression of Laila's little magic house in the vast solitude of snow.

It was a little, lowly dwelling-place,
Amid a garden whose delightful air
Was mild and fragrant as the evening wind
Passing in summer o'er the coffee-groves
Of Yemen, and its blessed bowers of balm.

A fount of Fire that in the centre play'd
Roll'd all around its wondrous rivulets,
And fed the garden with the heat of life. 28

Notice the effect of the following lines that convey Thalaba's feeling when the Green Bird left him alone for a brief period in the wilderness.

Evening came on; the glowing clouds
Tinged with a purple ray the mountain ridge

28 Ibid., Book X, Stanza 8, ll. 80f.
That lay before the Traveller.
Ah! whither art thou gone,
Guide and companion of the youth
whose eye
Has lost thee in the depth of Heaven?
Why hast thou left alone
The weary wanderer in the wilderness?
And now the western clouds grow pale,
And night descends upon his solitude.

The descriptive passages here lack the vigorous force of
Nadoc, the awful magnitude of Kehama, and the delicate
emotional appeal of Roderick. Thalaba has unique appeal of
its own. Excepting the experience in the cave of Haruth
and that in the submarine cavern, the coloring of the whole
poem may be characterized as a study in white, silver, and
pastels.

Although there has been as much unfavorable criticism
on this poem as on his others, he also received much very
favorable comment on Thalaba. Dibdin said of it,

Thalaba has long been and will long continue to be,
very generally known and admired. It was abundantly
popular at the period of its publication.30

It was the opinion of Sir Archibald Alison that Southey's
poetic fame rests primarily on Thalaba,

in which his brilliant imagination revelled without
control, save that of high moral feeling, in the

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29Ibid., Book XI, Stanza 7, ll. 80f.

30Thomas Frognall Dibdin, The Library Companion, p. 737, note. (This quotation is taken from the Library of Literary
Criticism, p. 404.)
waterless deserts and palm-shaded fountains and patriarchal life of the Happy Arabia. 31

Viewing his works at a distance, one can see readily that Sir Archibald was mistaken in the importance of *Thalaba* to the fame of the poet. The narrative is a stirring one with great appeal to the imagination of the reader. It clearly displays the poet's descriptive powers, as indicated by his ability to take the reader out of his surroundings and transport him into the atmosphere of the poem. The poem should be ranked as a good one with a thrilling story and some interesting characters. It is a poem that anyone will enjoy reading once it is pointed out to him; however, it is so secluded in the mass of good but seldom read literature that he is not likely to find it by himself.

31 Archibald Alison, *History of Europe, 1815-1852*, Vol. I, Ch. V. (This quotation is taken from the Library of Literary Criticism, p. 405.)
CHAPTER V

THE CURSE OF KEHAMA

Many critics have said that *The Curse of Kehama* is the best of Southey's epics. The author himself said, "No poem could have been more delicately planned, nor more carefully composed."¹ On May 1, 1801, while he was still in Lisbon, he started the poem. In the summer of that year, at Kingsdown, he added a little, and in London that winter he added a little more. After some additional work at Kingsdown in the summer of 1802 he laid the work aside not to resume it before 1806. At Keswick in that year he recast all that had been written and proceeded consistently but leisurely with the writing until it was finished on November 25, 1809. In 1810 the first edition of the poem was published, and by 1818 it had reached the fourth edition. In the first edition the stanzas were not numbered and the divisions were different. Except in these points, the poem in its present form varies little from the first edition.

In a letter to Landor, dated July 14, 1810, Southey said,

I am well assured that most persons will like [Kehama] even less [than Thalaba], -- or in plainer language will

dislike it more. About this I am perfectly indifferent. It is a work sui generis, which . . . will find its own admirers.²

The poet was correct in the first part of his prediction. When the poem was published, The Monthly Review issued a most scathing criticism from the pen of Lord Byron:

If this poem were to be tolerated, all things after it may demand impunity, and it will be in vain to contend hereafter for any one established rule of poetry as to design and subject, as to character and incident, as to language and versification.³

Although the poem was not received with great applause, it did enjoy a period of popularity with many of Southey's contemporaries. Charles Lamb credited Southey with a good piece of work, but confessed that he was dismayed among the monstrous gods that are pictured therein. Coleridge in his Biographia Literaria said of Kehama:

[It is] a gallery of finished pictures in one splendid fancy piece, in which, notwithstanding, the moral grandeur rises gradually above the brilliance of the new coloring and the boldness and novelty of the machinery.⁴

Southey based this poem upon one of the most remarkable peculiarities of the religion of the Hindus.

Prayers, penances, and sacrifices are supposed to possess an inherent and actual value, in no degree depending upon the disposition or motive of the person who


³Lord Byron was quoted by Southey in Preface to the Eighth Volume, reprinted in Poems of Robert Southey, p. 17.

⁴Samuel T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, p. 35.
performs them. They are drafts upon Heaven, for which the Gods cannot refuse payment. The worst men, bent upon the worst designs, have in this manner obtained power which has made them formidable to the Supreme Deities themselves, and rendered an Avatar, or Incarnation of Veeshnoo the Preserver, necessary.\footnote{Southey, Original Preface to The Curse of Kehama, reprinted in Poems of Robert Southey, p. 117.}

Kehama, a mighty Rajah of India, by a course of such "prayers, penances, and sacrifices," wrested from the gods of Hindustan a power which upon the earth was already equal to their own. However, he continued to engage in his devotions, thereby claiming additional power. The deities anticipated with growing alarm the period of their final overthrow by this inexorable enemy. The dreaded hour was not far remote, for Kehama had already acquired full power over earth, and he was engaged in a process of prayers and sacrifices to give him power over Indra and Swerga.\footnote{Indra is the Hindu God of the Elements; Swerga is his Paradise, one of the Hindu heavens. (From the Original Preface cited in footnote 5.)} After these two, his next object of conquest would be Padalon,\footnote{Padalon, the Hindu Hell, is "under the Earth, and, like the Earth, of an octagon shape; its eight gates are guarded by as many Gods." (From the Original Preface cited in footnote 5.)} where he would drink of the divine Cup of Immortality. After this he would have only to ascend to the highest
heaven and struggle for full divine power "with Brama, Vishnoo, and Seeva, the Trimourtee of the Bramins."  

The poem opens with an elaborate description of the funeral of Arvalan, son of Kehama. Thousands of torches dispelled the midnight darkness, thousands of drums sent forth one long thunder peal, and thousands of voices bewailed the dead. In all this mad din only one word was distinguished -- the name Arvalan, which resounded throughout and beyond the vicinity. At the head of the procession marched the Bramins, or "men of prayer," chanting the funeral dirge for the corpse borne after them. Following those bearing the body, were Kehama and Arvalon's young wives, dressed like Eastern queens. Around them

As on a bridal day,
With symphony, and dance, and song
Their kindred and their friends come on.
The dance of sacrifice! the funeral song!
And next the victim slaves in long array,
Richly bedight to grace the fatal day,
Move onward to their death.  

The funeral pile, erected on the bank of the Ganges River, was built of sandal-wood and was highly perfumed with myrrh and ambergris. On top of the pile the two young wives

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8 Brama, the Creator; Veeshnoo, the Preserver; and Seeva, the Destroyer, are regarded by the people of the Hindu religion as three distinct and personal Gods. Notice Southey's spelling of these names. (From the Original Preface cited in footnote 5.)

9 Southey used this spelling of the word throughout the poem.

10 Kehama, Canto I, Stanza 6, ll. 88f.
took their places with the dead body. While the Bramins stood in a circle around the pile, the father, Kehama, stepped forward and started the fire. Then followed the wild dance of the victim slave girls. While the multitude shouted and clapped their hands, and the musicians gave forth their wild music, the women whirled around the pyre until one by one they had all fallen, exhausted, into the flames.

While Kehama was spreading the Table of the Dead, the spirit of his son appeared to him, chiding him for doing no more for him than was being done. The spirit spoke so pitifully about his great suffering that Kehama, exercising his power as Man-God, spoke to the Elements and "they sinned no more against him." Only one other request did Arvalan ask and that was for vengeance -- "lasting long revenge" on the man Ladurlad. This unhappy man had killed him, to save Kailyal, his daughter, from Arvalon's lust. To grant this request, Kehama ordered that Ladurlad be brought forward; then he uttered the eventful curse on this wretched father.

I charm thy life
From the weapons of strife,
From stone and from wood,
From fire and from flood,
From the serpent's tooth,
And the beasts of blood:
From Sickness I charm thee,
And Time shall not harm thee;
But Earth which is mine,
Its fruits shall deny thee;
And Water shall hear me,
And know thee and fly thee;
And the Winds shall not touch thee
    When they pass by thee,
And the Dews shall not wet thee,
    When they fall nigh thee:
And thou shalt seek Death
    To release thee, in vain;
Thou shalt live in thy pain
While Kehama shall reign,
    With a fire in thy heart,
And a fire in thy brain;
And Sleep shall obey me,
    And visit thee never,
And the Curse shall be on thee
For ever and ever. 11

The remainder of the poem illustrates a favorite saying of Southey's Uncle William: "Curses are like young chickens; they always come home to roost." At dawn the cursed man in great agony found himself near the river at some distance from the scene of the midnight ceremony. While he was wondering what had become of Kailyal, he saw her in the river, clinging desperately to the image of Marriataly. 12 Because of the curse, Ladurład was able to walk, untouched by the water, into the river to rescue his daughter.

