A STUDY OF IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS AS TO SUBJECT MATTER AND PURPOSE

BY

MARION JEWETT AUSTIN
A. B. Illinois Wesleyan University, 1918

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

IN ENGLISH

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1919
I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Minnie Jewett Austin
ENTITLED A Study of Imaginary Conversations so as to Subject Matter and Purpose BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Arts in English

Committee on Final Examination*

*Required for doctor's degree but not for master's
A STUDY OF IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS AS TO
SUBJECT MATTER AND PURPOSE

Contents

I. Introduction
II. The Imaginary Conversation in Greek and Roman Literature.
III. Imaginary Conversations by Modern Writers, Except Landor.
IV. Landor's Imaginary Conversations.
Introduction.

The dialogue as a literary form has received considerable attention from literary historians, but the specific type of dialogue to which, following Walter Savage Landor's example, I have given the name "imaginary conversation" has never been fully differentiated, so far as I have been able to discover. Hirzel's *Der Dialog*¹ is a complete and scholarly study of this species of literature, especially as developed by the Greeks and Romans, but from the very nature of his definition of his subject matter, he was forced to slight the dialogues which it is my purpose to discuss most carefully. For example, the only reference to Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* is a mention in a footnote of his *Dialogues of the Greeks and Romans*².

Another book upon the dialogue is Miss Elizabeth Merrill's dissertation entitled *The Dialogue in English Literature*³, in which she endeavored to do for English dialogues what Hirzel had done for those of antiquity, but failed to attain the same completeness of treatment. Having limited her study to English literature, she was obliged to omit the discussion of many dialogues which may be included in this general literary survey.

Unlike Hirzel and Miss Merrill, I have selected one particular sort of dialogue to discuss. The classification is narrow, yet it must include, with Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*.

---

3. The Dialogue in English Literature, by Elizabeth Merrill, New York, 1911. A thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
dialogues as diverse as Plato's and Lucian's, or Bishop Hurd's and Christopher North's, and at the same time must exclude such dialogues as those of Erasmus, Berkeley, and Shaftesbury; that is to say, I am making a classification of those dialogues in which the speakers are real but the conversation is fictitious. The criticism may perhaps be made that I am working backward: that I have first arbitrarily selected the works to be studied and am now formulating a definition that will be comprehensive enough to include them all. This is true to some extent, but when the problem involves the making of a new literary classification, is not that method almost the only practicable one? The name "imaginary conversation" has no great importance in itself. If Landor, who employed this form more extensively than any other English writer, had used the title "realistic dialogues" or even "ideal confabulations", I should probably have labelled my classification accordingly.

The most natural way to begin a definition of the imaginary conversation, in its relation to dialogues in general, would be to say that all imaginary conversations are dialogues, but not all dialogues are imaginary conversations. Yet this statement, however logical it may sound, cannot be reconciled with Hirzel's definition of dialogue, which he shows to be a narrower term than conversation. Although he pays no attention, of course, to any distinction concerning the imaginary conversations of real personages, such as is made in this study, yet his distinction between Dialog and Gespräch will be of assistance in making the

even more restricted differentiation required here. He begins his book with the query, "Was ist ein Dialog?" and proceeds to answer thus: "A dialogue is a conversation', thus perhaps many would answer, and believe they had thereby settled the matter. However, the answer is not so simple, and dialogue and conversation by no means include one another in their conceptions. To be sure, every dialogue is a conversation, but not *vice versa* every conversation a dialogue. Would it occur to anyone to define as dialogue the chatter which takes place pleasantly over coffee or beer? In a dialogue we demand, so to speak, something more. Then follows a careful study of the Greek derivation of the word, from which this conclusion is reached: "Accordingly, the dialogue, if denoting conversation, can only denote such as is connected with discussion. A dialogue cannot flutter like a butterfly from one subject to another. The name dialogue has been attached to written fixed discussions in conversation form." It is evident from these quotations that the sweeping statement made above, concerning every imaginary conversation being a dialogue, would not have been accepted by Hirzel. If I accede to his interpretation of:

1. Hirzel, p. 2. This and the following excerpts from Der Dialog are free translations from the original German.
2. Hirzel, p. 4
3. Hirzel, p. 5
4. Hirzel, p. 6. It is interesting in this connection to compare Hirzel's definition of the dialogue with the quite contrary definition by Bishop Hurd in his Commonplace Book, quoted in Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Rev. Richard Hurd, D. D., Lord Bishop of Worcester; with a selection from his correspondence and other unpublished papers. By the Rev. Francis Kilvert, M.A. London, 1860, p. 252: "The genius of the Dialogue calm, moral, instructive; not disputative or controversial; the end, a reasonable opinion to be taken up, not a question to be casuistically discussed." Hirzel cites in a foot note an opinion similar to his own, from Bouterwek, Vorr. zu den Dialogen S. VIII: "Moreover I have not called these dialogues conversations, because I wish to designate with the Greek word only such conversations as those in which a serious theme is handled through a connected exchange of ideas." Hirzel, p. 4, note.
the word dialogue, I need not consider my choice of imaginary conversations as resulting in a small group selected from the general dialogue literature of the world. In fact, from this aspect, dialogue is as restricted a term as imaginary conversation, so that my list will include some writings which Hirzel's does not. But the more common use of the word dialogue is that which we find in Miss Merrill's treatise. She states no formal definition, but her selection and discussion imply that she has adopted the ordinary application, which gives the word several aspects, the most important for our purpose being that of "a written composition in which two or more persons are represented as conversing or reasoning on some topic, as the Dialogues of Plato";¹ and that of written conversations in which no serious theme has to be set forth, the value being aesthetic rather than controversial. It is this twofold application of the word that I shall make use of in the course of my study. When the word dialogue occurs, it means any written conversation, regardless of the original Greek significance.

I have discovered no definition, as such, of the particular class of literature with which this study is concerned, but there are several descriptions of individual writings of this type to be found which amount to definitions or may be so adapted. Also, there are definitions of dialogues in general which, by introducing a limiting clause, may be transformed into definitions of the special type in which we are interested. The article concerning the dialogue in the Encyclopedia Britannica is an instance of the latter sort. It begins by designating the dialogue as "properly

¹. See Webster's New International Dictionary, under Dialogue.
the conversation between two or more persons, reported in writing," but the most significant sentences are the following: "A dialogue is in reality a little drama without a theater, and with scarcely any change of scene. The dialogue is so spontaneous a mode of expressing and noting down the undulations of human thought that it almost escapes analysis. All that is recorded, in any literature, of what pretended to be the actual words spoken by living or imaginary people is of the nature of dialogue."¹ This is as broad an application as Hirzel's is narrow, including as it does even the conversation in novels. If we limit the term to writings made up solely of conversation, the sentence quoted last may be easily amended to form a fairly accurate definition of imaginary conversations, in which are written what pretend to be the actual words of people who live or have lived. There are several exceptions and qualifications to this statement which will be considered later.

Professor Oliver Elton has written a description of Landor's Imaginary Conversations which comes so close to being a definition of the type that it merits quotation at this point. "The 'imaginary conversation', in its freedom and its limitations," writes Elton, "is a form that was shaped by Landor in exact accordance with his genius as a writer of prose. It has only two rules. First, there is no narrative, and as few stage directions as possible; and although the speakers sometimes tell each other stories, the author does not interrupt them, except when 'Walter Landor' comes forward

himself as an interlocutor. Secondly, the speakers must be real persons, living or dead. Otherwise, the Imaginary Conversations are as free as air. Any one of the 'leading figures of time',\(^1\) or any one else, may appear, and may talk about anything. Hence the Conversations differ as much from one another as Cicero's Tusculan disputations, a scene in Sophocles, a scene in Molière, or a dialogue in Lucian."\(^2\) Professor Elton states that Landor invented the imaginary conversation. It is true that his work is unique, but this study, if it achieves what it intends, will prove that his, although perhaps the most perfect, is not the only kind of imaginary conversation.

As the name indicates, imaginary conversations are never the historically recorded conversations of the characters who participate in them. Similar conversations may or may not have really taken place. The following comment on Landor's Conversations might be applied to other writers of this type of dialogue: "His dramatic scenes are not in the least mosaics pieced together from 'authorities' or 'sources'. On the contrary he chose by deliberate preference events which might have occurred, but were quite unrecorded, and he austerely refused to lay upon his interlocutors' lips any single sentiment or thought save what he believed to be original

---
1. This phrase is quoted from Sidney Colvin's Walter Savage Landor, New York, 1884, p. 99.
2. Similar brief definitive descriptions of Landor's Imaginary Conversations which are of assistance in understanding the limitations of the general type, are to be found in most books on English literature; for example, in:
   - English Literature, by William J. Long, Boston, 1909, pp441-42.
   - English Literature, by Alphonso Gerald Newcomer, Chicago, 1905, p. 277.
The name 'imaginary conversation', as was stated above, has no particular significance. Edmund Gosse calls Landor's conversations 'historic dialogues' and 'stately colloquies' almost in the same sentence. Landor and Southey thought--however mistakenly--that they were writing the same sort of dialogues, yet Landor called his "Imaginary Conversations" and Southey entitled his "Colloquies". If we include all dialogues which are the imagined conversations of real personalities, then we may consider as imaginary conversations all so-called "Dialogues of the Dead". There are, then, two distinct types of imaginary conversations,--those in which the characters are represented as living, and those in which the characters are supposed to be speaking after death, in the Elysian Fields. Miss Merrill's dissertation contains an adequate description of the former type, based upon a consideration of Landor's dialogues, as follows:

"Various as these dialogues are, they have certain common characteristics. In the first place, their interlocutors are nearly all actual personages, and nearly always of the past, though rarely, as in the case of Southey and Landor himself, of the present. They are reproduced under conditions that were supposedly theirs during their lives on earth, and their conversations thus give a reproduction of past ages in some such way as the historical novel aims to do, save that these conversations concentrate interest wholly on the personages, scarcely at all on the events, of the past."

2. A Short History of Modern English Literature, by Edmund Gosse, 1897, p. 324.
Of the second type,—that is, the dialogues of the illustrious dead—Lord Lyttelton has given an interesting exposition in the preface of his Dialogues. He writes: "Lucian among the ancients, and among the moderns Fénelon archbishop of Cambray, and M’sieur Fontenelle, have written Dialogues of the Dead with a general applause. The plan they have traced out is so extensive that the matter which lies within the compass of it can hardly be exhausted. It sets before us the history of all times and all nations, presents to the choice of a writer all the characters of remarkable persons, which may best be opposed to or compared with each other; and it is perhaps one of the most agreeable methods that can be employed, of conveying to the mind any critical, moral, or political observations, because the dramatic spirit, which may be thrown into them, gives them more life than they could have in dissertations, however well written."

A fine defense and analysis of the imaginary conversation form of dialogue is contained in Bishop Hurd's preface to the 1764 edition of his Moral and Political Dialogues. He has mentioned The Moralists of Lord Shaftesbury, Mr. Addison's Treatise on Medals, and The Minute Philosopher of Bishop Berkeley, as being the only English dialogues worthy of the name, but adds, "An essential defect runs through them all. They have taken for their speakers, not real, but fictitious characters; contrary to the practice of the old writers, and to the infinite disadvantage of this mode of writing in every respect.

"The love of truth, they say, is so natural to the human mind, that we expect to find the appearance of it, even in our amusements. In some indeed, the slenderest shadow of it will suffice: in others, we require to have the substance presented us. In all cases, the degree of probability is to be estimated from the nature of the work. Thus, for instance, when a writer undertakes to instruct or entertain us in the way of Dialogue, he obliges himself to keep up the idea, at least, of what he professes. The conversation may not have really been such as is represented but we expect it to have all the forms of reality. We bring with us a disposition to be deceived (for we know his purpose is not to recite historically, but to feign probably); but it looks like too great an insult on our understandings, when the writer stands upon no ceremony with us, and refuses to be at the expense of a little art or management to deceive us.

"Hence the probabilities, or, what is called the decorum of this composition. We ask, 'Who the persons are, that are going to converse before us?' 'Where and when the conversation passed?' and 'by what means the company came together?' If we are let into none of these particulars, or, rather if a way be not found to satisfy us in all of them, we take no interest in what remains; and give the speakers, who in this case are but a sort of puppets, no more credit, than the opinion we chance to entertain of their Prompter demands from us.

"On the other hand, when such persons are brought into the scene as are well known to us, and are entitled to our respect, and but so much address employed in showing them as may give us a colourable pretence to suppose them conversing together, the writer himself disappears, and is even among the first to fall into his
own delusion. For thus CICERO himself represents the matter:

"'This way of discourse, 'says he, 'which turns on the authority of real persons, and those the most eminent of former times is, I know not how, more interesting than any other: in so much that in reading my own Dialogue on old age, I am sometimes ready to conclude in good earnest, it is not I, but Cato himself, who is there speaking. '"

Bishop Hurd has touched upon the one common bond that holds all imaginary conversation together—the reality of the speakers. It will be seen that the conversations of different writers vary as widely as possible in purpose and method and subject matter, but one may always depend upon meeting with actual personalities. If in the midst of a collection of dialogues which for the most part fulfil the requirements of the imaginary conversation, I come upon some in which the speakers are abstractions or creatures of the author's imagination, I shall look upon them as interlopers, as being there under false pretenses, rather than enlarge and distort my definition to include them. However, I shall include some which were intended by their authors to be imaginary conversations.


2. P. Andraud, editor of Fénelon—Choix de Fables et de Dialogue, Paris, 1913, prefers to extend the limitations of the type. He writes: "As in the Fables, it is necessary to enlarge somewhat the sense of the title given to the collection. In the ensemble, there are indeed the dead, more or less illustrious, who are supposed to converse for the greatest profit to the young duke; but some dialogues have for interlocutors mythological persons, whether gods, as Mercury or heroes of ancient Greek legends, as Achilles; the last dialogue is established by the two personages of comedy, Harpagon and Darante."

--Translated from the French, p. 27, note. Such leniency in the treatment of exceptions tends to produce confusion and shall be avoided as much as possible in the course of this study.
but which failed to be so through the limitations of the writer's skill; for example, Southey's *Progress and Prospects of Society*. These will be treated as attempts rather than as achievements in the production of this type of literature. Also, in order not to be too insistent upon details of relatively minor consideration, I shall generally admit into this classification those conversations in which real people are represented as conversing under assumed names. Southey, for example, takes the name of Montesinos in his *Colloquies* and Fénelon even goes so far as to disguise the Duke of Beuvilliers as Chiron and the Duke of Bourgogne as Achilles in the dialogue entitled *Le Centaure Chiron et Achille*. Again, it happens sometimes that a character is so much idealized or misrepresented that the real personality becomes lost, but the dialogue may be included as an imaginary conversation if it is evident that the writer intended to reproduce an actual personage. Plato's *idealization* of Socrates and Professor Wilson's of the Ettrick Shepherd may serve as an ancient and a modern example of this glorifying tendency. There is still another stipulation to be made with regard to the reality of the characters, although doubtless it has been inferred already. It is that the speakers must be not only real but real to others besides the author; to illustrate: in Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson's philosophical dialogue entitled *The Meaning of Good*, Philip Audubon, Arthur Ellis, Parry, and Leslie may be—probably are—real men, with their names changed, but since they are not real to the

1. Andraud, p. 139.
reader they are ostensibly fictitious and therefore the dialogue cannot be classed as an imaginary conversation.

It is impossible to lay down absolute requirements concerning the structure and method of imaginary conversations, which of necessity differ widely according to variations in subject matter; but it is obvious that any elements which detract from the seeming reality of the conversation such as extraordinary length—as in Plato's Republic—and metrical treatment, are undesirable.

There are two distinct types of imaginary conversations, parallel in many cases to the division previously made between dialogues of the living and of the dead. They are, first, the conversations which might easily have taken place owing to the actual acquaintance and common interests of the speakers; and second, those in which the characters are so widely separated by time, social positions, nationality, or inclination that no conversation was ever really held between them. The dialogues of the dead by Lucian, Fontenelle, Fénelon, and Lyttelton are, almost without exception, conversations between characters who never could have talked together during their lifetime. But the greater part of the conversations by Plato, Wilson, Hurd, and Landor are of the other type. Many indeed, are so plausible that one cannot but feel certain that a very similar conversation actually took place. All this will be evinced later in the analysis of the individual conversations; it is sufficient to state here that to insert a clause in our definition limiting imaginary conversations to conversations which never could have taken place would be a mistake.

It is impossible to state in a brief working definition all the stipulations regarding the imaginary conversations,
which have been set forth in the preceding paragraphs; but if one keeps in mind that, as the term is used here, an imaginary conversation at its best is a written conversation between two or more significant personalities of ancient or modern times, each speaking from his own point of view, then it will be possible to determine wherein particular conversations are at fault or wherein their chief merit lies. I shall trace the imaginary conversation through all literature as fully as the scope of this study allows, classifying the conversations of each writer according to subject matter and purpose, and showing by illustration the styles and methods employed by the different authors. It is my aim to show how many important works of literature have been couched in this form, how favorable it is to the expression of ideas, and what a wealth of knowledge is stored up in the imaginary conversations of ancient, mediaeval, and modern times.
II.

THE IMAGINARY CONVERSATION IN GREEK AND ROMAN LITERATURE

The literature of the Greeks and Romans is crowded with dialogues of every kind, so that it is not to be wondered at that many can be found which fulfill the requirements of the imaginary conversation. Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, and Lucian, the greatest writers of prose dialogues in their respective periods, each produced several imaginary conversations with great success, although their main literary purpose in most cases led in a different direction. Antiquity offers no writer who, like Walter Savage Landor, composed imaginary conversations from purely artistic motives; hence it would be a little unfair to emphasize his superriority in the use of this form of literature over writers who employed it as a means to an end and not as an end in itself. To pronounce Plato's wonderful Phaedo and Symposium and Republic inferior to Landor's Dialogues of the Greeks and Romans, simply because the former are narrated dialogues, would seem at first sight a grave injustice as well as an indication of a decided lack of literary discrimination. It would be all this and more if the comparison were extended to the contents and significance of the two groups, but this is a study of a certain literary form and if in the study unusual estimates such as the one stated above are introduced, it must be kept in mind that they are made with regard to relatively minor factors, more important considerations being sometimes deliberately overlooked for the scientific purpose of tracing the use of this particular literary form.

It is sufficient proof of the great possibilities of the imaginary conversation that Plato should have employed it with
more or less modifications in all his prose writings. There is room for disagreement concerning the classification of the Platonic dialogues as "imaginary conversations", but there need be no hesitation about attributing to Plato the impulse which led to the ultimate perfection of the form.\(^1\) Ironically enough, Landor himself, angry as he would have become had the fact been called to his attention, owed much to this Greek whom he so strangely misjudged. Landor learned from Plato "many strokes of the craft of dialogue—the cunning overture, the power of keeping characters distinct, and of interveining an abstract discussion with beautiful or lively human touches, the use of allegory or idyll by way of interlude. For all this Landor must surely have studied the master to whom he is unfair."\(^2\)

Plato's general purpose in writing his Socratic dialogues may be briefly stated as the desire to present in a clear undogmatic fashion the philosophy of his teacher and the ideas which he himself had derived from this philosophy. A writer with less dramatic genius probably would have executed the same purpose in treatise form, but Plato recognized that "thought with personality added to it, is a greater thing than thought alone."\(^3\) Combined with the primary desire of raising men's thoughts to the heights to which his had been elevated by Socrates, other desires led to the writing of these dialogues, such as that of preserving for future generations the complex personality of Socrates, and that of exer-

---

1. It is unnecessary, here to trace the origin of the imaginary conversation back to the lost mimes of earlier times. A description of these writings and of Plato's indebtedness to them is to be found in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, VIII. Dialogue, and Hirzel, I -- p. 20ff.
2. Elton, II, p. 33.
3. Merrill, p. 3.
cising his own dramatic ability and literary sense.\textsuperscript{1} It is the side of his work which is related to these subordinate desires which interests us here, rather than the philosophical side. Most students of Plato have been interested in the conversational phase of the dialogues only in so far as it affected the doctrines inculcated by them.\textsuperscript{2} In this study, however, the usual attitude will be quite reversed; the philosophical elements will concern us only as they influence the artistic, dramatic quality.