Believing that Kailyal should not see him suffer, Ladurład in the evening slipped away. When she awoke and found him gone, she was terrified. And her terror was increased by the appearance of the spirit of the sensual Arvalan, who was to be a menace to her throughout the story. As she lay senseless on the ground under a poisonous tree

11 Ibid., Canto I, Stanza 14.
12 "The Goddess who is chiefly worshipped by the lower casts." (From the Original Preface cited in footnote 5.)
dews of which would surely have killed her, she was found by Ereenia, one of the Glendoveers.13 Charmed by her beauty, innocence, and virtue, he took her in his arms and flew to Himakoot, where the holy Ganges has its source and where dwelt Casyapa.14 Knowing Kailyal to be hated of Kehama, the kindly old god warned the Glendoveer against this formidable and wicked Rajah who made the very gods to shake with terror. Casyapa counseled Ereenia to seek advice of Indra, the God of the Elements, who dwelt in Swerga. Indra pointed out that the persistent, loving Ereenia might find a place of temporary safety on Mount Meru, where the Ganges had its second source. In the Heavenly Car, Kailyal and Ereenia went in search of Ladurlad. They found him in great grief and physical agony at the home place. Their arrival was just in time to save him from the evil spirit of Arvalan.

For a time there was complete happiness for the three on Mount Meru. Here Ladurlad was not under the "curse of Kehama," and here also the spirit of the faithful Yedillian, wife of Ladurlad, came to visit her husband. For a while Ereenia protected them from Arvalan. But neither Ereenia nor Casyapa nor Indra could hold his own sphere when Kehama

13 "The most beautiful of the Good Spirits." (From the Original Preface cited in footnote 5.)

14 Casyapa is the "Sire of Gods" or "Father of Immortals." (See Kehama, Canto VI, Stanza 3, 1. 41, and Stanza 4, 1. 42.)
had successfully, after years of vain attempts, made the
sacrifice which gave him power over Swerga. This was another
step toward the realization of his ambition to acquire full
divine power. After this victory of Kehama, Ereemia had to
carry his two mortal friends back to Earth.

Arvalan, meantime, had sought the aid of his old friend
Lorrinite, the Enchantress with a "spirit to all evil moved."
She promised to exercise her art to the utmost to bring
Arvalan to enjoy the pure and beautiful Kailyal. Shortly
after this return to Earth, a group of Yogueses15 found
Kailyal to be the object of their search for a bride of
Jaga-Naut.16 There was great rejoicing among the people
when the girl, robed as a bride, was carried through the
streets with the huge seven-headed Idol on his mammoth-
sized car. Back at the temple Kailyal was left on the bridal
bed to await the coming of the great god.

There trembling as she lay,
The Bramin of the fane advanced
And came to seize his prey.
But as the abominable Priest drew nigh,
A power invisible opposed his way.17

The "invisible power" was the spirit of Arvalan, who
slew the priest and entered his body to satisfy the old and

15 This is Southey's spelling of the word. These were
arcent devotees of Jaga-Naut.

16 This is Southey's spelling of the word. It refers
to a huge idol of Vishnu.

17 Kehama, Canto XIV, Stanza 10, ll. 144f.
increasing desire for the maiden. When she called for Ereenia, he appeared, but Lorrinite and a host of Demons came also. They seized the Glendoveer and carried him to the Ancient Sepulchres "below the billows of the Ocean," where he was chained. Left alone with Arvalan, the maid seized a torch and set fire to the room. Her adversary fled from the tortures that he felt in this mortal body. Then Ladurlad, armed under the influence of the curse, walked through the fire and bore his daughter to safety.

The next adventure deals with Ladurlad's experience in the City of Baly, where Ereenia was chained. Baly, a former Rajah, had been comparable with Kehama in power, but not in wickedness and evil designs. When Vishnool the Preserver overthrew him, the City sank to the bottom of the ocean, and Baly, "the friend of righteousness," was given a place in Patalon by the throne of Yamen, the Lord of Hell. Once a year he was permitted to leave his place as assistant to Yamen and take a walk on the Earth. After an undersea fight of seven days and nights with the huge monster set to guard Ereenia, Ladurlad was victorious. When he and the Glendoveer returned to the shore where Kailyal was waiting for them, Lorrinite called her Asuras and bade them seize Ladurlad and the Glendoveer. But Baly, who had been guarding Kailyal, showed himself at that moment with enough arms to seize Arvalan, Lorrinite and all her "fiendish ministers." With
his arms thus loaded, he stamped the earth and a direct passage opened to Padalon. Through this passage he disappeared with his prey. Now only the dreaded Kehama remained to menace the good father and daughter.

Ereenia at this time took flight to Mount Calasay to invoke the aid of Seeva, the mighty Destroyer, against the Rajah. Meanwhile, Kehama had come upon Ladurlad and Kailyal at the ocean side. Seeing how fair she was, he recalled the curse from the father and asked Kailyal to become his bride. Her refusal invoked a worse curse on both of them. As Kehama flew away, he vowed that he would conquer all of Padalon. Ereenia very soon returned with instructions to go to Yamen in Padalon and wait. The eventful trip of the three to the throne of Yamen was barely accomplished when the din of Padalon was hushed by the awful entry of Kehama. The guards were crushed by his chariot and Yamen was quickly overpowered. Taking his place on Yamen's throne, Kehama asked Kailyal to take her seat on the Golden Throne beside him. On her refusal he called for the Amreeta-Cup of Immortality, for fate had decreed that he and Kailyal should drink together. Now this divine Cup was good or Malignant according to the quality of the lips that touched it. He drank first, and instantly his body was filled with indescribable torture, for Seeva "open'd on the Accursed one his Eye
of Anger.\textsuperscript{18} He had wanted immortality; he had it now, but it was an immortal body to feel eternally the torture of fire.

After this climax, events happened quickly. Kehama was made to take his place with three others whose task it was forever to hold up the Golden Throne. Yamen reascended his throne. In faithful obedience to command, Kailyal drank of the Amreeta-Cup and instantly became immortal. There is a second climax at this point, for Ereenia claimed the now divine and immortal Kailyal for his own. Yamen bade Ereenia take his "heavenly mate" to the Swerga Bowers

\begin{quote}
And there recall the hours
Of endless happiness.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

In answer to her look of concern for her father, Yamen told her to go on, for she would find her father in the Bowers of his wife Yedillian. And so he of the "resolute heart" sank to rest to awake in Swerga with his loved ones.

In most points pertaining to plot structure the \textbf{Curse of Kehama} is an improvement over Southey's former poems. In the development of this poem the emphasis is laid first on plot, second on atmosphere, third on characters. Southey called to his aid a number of the traditional interest devices. The disguise element appears in Arvalon, though it

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, Canto XXIV, Stanza 18, 1. 219.

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibid.}, Canto XXIV, Stanza 24, 11. 290-1.
is a far cry from the Shakespearean use of disguise as Southey had used in Senena. The love element enters through the mutual attachment of Ereenia and Kailyal; however, as long as one was mortal and the other was immortal, their love was not admissible. This barrier kept them apart until the climax of this subplot, when Kailyal drank of the Amreeta-Cup and became immortal. Then, too, it is quite satisfying for the reader to learn that the long-suffering Ladurlad was at last rewarded by restoration to his own Yedillian in Swerga. However, it was the suspense element of which the poet made most effective use. Throughout the poem there is one thrilling episode after another; and each is filled with such a degree of suspense that a period of relief is necessary. Without such relief the reader probably would not follow the narrative to the conclusion. In the development of interest the plot of Kehama makes a good showing in comparison with the plot of other narrative poems. Each episode is well developed with its own rising interest, climax, and conclusion. These separate incidents lead logically to the climax in the last book, "Amreeta." The plot moves rapidly enough to a point near the climax; then the reader is held in breathless suspense while he is rushed along to a positively dramatic climax and conclusion.

In the Quarterly Review is found this conclusive pronouncement concerning the characters:
The principal actors are a man who approaches almost to omnipotence, another labouring under a strange and fearful malediction, which exempts him from the ordinary laws of nature, a good genius, a sorceress, and a ghost, with several Hindostan deities of different ranks. The only being that retains the usual attributes of humanity is a female who is gifted with immortality at the close of the piece.20

Indeed we find that the characters are far from ordinary people. Yet to the mind of the Hindu, nursed in the superstitions of his religion, Kehama the Rajah, Ladurlad, the father who endured the curse, and Kailyal of the purely virtuous heart, as well as the gods and spirits, would be entirely credible. The Hindu religion is abundantly peopled by just such characters. It is by means of the characters Ladurlad and Kailyal that Southey keeps his poem attached to the earth, notwithstanding their supernatural excursions into other realms. They possess all of the desirable traits of human characters without the undesirable, and seem to be perfected through suffering and affliction. In the curse that he had to endure, Ladurlad bears some resemblance to Job. Both were afflicted by the powers of evil, though Job's suffering was permitted by Jehovah and Ladurlad's, it seems, could not be prohibited by the gods. Ladurlad made use of his curse to thwart the evil designs of the enemy. By means of it he saved Kailyal twice, released Ereenia from his captivity, and delayed Kehama's acquisition of power over Swerga.

20"Southey's Curse of Kehama," Quarterly Review, V (February, 1811), 44.
The poet pictures this man as a very normal father. When his daughter was threatened by Arvalan, it was natural for him to spare no means of saving her. After the curse was placed upon him, he realized that the sight of him under such suffering would be grievous for her; so he slipped away from her in the night to spare her that pain. It was when he had wandered back to his homestead that he was most pathetic. Here Southey gives us one of the most beautiful passages in the poem. The reader can feel with the forlorn man all the emotion that he experienced on that occasion. Here he relived in memory the happy days that he had spent in this humble peaceful home with his wife and daughter. His vines and trees, now untrained; his flowers, drooping for want of care and choked by undesirable plants -- the whole scene was one of desolation and filled him with irresistible sadness. This melancholy was increased by the mirthful sounds that reached his ear from the village marketplace. The joviality of his neighbors, unaware of his presence in the village, acted almost as an insult to this miserable, wretched man. His entire life after the curse came upon him was one to inspire in the reader love, sympathy, and admiration. His integrity was so great that even when he was promised as a reward permanent release from the curse he refused to comply with Kehama's request for Kailyal as a wife. While this man was not to enjoy any more physical
comfort and peace of mind and soul in his life, Southey re-
warded him in a way that is entirely satisfactory for the 
reader in letting him be reunited with his wife in Paradise. 
Thus the poet remained true to one of his favorite beliefs: 
that good will be ultimately rewarded.

This same principle is further presented through 
Kailyal. We find in her everything that one would expect 
to find and perhaps more. Her chief traits were virtue, 
filial love, loyalty, humility, and, on one occasion, great 
courage. She was so free from guile and possessed such a 
gentle nature that even the wild beasts were docile in her 
presence. One instance displayed that she was a person of 
great spirit and determination when occasion demanded. When 
the Asuras had seized Ereenia, Kailyal knew that she would 
have to defend herself; nor was she lacking in ingenuity to 
do so. Preferring death to the evil touch of Arvalan, she 
seized a torch in the temple and set the entire chamber 
afire. The timely arrival of her father saved her from the 
flames. On two occasions Kehama offered to make her his 
queen, but she preferred physical persecution to such an 
unholy and distasteful alliance. The faith that she showed 
on the occasion of the Amreeta-Cup reminds one of the Tal-
isman that carried Thalaba through his many precarious ex-
periences. Even after she had seen the tragic effect of the 
Cup of Kehama, she drank of it without hesitation after she
was bidden to do so. Kailyal's reward for such virtues was perhaps more than the reader would have expected the poet to give her. Yet it is in keeping with the beliefs of the Hindu religion that the poet portrays so well throughout the poem. Furthermore, only by the attainment of immortality could Kailyal become the mate of the Glendoveer. Thus in these two characters Southey again demonstrates his own faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness.

Although the general question of classification will be discussed in the last chapter, it seems fitting to point out here the epic qualities of Kehama. In length, subject matter, and characters this poem is undeniably epic. Concerned entirely with the Hindu religion and its monstrous gods and unearthly superstitions, it certainly lays claim to the supernatural element. The powers of Kehama are vast, making the reader tremble along with the very gods who fear him. The whole poem is a struggle between purity and justice on one side and lust and cruelty on the other. Southey is quite Christian in bringing out the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Yet he is accurate in depicting the Hindu beliefs.

Only the very few individuals of impeccable character achieved Swerga immediately after death. Those souls guilty of sin must reappear any number of times in the body of various animals, the kinds and number of appearances depending on the degree of guilt of the individual. Arvalan's soul was
made to wander without a body until he was finally taken to Fadalon to be sentenced by Yamen and Daly. In Kehama, true to epic style, are found the elemental passions, hate, revenge, sexual desire, ambition, and love for power. As has been pointed out, the poem is divided into books, or cantos, each complete within itself, but all bound together in their common relationship to the main plot, therein meeting another main characteristic of the epic.

Most people think of Southey as one of the innovators of the romantic movement. However, it is difficult to place him either among the romanticists or outside that circle. If his claim to a place in the new movement depended solely on The Curse of Kehama, he would have slight claim. Considering the author's general ambitions, one may say that this poem resulted from the romantic movement; yet it is hardly of that movement. A study of the details of the poem will reveal romantic touches. First, the versification of the poem resulted from Southey's efforts to exercise the freedom preached by the romanticists. Next, romanticism has as one of its leading phases the supernatural element. Supernaturalism prevails throughout this poem; yet the mysticism of the truly romantic poets is not found. Further, the true romanticist takes the road of return to nature. Within Kehama are some very lyrical descriptions of nature, yet they do not convey anything of that
transcendental love for nature generally recognized as part of the romantic movement. Southey used such passages as settings to display the rational virtue and studied beauty of Kailyal rather than for the pure love and praise of nature herself. Next, romanticism is filled with "dreams of the strange, the beautiful, and the ideal."\(^2\) The careless observer might say such dreams are found in the heavenly spheres of Kehama and in the ideals of purity and fortitude that held Kailyal and Ladurlad steadfast to the end. Yet these dreams lack the thin veil of coloring that makes the difference in romanticism. In the opinion of this writer, the most romantic touch in the entire poem is the figure of Lorrinite, the Enchantress. She reminds one of Coleridge's Geraldine in the poem "Christabel." Lorrinite, however, is given such realistic human passions that she seems less romantic than Geraldine.

She was a woman, whose unlovely youth,
Even like a canker'd rose which none will pull,
Had withered on the stalk; her heart was full of Passions which had found no natural scope.

\ldots

And then, in wrath and hatred and despair,
She tempted Hell to tempt her; and resigned
\ldots

Her body to the Demons of the air.\(^2\)

Romanticism recognizes the worth of the individual -- the common man. The only resemblance of this phase to be found


\(^2\)Kehama, Canto XI, Stanza 3, ll. 27f.
in *The Curse of Kehama* is in the choice of two lowly people to be objects of the vile scheming of Kehama and Arvalan. Yet Southey, it seems, chose these simply as more fitting subjects to display the Hindu religion. He endowed them with the virtues that entitled them to immediate happiness in Swerga. As has been pointed out, Hinduism teaches that only such strict adherence to virtue as is here displayed enables one to escape the horrors of transmigration. In summary, *The Curse of Kehama* has many slight touches of romanticism, but as a whole it can hardly be classed as romantic.

This narrative consists of twenty-four divisions or 5077 lines. The stanzas, like those of *Thalaba the Destroyer*, are of unequal length, varying from four lines to twenty-five and thirty. Unlike his practice in *Thalaba*, he made no use of quotation marks for direct discourse; but in several conversations, especially where the speeches are short, he gave the names of the speakers in a somewhat dramatic form.

As stated in Chapter IV, Southey wrote *Thalaba* in "timeless metres." While most of the lines are iambic, the variety in the number of feet to a line and the number of lines to a stanza enabled him to avoid monotony such as is often found in a long poem using this metre. In *The Curse of Kehama* he used the same kind of stanzas, but they are in
general longer and more varied. Here he achieved an excellent effect by the use of rhyme. There is no set rhyme scheme, but the general effect is more forceful because of this lack. These lines from Book 13, "The Retreat," describing the lovely Kailyal, are representative of the variety and beauty achieved by Southey's skill in handling this type of verse:

Well might they thus adore that heavenly
Maid!
For never Nymph of Mountain,
Or Grove, or Lake, or Fountain,
With a diviner presence fill'd the shade.
No idle ornaments deface
Her natural grace,
Musk-spot, nor sandal-streak, nor scarlet
stain,
Ear-drop nor chain, nor arm nor
ankle-ring,
Nor trinketry on front, or neck, or breast
Marring the perfect form: she seem'd
a thing
Of Heaven's prime uncorrupted work,
a child
Of early nature undefiled,
A daughter of the years of innocence. 23

If the reader becomes tired of the long verses of
Kehama, he likely is unaware of the fact; yet he is agreeably affected by the occasional appearance of a series of short lines:

O Maid of soul divine!
O more than ever dear,
And more than ever mine; 24
Replied the Glendoveer.

23 Ibid., Canto XIII, Stanza 13, ll. 193f.
24 Ibid., Canto XX, Stanza 4, ll. 33f.
Notwithstanding the unearthliness of the funeral scene, this seems to be about the only part of the story that belongs to the earth. From here the reader passes into another atmosphere, touching the earth occasionally, but not often enough to keep him convinced that he is following the experiences of realistic human beings.

*Kehama* has been described in terms ranging all the way from "worthless" and "vile" to "superb." The poem has its faults; yet to the reader who enjoys a well-written long narrative poem, it is an excellent narrative, deserving to be ranked among England's good mythological poems of the nineteenth century. The characters suit the story; they are well drawn for the author's purpose. And the vehicle of the story is well adapted to the various scenes and incidents. Southey never lacked for words and figures of speech, whether describing the thrilling yet awful descent of Kehama to Padalon or the delightful, fragrant bower of the lovely Kailyal. George Saintsbury, in his article on Southey in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, stated that Southey would deserve a high place as an English poet if he had written no poetry but the best parts of the epic *The Curse of Kehama*. 
CHAPTER VI

RODERICK, THE LAST OF THE GOTHs

About the first half of 1805 Southey started thinking of plans for a poem dealing with Spanish history of the time of the Moorish invasion. On December 2, 1809, when he undertook the writing of this poem, he intended that the central figure should be Pelayo, the "founder of the Spanish monarchy." When he came to the conclusion of the sixth division, he realized that not Pelayo, but "Roderick, the last of the Goths," was his hero. That realization necessitated some changes in the original plans.

I believe I must go back to the fifth, and interpolate a passage introductory of Egilona, whose death I think of bringing forward in Book 8, and in whose character I must seek for such a palliation of the rape of Florinda as may make Roderick's crime not so absolutely incompatible with his heroic qualities as it now appears. The truth is that in consequence of having begun the story with Roderick I have imperceptibly been led to make him the prominent personage of the poem, and have given him virtues which it will be very difficult to make consistent with his fall.  

It was July 14, 1814, that Roderick, the Last of the Goths was finally completed. It is interesting to note the

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1Egilona was the wife of King Roderick. According to Southey, it was her failure to bring the king domestic happiness that caused his fall.