The classification and chronological arrangement of Plato's dialogues have caused endless perplexity to scholars; they still are and doubtless always will be moot questions. The usual

1. With regard to Plato's purpose in employing this literary form, Mahaffy writes: We can perceive at least four distinct and important objects attained by adopting it. First, it was the best and most natural way of giving a full and lively history of the life, character, and conversations of his master Socrates, thus producing from another mind and from a different standpoint, a grander, if not so faithful a memoir of the inimitable master. Secondly, it exhibited most clearly the most Socratic and valuable point in Plato's philosophy— the principle of searching after truth, and of resting in this search as a great intellectual end, whether any conclusion was attainable or not; the raising and discussing of all the objections to, and difficulties in any theory, could in no other way be brought so vividly before the student. Thirdly, it enabled Plato to put forth opinions tentatively, without assuming any responsibility, and of ventilating a new theory before adopting it as a dogma. . . . Lastly, we must not forget that Plato satisfied a keen dramatic and literary instinct by drawing these personal sketches. He gave rein to a satirical and critical spirit also." --Rev. J. P. Mahaffy—A History of Classical Greek Literature, Vol. II, The Prose Writers, New York, 1880, p. 172.

2. Even Jowett with all his keen appreciation of the literary value of Plato's philosophical writings, disparages the passages whose value is solely dramatic. "If," he writes, "we find these writings side by side with philosophic inquiry, a considerable space allotted to historical description and dramatic imagery, it is yet easy in some cases to separate these elements, in others to recognize the philosophic kernel which they themselves contain." -- The Dialogues of Plato— Translated into English with Analyses and Introductions by B. Jowett, New York Edition, Vol. I, p. XLII.
classification according to subject matter is a grouping into dialogues of search and dialogues of exposition, typical examples of each type being the Charmides and the Phaedrus, respectively.  

The only classification which Plato himself seems to have had in mind was a separation of the general inquiries into knowledge and understanding, from the specific inquiries into physics and ethics. He carefully avoids mingling to any great extent these two types of inquiry in the same dialogue. 2 Schleiermacher's division of the dialogues into three categories, according to the connected development of philosophical thought, was a convenient one and had the distinction of being the first complete and satisfactory classification upon this basis. Dr. Eduard Zeller, in his Plato and the Older Academy, treats the subject of the classification, chronology, and authenticity of the Platonic dialogues with great fullness and care, comparing the classifications of Schleiermacher, Ast, Socher, Stallbaum, Hermann, and more modern investigators of this question. 3 He concludes his comparison thus: "--none of the theories we have been considering can be rigidly carried out; the order of Platonic writings cannot depend wholly either on design and calculation to the exclusion of all influences arising from external circumstances.

3. Dr. Eduard Zeller--Plato and the Older Academy, translated with the author's sanction from the German, by Sarah Frances Alleyne and Alfred Goodwin, London, 1888, pp. 99-109. Schleiermacher's classification may be taken to illustrate the general method of all these arrangements, which differ more in the grouping of the dialogues than in the bases of separation. In Harper's Dictionary, his three classes are described thus: "In the first he considers that the germs of dialectic end of the doctrine of ideas begin to unfold themselves in all the freshness of youthful inspiration; in the second, those germs develop themselves further by means of dialectic investigations respecting the difference between common and philosophical acquaintance with things, respecting motion and knowledge; in the third they receive their completion by means of an objectively scientific working out, with the separation of ethics and physics."
and Plato's own development; or on the gradual growth of Plato's mind, to the exclusion of any ulterior plan; or, still less, on particular moods, occasions, and impulses. 1 The main purpose---of the great majority of the dialogues, be their outer motive what it may, is the representation and establishment of the Platonic philosophy. 2 Dr. Zeller then offers his own system of grouping, according to this idea. These strictly philosophical arrangements concern our study very little; better adapted to our purposes would be a classification on a literary basis. The nearest approach to such a classification is the system by which the dialogues, as though they were dramas, are grouped into trilogies and tetralogies, according to similarity of theme and treatment. 3

Apparently the dialogues have never been grouped strictly according to structure or method of presenting the ideas, but since such a grouping would be the one most consistent with this discussion of their conversational value, there is no reason why it may not be used. They fall naturally into two groups---narrated and direct dialogues. The former begin with a few speeches of direct dialogue, serving to introduce the main conversation, which is related by one of the speakers. The dialogues of this type are the Charmides, Lysis, Protagoras, Phaedo, Symposium, Euthydemus, Republic and Parmenides. Only a Plato could have employed this unwieldy form of oratio obliqua with the success which it attains in the Symposium, but even there one feels that it is an error in form, and that the dialogue could be read with more ease had the simpler method

1. Zeller--p. 117.
3. The Encyclopaedia Britannica uses a part-literary, part-philosophical classification, grouping the dialogues into eight series and explaining the relation in each case.
been used. The advantage offered by this method of describing the speaker's and the setting of the dialogue, or the incidents which brought it about, probably seemed to Plato to out-weigh the inconveniences. Yet the narrative element seriously detracts from the value of the dialogues as imaginary conversations, — a species of literature which has as its leading characteristics directness and a sense of reality. The fact that some of the narrated dialogues are more interesting and more spirited than some of those which lack this handicap does not lessen the truth of the criticism but does increase one's admiration of Plato's exceptional dramatic skill.

Another classification might be made on the basis of the relative historical and fictitious quality of the conversations. An imaginary conversation, we have decided, consists in the imagined speech of real people. There are many critics of Plato who would question our right to apply this term to his dialogues, maintaining that Socrates is an idealization, a mere name, not a real person at all, as Plato presents him; there are just as many other critics who

1. Harper's--See Dialogues. Mahaffy writes thus regarding the method of indirect narration: "This prolonged obliqueness of construction, with its crowded infinitives, always appears awkward, not to speak of the dramatic absurdity of making any man repeat from memory a set of speeches or an intricate dialogue. This absurdity is only artistically tolerable where the speaker reports a conversation in which he himself took a leading part, as is the case with Socrates in the Lysis, Charmides, and Protagoras.

2. This view is presented by A. E. Taylor in his Plato, (New York), pp. 31-32: "If we would avoid serious errors, it is necessary always to remember that the personages of one of Plato's philosophical dialogues are one and all characters in a play. 'Protagoras' or 'Gorgias' in a Platonic dialogue, is not the historical Professor of that name, but a fictitious personage created by Plato as a representative of views and tendencies which he wishes to criticise. Mingled with traits drawn from the actual persons whose names these characters bear, we can often find in the pictures others which can be known or suspected to belong to the writer's contemporaries. And the same is true, though the fact is commonly forgotten, of the protagonist of the drama, the Platonic 'Socrates'. 'Socrates' in Plato is neither, as some of the older and more uncritical expositors used to assume, the historical Socrates, nor, as is too often taken for granted today, the historical Plato, but the hero of the Platonic drama."
would argue that in Plato's dialogues we have the actual, not the imagined, conversation of real people. But these are the extremes of critical attitude. May we not avoid entering too deeply into the controversy over the historical value of Plato's portrayal of Socrates, by taking a neutral position, admitting that here we have an actual incident, a remembered speech, or a genuinely noted-down bit of conversation, but there again we have a fancied happening, a speech based upon supposition and general impression, or a conversation that is consciously invented and attributed, because of truth to spirit, to actual personages? To be sure Plato was not troubled by Landor's abhorrence of using the historically recorded or remembered speeches of his characters. Plato employs not only real but often contemporary characters so that it is not more than reasonable to expect to find much that is not imagined in his dialogues, especially since the production of imaginary conversations, as such, had no part in his conscious purpose. Doubtless at first his intention was to be as exact in reproducing actual conversations as possible.

1. John Burnet, in his Plato's Phaedo, Oxford, 1911, takes this attitude, especially toward the Phaedo:-"...I cannot bring myself to believe that he (Plato) falsified the story of his master's last hours upon earth by using him as a mere mouthpiece for novel doctrines of his own. That would have been an offense against good taste and an outrage on all natural piety; for if Plato did this thing he must have done it deliberately. There can be no question here of unconscious development; he must have known quite well whether Socrates held these doctrines or not. I confess that I should regard the Phaedo as little better than a heartless mystification if half the things commonly believed about it were true." Intro. p.XII.

2. Merrill, p.118.-"He (Landor) said of this method (of Imaginary conversation) that he never put into the mouths of his speakers any words they had actually spoken—only such as they might have spoken. Furthermore, he avoided placing them in the situations in which they had actually figured in life. He chose rather to live into their personalities until he could know what they would say and do under any imagined circumstances, and then to represent them in such new situations. His aim was, then, to attain psychological rather than historical accuracy. Moreover, he tried to represent his speakers, not in the one light in which they are wont to be seen as historical personages, but also as complex human beings."
ble, but as his ideas became more clearly formulated and as he began to extend the application of Socrates' principles into realms of thought hitherto unexplored, instead of dropping the old method of Socratic conversation, he merely imagined what Socrates would have said upon these new subjects, could he have lived to think them out. Herein we have the very essence of the imaginary conversation. Finally, however, he had so far transgressed the bounds of Socratic reasoning that the device of putting his own words into the mouth of Socrates became a very unnatural one; consequently, in the later dialogues Socrates is little more than a name, or at the most an idealization. A division upon this basis seems the one best suited to the study of the Platonic dialogues as imaginary conversations, and is in no way inconsistent with the philosophical divisions of Schleiermacher and other scholars.

Having discussed the dialogue in general as to purpose and classification, it now remains to examine them more specifically with regard to their dramatic value. When reading Plato's dialogues as imaginary conversations, the features that attracts one's attention most forcibly is the way in which the prevailing spirit of a dialogue suits its subject matter,—the way in which Plato has put real art into his philosophical writings. A distinctive tone is given to each dialogue,—the pervading sense of youth and beauty in

1. A systematic analysis of the dramatic qualities of each individual dialogue would be of value at this point, but it is omitted partly because of lack of space and partly because Hirzel's discussions and Jowett's analyses are so complete as to include even some treatment of the dramatic phase of the dialogues. The latter's comparisons of the various dialogue devices employed by Plato, his ideas regarding the relation of history and fiction in the Platonic dialogues, and his manner of tracing the blend of philosophic and dramatic inspiration, could scarcely be improved upon. The purpose of the following brief and admittedly inadequate discussion is merely to emphasize and illustrate a few of the most salient traits in the dramatic work of Plato.
Lysis, the simplicity and poetic style of Charmides, the vigor and marked dramatic force of Laches, the clever argumentative spirit of Protagoras, the serene spiritual beauty of Phaedo combined with a sense of impending tragedy, the ironical mirth of Euthydemus, the dignified mature thoughtfulness of Phaedrus, so one might continue throughout the list, for in almost every dialogue the dramatic genius of Plato has created a definite mood which breathes life into the speakers and gives sound and expression to their words.

In spite of the profound philosophical thought underlying the conversations, Plato generally makes them sound natural and characteristic of the speakers. With indefatigable patience he reproduces the almost endless Socratic questionings by which the great master was wont to lead the ignorant into the mazes of metaphysics. Perhaps the best example of this type of lengthy interchange of brief leading questions and monosyllabic answers by Socrates and a slave boy in Meno, whereby the latter is brought to an understanding of geometrical figures. Since this passage is far too long to quote, I have selected a group of speeches from Charmides which, in spite of its being indirect dialogue, will illustrate this same method in a comparatively short space, considering that length is one of the leading characteristics of this type of conversation.

Socrates has asked the youth to define temperance.

"At first he hesitated, and was very unwilling to answer: then he said that he thought temperance was doing things orderly and quietly, such things for instance as walking in the streets, and talking, or anything else of that nature. In a word, he said, I should answer that in my opinion temperance is quietness. Are you right, Charmides? I said. No doubt the opinion is held that the quiet are the temperate; but let us see whether they are right who say this; and first tell me whether you would not acknowledge temperance to be of the class of the honorable and good?"

Yes.
But which is best when you are at the writing-master's, to write the same letters quickly or quietly?
Quickly.
And to read quickly or slowly?
Quickly again.
And in playing the lyre, or wrestling, quickness or cleverness are far better than quietness and slowness?
Yes.
And the same holds in boxing and the pancratium?
Certainly.
And in leaping and running, and in bodily exercise generally, quickness and agility are good; slowness and inactivity and quietness are bad?
That is evident.
Then, I said, in all bodily actions, not quietness but the greatest agility and quickness, is the noblest and best?
Yes, certainly.
And is temperance a good?
Yes.
Then, in reference to the body, not quietness, but quickness will be the higher degree of temperance, if temperance is a good?
True, he said.
And which, I said, is better—facility in learning or difficulty in learning?
Facility.
Yes, I said, and facility in learning is learning quickly, and difficulty in learning is learning quietly and slowly?
True.
And is it not better to teach one another quickly and energetically, rather than quietly and slowly?
Yes.
And is not shrewdness a quickness or cleverness of the soul, and not a quietness?
True.
And is it not best to understand what is said, whether at the writing-master's or the music-master's, or anywhere else, not as quietly as possible but as quickly as possible?
Yes.
And when the soul inquires, and in deliberations, not the quietest as I imagine, and he who with difficulty deliberates and discovers, is thought worthy of praise, but he who does this most easily and quickly?
That is true, he said.
And in all that concerns either body or soul, swiftness and activity are clearly better than slowness and quietness?
That, he said, is the inference.
Then temperance is not quietness, nor is the temperate life quiet, upon this view; for the life which is temperate is supposed to be the good. And of two things, one is true,—either never or very seldom, do the quiet actions of life appear to be better than the quick and energetic ones; still
even if we admit this, temperance will not be acting quietly any more than acting quickly and vehemently, either in walking, talking, or anything else; nor will the quiet life be more temperate than the unquiet, seeing that temperance is reckoned by us in the class of good and honorable, and the quick have been shown to be as good as the quiet.

I think, he said, Socrates, that you are right in saying that."¹

In a passage such as this, Plato has shown us not only Socrates' method but the man himself, — at least in one aspect of his many sided nature,—the searching, thorough, but very queer, instructor of youth. The following realistic bit of conversation from Protagoras shows Socrates in a different mood and illustrates Plato's skill in contrasting characters. The amiable but ostentatious and prolix Protagoras is the very antithesis of terse ironical Socrates.——

Socrates speaks: "Protagoras, I have a wretched memory, and when any one makes a long speech to me I never remember what he is talking about. As then, if I had been deaf and you were going to converse with me, you would have had to raise your voice; so now, having such a bad memory, I will ask you to cut your answers short, if you would take me with you. What do you mean? he said: how am I to shorten my answers? Shall I make them too short? Certainly not, I said. But short enough? he said. Yes, I said. Shall I answer what appears to me to be short enough, or what appears to you to be short enough?

I have heard, I said, that you can speak and teach others to speak about the same things at such length that words never seemed to fail, or with such brevity that no one could use fewer of them. Please therefore, if you talk with me, to adopt the latter or more compendious method.

Socrates, he replied, many a battle of words have I fought, and if I had followed the method of disputation which my adversaries desired, as you want me to do, I should have been no better than another, and the name of Protagoras would have been nowhere."²

2. Jowett, IV, p. 170
A fine example of dramatic force combined with the utmost simplicity is offered by Crito, in which Socrates' aged friend visits him in prison. The beginning is dramatic by reason of its very quietness and naturalness:—

"Socrates. Why have you come at this hour, Crito? It must be quite early?
Crito. Yes, certainly.
Socrates. What is the exact time?
Crito. The dawn is breaking.
Soc. I wonder that the keeper of the prison would let you in.
Crito. He knows me because I often come, Socrates; moreover, I have done him a kindness.
Soc. And are you only just come?
Crito. No I came some time ago.
Soc. Then why did you sit and say nothing, instead of awakening me at once?
Crito. Why, indeed, Socrates, I myself would rather not have all this sleeplessness and sorrow. But I have been wondering at your peaceful slumbers, and that was the reason why I did not awaken you, because I wanted you to be out of pain. I have always thought you happy in the calmness of your temperament; but never did I see the like of the easy, cheerful way in which you bear this calamity.
Soc. Why, Crito, when a man has reached my age he ought not to be repining at the prospect of death."¹

Socrates is not the only character who is made real to us in Plato's dialogues. In a few brief speeches a minor character is often revealed with surprising distinctness. How clearly the following passage makes manifest the sophistic egoism of Euthyphro:—

"Socrates. Good heavens, Euthyphro! and have you such a precise knowledge of piety and impiety, and of divine things in general, that, supposing the circumstances to be as you state you are not afraid that you may be doing an impious thing in bringing an action against your father?
Euthyphro. The best of Euthyphro, and that which distinguishes him, Socrates, from other men, is his exact knowledge of all these matters. What should I be good for without that?
Socrates. Rare friend! I think that I cannot do better than be your disciple, before the trial with Meletus comes on."²

The characteristic tone of the Greek rhapsode is caught to perfection in these speeches from Ion:

Socrates has just suggested to Ion that he praises Homer not by art but by divine inspiration:

Ion. That is good, Socrates; and yet I doubt whether you will have eloquence enough to persuade me that I praise Homer only when I am mad and possessed, and if you could hear me speak I am sure that you would never think that.

Soc. I should like very much to hear you read, but not until you have answered a question which I have to ask. On what part of Homer do you speak well?--not surely about every part?

Ion. There is no part, Socrates, about which I do not speak well, of that I can assure you.

Soc. Surely not about things in Homer of which you have no knowledge?

Ion. And what is there of which Homer speaks of which I have no knowledge? 1

As one reads a dialogue of Plato, one's mind often wanders far from the printed page; indeed, this happens so frequently that there is created a feeling of difficulty in concentrating the attention on the dialogues, which inclines one to criticize Plato for inability to retain his readers' thoughts, until suddenly it dawns upon one with startling illumination that in this very characteristic lies Plato's greatest art. The remarkable power of provoking individual thought is the element of the Platonic dialogues in which they excel all other imaginary conversations. 2


2. All critics, I find, do not agree with me in giving so favorable an interpretation to the mind-wandering tendency induced by reading Plato. Among these is Mahaffy, who declares it to be an undoubted fact "that this great author is far more talked about, and lauded to the skies, than honestly read, and that even diligent scholars find it a task to read a dialogue of Plato honestly through. Very often the questions and answers are minute and trivial, containing no further interest than the persistent assertion of the importance of the search after truth as such. Often, again, the points made by Socrates are sophistical and unsound, and we feel annoyed that Plato will not let the respondent give him the true and embarrassing reply...Even all the literary skill and nameless charm of Plato's style cannot conceal from us the fact that his dialogues are tedious in their minuteness and elaboration of their conversations. This will be admitted by any candid reader of Plato who does not belong to the scholastic trade-union which thinks that all great Greeks are to be lauded as perfect, and that even the mildest detraction is to be set down as want of taste, or want of real appreciation or of
trasting of characters also is a notable feature of the work. In most cases the contrast is made between Socrates and those with whom he speaks. This device is used to excellent advantage when the clear thinking, ironical Socrates converses with men representative of distinct types, such as the easily cornered Protagoras, the conceited enthusiastic Ion, or ingenuous youths like Charmides, Lysis, or Menexenus. It is one of the marks of his genius that every character in the dialogues is a distinct personality, no two having precisely the same attitude or type of mind.¹ Nor has Plato failed to give us, in the dialogues taken as a whole, a vivid impression of the many-sided Greek life of his own day and of an earlier day as well. So imperceptibly is this impression fostered that the reader is often quite unconscious of its influence.²

It is difficult to summarize, in a sentence or two, Plato's contribution to the development of the imaginary conversation for, as Hirzel suggests³, in the range of his dialogues,—from the highly realistic conversations whose aim is the lifting of the Silenus mask from Socrates' personality, to the profound discussions in sympathy for the classics. Verify the merits of such an author as Plato do not need to be supported by a suppression of his weaker points." Jowett, however, says nothing to contradict my statement; he remarks that "the dialogues themselves manifest beyond the possibility of mistake the design of compelling the reader, by their peculiar form, to the independent origination of thoughts."—Vol. I, p.LV.