2Southey, an unpublished letter to Walter Savage Landor. (A quotation by Fitzgerald in his notes in Poems of Robert Southey, p. 751.)
poet's feelings on the completion of the poem. In a letter to his brother, Captain Thomas Southey, R. N., dated with the above date, he wrote:

Monday came and I continued at my task, still writing like a Lion -- it was like going up a mountain, the termination seemed to recede as I advanced. So I was still at it on Tuesday middleday, when in came a Laker to interrupt me. . . . This morning I went again to work, and just at dinner-time finished a poem which had been begun 2 December 1809. The last book has extended to 580 lines, and the whole work to 7,000, some twenty more or less. -- Hourra! your Serene Highness! O be joyful St. Helen's, Auckland, and Greta Hall! . . . I do not feel exactly as Gibbon did, who knew that it was impossible for him ever to execute another work of equal magnitude with his great history; for I neither want subjects nor inclination for fresh attempts. But this poem has been 4½ years on hand, and had been thought of as many years before it was begun: and it is impossible not to feel how very doubtful it is whether I may ever again compleat one of equal extent, or of equal merit, -- tho' never at any part of my life better disposed for it in power than at the present time.3

In the fall of 1814 Longman published Roderick in one volume. In 1816 the poem reached a fourth edition, which differed very little from the first. In 1820 there was a French translation of the poem and in 1821, a second, both in prose and written by Frenchmen. In 1823-24 "a very good translation in Dutch verse was published in two volumes."4

On publication Roderick was announced as Southey's best work. The poet himself said in a letter to Gooch, dated

3Ibid.

November 30, 1814, "You have in Roderick the best which I have done, and, probably, the best that I shall do, which is rather a melancholy feeling for the author."5 His friend Charles Lamb wrote to him, "The story of the brave Maccabee was already, you may be sure, familiar to me in all its parts. I have, since the receipt of your present, read it quite through again, and with no diminished pleasure."6 In the opinion of James Hogg it was the noblest epic of the age. And even Jeffrey delayed his usual sarcastic criticism long enough to make the following complimentary statement:

This is the best, we think, and the most powerful of all Mr. Southey's poems. It abounds with lofty sentiments, and magnificent imagery; and contains more rich and comprehensive descriptions -- more beautiful pictures of pure affection -- and more impressive representations of mental agony and exaltation than we have often met with in the compass of a single volume. . . . The author is a poet undoubtedly; but not of the highest order.7

In our effort to understand the setting of the poem we find that history gives little help. We know that in the first part of the eighth century (711 is the date commonly recognized) the Moors were invited into Spain by Count Julian, the governor of Ceuta and Andalusia. After a battle of eight days on the plain of Xeres, King Roderick's army was defeated and the invaders were free to move on.

5From Southey's letter to Landor cited in footnote 2.
6Ibid.
In the disorder which followed the defeat at Xeres, the king quitted the car in which he rode, and mounted his horse Orello for flight: his real fate was never known, but his crown, his robe, and the royal steed were found on the banks of the Baetis, and it was supposed that "the last of the Goths" had perished in its stream.  

Here legend supplements history's supposition. The fabulous Chronicle of Don Rodrigo relates a story of his wandering into a hermitage where he received divine instructions for penance. After carrying out these instructions for a year, he came to the final step, which was to inclose himself alive in a tomb with a two-headed serpent, and in that situation to await his death patiently. The chronicle goes on to state that the tomb was discovered in the 13th century, and that it bore this inscription, "Hic jacet Rodericus, ultimus Rex Gothorum."  

From the conclusion of his poem we judge that Southey was "inclined to credit the fact of this discovery, as there do not appear to have been any interested motives connected with the assertion of it, or any 'intention of setting up a shrine' to enrich the monks of the place."  

Whatever the reason for the treachery of Count Julian, historians have only the Spanish legend to account for it. According to this shadowy source, the count had sent his lovely daughter, Florinda, to live in the king's court at Cordoba. The king admired her greatly and finally in a fit

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
of uncontrolled passion seduced her. Count Julian, desiring
revenge for this violation of his daughter, threw open the
gates of Spain to the Moors.

Southey, in a preface to the poem, has written an ex-
planation that enables the reader better to understand the
relationship existing among the characters portrayed in the
poem. Of the royal Gothic family of Chindasuntho there
were two sons. Theodofred and Favila. King Theodofred and
his wife, Rusilla, were parents of Roderick; and Favila and
his wife, who later proved false to him, were parents of
Pelayo. Opposed to this family was that of Wamba, also a
great leader of the Goths. Witiza of this family had de-
feated Theodofred and blinded him in the presence of Rusilla.
Furthermore, following the advice of his mistress, the faith-
less wife of Favila, he put the latter to death and exiled
her son Pelayo. To this unholy union were born two sons,
Ebba and Sisibert. Witiza also had a brother, Orpas, who
was a renegade priest. When the young Roderick grew up, in
revenge for the suffering of his father, he subjected Witiza
to the same treatment that the latter had inflicted on
Theodofred; however, he spared Orpas, Ebba, and Sisibert.
In this mistaken clemency he had made it easy for the seeds
of disorder to sprout. Therefore when the Moors came into
the country, they found cowards and traitors ready to aid
them in their conquest.
In the opening of the poem the author gives a brief account of Roderick's sin, the Moorish invasion, and the disastrous results of the battle on the plain of Xeres. King Roderick, heavy hearted and bowed under the weight of his guilt, left the scene of defeat. Disguised as a peasant, for seven days he traveled northward, and on the eighth day came to the banks of the Guadiana, where he found the remains of the Caulian Schools. Here he found one solitary monk, Romano, who, because of his age, sense of duty, and the hope for martyrdom at the hands of the infidels, had remained in the service of the altar. This old monk spoke words of comfort to him and urged him to confess his sins. This confession brought him a little comfort. Realizing that they were not safe here, the two left the monastery, crossed the Tagus and the Zezere, and came to the sea at Nazareth. Here they took up their abode in a hermitage.

After a year's stay here, Romano died and the king buried him. Now alone in the solitude of the place, Roderick dug a grave for himself and lay down to die. Realizing, however, that there would be no one to cover his body to protect it from the fowls, and worse still, that he would probably be attacked before life had left his body, his despair increased. The solitude becoming unbearable, he stretched himself on his friend's grave and prayed to the spirit of Romano.
'Oh point me thou
Some humblest, painfulest, severest paths --
Some new austerity unheard of yet.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Labour and outward suffering, anything
But stillness, and this dreadful solitude!' 11

Exhausted from his anguish, he fell asleep on the grave;
then a message came to him in a dream. His vision was of
his mother, who spoke of the awful plight of Spain under
the heel of the conquering infidel. Then this dream changed
and he saw her clad for battle.

Anon, the tramp
Of horsemen, and the din of multitudes
Moving to mortal conflict, rung around;
The battle-song, the clang of sword and shield,
War-cries and tumults, strife and hate, and rage,
Blasphemous prayers, confusion, agony,
Rout and pursuit, and death; and over all
The shout of victory -- Spain and Victory!
Roderick, as the strong passion master'd him,
Rush'd to the fight rejoicing. 12

When the king awoke, he believed that this dream had revealed
to him the will of heaven. He also now hoped that his mother
was alive and that he might see her again. With his thoughts
thus set on objects outside himself, he resolved to leave
the hermitage and seek some loyal chiefs who might yet save
his country.

He lost no time in making preparations for his departure.

As he drew near to Leyria, now possessed by the Moors, he

11 Roderick, Book II, 11, 146f.
12 Ibid., Book II, 11, 216f.
perceived that the grief and penance that he had experienced had effected a complete disguise of his identity. Both Moor and Christian mistook him for a beggar and gave him food. He resolved to retain this disguise to help him accomplish his purpose. As he traveled on, he took careful note of the ruin brought upon his country. His religious nature rebelled against the Moors' use of the Christian temples for the celebration of Moorish ceremonies. When he arrived at Auria, in spite of the horrible sights that he had already witnessed, he was shocked by the complete ruin of this little town. What buildings had not been burned, were wrecked, and carcasses, both Moor and Christian, littered the streets.

... a woman came
Toward him from the ruins. For the love
Of Christ, she said, lend me a little while
Thy charitable help! -- Her words, her voice,
Her look, more horror to his heart convey'd
Than all the havoc round; for though she spake
With the calm utterance of despair, in tones
Deep-breathed and low, yet never sweeter voice
Pour'd forth its hymns in exstasy to heaven.
Her hands were bloody, and her garments stain'd
With blood, her face with blood and dust defiled.
Beauty and youth, and grace and majesty,
Had every charm of form and feature given;
But now, upon her rigid countenance
Severest anguish set a fixedness
Ghastlier than death.13

She led him among the ruins to a place where four bodies, those of members of her family, lay upon the ground.

13Ibid., Book III, 11. 218f.
There -- with firm eye and steady countenance,
Unfaltering, she address'd him -- there they lie,
Child, husband, parents -- Adosinda's all!
I could not break the earth with these poor hands,
Nor other tombs provide -- but let that pass --
Auria itself is now but one wide tomb
For all its inhabitants -- what better grave?
What worthier monument? -- O cover not
Their blood, thou earth! nor yet, ye blessed souls
Of heroes and of murder'd innocents,
Oh never let your everlasting cries
Cease round the eternal throne, till the Most High,
For all these unexampled wrongs, hath given
Full, overflowing vengeance.14

After Roderick had assisted her in the burial of her dead,
she told him her story. In the massacre of the people of
the town, a captain of Alcahan's army had hidden his men
reserve her for an hour of dalliance; but she prevailed on
him to give her that one night to indulge in grief for her
loved ones. Seeing her opportunity when he slept, she
killed him with his own sword, and escaped to Auria to per-
form her last duties to her beloved dead. The effect of
her story on Roderick inspired her to tell it elsewhere to
arouse Spain against the invaders. The two consecrated
their lives to God and to Spain. Roderick hoped to work
out his own redemption while he aided in the redemption of
his country. As part of his penance the king refused to
reveal his identity to Adosinda; so she gave him the name
of Baccabean. Her instructions were for him to go to Visonia
to consult with the Abbot concerning who of the loyal leaders
was best suited to be king of Spain. In Visonia he was told

14 Ibid., Book III, 11. 246f.
by the priests Odoar and Urban to make contact with Pelayo, who was held prisoner at the conqueror’s court, and to ask him to assume command of the patriots. When Roderick left the two priests, he had been formally endowed with authority to perform the duties of the priesthood.