1. Jowett, I, p. 18
2. Burnet—pp.XXII-XXXIV:—"We must note certain positive features which show that Plato was not only a realist in his character-drawing but also had a strong sense of historical perspective and a genuine feeling for historical values.—Like the great dramatist he was, Plato has transported himself back to the age of Pericles and the age of Alcibiades, and portrayed them as they seemed to the men who lived in them, not as they must have appeared to his contemporaries and to himself, when the glamour of the great time had passed away....It seems to me that the reason why Plato's power of transporting himself back to an earlier time has met with such scant recognition is just the success with which he has done it. As we read him, we can hardly realize that he is calling up a time which was passing away when he himself was a boy."

3. Hirzel, I, p. 175.
which the dramatic form is crushed under the burden of the thoughts, we can find this literary form used for every possible purpose.

Plato was blessed with not only profound intellectual development but also artistic gifts of a high order, -- a combination that is essential to the realization of all the possibilities of the imaginary conversation. Had Plato extended the scope of his character delineations as widely as did Landor, -- that is, had he gone outside the Socratic circle, -- and had he placed the dramatic interest foremost rather than making it secondary to the philosophic, undoubtedly, because of his superior genius, he would have far excelled Landor. As it is, however, we must accord to Landor a higher place, as a writer of imaginary conversations; hundreds of men and women talk to us from his pages, as opposed to the score or more whom Plato causes to speak.

Xenophon is so far inferior to Plato as an "imaginary conversationalist" that I feel no compunction in discussing him second, even though his English translator, Professor Dakyns, is firm in the opinion that Plato borrowed his idea of the Symposium from Xenophon's Banquet of the Philosophers. Only one of Xenophon's works, his Hiero, is strictly speaking, an imaginary conversation, and even here he has not used the form to its very best advantage. Only by pardoning a multitude of structural sins could his Socratic


2. Dakyns expressly refers to it as an imaginary conversation p. VI, -- "the Hiero, an imaginary conversation conducted in quasi Socratic manner on the topic of "Tyranny". He again describes it as an imaginary conversation on p. LXXII.
writings be included in this classification; occasionally, it is true, there are bits of what one feels to be real imaginary conversation— to use a somewhat paradoxical expression— but the exceptions devour the examples. Plato and Xenophon used much the same materials and source of inspiration, and both wrote in dialogue form.

How, then, did it come about that both did not produce imaginary conversations? The answer lies mainly in the personalities of the two men. The practical, largely unimaginative temperament of Xenophon was not adapted to the composition of writings as idealistic and dramatic as the *Phaedo*, for example. Although he must have known Socrates far less intimately than did Plato, his picture of the great teacher, as far as trifling mannerisms and insignificant detail of character and appearance are concerned, is more accurate than Plato's. The latter with his penetrating insight had so perfect a knowledge of his master's personality that it enabled him to understand how Socrates would have met new arguments and situations.

He did not feel constrained, as Xenophon with his fragmentary information must always have felt, to keep to the absolute facts. The difference in the work of the two writers is much the same as the difference in the work of the artist and the photographer. Xenophon did not possess dramatic genius and Plato did; there lay the true

2. Burnet — pp. XIV - XIX.
4. Burnet — p.LVI — "Xenophon gives us too little enthusiasm and Aristophanes too little irony; it is only in the Platonic Socrates that both elements are harmoniously combined in a character with a marked individuality of his own. The Platonic Socrates is no mere type but a living man."
difference. Plato never intruded his own personality when writing his dialogues, whereas Xenophon could never entirely efface his. This self-consciousness constitutes a decided blemish in the type of literature to which imaginary conversations belong. Plato's dramatic skill enabled him to give personality even to minor characters, but the only distinctly dramatic character in Xenophon's Socratic dialogue is Socrates himself, the others, with few and feeble exceptions being colorless interlocutors. Yet what merit, as imaginary conversations, exists in Xenophon's work is an outgrowth, strangely enough, of these very limitations of his dramatic power; not possessing Plato's idealistic, speculative temperament, he perforce wrote conversation that is natural and realistic even though at times it becomes so commonplace as to be vulgar.

This brief characterization of Xenophon's dramatic work in general needs to be supplemented by an examination of and illustrations from the dialogues themselves, - the Memorabilia, the Economicus, the Symposium, and the Hiero. The Memorabilia, as was stated above, really has no place in this discussion, except for purposes of comparison. The object of the work is practical, not artistic or philosophical; Xenophon wrote it as an answer to the accusations made against Socrates, - as a defense of his character and work. Since we are here interested in Xenophon, only as a dramatic artist, the historical and biographical value of the Memorabilia may be ignored. The dialogue portions - which are, unfortunately for their dramatic value, used as illustrations and not as the primary

1. Burnet, - p. XXVI.
interest of the work - were undoubtedly combined and arranged and adapted,\(^1\) to a certain extent, thereby receiving a touch of the quality of the imaginary conversation. Some of the characters are not real, according to the use of the word in our definition, and a thread of narrative or didactic exhortation and description holds the conversation together, - two glaring infringements upon the restrictions of the form we are studying.

The *Economices* has the practical purpose of instruction in domestic economy. It is more like a treatise than like an imaginary conversation, with its systematic development and inculcation of a lesson, but it is superior to the *Memorabilia* in originality and independence of thought. There are many speeches attributed to Socrates which Xenophon must have supplied from his imagination.\(^2\) It is interesting to note that in the latter part of the work, Socrates becomes the instructed, not the instructor. The following is a typical selection which will illustrate the natural, easy-going tone of Xenophon's dialogue:

"Socrates. Is there a subtle art in scattering the seed?"

*Ischomachus*. Let us by all means investigate that point. That the seed must be cast by hand, I presume you know yourself? Socrates. Yes, by the testimony of my eyes.

\(^1\) Dakyns - Vol. III, p.XXII. - "As to the composition (of the *Memorabilia*), my notion is that Xenophon had either juvenile notes to depend on, or at any rate memories refreshed in conversation with friends (Socratic or other) which at a certain date were thrown into some sort of literary form, tentatively at first (possibly portions were orally delivered, a text was gradually formed, copies were circulated). This was the nucleus of the complete work, which he kept working at on and off during his leisure at Scillus, 387 - 371 B. C. till the final moment."

Professor Dakyns has prepared an elaborate outline of the parts of the *Memorabilia*, identifying the characters and sources as far as possible. His comments with regard to the sources are such as these: "probably autobiographic", "there is no reason why Xenophon should not have been an ear witness," or "Xenophon might have learned it from Socrates or a Socratic." He traces most of the conversations to the last named source.

\(^2\) Mahaffy - II, p. 273.
Isch. But as to the actual scattering, some can scatter easily, others cannot.

Soc. Does it not come to this, the hand needs practice (like the fingers of a harp player) to obey the will?

Isch. Precisely so, but now suppose the soil is light in one part and heavy in another?

Soc. I do not follow; by "light" do you mean weak? and by "heavy" strong?

Isch. Yes, that is what I mean. And the question which I put to you is this: Would you allow both sorts of soil an equal share of seed: or which the larger?

Soc. The stronger the wine the larger the dose of water to be added, I believe. The stronger, too, the man the heavier the weight we lay upon his back to carry: or if it is not porterage, but people to support there still my tenet holds: the broader and more powerful the great man's shoulders, the more mouths I should assign him to feed. But perhaps a weak soil, like a lean pack-horse, grows stronger the more corn you can pour into it. This I look to you to teach me."

The Symposium, one may suppose, was intended by Xenophon to be typical of the many Greek banquets at which Socrates figured prominently, - historical in that all the conversation must have been actually spoken at one time or another, but imaginative in that it is not an account of any one particular occasion. The characters comprise at least two "significant personalities," Socrates and Antisthenes, not to mention other recognizable persons such as Critobulus and Autolycus. There is a considerable narrative element present, and the Symposium proper is far more elaborate in structure than an ordinary imaginary conversation needs to be, divided as it is into first thesis, second thesis, and so forth. Occasionally bits of natural and very colloquial dialogue creep in, in which the great Socrates is made to appear almost too undignified. What relates Xenophon's Symposium most closely to the classification of imaginary conversation is the fact that, perhaps unintentionally on Xenophon's part, the men who talk together here could not have met thus at one time. Chronology is utterly disregarded.

1. Dakyns - III, pp. 267-270.
2. Dakyns - III, p. LVIII and p. LXX.
3. Dakyns - III, p. LXX.
The Hiero has the distinction of being the first imaginary conversation without Socrates. Hiero, the despot of Syracuse and Gela, and Simonides of Ceos, the poet, are represented as conversing, about the year 474 B. C., on the advantages and disadvantages of tyranny. The tone is didactic and the moral is stressed; the style is somewhat too elaborate for realistic conversation, and a narrative element prevails, created by the opening phrase, "Once upon a time," and the use of parenthetical descriptive remarks; but the most important requirements of the imaginary conversation are complied with and occasionally there are introduced touches of human nature so vivid that the reader is almost inclined to sympathize with the "poor rich man". The following passage is representative of the manner of the entire conversation:

"Now when Simonides had listened to these reasonings to the end, he answered: How is it, Hiero, if to play the tyrant is a thing so villainous, and that is your final judgment, how comes it you are not quit of so monstrous an evil? Neither you, nor, for that matter, any monarch else have ever heard of, having once possessed the power, did ever of his own free will divest himself of sovereignty. How is that, Hiero?

"For one simple reason (the tyrant answered) and herein lies the supreme misery of despotic power; it is not possible even to be quit of it. How could the life of any single tyrant suffice to square the account? How should he pay in full to the last farthing all the moneys of all whom he has robbed? With what chains laid upon him make requital to all those he has thrust into felons' quarters? How profer lives enough to die in compensation of the dead men he has slain? How die a thousand deaths?

"Ah, no! Simonides (he added), if to hang one's self outright be ever gainful to poor mortal soul, then, take my word for it, that is the tyrant's remedy: there's none better suited to his case, since he alone of all men is in this dilemma, that neither to keep nor lay aside his troubles profits him." 1

Xenophon and Plato, particularly in their distinctly Socratic dialogues, had in common the desire to reproduce or preserve for the younger generation the personalities and discussions of the generation that was just passing away in the time of their

1 Dakyns - III, p. 377.
own young manhood. Cicero, the next writer to make any considerable use of the imaginary conversation,\textsuperscript{1} employs the form not only for this purpose but also as a means of giving a resume of the learning of more remote generations. Miss Merrill compares the dialogues of Plato and Cicero in a way which brings out the fundamental difference which results from this new use, when she writes: "Plato's is the philosophical dialogue, filled with dramatic force and power, and kept closely in touch with the life from which it sprang; Cicero's the dialogue which is a thing of the study, setting forth its author's own exposition of its subject matter".\textsuperscript{2} Cicero's dialogues may be classified in two ways: according to form or according to subject matter. He himself divides them on the basis of form or style into those which resemble the dialogues of Heraclides, in that distinguished men of the past converse on subjects suited to their characters; and those which resemble the dialogues of Aristotle, in that the author represents himself as the chief speaker in a conversation with prominent men of his own time. All are distinctly of the latter type except \textit{De Republica}, \textit{De Amicitia}, \textit{De Senectute}, and \textit{De Oratore}.\textsuperscript{3} According to subject matter, the dialogues may be separated into three groups: those which treat of rhetoric, such as \textit{De Oratore}; those upon philosophical themes, such as \textit{De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum}; and those which are generally referred to as moral essays, such as \textit{De Amicitia}.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}Other dialogue writers, such as Aristotle and Heraclides, for example, will be considered in this paper only as influences upon Cicero and others, although their contribution to the progress of the form of the imaginary conversation really merit a somewhat more extensive treatment.

\textsuperscript{2}Merrill, p. 9.


\textsuperscript{4}Anthony Trollope - The Life of Cicero, 2 vols., New York, 1881, p. 252.
Cicero's imaginary conversations fulfill the letter of our definition but not the spirit of it. The characters are all real, some very distinguished men being included among them, and the dialogues are not based upon actual conversations; but instead of being the imagined conversation, dramatically conceived, of these real characters, I am referring here to the Heraclidean dialogues in particular. Cicero has merely put his own views, for the sake of increased authority, into the mouth of some eminent person and conversation is supplied by the natural answers to and comments upon these views. In the Aristotelian type, the same criticism applies, except that there is not his own views but the views expressed in Greek philosophical books are put into the mouths of the other characters, to be challenged by himself. Editors of Cicero's works have been careful to emphasize that, as he himself was frank enough to admit, his dialogues of the latter type, especially those on philosophical themes, possess no real originality. In dialogues constructed after this manner, the character element tends to become secondary to the thought.

1. I have given Cicero the benefit of the doubt in this regard. As Sihler says in his biography of Cicero, "The customary and futile quest of Greek sources we will put aside." (Cicero of Arpinum, A Political and Literary Biography, by E. G. Sihler, New Haven, 1914, p. 408). Many of the dialogues open with an introductory paragraph in which Cicero emphasizes the authenticity of the conversation, but this is merely consistent with his use of real characters to gain authority for his statements and is not to be taken too literally. Xenophon used a similar device for much the same purpose, so that we can never entirely trust him when he declares himself to have been an actual hearer of a conversation.

2. Rackham, De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum, with an English translation, London, 1914, Introduction, p. X—"his writings made no claim to being original.—He merely chose some recent hand-book and reproduced it in Latin, encasing passages of continuous exposition in a frame of dialogue, and adding illustrations from Roman history and poetry. He puts the matter frankly in a letter to Atticus (XII, 52): 'You will say, "what is your method in such compositions?" They are mere transcripts, and cost comparatively little labour; I only supply the words, of which I have a copious flow."
A brief examination of each of the dialogues which conform most closely to the requirements of the imaginary conversation will give us a more precise idea of the extent to which Cicero employed the form. The *De Oratore* is the first dialogue to demand specific treatment here. It was written and published in 55 B.C. but represents an imaginary conversation held in 91 B.C., at the Tusculan villa of L. Licinius Crassus, carried on between "the leading representatives of genius and accomplishments in Rome." The background is well chosen with regard both to appropriateness and to dramatic possibilities. The dialogue begins with a rather long introduction in which the value of oratory is discussed and the characters and scene are indicated. At first, Cicero makes an effort to prove, and keep the reader reminded of, an historical basis for the conversation, by introducing such remarks as these: "I was told, I remember, that Lucius Crassus--betook himself--to his Tusculan county seat. --- Cotta repeated to me many things then prophetically lamented and noticed by the three of consular dignity in that conversation.---There (as Cotto used to relate) in order that the minds of them all might have some relaxation from their former discourse Crassus introduced a conversation on the study of oratory," etc.

1. Hirzel is concerned, not solely with the dramatic originality of the dialogues, as we are in this study, but with every aspect of them. He takes up each dialogue and analyzes it with the utmost care. For example, he begins with *De Republica* and discusses it exhaustively under the following heads: time of composition, scenery of the dialogue, persons, the course of conversation, comparison with Plato, influence of other philosophers, Roman coloring, contact with the present, and, finally, Cicero under the mask of Scipio. I, pp. 459-471.


3. Wilkens, p. 2--"The scene of the dialogue is laid at a time sufficiently distant from that at which he is writing to robe it in the mellow light of a by-gone generation; and yet it is near enough not to be strange and unfamiliar.--(p.5) The scene--is laid at a time which is at once one of the most obscure and one of the most important in the last century of the republic."

4. Cicero on Oratory and Orators--translated or edited by J. S.
But he soon abandons the suggestions of Cotta's having told the conversation to him, and allows it to become more directly dramatic; however, he retains the narrative phrases such as, "Then Scaevola, smiling, said," "Here Crassus rejoined", or "Antonius then observed". The speeches are long and expository, so that the conversation moves with an even dignity very different from the staccato give-and-take of Socratic questionings. The dialogue is mainly didactic in purpose, Cicero's object being "to set before his reader all that was important in the rhetorical treatises of Aristotle, Socrates, and other ancient writers on oratory, divested of technicalities and presented in a pleasing form." But the dramatic element is by no means deadened by the didactic; critics have been united in placing a high value on the artistic skill evinced in the portrayal of the speakers and the manipulation of the cheerful discussions which are supposed to occupy the greater part of three days.

In *De Republica* and its sequel *De Legibus*, Cicero employed a modification of the Platonic type of dialogue as it manifests itself especially in *The Laws*. They deserve classification as treatises rather than as imaginary conversations because the dramatic element is so little in evidence. The *Academica* and the *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, both philosophical dialogues of the Aristotelian type, have the common purpose of teaching Philosophy.

1. Watson, p. 142.
2. John Edwin Sandys, Editor of *M. Tulli Ciceronis ad M. Brutum Orator*, Cambridge, 1885, quotes Cardinal Newman's opinion that *De Oratore* is the most finished of Cicero's compositions and that "An air of grandeur and magnificence reigns throughout. The characters of the aged senators are finely conceived, and the whole company is invested with an almost religious majesty." p. XLIX. J. L. Strachen Davidson in his *Cicero and the Fall of the Roman Republic*, New York, 1900, states that "in charm and interest the work is only inferior to a dialogue of Plato", p. 292.
to speak Latin, as Cicero himself phrased it.\(^1\) With his deep-rooted patriotism, it was a source of great displeasure to Cicero that only through a study of Greek could the Romans gain a knowledge of the great philosophical wealth of the past. His philosophic dialogues create a Latin vocabulary in which to discuss Greek philosophy.

Having accomplished this important feat, the dialogues could scarcely be expected to give evidence of great originality, as well. Many of the long, uninterrupted speeches are scarcely more than translations from the original Greek.\(^2\) Yet, at the same time there is a noticeable dramatic element in both the *Academica*\(^3\) and the *De Finibus*. The latter consists of three imaginary conversations in which are discussed the Epicurean, the Stoic, and the "Old Academic" schools. The three spokesmen are Torquatus, Cato, and Piso, respectively. The scene and time of the discussions change: the first dialogue is represented as having taken place at Cicero's villa at Cumae in the year 50 B. C.; the second at Lucullus' Tusculan villa about 52 B. C.; and the third at Athens back in 79 B. C.\(^4\) All the characters were actual personages, and are still identifiable. All were dead at the time the *De Finibus* was written,\(^5\) and there is nothing to suggest that these three conversations were not entirely

---

1. Quoted by W. M. L. Hutchinson, in the introduction of his edition of *De Finibus*, London, 1909, p. IX.
2. Reid - p. 26
3. Professor Reid wrote with regard to the *Academica* that Cicero "strove as usual to give vividness to the dialogue and to keep it perfectly free from anachronisms.---The many political and private troubles which were pressing upon him when he wrote the work are kept carefully out of sight." p. 47. It is difficult to make an estimate of the dramatic value of the *Academica* as Cicero finally wished it to be published because only a part of it has been preserved for us,- the second book of the first version, in which Catulus and Lucullus were the most important speakers, and the first book of the second version in which the original dialogue was expanded and changed so that Varro, Atticus, and Cicero himself were the speakers.
4. Hutchinson, pp XIII-XV.
5. Rackham - p. XI.
imaginary, - if conversations based upon material so far from original may in any sense be called imaginary.

There remain for discussion the dialogues on old age and friendship.¹ Both are essays thinly disguised under a conversational form, yet here again, as has been said already of most of Cicero's dialogues, the definition of imaginary conversation is literally complied with for the characters are significant personalities and the speeches are products of Cicero's own thought. His method of writing De Senectute was not such as would have been calculated to achieve an imaginary conversation of the most realistic type. Instead of writing on old age because Cato, the character to whom he wished to give speech, would naturally have chosen that theme, he approached the work from the other direction, choosing Cato, that distinguished old man of a by-gone century, as being most suited to express ideas on old age which he himself had formulated, and was seeking to give to his readers in an authoritative form. He states this clearly in his introductory paragraph: "-----all the discourse we have assigned not to Tithonus, as Aristo the Chian did, lest there should be too little of authority in the tale; but to Marcus Cato, when an old man, that the discourse might carry with it the greater weight." And he closes the introduction with the words: "-Now the conversation of Cato himself shall unfold all my sentiments on old age."² After this introduction, the conversation begins abruptly but it is essentially didactic and, when once started, subsides into almost uninterrupted monologue on the part of the aged censor. De Amicitia contains a more sustained dramatic element, and the narr-¹ Those which are omitted - Brutus, De natura Deorum, and others - are not without some dramatic value, but they illustrate no features other than those supplied by the dialogues here selected for discussion.

tive style is entirely dispensed with, an innovation on Cicero's part which he explains thus: "The opinions of that disquisition (Laelius' conversation on friendship with Lucius Scaevola the augur, and Caius Fannius the historian) I committed to memory and in this book I have set them forth according to my own judgment. For I have introduced the individuals as if actually speaking, lest, 'said I' and 'said he' should be too frequently interposed; and that the dialogues might seem to be held by persons face to face. — I would wish you to withdraw your thoughts a little while from me, and fancy that Laelius himself is speaking."¹ The dialogue begins realistically in the middle of the conversation, thus:

"Fannius; Such is the case, dear Laelius, nor was there ever a better or more distinguished man than Africanus."

A distinctly conversational tone is frequently present, although the best ideas are usually conveyed in the more expository passages. The following extract is representatively conversational:

Laelius. (end of a very long speech) - Thus far I seem to have been able to lay down what are my sentiments concerning friendship. If anything remains (and I fancy there is much), ask of those, if you please, who practise such discussions.

Fannius. But we would rather hear it from you; although I have often asked such questions and heard their opinions, and that not without satisfaction, yet what we desire is the somewhat different thread of your discourse.

Scaevola. You would say so still more, Fannius, if you had been present lately in the gardens of Scipio, when the subject of government was discussed: What an able pleader was he then on the side of justice against the subtle argument of Philus!

Fannius. Nay, it was an easy task for the most just of men to uphold the cause of justice.

Scaevola. What shall we say then of friendship? Would it not be easy for him to eulogize it, who, for maintaining it with the utmost fidelity, steadiness, and integrity, has gained the highest glory?

Laelius. Why, this is using force against one; for what matters it by what kind of request you compel me? You certainly do compel me. For to oppose the wishes of one's son-in-law, especially in a good matter, is not only hard, but it is not even just. After very often, then, reflecting on the subject of friendship, this question seems to me especially worthy of consideration, whether friendship has become an object of desire, on account of weakness or want, so that by giving and receiving favour, each may receive from another, and mutually repay, what he is himself incapable of acquiring.  

And so it continues almost without interruption to the end.

The study of the dialogues of Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero, as imaginary conversations, may seem to have led us dangerously near to the conclusion that the less thought a dialogue contains, the more dramatic it is, and the better qualified to be included in our classification. If this really were the logical conclusion of our examination, it would mean that the form we are tracing cannot hold a very vital place in the literature of serious thought. But this is only a superficial impression; for in the Phaedo, to take only one example from the many we have been considering, the dramatic and thought elements are inextricably united, neither in any way diminishing the value of the other. It is a fact, however, that it is more difficult for a writer to make an imaginary conversation seem dramatic and realistic when he has a serious thesis to maintain than when his sole aim is to represent men talking in such a way as to reveal their personalities. Herein lies the reason why so comparatively few modern writers of imaginary conversations have followed Plato, Xenophon, or Cicero, as their models, and why, on the other hand, so many have imitated Lucian 2 who wrote his dialogues, not in the mood of a serious constructive philosopher or

---

2. Rev. W. Lucas Collins in his biography of Lucian (Philadelphia, 1875) is as positive of Landor's indebtedness to Lucian (p. 50), as Elton is of his indebtedness to Plato.
teacher, but in a mood of mocking laughter, in an effort to reduce to absurdity the false philosophy and the ideas of deity and the after life of which the old Greek religion was composed. However clearly the characters in Lucian's dialogues may reveal the author's philosophy of life, they themselves are almost never made to "talk philosophy" at great length, so that his dialogues have a sprightly, casual sound which makes them seem, on the surface, more like natural every-day conversation than do those of his predecessors.

Everyone who studies Lucian tries to decide out of what combination of models or sources he contrived to formulate the type of dialogue for which he became famous. Some maintain that he chiefly followed Plato; others declare that his inspiration came from Aristophanes, Menander and Menippus. Whence came his impulse to write satirical dialogues is a matter of little importance, since the way he acted upon that impulse led to work of such a distinctly novel sort. His dialogues give us neither the questions and answers

1. The spirit of fun-making for its own sake must have actuated Lucian aftenetimes, but his readers of the Middle Ages and even as late as the seventeenth century valued him almost solely as a reformer. The following comment is suggestive of this: - Ferrand Spense - Lucian's Works, Translated, from the Greek, to which is prefixed The Life of Lucian, London, 1684. (not pagd): - "Lucian was inflamed with a just Indignation against such Villanous Masqueraders (the false philosophers), and drew his pen with a resolution never to let it rest in the Standish, till he had exposed their Juggles and Impostures. And indeed, perhaps never any Man did lay more open the vanity and cheat of Paganism, nor the pride and ignorance of Philosophers, together with the frailty and inconstancy of Humane things, than Lucian has done in these his works. -- Lucian contributed more towards the Extirpation of Paganism Root and Branch, than any of the Doctors of Christianity. -- He made the Scales to fall from the eyes of the blear-ey'd Populace, and shew'd all the Gods and Goddesses to be no better than a company of Gipsies. -- He attempted to root all vanity out of the minds and manners of mankind."

2. Lucian must have studied Plato somewhat as we have been studying him here, -- for the lively, dramatic elements only, not for the benefit he would derive from the teachings.
of Plato and Xenophon, nor the lengthy expositions of Cicero, but, instead, sarcastic banter and clever rejoinders, spiced with lively little anecdotes. They have the quality one usually labels as "popular" for want of a more specific word. The conversation always seems suited to the speakers and absolutely natural, but the question "Did Lucian really understand human nature?" perpetually arises in one's mind. Reading him with an answer to this query in view, one sees that his knowledge of mankind was, after all, very one-sided; he lacked discrimination and warmth of feeling in presenting characters. Underlying his mirth-provoking humor there was a cynical melancholy which tinged all his characterizations. But his worst fault as a reproducer of personalities was his inability to efface himself from his work. In Menippus, Lycinus, Tychiades, and many others we see Lucian revealed, just as in Childe Harold and Don Juan we see Lord Byron.

Miss Merrill's statement about the many types of Lucian's dialogues is made with regard to all of them but applies with equal propriety to the special ones in which we are interested. "The plasticity of the dialogue form in his hands," writes Miss Merrill, "appears in the number of uses it is made to serve. It may be essentially a narrative, set forth in conversation; it may be a series of tales, conveniently strung together by conversation; it may have enough of action implied to be little short of a play; it may be a satire; it may be made up essentially of description; or it may merely furnish the setting for a thoroughly charming prose idyl."

1. "He is one of the self-revealing fraternity; his own personal presence is to be detected more often than not in his work—and the essence of him as he reveals himself is the questioning spirit." — The Works of Lucian of Samasata, translated by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, 4 volumes, Oxford, 1905, Vol I, Intro. p. XXV.
A more definite classification would be impossible, for as Ferrand Spense truthfully comments, he is "the very Proteus of Wit," adding however, with equal truth, that "Lucian is Lucian still, in any shape."

Nigrinus, Lucian's first dialogue gave little promise of what was to come from its author later. Very little of the characteristic satirical element is present. Lucian and an anonymous friend are the speakers, but there is not much actual dialogue, most of the time being taken up with an exposition by Lucian of the philosophy of Nigrinus. Timon the Misanthrope approaches somewhat nearer our idea of the imaginary conversation, particularly in the part in which Timon's friends come to see him on learning of his recovered wealth; but it forfeits a place in our classification as an imaginary conversation because the friends are not "significant personalities," and Greek gods take part in the conversation. The thirty short dialogues grouped by Lucian as Dialogues of the Dead in general may be classed as imaginary conversations, but when analyzed specifically they are found to include several which more properly belong to the Dialogues of the Gods, and some which hold a position between the two groups, since gods and men are represented as talking together. It is hard to draw a distinction in the case of many of the characters in the Dialogues of the Dead between the real and the fictitious. Shall the legendary heroes of Trojan times - Ajax, Agamemnon, Achilles, and the rest - and historical characters, such as Croesus and Midas, about whom legends had grown up until all historical truth was crowded out, be considered as "significant personalities," as much as the undoubtedly real men, - Hannibal, Diogenes, Alexander, Anthisthenes, and the twenty others more or less? All talk together promiscuously, so that it is diffi-
cult to find dialogues in which no legendary character appears. All
the dialogues, needless to remark, are of the type described in the
Introduction as impossible of actual occurrence. Type characters,
personifications of vices or follies, are sometimes employed, as
well as characters which are mere names to us, whatever significance
they may have had in Lucian's day being now lost. Good examples of
imaginary conversations are the eleventh, in which Diogenes and
Crates, his distinguished follower, talk together on the folly of
desiring riches and the superiority of their own school; the
thirteenth, a dialogue between Diogenes and Alexander in which Luc-
ian, through Diogenes, laughs at the credulity and servility of the
Greeks and the evanescence of worldly power; the fourteenth, a con-
versation between Philip and Alexander, in which is revealed the
boastful pride of both father and son; the twentieth in which in a
conversation between Menippus, Pythagoras, and Socrates, Lucian
makes Socrates seem not great and wise but ridiculous; and the
twenty-fourth in which the indifference of members of the Cynic
School to the rites of sepulture is exemplified by a conversation
between Diogenes and Mausolus. The following excerpt from the
twenty-seventh illustrates the leading characteristics of the Dia-
logues of the Dead. It is an imaginary conversation between Dio-
genues, Antisthenes, and Crates, in which, as good Cynics, they ridi-
cule the fear of death among others and show their own indifference
to it. They come to the entrance to watch the new arrivals.

"Diogenes. --Bah! they are numerous and various
enough, and all in tears, except these newly-born children and
infants. Nay, even the very old fellows are bewailing them-
selves. What's this? Has the magic potion of life, forsooth,
got them under its influence? However, I want to question this
superannuated old man. - What are you weeping about, dying at
your time of life? Why are you indignant, my fine Sir, and
that, when you have arrived at a good age? You were, doubtless,
some king?"
Poor Man. Not at all.
Diogenes. Well, some satrap or other?
Poor Man. Not that, even.
Diogenes. Then you were, doubtless, a rich man, and it troubles you, I suppose, to have died and left behind you much luxury?
Poor Man. Nothing of that sort; on the contrary, I had arrived at about the full age of ninety years, and led a life of want, sustained by means of my fishing-rod and line, excessively poor, childless, and lame, into the bargain, and half blind.
Diogenes. Then, though you were in such a condition, did you wish to go on living?
Poor Man. Yes, for the light of day was sweet to me, and to die is a terrible thing and to be avoided.
Diogenes. You are bereft of your senses, old man, and behave in the face of inevitable Necessity like a child; and that, though you are a contemporary of the Ferryman there. What, pray, could one in future say as regards the young when people of your time of life are so fond of living, who ought to pursue Death as the one remedy for the evils essential to old age? - But let us be gone, now, for fear someone may suspect us of wishing to run away, if he sees us crowding about the entrance-gate."

If it was a part of Lucian's conscious purpose in writing his *Dialogues of the Dead*, as it must have been, to make the Elysian Fields of Greek religion seem unattractive, he surely succeeded wonderfully well. The "bare and ugly skull" is dwelt upon too frequently to be pleasing and it is fairly revolting to one's poetic sense to have even Helen represented as unlovely.

The *Menippus* is a Lucianic dialogue whose genuineness has not been absolutely proved. According to Professor Williams it is "a sort of epitome of the *Dialogues of the Dead* and other writings of the great master, which satirize the popular theology respecting the Under-World, and is of high interest as a resume of this province of Hellenic superstition". It is so characteristic of Lucian in his most amiable mood that I cannot forbear quoting from it, even though it be perhaps a mere imitation. The speakers

1. Lucian's *Dialogues* - translated with notes and a preliminary Memoir, by Howard Williams, London, 1900, (Bohn's Libraries) p.159.
2. Williams, p. 262, note.
are Menippus and Philonides - both real; the former has been answering in iambic hexameters.

Philonides. My good man, truce to your heroics; get off those iambic stilts and tell me in plain prose what this get up means; what did you want with the lower regions? It is a journey that needs a motive to make it attractive.

Menippus. Dear friend, to Hades' realms I needs must go,

To counsel with Tiresias of Thebes.

Philonides. Man, you must be mad, or why string verses instead of talking like one friend with another?

Menippus. My dear fellow, you need not be so surprised. I have just been in Euripides' and Homer's company; I suppose I am full to the throat with verse, and the numbers come as soon as I open my mouth.¹

What a different tone this has from that of the illustrations given in the earlier part of the chapter!

The Sale of Creeds and The Fisher are too fantastic to suit our ideas of imaginary conversations, including among the speakers a strange confusion of real people and abstractions. Hermotus, or The Rival Philosophers is an example of the Platonic type of dialogue. Anacharsis is a careful and instructive discussion of physical training. But there is no need to continue this enumeration further; enough has been said to show Lucian's versatility in the use of the dialogue, and his contributions to the type known as imaginary conversation.

To discuss the imaginary conversations of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, and Lucian is by no means to exhaust the resources in this type of literature among the Greeks and Romans, since each had numerous imitators; but in as much as the chief characteristics of the form as it was then used may all be gathered by this restricted examination, it is needless to extend the discussion further.

These were the writers who influenced most directly the later users of the imaginary conversation. Among the four, the scope of the

¹ Fowlers, pp. 156-7.
form has been proved to have been wide: it was used for practical as well as for philosophical purposes; for purposes of instruction as well as for purposes of satire; for the sublime as well as for the ridiculous. Could the distinctive contributions of each have been combined - Plato's dramatic insight and creative power, Xenophon's ability to write realistic dialogue, Cicero's aptitude for casting the dialogue into the past, and Lucian's versatility and range of characters - perfect imaginary conversations must have been the result.
III.

IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS BY MODERN WRITERS
EXCEPT LANDOR

The imaginary conversation is not a form which could have appealed to writers of the middle ages, men who read the works of antiquity, when they read them at all, for their moral precepts and not for their dramatic interest. The nearest approach to the form is to be found in Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiae, Augustine's Soliloquies, and Gregory the Great's Dialogues. But the conversations of those churchmen with Philosophy, Reason, and a younger friend, respectively, scarcely satisfy the requirements of our definition, even if we should overlook the almost entire absence of the dramatic element. During the Renaissance, the literature of Greece, which of course included the imaginary conversations of Plato and Lucian, was an important factor in the enlivening of style and in the introduction of dramatic forms. Italian writers, especially, responded to the influence of the ancient dialogues, and gradually the use of the form spread from Italy into Spain, Germany, and England. I have selected a dialogue by Petrarch as being representative of the products of the beginning of this dramatic impulse. His De contemptu mundi, which he called "meum secretum", is one of the first of the imaginary conversations of modern times; however, in spite of its author's intense humanism, it is an immediate outgrowth, not of the Renaissance, but of the deep religious self-abasement of the middle ages. In purpose and plan it is very different from those which were discussed in the preceding chapter, as will be indicated by a few sentences quoted from the preface, which begins with an explanation of how Truth bade St. Augustine talk to

1. Merrill, p. 15.
Petrarch. "Then", the author continues, "while Truth listened as
the silent Judge, none other beside her being present, we held long
converse on one side and the other, and because of the greatness of
the theme, the discourse between us lasted for three days. Though
we talked of many things much against the manners of this age, and
on faults and failings common to mankind, in such wise that the
reproaches of the Master seemed in a sense more directed against
men in general than against myself, yet those which to me came
closest home I have graven with more especial vividness on the tablet
of my memory. That this discourse, so intimate and deep, might not
be lost, I have set it down in writing and made this book; not that
I wish to class it with my other works, or desire from it any credit.
My thoughts aim higher. What I desire is that I may be able by
reading to renew as often as I wish the pleasure I felt from the
discourse itself. So, little Book, I bid you flee the haunts of
men and be content to stay with me, true to the title I have given
you of "My Secret": and when I would think upon deep matters, all
that you keep in remembrance that was spoken in secret you in secret
will tell to me over again."¹ Here, then, we have a new use made
of the imaginary conversation—not for satire, not for general
instruction, but for self-revelation and self-help. That this
imaginary conversation is influenced at least in form by those of
antiquity is also revealed in the preface, thus: "To avoid the too
frequent iteration of the words 'said I', 'said he', and to bring the
personages of the Dialogue, as it were, before one's very eyes, I
have acted on Cicero's method and merely placed the name of each
interlocutor before each paragraph. My dear Master learned this
¹ Petrarch's Secret, or The Soul's Conflict with Passion—
Three Dialogues Between Himself and S. Augustine. Translated from
mode himself from Plato." The unrelieved seriousness of the dialogue precludes the lighter conversational touches which best serve to reveal personal mannerisms and the most patent traits of character, but the reader of De contemptu mundi cannot fail to receive a vivid impression of the fundamental qualities of these two striking personalities. Petrarch's untiring study of St. Augustine's Confessions had given him an acute perception of its author's disposition and point of view. As for his own character, the fact that he was not writing for publication led him to expose his personal pride and "unconscious littlenesses" without the least reticence. It must have required no small amount of dramatic ability as well as self-analysis to compose reproofs against his own conduct and temperament, --such an admonition, for example, as is contained in this passage:

"St. Augustine.... One evil still is left, to heal you of which I now will make a last endeavor.

Petrarch. Even so, do, most gentle Father. For though I be not yet wholly set free from my burdens, yet, nevertheless, from great part of them I do feel in truth a blessed release.

S. Augustine. Ambition still has too much hold on you. You seek too easily the praise of men, to leave behind you an undying name.

Petrarch. I freely confess it. I cannot beat down that passion in my soul. For it, as yet, I have found no cure.

S. Augustine. But I greatly fear lest this pursuit of a false immortality of fame may shut for you the way that leads to the true immortality of life.

Petrarch. That is one of my fears also, but I await your discovering to me the means to save my life; you, of a truth, will do it, who have furnished me with means for the healing of evils greater still.