One evening while he was on his way to Cordoba, he happened to be in a company of travelers seated around a fire. During the course of their conversation concerning the general distress of the country, they cursed Roderick as the cause of it all. Of the party one of the men defended the erring king, and in this old man, Roderick recognized his foster-father, Siverian, who also was going to Cordoba. The next morning as Roderick was about to continue his journey, he was struck by a Moor; in retaliation, the insulted Christian dealt the infidel a death blow. Siverian, approaching that moment, was delighted to find such spirit in his fellow Christian traveler. Then the old man communicated to Roderick the purpose of his errand to Cordoba. He was sent by Rusilla, Roderick’s mother, to inform Pelayo that his house was seriously threatened by the apostasy of his sister Guisla. Roderick was relieved to learn that his mother was still alive.

As they neared Cordoba, Siverian wanted to visit the tomb of Theodofred, of course unaware of the fact that his companion was the son of that good king. As they came in
sight of the house, the old man recalled the events that had taken place there when his beloved Roderick, as king, had entered the house of his father. Roderick too recalled events that had happened there as he was growing up under the loving care of his parents. When they entered the chapel, they found Pelayo, for there his guilty mother was buried. On her death bed she had breathed a message for her son—that he continue to offer prayers for her soul; and on this, the anniversary of her death, he had been granted permission by his captors to keep his accustomed vigil at her tomb. Both the travelers delivered their respective messages to the Prince. There before the altar he accepted the responsibility of king of Spain.

Stretching forth
His hands toward the crucifix, exclaim'd
My God and my Redeemer! where but here,
Before thy awful presence, in this garb,
With penitential ashes thus bestrewn,
Could I so fitly answer to the call
Of Spain; and for her sake, and in thy name
Accept the crown of thorns she proffers me!
And where but here, said Roderick in his heart,
Could I so properly with humbled knee
And willing soul confirm my forfeiture?
The action follow'd on that secret thought!
He knelt, and took Pelayo's hand, and cried,
First of the Spaniards let me with this kill
Do homage to thee here, my lord and king!15

On Pelayo's return into the town, he found waiting for him none other than Florinda, the unfortunate daughter of Julian. Her story was one that brought sympathy from the

15 Ibid., Book III, ll. 158f.
good young prince. Orpas, the renegade priest who sought favor from the Moors, wanted to marry her, and Count Julian had given his consent to the union, that she might bear children to continue his race. Desiring to escape this plot against her, she begged Pelayo to help her get into Christian territory. The prince told her to be ready to escape with him that same evening.

After a short journey they joined Roderick, now known as Father Maccabee, and Siverian, and the group camped for the night. Soon all were asleep but Roderick and Florinda. Finding her companion to be a priest, she hastened to confess to him the whole story of her relationship with King Roderick. It was at this time that the priest learned her identity. In this confession she blamed herself for Roderick's offense. She revealed her own ardent though pure passion that had been kindled by the contemplation of his many virtues and cultivated by her awareness of the unhappiness of his domestic life. She pleaded the cause of the unfortunate king and reproached herself with the curses which her high and indignant spirit had breathed in a moment of vengeance upon the man she loved best. During this confession, Roderick could hardly control his emotion.

When the travelers arrived many days later at the castle of Count Pedro at Cangas, in Asturia, they found a party of patriots gathered, ready to begin their efforts to expel the
enemy from their country. Adosinda had been working among them and had incensed them to rally to the cause of Spain. Almost immediately after the arrival of the travelers, a band of Moors marched within sight. They had been sent to recapture Pelayo. The ready-assembled troops headed by Count Pedro quickly put them to flight, and marched on to Pelayo's castle. As they neared the castle, they met a multitude of Christians headed by a group of females. In this group was Guisla, Pelayo's sister, who had been intercepted by the patriots in her flight to join the Moors. Chief among these women was Adosinda. Not only had she called her country to fight, but she, like Joan of Arc, had taken her place among them to prove her sincerity. It was here that Roderick saw his mother; he watched and listened to her eagerly while she reassured Pelayo concerning the safety of his wife and children.

It was the next morning that Rusilla, advised by Siverian, sent for Roderick. Greatly touched, he listened to her and Florinda as they spoke tenderly of the supposedly lost man. Florinda's grief over the apostasy of her father gave the priest an excuse to weep for the real emotion that welled up within him in the presence of these two women whom he loved so well. In this scene his dog, Theron, recognizing his former master, arose from the floor and licked the hand of the priest.
On Pelayo's return from the mountains of Covadonga, where his family had been hidden for safety, he found all of his loyal patriots in readiness to greet him as king. A very elaborate and impressive ceremony followed in which Roderick played a great part. As the throng burst forth in shouts of praise to Pelayo and to Spain, the very air seemed to give forth assurance of ultimate victory over the enemy. When the ceremony was finished, Roderick hastened to his mother, knowing instinctively that she had recognized him. She believed him to be an even greater character than he had ever been before his passion had caused him to sin.

In the camp of the Moors we find the traitors, Ebba, Sisibert, Orpas, and Julian. Orpas had succeeded in planting in the minds of the Moors distrust and dislike for Julian. Julian, on the other hand, had begun to realize the serious significance of his treason against Spain and of his agreement with Orpas concerning Florinda. Getting permission from the Moorish chief, he sent for his daughter for an interview. Accompanied by Roderick, she went to the enemy camp for the visit with her father. Because of his change of mind and heart concerning her marriage to Orpas, the two were reconciled, but he would not renounce his belief in the religion of the Moors. Roderick, as priest, sought two things -- to reclaim him for Christianity and to
hear him express forgiveness for the sin against his daughter. Julian would do neither.

Orpas at last succeeded in getting Abulcacem, the Moorish chief, to agree to the assassination of Julian in the approaching battle against the Christians. Almost immediately afterwards the Moors departed for the Vale of Covadonga, where, according to Guisla's advice, he would be able to trap Pelayo's entire troop. Forewarned of their coming, the Spaniards were ready for the enemy. As half of the forces of the Moors marched into the narrow vale, from heights above came rolling massive rocks pushed by the patriots to crush their enemies. One of the leading figures in this total victory was none other than Adosinda; it was she who gave the signal that started the rocks rolling. In accordance with the plan of Orpas, the division of which Julian was a part was stationed outside the entrance to the valley. Count Pedro and his young son happened upon the quarters of Julian about the same time that the assassin sent by Orpas and Abulcacem arrived and plunged his dagger into Julian's side. Realizing the treachery in the Moorish camp, Julian commanded his army to join those under the standard of Pelayo; then he called for Florinda and Roderick and asked to be carried into a nearby Christian chapel to make confession. After performing for Julian all his duties as priest, Roderick revealed his identity, threw himself on his knees, and begged the forgiveness of the dying man.
Julian pardoned the penitent man and informed him that because Egilona was then dead, he was free to marry Florinda. But this union was not to be.

On the Goth she gazed,
While underneath the emotions of that hour
Exhausted life gave way. O God! she said,
Lifting her hands, thou hast restored me all —
All — in one hour! and round his neck she threw
Her arms, and cried, My Roderick! mine in heaven!
Groaning, he clasped her close, and in that act
And agony, her happy spirit fled. 16

When Roderick came from the chapel, he met Count Pedro and told him of the death of Julian and Florinda. At that moment Orello, Roderick's horse, emerged from the ranks of the detested Moors, bearing the more detested Orpas. The sight was too much for Roderick. He seized the reins of this favorite steed and made him throw Orpas to the ground. Orello, in obedience to this familiar hand and touch, then trampled the renegade to death. Mounting the horse, Roderick called for the sword of Julian and the armor of Siverian and plunged amidst the Moors, fighting like one possessed. True to his old custom, he shouted as he fought, "Roderick the Goth! Roderick and victory!" The cry filled every Spaniard's breast with amazement and hope, and all fought with a spirit like that of their leader. Each of the renegade Spaniards met his death in that battle, and the Moors were put to rout. When the recall was sounded and the victors

16Ibid., Book XXIV, 11. 266f.
had returned to their standards, all started looking for the beloved Goth who had led them.

Upon the banks
Of Sella was Orello found, his legs
And flanks incarnadined, his poitral smear'd
With froth, and foam, and gore, his silver mane
Sprinkled with blood, which hung on every hair,
Dispersion like dew-drops: trembling there he stood
From the toil of battle, and at times sent forth
His tremulous voice far echoing loud and shrill,
A frequent, anxious cry, with which he seem'd
to call the master whom he loved so well,
And who had thus again forsaken him.
Siverian's helm and cuirass on the grass
Lay near; and Julian's sword, its hilt and chain
Clotted with blood; but where was he whose hand
Had wielded it so well that glorious day?—
Days, months, and years, and generations pass'd,
And centuries held their course, before, far off,
Within a hermitage near Viseu's walls,
A humble tomb was found which bore, inscribed,
In ancient characters, King Roderick's name. 17

The poet's purpose in Roderick is clearly moral, and he accomplished this purpose by character portrayal rather than by plot structure. The story is of importance primarily as a medium for displaying the hero in his various relationships. Nevertheless, it is a well-constructed story. The priestly character of Roderick was a necessary device for all that happened between him and Florinda and her father; and, further, it secured attention to him throughout the story. The narrative begins in an interesting manner and moves smoothly on to the conclusion. It can hardly be said to have a climax, except in the characters themselves. With Susilla it is the recognition of her

17 Ibid., Book XXV, 11. 569f.
thirty-year-old son in the sad-faced priest; with Pelayo it is his acclamation as king; with Florinda and Julian it is Julian's reconversion and Roderick's revelation of himself; and with Roderick we may say that there is a three-fold climax -- the forgiveness of Julian, his final recognition by Florinda, and his triumph in the battle with the Moors. This last battle, in which the Spaniards recognized their beloved master, Roderick, is perhaps the climax of the action of the story. One of the best interest devices of the poem is the love between Florinda and Roderick. While it is hardly seen at all, it still pervades the entire poem. It is felt from the time that Florinda enters the story until her dying act of throwing herself into his arms in the joy of recognizing in the faithful priest the one whom she had loved for so long and whom she had caused so much suffering. No writer could more artistically have planned the action to accomplish so perfectly the purpose of this poem. There is real drama in a few scenes, for instance, in the defeat of the Moors in the Vale of Covadonga and the last battle described in the poem. Yet the action of the poem as a whole is strangely yet conveniently lacking in the dramatic quality. The dramatic effect is achieved in the spiritual battles of the characters.

If Southey took flight from this world in Thalaba and Kehama, as some critics have accused him of doing, he
certainly alighted again in *Roderick*. In this poem we find him at his best in character portrayal. His characters here appear to possess more of the ordinary human traits than any that we have met earlier. Furthermore, they act in situations that are not only quite possible, but also probable in the times with which the story deals. Except for four fictitious characters that he created for the story, all of the characters portrayed in *Roderick* are mentioned in history. In this study it will be necessary to discuss only four -- Florinda, Julian, Adosinda, and Roderick. These will be discussed in the order named.

Florinda, before she was visited by sorrow, had been a very beautiful young lady, and an average one for her surroundings. Her chief emotions were the love and loyalty that she felt for her father, for her church, and for Roderick. When she realized that she could not be Roderick's wife, the only thing left for her was to dedicate herself wholly to God. These emotions controlled all of her actions in the poem. When she first came on the scene, about a year after Roderick had disappeared, she bore signs of great suffering, both mental and spiritual. When she made her confession to the priest, she revealed to the reader the real facts concerning Roderick's sin against her. Her story told of the true nobility of his character and the great unhappiness of his married life. These two factors contributed to the love that she felt for him.
Quiet and calm like duty, hope nor fear
Disturb'd the deep contentment of that love.
He was the sunshine of my soul and like
A flower, I lived and flourished in his light.

And alas!
Pity with admiration and mingling then,
Alloy'd and lower'd and humanized my love. 18

Believing as she did that hers was the real blame for the
great calamity brought on the country, she would not let the
priest interrupt her before she had concluded her story.
Southey could hardly have conceived a more novel way of con-
veying to the reader the truly pathetic plight of these two
people, than to have them together as priest and penitent.
Her part in the story does not further the development of
the story itself, but it aids considerably in the develop-
ment of the character of the hero. Her confusion did not
soften his own feeling of guilt; rather it made him regret
even more the sin that he had committed, as he realized how
truly beautiful their love had been. At the end of her life
she was ready to die, for she had seen her father restored
to the Christian faith, and Roderick restored to her, the
same high noble character that had first won her admiration
and love. Thus her virtue and devotion were rewarded. She
died happy in the thought that he would be hers in heaven.
While the tragic but beautiful love of these two was only
spoken of and never really seen until the end of the story,

18 Ibid., Book X, 11. 174f.
still it adds a quality of human interest to the narrative that has not been found in any of the earlier poems. It is through Florinda herself that we get this effect and not through anything said or done by another character in the story.

Perhaps there is more growth in the character of Florinda's father than in any other personage of the poem. Certainly there is a greater change in the reader's opinion of him. Our first introduction to Count Julian comes at the opening of the poem when we are told why he "call'd the invaders."

A private wrong
Roused the remorseless Baron. Mad to wreak
His vengeance for his violated child
On Roderick's head, in evil hour for Spain,
For that unhappy daughter and himself,
Desperate apostate . . . on the Moors he call'd.  

Our last view of him is given when he lay dying in the chapel, where he uttered these words:

Forgive me, Lord, as I forgive
Him who hath done the wrong!

... . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Death will make

All clear, and joining us in better worlds,
Complete our union there!  

In the course of the poem Southey does not diminish the significance of Julian's great wrong; but he does soften its effect on the reader. The poet motivates carefully the

19 I[bid.], Book I, ll. 7f.
20 I[bid.], Book XXV, ll. 238f.
complete forgiveness that we feel for Julian in the conclusion of the poem. This motivation is by means of Florinda's love for her father, her grief for his apostasy, and Roderick's abiding desire for his forgiveness. A quotation from the Quarterly Review gives a very good summary of the part this character plays in fulfilling Southey's purpose in the poem.

The character of Count Julian, and the situation in which he is placed, are of material importance in furthering the object of the poem. The consciousness of shame which he tries to conceal by obstinacy; the self-justification which he vainly endeavours to establish by sophistry; the suspected light in which he is viewed by his adopted friends; the injuries which he and his followers are made to endure at their hands; -- all these hold forth a lesson, if one were wanting, to shew that he who forgets the natural obligations of duty, and forsakes his country and its cause, must never hope for effective refuge in the approbation of his own heart, nor in the confidence or esteem of others. The better part of his character serves to illustrate and exemplify the principles whose operation is developed throughout the poem; and which, as we have observed, furnish its most efficient agency -- the retrieving power of virtue, the force of enthusiasm and will. Julian, at his death, rewards the filial piety of his daughter; and in his reconversion to his country and his God, the triumph of her constancy and goodness is acknowledged. 21

The woman Adosinda is one of the most influential and least seen persons in the poem. The first contact that we have with her is in Auria and is sufficient to impress upon us the full strength of her character. She used great forethought and courage in her escape from the Moor who had

21"Southey's Roderick," Quarterly Review, XIII (April, 1815), 38.
taken her for an hour's enjoyment. She made use of her
grief for her loved ones in her determination to rouse the
patriots to drive the invaders from the country. Quickly
she sensed the effect of her story on Roderick and de-
termined to use it to the greatest advantage for her coun-
try. When Roderick left the hermitage with the aim of in-
stigating plans for the reclamation of Spain, Adosinda was
the first person that he met of a kindred spirit. The story
of all that she had suffered struck a familiar note in the
sentiment which occupied his mind. Her suffering suggested
to him the general distress of the country and seemed a
powerful call to him to revenge this distress. She was
absolutely necessary to the working out of Southey's pur-
pose, and his management of her displayed great skill. He
derived from her services all that was necessary to his plan,
without permitting her to trespass upon it, and he dispensed
with her office without appearing to have neglected or for-
gotten her. In the eleventh book we see evidence and hear
reports of her exertions, and in the fourteenth book we see
her in the actual fulfillment of the prophecy she made when
she left Roderick at Aura. In the twenty-third book, where
she made her last appearance, we see her playing a part en-
tirely worthy of her and of the reader's expectations on her
behalf. In Adosinda one can see evidence of the high value
that Southey placed on fortitude and moral courage.
The poet's primary avenue to the attainment of his moral purpose is through the character of Roderick. In this character he shows a sin-laden soul that from its own inherent goodness works out its elevation from the depths to the heights. Not only that, but through this same inherent goodness the poet elevates him in the opinion of the people. When the poem opened, he was the object of their curses; at the close, he had won for himself the blessings of his countrymen. In Roderick we see undoubtedly Southey's greatest narrative hero. Next to him, perhaps, I would name Thalaba, but the latter was not of the same moral nature as Roderick. Thalaba yielded to physical temptation when he persuaded Oneiza to be his wife, as Roderick yielded to sin with Florinda. But the Death Angel took Oneiza out of the way and left him, though grief-stricken, free to go on his way, forgiven and encouraged by his wife's spirit. Roderick, on the other hand, found no such easy way out of his difficulties. There were greater and more far-reaching consequences of his sin. While the cost to Spain seems unjustly great, his own inward punishment was equal to it in magnitude. He was made to see his country laid waste, his countrymen deprived of homes, loved ones, and even life. On every hand curses were breathed against him. All of this increased the remorse that was eating away within his heart and mind. Only one of a basically great and good nature
would experience the pangs of conscience that Roderick felt or would undertake the penance that he did. Through Florinda, Siverian, and Rusilla we learn of the nobleness and grandeur of Roderick before his fatal mistake. Florinda's story revealed that his error resulted from one unguarded moment; that did not necessarily have to indicate the ruin of his character. Had Florinda, who really loved him, not openly cursed him,\(^{22}\) and had Julian not sought such extreme means of vengeance, his sin would not have attained such proportions even in his own eyes. His release from Egilona and his marriage with Florinda would have brought happiness to overshadow the remorse that any person of his nature would naturally have felt.