S. Augustine. Think not that any of your ills is greater than this one, though I deny not that some may be more vile.

But tell me, I pray you, what in your opinion is this thing called glory, that you so ardently covet?

1. Ibid., p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. XXII.
3. Ibid., p. XIV.
Petrarch. I know not if you ask me for a definition, but if so, who so capable to give one as yourself? S. Augustine. The name of glory is well enough known to you; but to the real thing, if one may judge by your actions, you are a stranger. 1

From 1342, the probable date of the composition of the De contemptu mundi, 2 until about the beginning of the sixteenth century, few dialogues were written and none of them may be classified as imaginary conversations. Thereafter, however, not a century passed in which the form we are studying was not used to some extent. To facilitate the discussion of the writers whose employment of the form of imaginary conversation may be considered as representative of the entire scope of its use, it would seem that some system of classification should be adopted; but upon what basis is it to be made? Miss Merrill's classification of English dialogues into the polemical, the expository, and the philosophical does not emphasize the difference in form with which we are primarily concerned, and a classification based upon conformity to the respective types established by Plato, Lucian and Cicero would involve an infinite amount of cross-classifying, since many of the modern imaginary conversations are combinations of more than one ancient type. A chronological treatment seems, therefore, the most practicable method, even though it involves the juxtaposition of rather heterogeneous writers, at times.

Ulrich von Hutton, from 1517 to the close of his life, employed the dialogue in both Latin and German, for purposes of satire and diatribe, as did other writers during the Reformation. He imitated Lucian and therefore, like his great prototype, only occasionally produced dialogues which were imaginary conversations.

1. Ibid., pp. 165-6.
2. Ibid., p. XXI.
The form never occurs perfectly in Hutten's writings: significant historical characters such as Martin Luther and Franz von Sickingen are made to talk with stock type characters, or the real characters are disguised under assumed names, for the protection of the author, as in Phalarismus in which Duke Ulrich of Wurtenberg is made to converse in the under world with the famous tyrants of history from Cambyses to Domitian. Occasionally Hutten abandoned satire in his dialogues to devote himself to serious exposition, in which case he "put the best that he knew into the mouth of his Franz, as Plato did into the mouth of Socrates." \(^1\)

Far different from Hutten's dialogues in purpose and form is Count Baldassare Castiglione's Cortegiana, printed in folio at Venice in 1528 and translated into English as The Book of the Courtyer by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561. The inclusion of this book as an imaginary conversation would be open to the same criticism which we confronted in including Xenophon's Socratic writings, but at least it contains some significant qualities of the imaginary conversation. "We will not in these bookes," writes Castiglione as translated by Hoby, "follow any certain order or rule of appointed preceptes, the whiche for the most part is wont to be observed in the teaching of anye thinge whatsoever it be: but after the manner of men of olde time, renuinge a gratefull memorye, we will repeat certain reasoninges that were debated in times past betwene men verye excellent for that purpose. And although I was not there present, but at the time when they debated, it was my chance to be in Englande, yet soone after my retourne, I hearde them of a person

\(^1\) Ulrich von Hutten--His Life and Times, By David Friedrich Strauss, translated by Mrs. G. Sturje, London, 1874, p. 265.
that faythfullye reported them unto me. And I will endeouer my selfe, for so much as my memorye wyll serve me, to call them particularly to remembrance, that ye may see what men worthy greate commendacion, and unto whose judgement a man maye in everye poynt give an undoubted credyt, have judged and beleved in this matter.\textsuperscript{1} If we might take Castiglione at his work, we should have room to believe that there is as much of the imaginary conversation here as in Cicero's dialogues, which he introduced in almost the same manner; but Professor Raleigh does not allow us such an implicit belief.

"These are transcripts from life," he writes; "and, in point of fact, Castiglione is allowing a literary convention of modesty to vanquish truth when he pretends that he himself was not present at those four evening colloquies in the pallace."\textsuperscript{2} At another time, however, the editor remarks, "No doubt but he heightened reality: he was an artist, not an annalist, and sought to embody the most brilliant qualities of Renaissance court life in one convincing model."\textsuperscript{3} This artistic touch and purpose, combined with the fact that the characters are not only real but also significant personalities—Duke Frederige, for example, and the Italian writer Bembo—cause The Courtyer to be closely allied in tone and form with other dialogues which we have been considering.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1} The Book of the Courtyer, from the Italian of Count Baldassar Castiglione; done into English by Sir Thomas Hoby anno 1561, with an Introduction by Walter Raleigh, London, 1900, pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., p. LXXXIII.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. XVI.

\textsuperscript{4} Hirzel devotes several pages to a discussion of this type of dialogue, mentioning, among others, the \textit{Paradiso degli Alberti} of Leon Battista Alberti, Bembo's \textit{Asolani}, and the \textit{Ragionamenti} of Pietro Aretino. He considers these dialogues to be of the Ciceronian type, the speakers being usually the author's contemporaries. (Hirzel, II, pp. 385-389).

Lodowick Bryskett (fl. 1571-1611) published in 1606 his translation from the Italian of Baptista Giraldo's philosophical treatise which he entitled \textit{A Discourse of Civill Life, containing the Ethike Part of Morall Philosopie.} Bryskett preceded his translation with a conversation between himself and his friends, Dr. Long, Archbishop
In Dryden's Essay of Dramatic Poesy, published in 1668, for the first time we find imaginary conversation used for the purpose of literary criticism. The speakers are Eugenius, who represents Charles Lord Buckhurst, who became the Earl of Dorset in 1677; Crites, who represents Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law; Lisideius, who represents Sir Charles Sedley; and Neander who represents Dryden himself—"three of them," declares Dryden, "persons whom their wit and quality have made known to all the town; and whom I have chose to hide under these borrowed names, that they may not suffer by so ill a relation as I am going to make of their discourse." The dialogue is of the Socratic type; the discussions concerning the relative values of the dramatic literature of the Ancients and the Moderns, or of the French and English, and concerning other related themes, are brought to no dogmatic conclusions. As is the case with all dialogues of this type, the reader cannot ascertain precisely how much is the product of the author's imagination and how much is a conscientious record of the actual conversation of the speakers. The detail with which the scene, the time, and the circumstances that led to the holding of the conversation of Armagh, Captain Christopher Carlell, Captain Thomas Norris, Captain Worram St. Leger, and Mr. Edmund Spenser, which may have been an imaginary conversation. According to Malone, this work was composed between 1584 and 1589. (Dic. Nat'1 Biog., Vol. III, and Allibone's Dic. of Authors, Vol. I).

1. The editor of Dryden's Essays mentions certain French imaginary conversations as possible sources for the method of the Essay of Dramatic Poesy: "The Dialogue was a favorite form of composition in all the languages after the revival of learning, through the examples of Plato and Cicero. It was common in French among authors whom Dryden had probably read. Sometimes the persons appeared under their own names, like Menage, Chapelain, and Sarrasin in Sarrasin's Dialogue, S'il faut qu'un jeune homme soit amoureux (Œuvres, ed. G. Menage, Paris, 1656). "In a note he adds, "The name person's take part in Chapelain's remarkable Dialogue, De la Lecture des Vieux Romains, which, however, seems to have remained in manuscript till 1870 (ed. A. Feillet)." (Essays of John Dryden, Selected and Edited by W. P. Ker, Oxford, 1900, Vol. I, p. XXXV).

2. Ibid., p. XXXVII.

3. Ibid., p. 29.
are described, produces a semblance of historical truth, but Dryden allows his opponents in the arguments to present their points with so much more skill than they themselves could have expressed their own ideas, that the reader intuitively feels that the author's imagination was responsible for a great deal, if not all, of what is said by Eugenius, Crites, and Lisidei-us. The Essay of Dramatic Poetry proves that conversation, with its informal discussion and opportunity for comparison of opinions, serves well the purposes of literary criticism.

Fontenelle was the first modern writer to make an extensive use of the Lucianic type of imaginary conversation. His Dialogues des Morts were published in 1683. He freely acknowledges his debt to the Greek satirist in his dedicatory epistle to Lucian in the Elysian Fields. "Illustrious Ghost," he begins, "it is but Justice, that having borrowed an Idea, which doth of right belong to you, I should at least make my Acknowledgements, and pay my Homage for it to you, who do so justly merit it...Perhaps I may be

1. The first half of Fontenelle’s Dialogues des Morts was translated into English the year following its publication in French. The translator’s name is not affixed, nor does he name the original author. The book is entitled "Lucian's Ghost: or, Dialogues Between the Dead, wandering in the Elyzian Shades. Being Certain Satirical Remarks upon the vain ostentatious humours of several Learned and Philosophical Men and Women, as well as Ancient and Modern. Composed first in French, and now Paraphras'd into English, by a Person of Quality", London, 1684. The quotations from Fontenelle’s preface and dialogues are taken from this translation, since its quaint diction gives a more accurate impression of Fontenelle’s style than a modernized version could give. A German translation is available, the title page of which reads thus: "Herrn Bernhards von Fontenelle, ...Auserlesene Schriften, nämlich von mehr als einer Welt, Gespräche der Toten, und die Historie der heydenischen Orakel; vormals einzeln herausgegeben, nun aber mit verschiedenen Zugen und schönen Kupfern vermehrter ans Licht gestellet, von Johann Christoph Gottscheden," Leipzig, 1751. Gottsched prefaced his translation with an interesting critical discussion of dialogue literature from Plato to Fontenelle, which he called "Des Übersetzers Abhandlung, von Gesprachen überhaupt." An extended and most appreciative critical discussion of Fontenelle’s dialogues is contained in Fontenelle, L’Homme, L’Œuvre, L’Influence, by Louis Maigren, Paris, 1906, Third Part, L’Œuvre Philosophique—Chap. I.
accounted bold and rash, for having dar'd to tread in your Paths, but I should with much more reason have merited those Appellations if I onely had pursu'd the Traces of my own Fancy, and I may justly hope to have this advantage to make my own course Metal pass currently in the World, which so advantageously bears your Image and Character; and I am bold to say that if my Dialogues have but the least success, they'll do you more Honour than your own, and show that so Excellent a design needs no over-curious management. I rely'd so much upon the firmness, the stability of the Foundation, that I thought a small part on't might serve for so mean a superstructure. I have therefore left out Plato, Charon, Cerberus, and such Infernal company, who are so frequently introduc'd in these Entertainments."

Such an omission is a merit from the standpoint of our definition of imaginary conversations. He limite himself still further, thus: "You thought it not improper to raise Imaginary Ghosts, and to attribute the Glory of some Adventures to others who never merited 'em. But I have no reason to assume this privilege, since History has furnish't me with so many true Relations, that I have no need of having recourse to fiction for succour." As a result of this limitation, all of Fontenelle's Dialogues des Morts may be classed as imaginary conversations. He grouped them as "Dialogues des Morts Anciens," "Dialogues des Morts Anciens avec des Modernes", and "Dialogues des Morts Modernes", and wrote twelve of each type. His purpose is didactic and satiric. "I have also been bold," he states in his address to Lucian, "to imitate you in the end and Intentions of my conversations, by moralizing all my dialogues after your example, else what need had there been to have gone to Hell for company? If they had talk'd their Ribaldry without design, living mortals might have serv'd my Turn as well." He has given his
characters definite themes to discuss: for example, "Sur la bizarre des Fortunes," "Si les Anciens ont eu plus de vertu que nous", "Sur la liberté," "Si l'on peut être heureux par la raison," and "Quelle est la différence des Peuples barbares et de polis". These subjects are suggestive of essays and, indeed, many of Fontenelle's dialogues have little more than their structure to distinguish them from mere historical anecdotes. Fontenelle was not a brilliant writer; the speakers are well chosen from the standpoint of the similarity or contrast of their interests, but the dialogues show signs of youthfulness. One looks in vain for the seasoned satire or telling wit that marked Lucian's Dialogues of the Dead. The satire is often so mild that one entirely overlooks it. The following passage is as satirical as any in Fontenelle, and it could scarcely be characterized as biting:

"Socrates, I hope you won't take it ill, that I ask you some news; as how the upper world goes, and whether it ben't much changed from what it was?

Montaigne. Oh! Extremely, you would not be able to know it.

Socrates. I am glad to hear it, for I always thought that 'twould become better and wiser than 'twas in my time.

Montaigne. No, you are mistaken, 'tis more foolish and corrupted than ever it was, and on this occasion 'twas, I so much desired to see you, to know the history of that Golden Age, wherein you Liv'd, when Honesty and Justice seem'd to reign.

Socrates. And I, on the contrary, expected to hear miracles of the latter ages. What? are not the follies of Antiquity yet amended?

Montaigne. I believe you onely slight Antiquity, because you yourself were one of the Ancients; one can't enough bewail the miseries of the present age, wherein everything is degenerated, and grown worse.

Socrates. Is it possible? Things in my time went ill enough, yet I still believed that Mankind would take up at length, and grow wise by the experience of many years."

1. Lucian's Ghost, pp. 53-4.

Another imitator of Lucian, on a less ambitious scale was Thomas Brown, an English writer of humorous or burlesque trifles, who died in 1704. His Belgic Hero Unmask'd; in a Dialogue between Sir Walter Raleigh and Aaron Smith has almost no intrinsic value but suggests that the imaginary conversation, as Lucian had employed it, was in common use for occasional pieces. Thomas Brown wrote for popularity
Fénelon was the first modern author to produce writings of considerable literary value by the avowed employment of the form of the imaginary conversation. The testimony of his imitators was unanimous in according him a very high place among modern writers of dialogues of the illustrious dead. For example, Lyttelton makes Plato say to Fénelon: "Your Dialogues breathe the pure spirit of virtue, of unaffected good sense, of just criticism, of fine taste. They are in general as superior to your countryman Fontenelle's as reason is to false wit, or truth to affectation. The greatest fault of them, I think, is that some are too short." And Vauvenargues gives us this eulogistic bit of dialogue:

"Fénelon.
Dites-moi, je vous prie, génie sublime, ce que vous pensez de mon style?

Pascal.
Il est enchanteur, naturel, facile, insinuant. Vous avez peint les hommes avec vérité, avec feu et avec grâce."

and it is a natural inference that he made use of popular forms. This particular conversation is represented as having taken place soon after the death of William III, the "Belgic Hero", and is a political satire. It is not dramatic or delineative of character but it gives promise of the possibilities of the imaginary conversation for ephemeral political writing. (The Works of Mr. Thomas Brown, Serious and Comical, in Prose and Verse, With his Remains, in Four Volumes Complete. With the Life and Character of Mr. Brown, and his Writings, by James Drake, M.D., London, 1730. 7th edit; vol.II p.325ff)


2. Œuvres Posthumes et Œuvres Inédites de Vauvenargues avec notes et commentaires par D.-L. Gilbert, Paris, 1857, p.18. - Lue de Clapiers Vauvenargues (1715-47) wrote eighteen dialogues of the dead, doubtless in direct imitation of Fenelon, although without his pedagogical aim. His dialogues are partly devoted to literary criticism, of which type the fifth, Pascal et Fénelon, is perhaps the best illustration, and partly to the exemplification of general principals of conduct. None of them are remarkable, but the latter type are better suited to his abilities. "His literary criticism is...limited to a repetition in crude form of the stock ideas of his time. Thus
Fénelon used his dialogues as a "méthod d'éducation indirecte". They were a pedagogical instrument whereby he endeavored to set before the young Duke of Bourgogne in a lively and entertaining fashion the principles and examples of good government. The most illustrious men and women of history are made to reveal in their speeches the author's intense hatred of despotism. The predominating interest in the dialogues is the historical but some were written for the purpose of revealing to the duke the principles of beauty and of art, rather than of political affairs. Moral lessons, especially regarding the evil results of listening to flattery, are often inculcated. The dialogues have a truly conversational quality in spite of their educational purpose, most of them opening with a speech or two of friendly salutation, unlike the somewhat abrupt and scholastic openings of Fontenelle's dialogues. The characters greet each other as friends well met: "Ah! bonjour, mon ami," exclaims Herodotus to Lucian, and Louis XII greets Francois Ier with "Mon cher cousin, dites-moi de nouvelles de la France." Fénelon, like Fontenelle, devoted each dialogue to a definite theme: Confucius and Socrates converse "Sur la prééminence tant vantée des Chinois"; Alexander and Diogenes discuss "Combien la flatterie est pernicieuse aux princes"; Henry VII and Henry VIII of England talk about "Funestes effets de la passion de l'amour dans un prince"; but even so he succeeded in making the conversation realistic and delineative, which his French predecessor had failed to do.

3. The instructional motive of Fénelon led him to make some estimates of character which are unusual. Professor Andraud calls attention to this: "Appréciant le rôle de ses personnages au nom de l'idéal politique et humanitaireque l'en Sait, il a naturellement ses..."
Bishop Hurd's imaginary conversations, in manner and form, are in decided contrast with the others of the eighteenth century. There is no touch of satire present; the tone is "grave, polite, and something raised above the ordinary pitch or tone of conversation; and great care is taken to give an air of historical verisimilitude to conversations for which there is no real basis. The Moral and Political Dialogues were published, in 1759, as though they were composed by other authors and now for the first time given to the public, with preface and comments by Bishop Hurd. No pains were spared by the bishop to sustain this pretence. The following note, appended to Dialogue III, "On the Golden Age of Queen Elizabeth, between Hon. Robt. Digby, Dr. Arbuthnot, and Mr. Addison," is characteristic of the method employed throughout the volume. "Besides the curiosity of the matter debated in the two following Dialogues," writes Hurd in the guise of editor, "there is a farther circumstance to recommend them, that they were written, as I think we are to conclude, by the Hon. Robert Digby. This appears from some internal marks, which the attentive reader will observe; but chiefly from the préférens, et nul ne songe à s'étonner si, par exemple, un Caton l' emporte à ses yeux sur un César, un Louis XII sur un Louis XI, ou s' il traite avec sévérité tous ceux dont l'ambition a fait des despètes ou des conquérants." --p. 23.

1. The extent to which the form was used for hack-work it is impossible to trace; when the writer was famous in other lines such work has sometimes been preserved; for example, we know that Henry Fielding was the author of an imaginary conversation entitled A Dialogue between Alexander the Great and Diogenes the Cynic, probably composed about the middle of the eighteenth century. The word imaginary scarcely applies, however, for the dialogue is little more than a compilation of the traditional sayings of Diogenes and Alexander to one another. However, as he explains in a foot-note, he resorted to his imagination in fixing the time at which he represents the conversation as having taken place. He had no motive in writing it, apparently, beyond that of literary expression. (The Works of Henry Fielding Esq., edited with a biographical essay by Leslie Stephen, London, 1882, Vol. VI, p. 273).

little resemblance the style of the dialogue has to that of the other two speakers. The length and particularity of the recital may give occasion to suspect that it was drawn up with some liberty in the form, tho', doubtless, with great exactness as to the substance of the conversation. All we knew before of the ingenious writer, was from the few letters of his extant in Pope's works; which, together with the esteem had of him by that excellent person, speak, indeed, very strongly in his favour.¹ In his preface to this first edition, Bishop Hurd declared: "You have here a collection of choice and authentic conversations; not between men of obscure names, or, which is still worse, between those shadows of men without name, the A's and B's of every alphabet. The speakers in these dialogues are real persons; men, once fairly existing in the world, nay and the most respectable of their times."² A great part of the reading public felt that Hurd had made a mistake in trying to foist imaginary conversations upon them as actual occurrences. Horace Walpole stated in a letter to Rev. Henry Zouch, in 1760: "In one point, in the 'Dialogues' you mention, he is perfectly ridiculous. He takes infinite pains to make the world believe upon his word, that they are the genuine productions of the speakers, and yet does not give himself the least trouble to counterfeit the style of any one of them."³ The author himself, in a letter to Dr. Warburton in August, 1759, remarked that "the general opinion... is not favorable. The Dialogues themselves, it is said, might pass but for the Notes and

2. Ibid., p. 11.
Preface. It is true, I have heard of no good reason why this playful part of my book should be so particularly disrelished. Dr. Warburton, in a letter to Bishop Hurd in 1759 quoted from a letter he had received from Mr. Balguy, to this effect: "Our friend, it seems, has written an apology for Insincerity and invective against Retirement, and has seriously endeavored to impose upon the world a palpable forgery; such things are said not only by great and grave men (which is no more than natural), but by ingenious men; and it is the universal cry, that the notes ought all to be expunged in the next edition. Which notes have not been understood by any man I have conversed with, except Tom Warten of Oxford." I have discussed at some length this device and the way in which it was received because of the interesting contrast it offers with the attitude toward such a method in the time of Cicero. The Roman writer had to insist on an historical basis for his dialogues in order to obtain credence and authority; but the eighteenth century English writer could not gain a serious hearing until he was willing to reprint his dialogues as admittedly imaginary conversations. In 1765, Bishop Hurd published his Moral and Political Dialogues under his own name. Instead of the clever preface and notes, the dialogues were accompanied by an introduction discussing the manner of writing dialogue, several paragraphs from which were quoted in my introduction.

The Bishop's two-fold purpose in writing his dialogues is suggested by the adjectives "moral" and "political" which he

2. Ibid., p. 75.
applied to them. "Philosophical" or "critical" would perhaps be more appropriate than "moral" in the case of the two dialogues on the golden age of Queen Elizabeth and the two on the uses of foreign travel. Of the latter, he remarks, "My intention is to do a little good, if it may be, in the reproof of a very absurd practise; but the reader I dare say will look for nothing but a little amusement."

His biographer thus describes his special fitness for this kind of work: "It was a species of writing peculiarly congenial to his turn of mind. He was a curious inquirer into the hidden causes of things, and a sagacious investigator of the secret springs of action. He was also an acute observer of character, which enabled him accurately to personate those whom he has introduced as interlocutors; and his intimate acquaintance with the history of the speakers and of their times, aided by his complete mastery of the subjects discussed, qualified him to draw the justest conclusions and to raise the most profitable reflections upon them. The exactness of his judgment has been shewn in his giving to his Dialogues only a semi-dramatic cast; so as to concentrate attention not upon the characteristic traits of the speakers, which would have been beside his purpose, but upon the subjects under discussion, which was his main design." The dramatic element is, indeed, as this criticism suggests, subordinate to the thought element, yet an effort is sometimes made toward character delineation through speech; for example, in the case of Addison. Even here, however, only the political character of the man is intended to be revealed, as the author himself admits. The dialogues give evidence of careful pre-

1. Ibid., p. 90.
2. Ibid., p. 74.
3. Ibid., p. 77.
paration and thought. In the conversation of Mr. Abraham Cowley and
the Rev. Mr. Thomas Sprat on retirement, the talk is serious and
well measured, and the ideas are perfectly in accord with what we
know of these men from their writings. This particular dialogue
is of the indirect type, which, as always, lessens the vividness.
In some of the dialogues, the introductory paragraphs become so
extended that the narrative almost supersedes the dialogue; in
others, the dialogue tends to lapse into expository monologue. This
is especially true of the two dialogues on the uses of foreign
travel, the first being devoted to Lord Shaftesbury's arraignment
of the existing state of things, and the second to Mr. Locke's
defense of it. The undramatic character of the dialogues was not
due entirely to lack of dramatic skill but partly to deliberate
intention. "This, Sir," declares Lord Shaftesbury, who is represent-
ed as being the narrator of the Dialogues on the Uses of Foreign
Travel, "was the substance of what passed between us on the subject
in question. Our other friends interposed, indeed, at times; but
rarely, and in few words; and I have rather chosen to mix their
occasional observations with our own, than perplex and lengthen
this recital by more punctilious exactness. Besides, I could not
think it civil to introduce my friends upon the scene, only to shew
them, as it were, for mutes; their politeness to us, who were the
principals of the debate, being such as to restrain them from bear-
ing any considerable part in it. Yet this way of relation would,
no doubt, have given something more of life to the sketch I here
send you; as their presence, you may believe, certainly did to the
original conversation."¹

Bishop Hurd's greatest contributions to the history and development of the imaginary conversation are not his dialogues but his theories, expressed not only in his prefaces but even in the dialogues themselves. No other writer of imaginary conversations has analyzed the form so carefully or shown so keen a consciousness of using an unusual kind of dialogue. It is to be regretted that he did not have a fuller realization of its dramatic possibilities.

The Dialogues of the Dead (1760-62) by George Lord Lyttelton bring us back once more to the path of Lucianic tradition from which the writers of imaginary conversations seldom strayed in the eighteenth century. Dr. Johnson made a sound criticism of Lyttelton's dialogues when he declared that they were "the production rather, as it seems, of leisure than of study;—rather effusions than compositions. The names of his persons too often enable the reader to anticipate their conversations; and when they have met, they too often part without any conclusion. He has copied Fénelon 1. Hurd, Edition of 1811, Vol. IV, pp. 90-91. Introduction to On the Uses of Foreign Travel, as though written by Lord Shaftesbury, "If I were composing a Dialogue in the old mimetical, or poetic form I should tell you, perhaps, the occasion which led us into this track of conversation. Nay, I should tell you what accident had brought us together; and should even omit no circumstance of time or place, which might be proper to let you into the scene, and make you, as it were, one of us.

"But, these punctilios of decorum are thought too constraining and, as such, are wisely laid aside, by the easy moderns. Nay, the very notion of Dialogue, such as it was in the politest ages of antiquity, is so little comprehended in our days, that I question much, if these papers were to fall into other hands than your own, whether they would not appear in high degree fantastic and visionary. It would never be imagined that a point of morals or philosophy could be regularly treated in what is called a conversation-piece; or that anything so unlike the commerce of our world could have taken place between men, that had any use or knowledge of it.

"This, I say, might be the opinion of men of better breeding; of those who are acquainted with the fashion, and are themselves practised in the conversations of the polite world. The formalists, on the other hand, would be out of patience, I can suppose, at this skeptical manner of debate, which ends in nothing; and after the waste of much breath, leaves the matter at least undecided and just as it was taken up."
more than Fontenelle."¹ One searches fruitlessly for unconscious revelation of character; the speakers are outspoken, even boastful, not only of their achievements but of the traits of their characters, good and bad. They seem to stand aloof from themselves and take a critical view of their lives and temperaments. Lucian's characters spoke in a way consistent with their attitudes while alive; Diogenes was not made to say, "On earth I was narrow; I held too closely to the ideas of the Cynics"; instead, he carried those ideas with him into the Elysian Fields, and as a result his speeches were realistic and dramatic.

Some of Lord Lyttelton's conversations are so closely based upon historical accounts that they little merit being called imaginary. A great deal of the dialogue of Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger is a mere paraphrase of parts of the famous letters, the dialogue of Henry Duke of Guise and Machiavel is filled with excerpts from The Prince, and many others are plentifully annotated. They were evidently written for the pleasure the author experienced in applying his erudition in a novel way. The following quotation from his dialogue between an ancient and a modern epicure will illustrate Lyttelton's method:

"Apicius.

See Athenaeus, and alertness in seeking fine fishes. I sailed to the coast Bayle in of Africk, from Minturnae in Campania, only to taste of one species, which I heard was larger there than it was to the art-on our coast; and finding that I had received a false piece Apicius. information, I returned immediately without even deigning to land.

Darteneuf.

There was some sense in that; but why did you not also make a voyage to Sandwich? Had you once tasted those oysters in their highest perfection, you would never have come back: you would have eat till you burst.

See Senec.

I wish, I had:—It would have been better than poison-ning myself, as I did at Rome, because I found, upon the balance of my accounts, I had only the pitiful sum of Epig. 22. I forescore thousand pounds left to keep me from starving.

Darteneuf.

See Arbuth—Alas, poor man! this shews that you English have no idea of the luxury that reigned in our tables. Before I died I had spent in my kitchen 807,291 £13s4p."

There is something incongruous about an annotated imaginary conversation!

Occasionally Lyttelton devoted a dialogue to literary criticism, as in the case of the fourth, between Mr. Addison and Dr. Swift, and the fourteenth, an unusually long dialogue between Boileau and Pope. A few, moreover, have a noteworthy dramatic spirit, particularly the eighth, between Fernando Cortez and William Penn, and the tenth, between Christina, Queen of Sweden, and Chancellor Oxenstiern. But the majority of the thirty-two dialogues offer almost nothing that is distinctive. 2

Turning once more to French literature, we find in the copious writings of Voltaire and Diderot a few imaginary conversations. In the midst of Voltaire’s dialogues between A, B, and C.


2. Since Lucian’s Sale of Philosophers was not admitted into our collection of imaginary conversations, to be consistent we should disregard Archibald Campbell’s imitation of it, called The Sale of Authors, published in London in 1767. Nevertheless it is worth noting as another manifestation of Lucian’s profound literary influence in the eighteenth century. Some real characters are introduced but never by their real names. In the back of The Sale of Authors appears the advertisement of another dialogue by Campbell which may have been an imaginary conversation. "Lately published", states the advertisement, "Written by the same Author, and dedicated to Lord Lyttelton, Leixyphanes, a Dialogue Imitated from Lucian, and suited to the Present Time, Being an Attempt to restore the English Tongue to its ancient Purity, and to expose the affected Style of many late celebrated Writers."
and between type characters such as le Manderin and le Jesuite, appears the one entitled Lucien, Erasme, et Rabelais, dans les Champs Elysees. The characteristic spirited and satirical tone of Voltaire's style appears to good advantage in this type of writing.

"Lucien fit," writes Voltaire by way of introduction, "il y a quelque temps, connaissance avec Erasme, malgré sa répugnance pour tout ce qui venait des frontières d'Allemagne, il ne croyait pas qu'un Grec dût s'abaisser à parler avec un Batave; mais ce Batave lui ayant paru un mort de bonne compagnie, ils eurent ensemble cet entretien.

Lucien

Vous avez donc fait dans un pays barbare le même métier que je faisais dans le pays le plus poli de la terre, vous vous êtes moqué de de tout?

Erasme.

Hélas! je l'aurais bien voulu; c'eût été une grande consolation pour un pauvre théologien tel que je l'étais; mais je ne pouvais prendre les mêmes libertés que vous avez prises."

Voltaire continues in a way which shows that he appreciated to the full the satirical possibilities of dialogues of the dead. In a lighter vein of satire, he composed his Les Anciens et les Modernes, ou la Toilette de Madame de Pompadour. (1761) which is an imaginary conversation between Madame de Pompadour and Tullia. The speeches are perfectly natural and in keeping with the ideas and dispositions of the speakers.--

"Madame de Pompadour.

Quelle est donc cette dame au nez aquilin, aux grands yeux noirs, à la taille si haute et si noble, à la mine si fière et en même temps si coquette, qui entre à ma toilette sans se faire annoncer, et qui fait la révérence en religieuse?

Tullia.

Je suis Tullia, née à Rome, il y a environ dixhuit cents ans; je fais la révérence, à la romaine, et non à la francaise, je suis venue je ne sais d'ou, pour voir votre pays, votre personne, et votre toilette."

In its elaboration, this dialogue borders almost too closely on the drama to suit the purposes of our study.

2. Ibid., p. 642.
Diderot's imaginary conversations are not dialogues of the dead and are philosophical rather than satirical. Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot¹ and De Diderot avec Rivièr² are typical. His Reve de D'Alembert³ in which the interlocutors are D'Alembert, Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse, and de Médecin Bordeu, is a very unusual conversation, in which Voltaire "plunges into the depths of the controversy as to the ultimate constitution of matter and the meaning of life."⁴

It is a far cry from Diderot to Tom Paine, but chronology and the introduction of slightly different features into the form lead us now to a consideration of A Dialogue between General Wolfe, and General Gage in a Wood near Boston, published by Paine in the Pennsylvania Journal of January 4, 1775. We have here still another use of the imaginary conversation—for political propaganda—a fact in which we are more interested than in the intrinsic value of the dialogue. Paine used that modification of dialogues of the dead whereby a departed hero returns to earth to hold conversation with some distinguished living person. The purpose of the dialogue is stated at once and plainly:

"General Wolfe. Welcome, my old friend, to this retreat.

General Gage. I am glad to see you, my dear Mr. Wolfe, but what has brought you back again to this world?

Gen. Wolfe. I am sent by a group of British heroes to remonstrate with you upon a business unworthy of a British soldier, and a freeman. You have come here to deprive your fellow subjects of their liberty."⁵

2. Ibid., Vol. XVII, p. 481.
5. The writings of Thomas Paine, collected and edited by Muncure Daniel Conway—Vol. I, p. 10. Paine published, at the time when Congress appointed a committee to draft the Declaration of Independence, another imaginary conversation, in pamphlet form, which was entitled A Dialogue Between the Ghost of General Montgomery, just arrived from the Elysian Fields; and an American Delegate in a wood near Philadelphia. The purpose of the dialogue is stated by
The form of imaginary conversation, like the sceptre of royalty, has force only when wielded by a forceful personality. Several writers of the latter part of the eighteenth century made use of the form but, lacking genius, failed to produce conversations of intrinsic literary value. The nineteenth century, however, began with General Montgomery: "I am here upon an important errand, to warn you against listening to terms of accommodation from the court of Great Britain." (p.161) The entire conversation is taken up with the general's refutation of the delegate's feeble protests against war.

1. Thomas Tyers comes under this classification. In 1784, he distributed among his friends the twenty-five copies of his Conversations, Political and Familiar, which he had caused to be printed anonymously. As early as 1780 he had published his Political Conversations between several great men in the last and present century. In these he introduces several eminent persons delivering their sentiments in the way of dialogue, and discovers a considerable share of learning, various knowledge, and discernment of character. (Boswell's Life of Johnson, Edited by G. B. Hill, Oxford, 1887, Vol. III, p. 309). These Conversations appear to have been imaginary conversations, and perhaps were superior to the conversations, by Tyers which I have had an opportunity to read, but a comparison between the latter and other dialogues of the dead reveals several glaring defects. The advertisement, or preface, by the author, gives us an insight into his attitude toward the form he was using. After explaining that he deliberately imitated Fénelon, he continues, "The heroes of these dialogues will be found to talk very much like the heroes of this world. The scene seems to lie in London. It may be called, like the tombs in Westminster Abbey, the tragedy of the dead folks, that is personated to entertain the living....If place is not much attended to, order of time seems to be treated with less ceremony....What is more material, the Dramatis Personae speak in character, and deal in truth; and tell more than they did whilst they were living." (Conversations Political and Familiar, London, 1784, pp. V-VIII). Tyers claims too much for his dialogues; they are neither dramatic nor original. Traits of character are consciously exposed rather than unconsciously revealed—a fault already noted in the case of Lyttelton’s dialogues. Too often Tyers allows his characters to say the merely obvious things, and the reader becomes painfully conscious of the wide difference between what Tyers wrote and what might have been written on the same subject by an author possessing dramatic power.

Dr. John Ferriar's Dialogues in the Shades, published in the second edition of his book of miscellaneous in 1812, was probably composed at the end of the eighteenth century, soon after the publication of Godwin's Political Justice, against which it is bitingly satirical. For two important reasons, it is not a good imaginary conversation: first, one of the two speakers is not a real person; second it is, like Lyttelton's, an annotated conversation—almost every speech requiring a foot-note. The only thing about the dialogue which at all redeems it as an imaginary conversation is the character of Lucian, in his old role of exposing false philosophy. (Illustrations of Sterne: with other essays and verses, by John Ferriar, M. D., Second Edition, London, 1812).
more promisingly in this respect. It seemed, in truth, the blossoming time for imaginary conversations of the type in which the characters are represented as living, as distinguished from the dialogue of the dead which so decidedly predominated the eighteenth century. New and unexpected features were introduced. The justly celebrated Noctes Ambrosianae, contributed to Blackwood's Magazine between the years 1822 and 1835, are the most important and extensive expression of the new method. Up to this time we have been thinking of imaginary conversation as a form adapted only to comparatively brief writings. The extended dialogue of the Republic, for example, seemed too artificial, as a conversation, to claim any attention in this study, yet the Noctes Ambrosianae are continuous, so far as the characters and general purpose are concerned, and seemingly inexhaustible, going through volume after volume, in their collected form, without losing their dramatic reality and vividness and variety. This is the first example of the extended use of the form as a substitute for periodical essays. With regard to the authorship, Mrs. Oliphant writes: "It would not seem that these Symposia were under any regular system at first or subjected to any editorship. When they began it was frequently Lockhart who was the author, sometimes Maginn (after the advent of that still more unruly contributor) occasionally Hogg had, or was allowed to suppose he had, a large share in them. Finally they fell into the hands of Wilson, and it is chiefly his portion of these admirable exchanges of literary criticism and comment which have been preserved and collected."\(^{1}\)

to four volumes all the conversations written by "Christopher North" himself, and published them with a preface in 1855. Earlier than this a collection of all the Noctes, without discrimination as to authorship, had been published in America. In 1856 a revised edition of this collection was published in New York, in five volumes, with memoirs and notes by R. Shelton Mackenzie.

There is a difference of opinion among critics as to the literary significance of these conversations and as to their importance as criticisms, even their dramatic value does not stand unchallenged, for Sir George Douglas writes in his book on the Blackwood group: "Now to us, except in outward form, the Noctes appear almost any thing rather than dramatic; they are even less dramatic than the conversation pieces of Thomas Love Peacock. It is true that of the two principal talkers one speaks Scotch and the other English; but in every other respect they might exchange almost any of their longest and most important speeches without the smallest loss to characterization."¹ This is not, however, the usual verdict. Mrs. Oliphant recognizes the dramatic phase when she writes: "A certain amount of creative skill and dramatic instinct, in addition to the flow of wit and power of analysis and analogy, was necessary to one who had to keep up a keen argument single-handed, like a Japanese juggler with his balls, especially when every man who was supposed to speak was a notable man, whose thoughts and diction could both be easily identified."² Professor Wilson's son-in-law becomes fairly rhapsodic in his admiration of the dramatic

---

¹ The "Blackwood" Group, by Sir George Douglas, Edinburgh, 1897, p.44.
³ Thé Ettrick Shepherd of the Noctes Ambrosianae is one of the finest and most finished creations which dramatic genius ever called into existence. Out of very slender
criticism is too extravagant to be of much value, except as it indicates the dramatic force which ardent admirers of the Nocte\[1\] found in its character delineations. The speakers are always real men, and most of them writers of considerable importance in their own day. They are called always by their pen-names,\[2\] which were probably more widely known than their real names. Although these men frequently conversed together, it is probable that the discourse in the Nocte\[3\] Ambrosianae was entirely imaginary.