Southey used great skill in portraying in this fallen king the deepest human sentiments and emotions common to mankind. Only a writer well acquainted with human nature could so skillfully handle the character of Roderick. We met him at the lowest depths of despair; heard the confession that revealed the contrition of his soul; felt that half-comfort that he received with Romano; experienced the terrible effects of solitude produced by his bereavement; and with a great satisfaction saw the formation of a purpose that lifted him gradually out of his utter dejection. Even when he heard the confession that might have salved his

\(^{22}\)See account of her confession, p. 104.
conscience, he indulged in no self-justification, offered no excuses for his behavior, sought no lessening of his punishment. There is never any time in the poem when the reader does not feel sympathy for Roderick; however, in the scene between him and Florinda by the campfire, when we learn the facts of his downfall, we feel a genuine affection for him. When the good man stood in the chapel in the presence of Julian and Florinda, the two whose forgiveness he craved most, we knew that he had gained one of the greatest ends that he sought so persistently. In each important event in the poem Roderick is the most prominent figure, and on each occasion the reader's feeling for him is heightened. The climax comes in this feeling when we see him assume fully the kingly character that belongs to him and with might and courage and nobleness hew his way through the enemy, cutting them down on every side. It is with pride in our hero that we watch him in his true character as foremost patriot in the battle.

In _Joan of Arc_ and _Madoc_, Southey's first two narratives, he used blank verse. _Thalaba_ and _Kehama_, the next two, were written in the irregular verse discussed in previous chapters. Then in _Roderick_, his last narrative of importance, the author returned to blank verse. It will be noticed that the three written in conventional verse deal with more natural people and more normal situations,
while the irregular verse lent itself more readily to the purposes and effects of those more highly imaginary situations. As would be expected from such an immature writer, the blank verse of *Joan of Arc* showed many marks of imperfection. That of *Madoe and Roderick*, however, and especially the latter, shows great improvement over the verse of the earlier poem. Perhaps no more just estimate of the style could be made than that expressed in the following quotation from the *Quarterly Review*:

The variety of its cadences gives a spirit which relieves its grandeur, and the redundant syllable at the end of many of the lines prevents the majesty of its tone from oppressing the ear. The language is such as the authors of the best era of our literature would acknowledge, nor can we give it higher praise than to say that its standard worth would be admitted in the mint of Queen Elizabeth's age. Many words corrupted by familiarity are here restored to their original meaning, and rescued from the perversion to which they have been subjected by fashion or negligence.\(^{23}\)

Any analysis that I might make of the verse would but lead to the conclusion so well stated by Hiram Corson:

The blank verse of Southey's *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* has great merit as narrative verse, and is worthy of careful study. The variations on the theme-metre, and the resultant pause melody, show not only great metrical skill, but a moulding spirit which is quite a law to itself, and beyond mere skill.\(^{24}\)

\(^{23}\)"Southey's Roderick," *Quarterly Review*, XIII (April, 1815), 112.

\(^{24}\)Hiram Corson, *A Primer of English Verse*, p. 22. (This quotation is taken from the *Library of Literary Criticism*, p. 409.)
Because of the general differences between *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* and Southey's other long poems used in this study, the critic finds it necessary to deviate from the general trend followed in discussing the other poems. First, this poem attains a loftiness never approached in the others. And there is not one incident that detracts from this loftiness. This quality characterizes the high and tumultuous feelings that flow throughout the poem. The remorse of the king; the love and courage of Adosinda; Florinda's repentance; the loyalty of Pelayo's followers; the devotion of Siverian; Rusilla's courage, love, and pride; Orello's and Theron's recognition of their master; and by no means the last nor least important, the mutual love of Roderick and Florinda. Such feelings are far too numerous to name, for the whole poem is a study in strong human feelings and emotions.

To the discussion of the loftiness of the feelings of the poem, I would add that as in no other of his poems Southey has displayed great skill in delicate shades of human emotional experiences. He perhaps should be placed second to no other writer in this respect. He shows the keenest power of discrimination here. The effect is comparable with though better than his use of color in *Thalaba*.

As loftiness characterizes the feelings of the poem, so also does it characterize the actions, the personages,
and the scenes described therein. It is doubtful that Roderick can be said to surpass Kehama and Thalaba in the matter of description, but in this poem we can certainly see the author's versatility in this field. Consider, for example, this picture of man's agony of soul before the Cross:

His arms
Embraced its foot, and from his lifted face
Tears streaming down bedew'd the senseless stone.
He had not wept till now, and at the gush
Of these first tears, it seem'd as if his heart,
From a long winter's icy thrall let loose,
Had open'd to the genial influences
Of Heaven. In attitude, but not in act
Of prayer he lay; an agony of tears
Was all his soul could offer. 25

Now notice the personage and situation described below. The central figure is Roderick's mother, who has not known the fate of her son since his disappearance.

Little deem'd
Rusilla at that moment that the child,
For whom her supplications day and night
Were offer'd, breathed the living air.
Her heart
Was calm; her placid countenance, though grief
Deeper than time that had left its traces there,
Retain'd its dignity serene; yet when
Siverian, pressing through the people, kiss'd
Her reverend hand, some quiet tears ran down.
As she approach'd the Prince, the crowd made way
Respectful. The maternal smile which bore
Her greeting, from Pelayo's heart at once
Dispell'd its boding. 26

25 Roderick, Book I, 11. 191f.
26 Ibid., Book XIV, 11. 155f.
Contrast with the above two studies in human nature the fol-
lowing picture of a night scene.

How calmly gliding through the dark-blue sky
The midnight Moon ascends! Her placid beams
Through thinly scatter'd leaves and boughs grotesque,
Mottle with many shades the orchard slope;
Here, o'er the chestnut's fretted foliage grey
And massy, motionless they spread; here shine
Upon the crags, deepening with blacker night
Their chasms; and there the glittering argentry
Ripples and glances on the confluent streams.
A lovelier, purer light than that of day
Rests on the hills; and oh how awfully
Into that deep and tranquil firmament
The summits of Ausena rise serene!
The watchmen on the battlements partake
The stillness of the solemn hour; they feel
The silence of the earth, the endless sound
Of flowing water soothes them, and the stars,
Which in that brightest moon-light well-nigh quench'd,
Scarce visible, as in the utmost depth
Of yonder sapphire infinite, are seen,
Draw on with elevating influence
Toward eternity the attendant's mind.
Musing on worlds beyond the grave he stands,
And to the Virgin Mother silently
Prefers her hymn of praise. 27

Notice the effect of the passage quoted below:

While thus Florinda spake, the dog who lay
Before Rusilla's feet, eyeing him long
And wistfully, had recognized at length,
Changed as he was and in those sordid weeds,
His royal master. And he rose and lick'd
His wither'd hand, and earnestly look'd up
With eyes whose human meaning did not need
The aid of speech; and moan'd, as if at once,
To court and chide the long-withheld caress. 28

While the possibilities in descriptive passages are endless,
we must finally quote a last one. The following lines

27 Ibid., Book XV, 11. 1f.
28 Ibid., Book XV, 11. 241f.
contain the philosophy of the poet. It is impossible not to notice the breadth of this philosophy. Roderick was explaining to Julian the way of life and immortality as they were sitting near a crystal-clear spring.

Here we see
The water at its well-head; clear it is,
Not more transpicious the invisible air;
Pure as an infant's thoughts; and here to life
And good directed all its uses serve.
Through woodlands wild and solitary fields
Unsullied thus it holds its bounteous course;
But when it reaches the resorts of men,
The service of the city there defiles
The tainted stream; corrupt and foul it flows
Through loathsome banks and o'er a bed impure,
Till in the sea, the appointed end to which
Through all its way it hastens, 'tis received,
And, losing all pollution, mingles there
In the wide world of waters. So is it
With the great stream of things, if all were seen;
Good the beginning, good the end shall be,
And transitory evil only makes
The good end happier. Ages pass away,
Thrones fall, and nations disappear, and worlds
Grow old and go to wreck; the soul alone
Endures, and what she chuseth for herself,
The arbiter of her own destiny
That only shall be permanent. 29

29 Ibid., Book XXI, 11. 382f.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was set forth in the Introduction as an attempt to answer the following questions concerning Robert Southey as a narrative poet: (1) Why is he as a narrative poet so little known? (2) What are the qualities of his narratives? (3) Do his narratives deserve more attention and better treatment than they have received from the critics? In the five foregoing chapters the more important facts have been laid before the reader, in addition to some conclusions and opinions formed concerning the individual poems. In this chapter general conclusions will be presented in regard to the narratives as a group. These conclusions will be based on facts and deductions found in the body of the thesis.

Many critics have thought of Southey's narrative poems only in terms of the epic. There is little disagreement on the fact that these poems are not epics in the usual sense of that word. Yet judged by the following definition, all five of Southey's poems are epic in nature:

The epic is a long narrative poem, dealing with the story of some hero, and involving a large number of events and episodes. The material is such that the
epic must run through many chapters or cantos; it often reaches the proportions of a good-sized volume.\textsuperscript{1}

The following statement also aids in the characterization of these poems: "The plain account of the nature of an epic poem is the recital of some illustrious enterprise in a poetical form."\textsuperscript{2} Besides the qualities implied in these general definitions, there are more specific ones. Southey built his poems on a safe epic foundation in choosing traditionary history. The ground-work of his poems is heroism, true to epic tradition. His two-fold purpose differs only slightly from the usual object of the epic. The exaltation of virtue and goodness is apparently his great underlying purpose. His secondary purpose evidently is to excite admiration of his heroes.\textsuperscript{3} Furthermore, the heroes bear traits that are remarkably epic. Especially is this true of the heroes of Thalaba, Kehama, and Roderick. The poems are epic in their use of episodes. By the rules, episodes must be naturally introduced, must have a sufficient connection with the poem as a whole, and must seem to be inferior parts that belong to it and not mere appendages. In their moral idealism, in their subject-matter and structure, in their supernatural features, and in their occasional extravagance, these poems bear a striking resemblance to epics.