The conversations were monthly commentaries on everything. They criticized the literary work of the day, satirized manners and fashions, and introduced new poetry, new jokes, or new anecdotes about distinguished people. In the earlier numbers, those not written by Wilson, the scene was often changed and the list of characters was increased. For example, in No. IV, July 1822, the materials, an ideal infinitely greater, and more real, and more original than the prototype from which it was drawn, has been bodied forth. Bearing in mind that these dialogues are conversations on men and manners, life and literature, we may confidently affirm that nowhere within the compass of that species of compositions is there to be found a character at all comparable to this one in richness and readiness of resource. In wisdom the Shepherd equals the Socrates of Plato; in humour he surpasses the Falstaff of Shakespear. Clear and prompt, he might have stood up against Dr. Johnson in close and peremptory argument; fertile and copious, he might have rivalled Burke in amplitude of declamation.... Be the theme what it may, tragical or comical, solemn or satirical, playful or pathetic, high or low, he is always equal to the occasion. In his most grotesque delineations, his good sense never deserts him; in his most festive abandonment his morality is never at fault. He is intensely individual and also essentially national. Hence he is real—hence he is universal. His periods have all the ease and idiom of living speech as distinguished from the stiffness of what may be called spoken language, and this to an extent which is not always to be met with even in dramatic composition of the highest order."

1. There is an exception or two; for example, Buller seems to be an embodiment of Professor Wilson's old Oxford Reminiscences.

2. The Ettrick Shepherd is, however, often addressed by his own name, James Hogg. When other characters outside the regular Ambrose group, such as De Quincey and Byron, are introduced, the real names are retained.
conversation was supposed to have taken place at Pisa, and the speakers were Lord Byron and Ensign Morgan Odoherty—the pseudonym of William Maginn, who composed this number. The American editor, Mackenzie, remarks in a footnote to this dialogue, "It has so many points of vraisemblance, that even Byron himself is said to have exclaimed, after reading it, 'By Jupiter! the fellow has me down regularly, in black and white.'" The Noctes Ambrosianae stand alone among imaginary conversations in the utter naturalness of the language and the discursiveness of the speeches. Casual remarks abound, and the most ordinary subjects are introduced along with profound literary criticism. The conversations are so varied and so continuous that it is difficult to settle upon any one brief passage as a typical illustration of the style and method; the following, however, well illustrates the spontaneity and dramatic vividness of Wilson's work. The Ettrick Shepherd has become very eloquent over Pope's poetry.—

"North. Stop, James—you will run yourself out of breath. Why, you said, a few moments ago, that you did not care much about Pope, and were not at all familiar with his works—you have them at your finger ends.

Shepherd. I never ken what's in my mind till it begins to work. Sometimes I fin' mysel' just perfectly stupid—my mind, as Locke says in his Treatise on Government, quite a carte blanche—I just ken that I'm alive by my breathing—when, a' at once, my soul begins to hum like a hive about to cast off a swarm—out rush a thousand springing thoughts, for a while circling round and round like verra bees—and then, like them too, winging their free and rejoicing way into the mountain wilderness, and a' its blooming heather—returning in due time, with store o' wax on their thees, and a wameful o' honey, redolent of blissful dreams gathered up in the sacred solitudes of Nature. Ha! ha! ha! ha! isna that Wordsworthian and sonorous? But we're forgotten wee Pop. Hae ye ony mair to say anont him and Bells?

Tickler. Bowles also depreciates his genius.

North. No, no, no!

Tickler, yes, yes, yes!
Shepherd. Gude safe us, Mr. Tickler, you're no sober yet, or you wad never contradic Mr. North.
Tickler. Bowles also depreciates his genius. What infernal stuff all that about nature and art! Why Pope himself settles the question against our friend Bowles in one line:—
'Nature, must give way to Art.'
North. Pope's poetry is full of nature, at least of what I have been in the constant habit of accounting nature for the last three score and ten years. But (thank you, James, that snuff is really delicious!) leaving nature and art, and all that sort of thing, I wish to ask a single question: what poet of this age, with the exception, perhaps, of Byron, can be justly said, when put into close comparison with Pope, to have written the English language at all?
Shepherd. Tut, tut, Mr. North! you needna gang far to get an answer to that question. I can write the English language—I'll no say as well as Pop, for he was an Englishman, but—
North. Well, I shall except you, James;—but, with the possible exception of Hogg, from what living poet is it possible to select any passage that will bear to be spouted (say by James Ballantyne himself, the best declaimer extent) after any one of fifty casually taken passages from Pope?—Not one."

Such a conversation as this cannot be classified as Platonic or Ciceronian or as belonging expressly to any of the ancient types. It approaches the Xenophonic most closely, perhaps, in its colloquialisms, but it is, altogether, a new type which might be called the magazine or editorial conversation. A great part of every number was written with the sole aim of holding the reader's attention and enticing him into something toward which he would have been quite indifferent, had it been presented to him in a less popular way. The Noctes Ambrosianae are a striking proof of the pliability of the form of imaginary conversation—its adaptability to existing literary needs or fashions. Here we find it catering to the demand for informal literary criticism, and for familiar periodical writings. The influence of this type has been very great but it is impossible to estimate it definitely, for by its very

nature and aim it led to the production of ephemeral writings. The literary criticism is apt to be as much concerned with the "best-seller" of the day as with the great literary tendencies of the age. In the Noctes, mention is made of writers like "Barry Cornwall", D. M. Moir, Mrs. Hemans and Joanna Baillie as frequently as of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott. Because of the apparent ease with which Wilson had produced the conversations and because of the popularity which they attained, many other writers felt called upon to try their skill in a similar strain. "Like most other very original things," Professor Saintsbury comments, they drew after them a flock of imbecile imitations; and up to the present day those who have lived in the remoter parts of Scotland must know or recently remember dreary compositions in corrupt following of the Noctes with exaggerated attempts at Christopher's worst mannerisms, and invariably including a ghastly caricature of the Shepherd.  

The greatest contribution in the nineteenth century to this kind of literature is, of course, the use of the form by Walter Savage Landor, to which the next chapter is devoted. Although the brilliancy of his work throws into shadow all the other imaginary conversations of and following his time, yet it is interesting for historical purposes to trace, in a representative way, the use of the form down to the present day.

Macaulay wrote an imaginary conversation entitled "A Conversation between Mr. Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Hilton, Touchstone" published his Attic Nights in London in 1879, acknowledging in his preface the fact that he had deliberately imitated Professor Wilson. Although he did not possess dramatic ability equal to the professor's yet he succeeded in introducing a good deal of literary criticism of a sound character. His conversations prove that he must have studied the Noctes through and through.
ing the Great Civil War, Set Down by a Gentlemen of the Middle Temple which was printed in Knight's Quarterly Magazine, August, 1824. The choice of characters is very good for a dialogue of this kind. It is extremely doubtful that Milton and Cowley ever conversed together but it is historically plausible, since, in spite of their opposite political views, they had many literary and temperamental traits in common. A third person is represented as having recorded the conversation, which took place in the spring of 1665, and the customary device of making the work seem authentic is employed. "I have thought it good, "begins the narrator, to set down in writing a memorable debate, wherein I was a listener, and two men of pregnant parts and great reputation discouersers; hoping that my friends will not be displeased to have a record both of the strange times through which I have lived, and of the famous men with whom I have conversed."

The comments of this narrator aid materially in giving the reader a clear impression of the characters of the speakers; for example, he remarks after relating Milton's praise of the Long Parliament, "Mr. Cowley was, as I could see, a little nettled. Yet, as he was a man of kind disposition and a most refined courtesy, he put a force upon himself, and answered with more vehemence and quickness indeed than was his wont, yet not uncivilly." Macaulay's purpose in writing the conversation was evidently that of historical criticism. The only fault of the dialogue as an imaginary conversation lies in Macaulay's inability to write in any other style than his own, which, with its interrogative climactic tone, sounds peculiar at times on the lips of Milton and Cowley.

2. Ibid., p. 122.
Robert Southey's Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society (1829), between Montesinos, who represents Southey himself, and Sir Thomas More, might serve as a warning to writers without dramatic genius to avoid the form of imaginary conversation. "My plan grew out of Boethius," wrote Southey to Landor, but added with truth, "though it has since been so modified that the origin would not be suspected."¹ Forster sums up the defects of Southey's plan when he comments: "It is but an ill canvas for dialogue, which takes a road so narrow, 'where but one goes abreast'; and such was Southey's, as it had been Hurd's and Lyttelton's in similar books; mere monologues cut up into short sentences uttered with equal appropriateness by A and B; the main object being to recommend particular systems or lines of thought, special opinions, or social changes."² It is interesting to find in the nineteenth century a writer reverting to the type of imaginary conversation which characterized the middle ages—the type in which the writer converses with a ghostly visitant of recognized wisdom.

Leigh Hunt occasionally wrote imaginary conversations; two are included in his Table Talk, published in 1850. The author states in his preface: "The 'Imaginary Conversations of Pope and Swift' were considered an appropriate addition to a volume of 'Table Talk', and are intended strictly to represent both the turn of style and of thinking of these two poets; though the thoughts actually expressed are the writer's invention."³ He carries out his intention with considerable success. The first, entitled Conversation of Pope, is dated July 4, 1727; it is an indirect dia-

¹ Forster, I, p. 509.
² Ibid., I, p. 509.
³ Table Talk, by Leigh Hunt, new edition, London, 1902, Preface p. V.
logue, reported by Mr. Honeycomb, who is represented as having dined with Pope. Those who converse are Pope, Mrs. Martha Blount, Mr. Walcott, who is "a great Tory but as great a lover of Dryden", and the narrator. Something too much of the narrative element is present, for a perfect work of this type. The chief purpose of the conversation seems to be artistic, but much literary criticism is introduced, upon the writings of Walton, Dryden, Steele, Swift, and Pope himself. The second, called Conversation of Swift and Pope, is recorded by the same visitor, and dated July 15, 1727. Almost the first half is delineative and descriptive narrative. Hunt did not trust his readers to visualize scene and characters through conversation alone as did Landor; consequently, the conversation seems more analogous to Boswell's Life of Johnson or Pepys' Diary, than to what we understand by an imaginary conversation. Some of the best touches are not in the conversation at all; for example, the speaker says, "Dr. Swift somehow makes me restless. I could hear his talk all day long, but should like to be walking half the time, instead of sitting."

1 The conversation has literary merit and the characters seem real, but one questions whether much of the reality is due to the speeches, irrespective of the narrative.

The collected works of Henry Lord Brougham, published in Edinburgh in 1872, contain his Dialogues on Instinct, which are the first examples we have discovered of the imaginary conversation used for scientific writings. Lord Brougham's preface gives us his reason for choosing this form and indicates the extent to which his work deserves the name of imaginary conversations:— "The form of dialogue appears to me eminently suited to the thorough sifting of a

1. Ibid., p. 268.
subject confessedly extremely difficult, and on which there as yet can hardly be said to exist the means of laying down satisfactory, clear, and unquestionable doctrines. The whole argument in all its parts is thus subjected to scrutiny; all possible objections are brought under consideration; and the ground is cleared for future discovery, even if no results shall for the present be obtained sufficiently free from doubt to rest upon—...In the writings of Ancient philosophers this form of inquiry was very generally adopted, but it must be admitted, that in almost every instance, the form of the dialogue alone was observed. An excuse was thus given for making the discourse more desultory and less elaborate than a complete and systematic dissertation: but the prolocutors were very far from dividing the argumentation among them. One alone, as Socrates in Plato's Dialogues, performed nearly the whole; the others were merely assenters. In the following Dialogues, the conflict of argument on either side is real throughout; so that the subject is fully sifted, the argument placed in all the lights in which it was found possible to view it. As for the fictitious nature of such dialogues, Cicero has long ago observed, when writing to one of his prolocutors,—'Puto fore, ut, cum legeris, mirere nos id locutos esse inter nos, quod nunquam locuti sumus. Sed nosti morem dialogorum.' (Ep. ad Fam. Lib. IX, 8). Nevertheless, a good deal of discussion, both by letter and in conversation had taken place between the persons of the present drama.'

The facts and theory of instinct and animal intelligence occupy the entire attention of the speakers but some pains is taken by the author, especially at the beginning, to make the conversation seem natural and to

reveal intellectual if not temperamental traits of character. The
dialogues are represented as having taken place at Brougham, in
Westmoreland, September, 1837, about the time of the general election
so disastrous to the Whig party. The speakers are Lord Brougham
himself, designated by "B" in the dialogues, and Lord Spencer, known
as Viscount Althorp before his accession to the earldom in 1834, and
designated, probably for the purpose of brevity, by "A". In the
withdrawal of these statesmen from the contentions and worries of
political life to discuss questions of natural science, one is re-
mined of a similar situation presented in Cicero's De Oratore.

The English poet, William Watson, made a novel use of
the imaginary conversation in his Dr. Johnson on Modern Poetry, An
Interview in the Elysian Fields, A.D. 1900, published originally in
a periodical and reprinted in 1893 in his Excursions in Criticism.
In casting the dialogue into the future in this way, Mr. Watson adds
a new although not particularly significant device to the Lucianic
type. The characters are an interviewer and Dr. Johnson, and the
end in view is literary criticism. Dr. Johnson is made to express
his views on Wordsworth, Shelley, Rossetti, Tennyson, Arnold, and
other nineteenth century poets. The author tries to reproduce
Johnson's point of view and character and succeeds unusually well,
but occasionally he permits himself to descend to a mere caricature
of the great man's mannerisms, as when he makes Dr. Johnson say,
"Sir, I sighed for the agreeable vanities that mitigate the severity
of existence. Seldom, since the love passages of my Litchfield days,

have I discovered such a propensity to suspiration." Such a dia-

Again, when Johnson is criticizing Tennyson's In Memoriam, he is made
to say,"The thoughts are too apt to be pursued to their remotest ram-
ifications. I stick fast in their mazy turns and windings. (After a
pause). I become entoiled in their labyrinthine circumplications and
multiflexuous anfractuosities". --p.155.
logue as this reminds us of Christopher North.

As an example of the use of the imaginary conversation in the present day, mention may be made of the articles in that form by the English novelist, George Moore, published serially in The Dial, beginning October 19, 1918. Mr. Moore's adoption of this form was doubtless owing to his great admiration for Landor's writings—he speaks of his "unorthodox faith that more human souls rise out of Landor's Imaginary Conversations than out of Shakespeare's plays"—but his conversations are in the tradition of the type introduced in Blackwood's Magazine. They are written with the definite literary aim of giving "a review of the history of prose narrative in England" which will prove that form of writing to be the weakest part of English literature. The speakers are the author and Edmund Gosse; the conversation, although carefully directed, seems informal and natural, and the speakers often quote rather imperfectly from memory in a realistic manner. Mr. Moore has proved that more of the personal element may be introduced into an article written in this form than in to an essay, however familiar.

This survey of imaginary conversations written by modern authors other than Landor indicates the immeasurable dramatic influence exerted by Plato, Cicero, and Lucian upon the centuries which have succeeded them. It also shows that Landor was not the inventor of the imaginary conversation, or the first to employ it in modern times, as critics sometimes inaccurately claim with regard to him. It is a form which never will be discarded, one may venture to prophecy; its flexibility will keep it alive, as well as its manifold possibilities for criticism, instruction, amusement, satire, or dramatic characterization.

IV.

LANDOR'S IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS

It is difficult not to become extravagant in praise of Landor's Imaginary Conversations when comparing them with other works of the same type. Their distinct preeminence has led even careful critics to consider them unique in form and treatment. 1

1. Forster, Colvin, Crump, and others record the delays, quarrels, and disappointments which ensued before the first edition of the Imaginary Conversations appeared in two volumes in 1824. "In the days of his connection with Whig journalism twenty years before, he had offered to Adair for insertion in the Morning Chronicle a dialogue between Burke and Grenville, which had been declined. He had about the same time written another between Henry IV and Arnold Savage. After that he had never regularly resumed this form of composition until towards the date of his departure from Pisa." (Colvin pp. 98-99). A second edition of the first two volumes was published in 1826; a third was added in 1828, and these three volumes formed the "first series". The fourth and fifth volumes—-the "second series"—were published in 1829, and a sixth was added when the collected edition of Landor's works was published in 1846. Landor continually revised the conversations, wrote many new ones which were printed in periodicals during the remainder of his life, and published several other collections from time to time, such as the Conversations of Greeks and Romans and The Last Fruit Off an Old Tree, in 1853. Forster collected the imaginary conversations in his complete edition of Landor's works in 1876. Charles G. Crump's edition of the imaginary conversations in six volumes with biographical and explanatory notes was first published in 1891. Notable editions of selections are those by Colvin, Clymer, and Newcomer.

2. Elton declares that the Imaginary Conversations "entitle Landor to the praise which many great, and some greater, writers have not earned—that of inventing a new form of art, of which he remains the chief master." (Survey of Eng. Lit., Vol.II, p. 34). I have already quoted Elton's opinion with regard to Landor's indebtedness to Plato. He also, of course, recognises that in the use of the general dialogue form Landor had many English predecessors. With regard to his indebtedness to these, Elton comments: "The eighteenth century makers of dialogue cannot have counted for much to him. Berkeley and Hume discussed first principles, which he does not; besides, their personages are imaginary, and shadows with Greek names... He did not learn much from the dialogues of Hylas and Philonous, or those Concerning Natural Religion. The compositions of Lyttelton and Hurd can only have touched him faintly, though superficially nearer in purpose." (pp. 33-34). Sidney Colvin devotes only two sentences to the consideration of Landor's relationship to other dialogue writers: "He had before him the examples of many illustrious writers in all ages; of Plato, Xenophon, and Lucian, of Cicero and Boethius, or Erasmus and More; and, among English authors of comparatively recent date, those of Langhorne, Lyttelton, and
is true that Landor was not a conscious follower of any earlier writer of imaginary conversations—indeed, he would have been the first to have claimed the credit of inventing the form—but a comparison of his critical conversations with those of Bishop Hurd, for example, or of his philosophical dialogues with those of Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero, shows that his achievement was not the discovery of a new form but the realization, almost to the utmost, of the possibilities of an already formulated type of literature. In Landor's one hundred forty-seven dialogues there are examples of almost every sort of imaginary conversation except dialogues of the dead. Realism, often touched, however, with the magic wand of classic idealism, and poetic fancy, is the fundamental quality of his conversations; the characters are never shades wandering in the Elysian Fields, such as served the purposes of Lucian, Fenelon, and their lesser followers, but living men and women, passionate, thoughtful, and, at their best, unconsciously self-revealing. Anachronisms abound, but the conversations are always between people whose lives were at least partly coincident. The most commonly cited discrepancy in time occurs in the conversation between Bacon and Hooker. Sometimes, as in this case, the artistic possibilities of a situation which might have come to pass, had not death intervened, tempted Landor to disregard well known facts. Far from being accounted blemishes, such departures from history increase the value and originality of the work when considered simply from the point of view of its being imaginary conversation. Landor was more artist than historian; hence, truth of spirit appealed to him more strongly than literal truth of fact. His early dialogues show some

Hurd. It is needless to say that he did not closely follow, much less imitate, any of his predecessors." (Sidney Colvin's Landor, London, 1884, p. 101).
dependence upon historical sources, but as he grew more and more accustomed to the form, he relied almost exclusively upon his imagination, enriched as it was with the reading of a lifetime. In this respect his work offers a pleasing contrast to many of the conversations by other writers, which we have noted as being mere rearrangements in dialogue form of historical anecdotes of the kind supplied by any encyclopedia. It is this originality, combined with dramatic genius, which places Landor far ahead of all other writers of imaginary conversation.

If the general reading public has slighted Landor's work, critics and literary estheses have been, on the whole, flattering.