\textsuperscript{1}William Henry Sheran, \textit{Handbook of Literary Criticism}, p. 467.

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 471.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 474.
Southey has received censure for his part in the romantic movement. Jeffrey, for example, in the *Edinburgh Review*, 4 charged him first of all with being one of the new school; on the other hand, he said that Southey was the least objectionable of the new school in his revolutionary poetical practices. It seems that Jeffrey intended to leave the impression that Southey was some sort of literary monstrosity. Robert Southey does belong to a somewhat transitional period in literary style. That fact within itself, aided by other facts disclosed in this study, rendered him less likely to attain eminence. There was a gradual growing away from tendencies of the age of Dryden, and the principles of romanticism had hardly been clearly formulated. Critics had not become accustomed to what the new movement had to offer. Southey, with his few romantic tendencies, had the effect of antagonizing the critics while at the same time he served somewhat as a shock absorber for the more radical members of the romantic movement. It is rather unfair to Southey that through the years he has been considered a romanticist; considered in the light of the foregoing facts, that classification implies undeserved inferiority. Rather he was a transition poet with some romantic tendencies. In his treatment of nature he disclosed

4Francis Jeffrey, "Southey's Thalaba the Destroyer," *Edinburgh Review*, I (October, 1802), 68.
most resemblance to the romanticists. However, his use of mytholo
gy and of characters that are clothed in legendary mystery also indicates his kinship with the romanticists. As a romanticist he would be a minor figure; as a transition poet tending toward the new movement he assumes importance.

His narrative art should be measured in terms of standard elements of literary criticism. The first requirement of a good narrative poem is that it be a unified production; "that all the parts, . . . though some of them may be uninteresting in themselves, contribute to the general effect, and the whole seem organic, as if it had grown by a continuous process." Our study of Joan of Arc and Madoc revealed that Southey fell short of this requirement, especially in the first part of Madoc, but such is not the case in Thalaba and Kehama. However, I cannot claim the existence of the mark of genius in them, for they do not attest that "something is accomplished which is so far beyond the reach of intelligence and industry that it seems as if it had come into being without the author's conscious volition." These two, while possessing unity in subject matter, occasionally bear indications of having resulted from great industry on the part of the author. Roderick, however, is free from such signs of conscious effort.

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5 Charles F. Johnson, Elements of Literary Criticism, p. 6.
6 Ibid.
The second element by which we shall measure these poems is their characters. The poems used in this study cover a total of 565 pages of average size. In these five long poems there are four characters, Ladurlad, Adosinda, Roderick, and Count Julian, that may claim sufficient distinction to deserve mention in this concluding discussion. Only the last three mentioned possess enough individuality to claim literary immortality, and their claim has not been acknowledged.

As I have pointed out elsewhere, Southey chose his characters to work out the purpose of his narratives, but somehow when the purpose has been accomplished, the only thing about the characters that is remembered is the atmosphere in which they lived in the story. This shortcoming cannot be attributed to the author's lack of feeling for his characters. He regarded Joan of Arc and Madoc with great love and admiration. Thalaba always had the understanding of his creator. Ladurlad and Kailyal were objects of his compassion. Adosinda was admired for her patriotism and courage; and Roderick, Florinda, and Julian were treated with compassion by the poet. But they all, except for the unusual nature or intensity of their suffering, have slept through the years since their creator brought them into existence, disturbed occasionally only by those who have attempted to account for their mediocrity. And all except
perhaps Roderick, Adosinda, and Julian deserve their fate. First we may say that the poet himself, notwithstanding his love for them, failed to know them thoroughly. This statement is not intended to contradict the former contention that Southey was a student of human nature. Understanding man's inner springs of action does not intimate ability to conceive an individual character so clearly and to describe him so accurately as to make him live in literature. Kehama and Roderick profited by the three earlier poems. Particularly is this true of Roderick, in which we find true art in character development.

The next element by which we shall judge the poems is that of the philosophy of the writer. His philosophy of human conduct was within itself not unusual. He believed that the good and the virtuous would always triumph over the evil of the world, and he incorporated this philosophy in all his works. The unfortunate truth is that in general the poet failed to attain philosophic depth. In Thalaba, the hero theoretically had his choice between good and evil, yet the poet so clearly and definitely played up the controlling Mohammedan principle of predestination that Southey's preaching of the triumph of virtue loses significance. In Roderick the poet used this principle in more true-to-life characters, and the effect is therefore more impressive.

In the choice of musical words and words that convey the desired pictures and feelings, Southey was an artist.
His picturesque and musical vocabulary found its best employment in his artistic descriptions, some of which are among the best in the English language.

For a piece of literature to receive the critic's stamp of approval, the following three questions should be answered affirmatively: (1) Is it sincere? (2) Is it true to life? (3) Does the artist possess depth and range of vision? We shall now examine Southey's poems in relation to these questions.

(1) Are they sincere? Robert Southey was one of the most sincere writers that England has produced. That sincerity is apparent throughout the narrative poems. In 1837, when he collected the works of his younger days, he still believed that they possessed merit as pieces of literature. In the moral purpose of his poems he was so sincere that had he rewritten them later in life he would not have changed that purpose.

(2) Are the poems true to life? One critic has said:

The truth demanded by the critic . . . is not truth to fact, but truth of imagination, truth of idea, truth of characterization. Art may violate the laws of nature in creating ghosts and fairies, in having dead men row boats or snakes change into women. But the critic demands that the images of these beings and these events be vivid; they must seem true even though they are manifestly impossible. The ideas expressed must be ideas with which the critic can sympathize; they need not be ideas with which he individually

7Louise Dudley, The Study of Literature, p. 255.
agrees, but they must be ideas he can understand as those of a fellow human being. And he must recognize, in the characters of a story, people like himself, people with like passions and impulses, with similar feelings and desires.\footnote{Ibid.}

Southey's poems are true to life in the light of the foregoing explanation.

(3) Does the artist have depth and range of vision?\footnote{"The person who has depth may get along with very little range, but range alone will not produce art." Dudley, \textit{The Study of Literature}, p. 255.} One has only to make a mental review of the places, peoples, and objects encountered in our study to pronounce Southey a poet of remarkable range; the same cannot be said concerning his depth. Here we have one of his greatest shortcomings.

Now to one final test must our poet be submitted -- that of universal\-\-\-ality. A good piece of literature is "one that is liked by all people, in all places, and at all times";\footnote{Ibid.} therein lies the explanation of the term universal\-\-\-ality. In order to appeal to people of different ages and races, literature must be the work of the imagination and it must appeal to the emotions. Furthermore, it must "reflect primarily the universal rather than the variable traits -- dealing with problems common to mankind regardless of race, manner, language, or religion."\footnote{Ibid.} These poems possess qualities necessary for universality, yet they have
not exhibited universal appeal. Nor have they passed the test of time, which is a part of the test of universality.

Byron, though bitterly opposed to Southey's principles in poetry, "yet was constrained to admit the Laureate's claim to admiration as a poet."\textsuperscript{12} He made this observation: "Of his poetry there are various opinions: there is perhaps too much of it for the present generation; -- posterity will have to select."\textsuperscript{13} An appropriate question is whether posterity has had a chance to select. It is interesting to note this observation of Macaulay, an ardent champion of the \textit{Edinburgh Review}, regarding Southey's poems:

Though full of faults, they are nevertheless very extraordinary productions. We doubt greatly whether they will be read fifty years hence; but that, if they are read, they will be admired, we have no doubt whatever.\textsuperscript{14}

Macaulay's judgment was accurate. One very probable explanation for this lack of popularity lies in the fact that Southey wrote in the wrong age. His works were obscured in his own day by the combined brilliance of many well-written, highly romantic pieces of literature. Furthermore, the new school of poetry gained in popularity while Southey maintained the even tenor of his own individual style. Between 1796, when \textit{Joan of Arc} was published, and 1816, two years after the

\textsuperscript{12}Quoted by Fitzgerald in the preface of \textit{Poems of Robert Southey}, p. iv.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
publication of Roderick, the following well-known pieces of literature appeared before the reading public of England: Lyrical Ballads, by Coleridge and Wordsworth; The Excursion, by Wordsworth; The Lay of the Last Minstrel, Marmion, and The Lady of the Lake, by Scott; Alastor, by Shelley; Christabel, by Coleridge; and a part of Childe Harold, by Byron. It is little wonder that by the close of the first quarter of the century Southey's star was hardly visible in such a galaxy.

In general, the foregoing study has revealed a number of factors that have contributed to the poet's failure to maintain the reputation which he won in the early part of his life. He occasionally failed quite noticeably to achieve unity; he was slow in developing any considerable skill in plot structure; many of his characters were inadequately conceived and poorly developed; and finally, he failed to reach the philosophic depth for which he strove and which the sincere reader expects in a serious poem.

On the other hand, many merits have been disclosed. His narratives move quickly and easily and are quite exciting. They are written in fine taste, and are good morally; the characters are clean and wholesome; the poet has handled the most obnoxious characters and scenes in a refined style. He showed real skill in depicting the finest and most delicate human sentiments. With his well-adapted metre, his choice of words, and his own sensitiveness
to beauty and goodness, he produced many very beautiful lyrical descriptions. In reading all five of the poems one encounters varied fields of human experience: Hinduism, Mohammedanism, France in the time of Joan of Arc, Wales in the years following the reign of Owen, religious customs of the Aztecs, the Moor-Christian relation during the Moorish conquest of Spain. More important than that, a careful study of the group will show the gradual development of the poet's narrative art.

The final conclusion is meant to answer the last question concerning the poems. They are worthy of rediscovery by students and teachers of literature. They are a worth while part of the great heritage of English literature and will enrich the experience of anyone who reads them.
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