1. With regard to the conversations which he classes as idyllic Elton remarks: "Some of his actual sources, or rather the hints in which he drew, have been traced; they are various and abstruse, but they seldom furnish him with more than an outline and this is true of the Imaginary Conversations generally. He treats his originals quite freely, far more freely than Shakespeare treated Plutarch, so that they count for little in his artistic procedure." (pp. 36-37). Sidney Colvin's book of selections from Landor's works contains notes which trace the sources as far as possible and at the same time prove Landor's originality. The following note on the conversation between Marcellus and Hannibal is typical: "For the facts relating to the death of Marcellus, see Polybius (X, 32, and the doubtful fragment in Suidas sub voce Ἰουςπός), but more particularly Appian, Hannib., 50, and Plutarch, Marcell., 30. Landor has taken several details from the last two writers. They both tell of the reverence paid by Hannibal to the fallen consul; of the ring Hannibal took from his body; of the escape of the young Metellus Marcellus, his son; and how his ashes were sent home with honour to his family. But both Appian and Plutarch represent Marcellus as already dead when Hannibal came up; and the essential idea of the dialogue, that of making him survive his death wound long enough to speak with and learn the generosity of his conqueror, is Landor's own." (Selections from the Writings of Walter Savage Landor, Arranged and Edited by Sidney Colvin, London, 1902, p. 358). In his biography of Landor, Colvin says with regard to his use of historical material; "He was not at first sure of the method to be adopted, and began by planning set conversations on particular texts and topics. This was soon given up and he wrote according to the choice or preoccupation of the moment. For fear of being caught at any time echoing either the matter or the manner of any other writer, he used to abstain altogether from reading before he himself began to compose, 'lest the theme haunt me, and some of the ideas take the liberty of playing with mine. I do not wish the children of my brain to imitate the gait or learn any tricks of others.'" (Colvin, pp. 101-2.
ing in their attention and approval, but they have not been concerned with an estimate of the dialogues as imaginary conversations so much as with their place in English prose literature as a whole. John Forster's detailed accounts, in his cumbersome biography, of "What the First Volume Contained" and "What the Second Volume Contained" are scarcely at all critical or comparative,—mere summaries of contents and enumeration of characters, highly appreciative but not analytical. In Sidney Colvin's biography of Landor in the English Men of Letters Series, the relative values of the different types of dialogues are more carefully weighed and a discriminating estimate is made of their merits and defects. As a critical study of Landor's aim and achievement in writing imaginary conversations, Leslie Stephen's essay in *Hours in a Library*, Volume III, entitled *Landor's Imaginary Conversations* is perhaps the best, since the writer did not divide his attention between biography and criticism as Forster and Colvin were forced to do. Many other essayists, among them James Russell Lowell, have contributed their opinions of the literary value of the conversations, and the surveys of the literature of the Victorian period, written by Elton, Stedman, Saintsbury, Mrs. Oliphant, and others, devote considerable space to praise of Landor's prose, but in almost every instance the conversations are treated as an isolated type of literature originating with Landor and followed only by slavish imitations. The present discussion, on the other hand, is intended to show how Landor extended the scope of the imaginary conversation and for what purposes he employed it, without entering into a consideration of his personality and of the contributions he made to English prose style except in so far as these matters are directly related to the development of the form he was using.
For information concerning Landor's own attitude toward the imaginary conversation, we are indebted to his correspondence with Southey, \(^1\) to casual remarks made by characters in the dialogues themselves, and to the prefaces of the collections published during his life. In his dedication of the first series to Major-General Stopford, dated October 11, 1822, he wrote: "You will find in these Conversations a great variety of subjects and of style. I have admitted a few little men, such as emperors and ministers of modern cut, to shew better the just proportions of the great; as a painter would station a beggar under a triumphal arch, or a camel against a pyramid. The sentiments most often inculcated are those which in themselves are best; which, even in times disastrous as our own, produced an Epaminondas, Pelopidas, and a Phocion: and in these, when genius lies flat and fruitless as the sea-sand, a Washington, a Kosciusko, and a Bolivar." \(^2\) In the preface to this series he makes this further comment on his work: "The peculiarities of some celebrated authors, both in style and sentiment, have been imitated in these dialogues; but where they existed in times long past, to have retained their language would have been inelegant and injudicious. It was requisite to modify in a slight degree even that of so late a period as the reigns of Elizabeth and of James I, a period the most fertile of all in original and vigorous writers." \(^3\) From the first, it was his aim to employ historically significant personages. "The only characters," he remarks in this preface, "known little to the public, of whom no sufficient account is found in the Conversations themselves, are those of the Author, of Sir Arnold Savage, and

---

1. Forster, I, pp.510-511
3. Ibid., p. IX.
of Walter Noble."¹ In a futile effort to make the public believe the work to be entirely objective, he also declares, as he did on several other occasions: "The reader will not be surprised at finding in the dialogues a great diversity of opinions. He is requested to attribute none of them to the author of the work, as proceeding from his conviction or persuasion, but to consider that they have risen and fallen in different periods and emergencies. Here, however, it should be protested, that nothing of this irreverence (referring to thrusts at the ministry of Mr. Pitt and Lord Castle- reagh) should be attributed to the writer; whose business it is to examine the most interesting and important questions, by the introduction of personages in some cases the most zealous and enthusiastic, in others the least prejudiced and preoccupied."² As for his original purpose and plan, Landor states in a later preface: "I wish to excite a more popular and able writer to the completion of what I once projected. It was to give imaginary conversations, first of the ancient philosophers, poets, and statesmen; then of the modern; in which there should be discussions on the systems of ethics, the varieties of style, the defects and excellencies of poetry and poets. Traces of this design, but somewhat diversified, are to be discovered in the volumes I have published: in which I have found no difficulties with Solon and Phocion, with Barrow and Milton, with Cicero and Chatham, with Hannibal and Caesar. A man does not lose so much breath by raising his hand above his head, as by stooping to tie his shoestring. What I lost of mine, I lost in the entanglement and dust of the knot-grass and fuz-balls under and about me, in the Pitts

1. Ibid, p.X
2. Ibid, pp. XI - XIII.
and Feels, the Cannings and Crokers."\(^1\) Another characteristic com-
ment is this: "So many and so long have been the delays in the publi-
cation of these volumes, that, if the subjects of them had been of an 
ephemeral nature, the intent had been deluded."\(^2\)

Beyond such comments as these, Landor made no expla-
nation of his purpose, but a careful comparison of the different 
types of his imaginary conversations shows that he must have had 
very definite aims when writing some of them, although the sheer joy 
of artistic creation probably was responsible for the composition of 
others. To go through the imaginary conversations classifying each 
according to what must have been Landor's primary purpose in writing 
it, would be an interesting task, productive of interesting results. 
Without going into the matter so minutely as this, however, I shall 
attempt to show that a classification according to purpose is not 
only possible but also in some ways more satisfactory than the others 
which have been made. Everyone who has made any considerable study 
of Landor's Imaginary Conversations has tried his ingenuity in class-
ifying them. John Forster's arrangement of the dialogues in the 
collection published in 1876 was the first complete classification, 
and has been generally accepted as the most practicable for purposes 
of publication. Forster grouped the conversations into Classical 
Dialogues, subdividing this group into Greek and Roman; Dialogues of 
Sovereigns and Statesmen; Dialogues of Literary Men; Dialogues of 
Famous Women; and Miscellaneous Dialogues. Such a classification, 
based upon the historical time or position of the characters, obvi-
ously tends to place conversations very unlike in treatment and sub-
ject matter in common groups. Forster's divisions are arbitrary in
\(^1\) Landor*Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen, 
\(^2\) Ibid, p. XXIX.
the extreme; for example, one wonders why the conversation of Bonaparte and the President of the Senate, of Nicholas, Frederick-William, and Nesselrode, of Louis Philippe and M. Guizot, and many others which are classified as Miscellaneous are not grouped with the Dialogues of Sovereigns and Statesmen. It would be possible to point out innumerable minor inconsistencies involved in such a classification. Sidney Colvin dispensed with the historical division altogether, even the groupings which Landor himself had insisted upon. "To my mind," he declared in his biography of Landor, "the only vital and satisfactory division between one class and another of Landor's prose conversations is that between the dramatic and the non-dramatic; the words are inexact, and the distinction is far from being sharp or absolute; but what I mean is this, that some of the compositions in question are full of action, character, and passion, and those I call the dramatic group; in others there is little action, and character and passion are replaced by disquisition and reflection, and those I call by contrast the non-dramatic. In the former class, Landor is in each case taken up with the creative task of realizing a heroic or pathetic situation, and keeps himself entirely in the background. In the latter class his energetic personality is apt to impose itself upon his speakers, who are often little more than masks behind which he retires in order to utter his own thoughts and opinions with the greater convenience and variety." This is a most tempting classification, simple in theory and easy in application, if the dramatic group is to be restricted to those dialogues in which emotion is the only prominent element.

But what is to be done with a conversation like that of Epicurus.

1. Elton comments on this inconsistency in a note, Vol. II p. 413.
Leontion, and Ternissa, or of Aesop and Rhodope, filled as they are with reflection yet permeated with feeling and suggestive of much action—action which, if scarcely noticeable to the superficial observer, is in reality deeply significant of character? Colvin's classification is very good for general critical purposes but it would not be adequate for a complete analytical study of the dramatic elements of the conversations. 1 Professor Newcomer, in the introduction to his Selections from the Imaginary Conversations, discusses the dialogues "in the two major divisions of Philosophic and Dramatic and the two minor ones of Political and Critical." 2 This comes much nearer being the classification according to purpose, which we are seeking. Charles G. Crump, in his edition in six volumes of the Imaginary Conversations follows, with a few important variations, the classification made by Forster. His introduction contains this comment concerning the grouping of the dialogues: "It would be interesting did space and time allow to discuss here the question of the proper arrangement and classification of the conversations. The question is exactly the sort of idle one, whose answer it is pleasant to look for. Mr. Forster's classification is the established one to which all subsequent editors must conform, but few will entirely concur in it. Mr. Colvin....would classify the Conversations into dramatic and non-dramatic. The present editor cannot help a lingering suspicion that Mr. Colvin's first class

1. Edward Waterman Evans, in his critical study of Walter Savage Landor, adopts Colvin's classification, saying with regard to it, "This is certainly a philosophic demarcation, and one which can be applied with some degree of exactitude. We would, however prefer to employ the positive terms, reflective and dramatic, in discriminating between the two classes."—p.129. C. H. Herford in his Age of Wordsworth prefers "dramatic" and "discursive", —p. 278.

would be but a small division. For himself, he would suggest a division into three groups—that is to say, controversial Conversations, of which 'Lucian and Timotheus' will do for a type; contemplative like the Conversations between Epicurus and Menander; and Conversations whose aim is criticism either of literature or politics or philosophy, including in this last class only those in which the controversial note is absent or unimportant. To these three classes might be added a small fourth class, formed by the purely dramatic conversations, of which 'Marcellus and Hannibal' in the first volume of this edition is a fine instance. It is unfortunate that Mr. Crump considered the re-classifying to be such an idle problem, for an edition based upon his suggested arrangement would be, in my opinion, superior in value to that based on Forster's. The most recent and in some ways the most elaborate classification is the one made by Oliver Elton in his Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830. He took Colvin's division as his basis, and separated the dramatic dialogues into four groups: conversations in which heroic action and passion are depicted; brutal and ferocious scenes; idyllic, gracious, and playful scenes; and humorous and ironic dialogues. The other type, the non-artistic or non-dramatic, are put into two groups: first, the political and constitutional, or ethical, disquisitions in dialogue; and, second, the conversations of 'literary men', and criticisms. This discrimination is well adapted to a brief survey of the conversations, especially with regard to their difference in appeal.

1. W. J. Dawson takes a different attitude. After discussing the dramatic genius manifested in the Conversations, he remarks: "The imaginary Conversations do not, however, all range themselves under the plain category of the dramatic. Some are philosophic, some are critical, though even in these the dramatic instinct is always present." The Makers of English Prose, (W. J. Dawson, New York, 1906).

After all, classification is mainly a matter of choice of words, the resulting general groups of dialogues being in most cases almost identical. The discussion here will treat of the dialogues in the four divisions of speculative, satirical, critical, and artistic. The author's purpose will be taken into consideration in the grouping. The names of the four types are surely self-explaining but, for the sake of added clearness, I shall indicate briefly the kind of conversation to which each refers, before entering upon a more detailed description of the dialogues comprising the different groups. By speculative, I mean the conversations in which Landor causes his characters to discuss or formulate philosophy, or to meditate upon events and policies; the satirical are those in which Landor, through the speakers, gives expression to his dislike for monarchy and priesthood and intolerance in general; by critical conversations I refer only to those in which Landor introduces literary criticism as the leading topic of conversation; the artistic conversations are those which Landor wrote, not to weigh different attitudes toward life, or to ridicule any institutions of religion or government, or to criticize any work of literature, but solely to portray interesting characters or situations which appealed to his sense of the artistic, the effective. The most important difference between this classification and the others which have been made is the absence of the word dramatic. The best of each type are, in their way, intensely dramatic, as I shall endeavor to prove. Only in the last named group, however, does the dramatist or artist in Landor entirely eclipse the philosopher, satirist, and critic. In this group, also, will be placed the conversations in which the historical importance of the speakers or the historical significance of the situation is the important feature, and the
conversation is intended primarily as a reproduction of a portion of history hitherto unrecorded. Although most of the conversations contain elements of several of the types, yet one is almost always dominant, and it is this dominant note which shall decide in what group a dialogue is to be placed. By no means all the conversations can be discussed but only those which are either the most typical or the most unusual.

The dialogues which I have designated as speculative comprise the bulk of Landor's imaginary conversations but are those for which he is most famous. The desultory reader forms his opinion of Landor's work almost entirely from the short tense dialogues of feeling or from the stinging irony of the satirical conversations, yet some of the best ideas as well as some of the most penetrating characterizations are embodied in the long discursive dialogues of discussion and reflection. It is through these especially that one gains a realization of the remarkably wide range of characters and topics. From Plato and Diogenes to Southey and Porson, almost all the philosophers and literary men who would have been apt to hold any speculative conversations are presented to the reader. In spite of the general similarity in purpose of the speculative dialogues, they differ widely in the method in which the speculations or arguments are carried on, from the highly dramatic and playful yet philosophical conversation of Epicurus, Leontion, and Ternissa, to the serious dignified discussions of Penn and Peterborough, or Washington and Franklin. But even the most profound and long sustained discussions are relieved by a certain degree of implied action or glimpses of a background which make the conversation seem appropriate and of actual occurrence. For example, the dialogue already mentioned, between William Penn and Lort Peterborough, begins
in the most casual manner:

"Penn. Friend Mordaunt, thou hast been silent the whole course of our ride hither; and I should not even now interrupt thy cogitations, if the wood before us were not equally uncivil.

Peterborough. Can we not push straight through it?
Penn. Verily the thing may be done, after a time, but at present we have no direct business with the Pacific Ocean; and I doubt whether the woodland terminates till those waters bid it."

It is most reasonable that a conversation, begun on the subject of the appearance of Pennsylvania should merge into a serious discussion of the laws and principles of the new commonwealth and thence, by a natural transition, proceed to a consideration of the underlying principles of organized society. A less able writer would have ended the dialogue at this point, but Landor characteristically brings the conversation back from abstract theorizing to a bit of concrete realism. The way in which the last few speeches combine the two elements of conversation, the reasoned and the incidental, is a striking illustration of Landor's genius for writing in the dialogue form:

"Penn. It is untrue that nations cannot be at once agricultural and commercial. That the most commercial are the most agricultural, the states of Holland and indeed the Netherlands at large are evidences, and, in another hemisphere, China. Attica, composed of rocks, was better cultivated than Sparta. Carthage and Alexandria, Bruges and Dantzic, put into motion fifty ploughs with every rudder.

Remove from mankind the disabilities that wrong system of government have imposed and their own interests will supply them both with energy and morality. I speak of men as we find them about us, possessing the advantages of example and experience.

Here we are at home again. Thy valet is running hitherward with his hat off, beating the flies and gnats away. My helper Abel standeth expecting me, but knitting hose.

Abel. Abel.
Abel. Friend, what wouldst thou?
Penn. Take my mare and feed her. Hast thou dined?
Abel. Nay.
Penn. Art hungry?

1. Landor's Imaginary Conversations - Edition of 1876, III, p.250
Abel. Yea.
Penn. Greatly?
Abel. In thy house none hungereth painfully: but verily at this hour my appetite waxeth sharp.
Penn. Feed then first this poor good creature, the which is accustomed to eat oftener than thou art, and the which haply hath fasted longer.
Abel. Thou sayest well: it shall be done even as thou advisest.

Peterborough. There are only three classes of men that we in general have no patience with; superiors, inferiors, and equals. You have given me abundant and perpetual proofs that you can bear the two latter; and I am persuaded that you would place any decent one of the former in the same easy posture, if God, decreeing his happiness or amendment, should ever direct him toward you.1

A speculative dialogue by Landor can seldom be given a definite title in the way in which Fontenelle's and Fenelon's were labelled, for, like actual conversations, they wander from topic to topic, and one almost always has to read for several pages before determining what idea Landor had in mind, chiefly, in writing it. The tone of the conversation, the amount of action and the dramatic interest depend upon the characters selected. Some are exceedingly dramatic: for example, the deep grief of Epicurus, expressed in his conversations with Menander, in spite of his calm philosophic restraint, cannot but move the reader greatly; Lucian's sarcastic laughter and Timotheus' earnest perplexity give a vivid dramatic cast to their conversation; and the very stateliness and courteous deference manifested in the conversation of Marcus Tullius Quinctus Cicero, and its long dignified speeches, make it far more realistic and dramatic, under the circumstances, than more animation and action and shorter speeches could have done.2 No other writer of the type

---

2. Other speculative dialogues, besides those which are mentioned in the discussion of the type, are, in my opinion, -II, Greek, 6, 8, 9, 13, Roman, 6; III, 2, 3, 10, 14; IV, 1, 9, 17; V, 22, 23, 27, 28/ (Edition of 1876).
of imaginary conversation which concerns itself with subjects of political economy and metaphysics ever succeeded in enlivening the discourse with as many vivifying touches as Landor did in his dialogues of this class.

Satirical expressions are often mingled with the many other elements of the speculative conversations but the dialogues of this type do not impress one as being directed focussed satires. Occasionally, however, Landor used imaginary conversation for the sole purpose of satirizing some particular institution or person. These strictly satirical dialogues form a small but important class. Other writers who used imaginary conversation for satire composed dialogues of the dead, in which characters looked back upon life and deliberately ridiculed its foibles, but Landor, with much greater effectiveness, makes the speakers seem utterly unconscious of the follies which they are exposing in their conversation. The satire is of two kinds,—directed against state government as represented by a king or queen or minister, or directed against church government in the person of a pope or a priest. A good example of the former is the conversation between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Canning, and the conversation between Fra Filippo Lippi and Pope Eugenius the Fourth is a notable example of the latter. A combination of the two is presented in the dialogues between Alexander and the priest of Hammon, between Bossuet and the Duchess de Fontanges, and between Louis XIV and Father la Chaise,—the most frequently cited examples of Landor’s satire. In all these dialogues the faults which the author wishes to satirize are dramatically exhibited rather than described and discussed. It is left to the reader to do the criticizing and the deriding. To Illustrate: Louis XIV has confessed to having eaten a mince pie on a Friday.—
"La Chaise... Penance is to be done: your Majesty must fast; your Majesty must wear sackcloth next your skin, and carry ashes upon your head before the people.

Louis. Father, I can not consent to this humiliation; the people must fear me. What are you doing with those scissors and that pill? I am sound; give it Villeroy or Richelieu.

La Chaise. Sire, no impiety, no levity, I pray. In this pill, as your Majesty calls it, are some flakes of ashes from the incense, which seldom is pure gum; break it between your fingers, and scatter it upon your peruke: well done. Now take this.

Louis. Faith! A black plaister! What is that for?

La Chaise. This is sackcloth. It was the sack in which Madame de Maintenon put her knitting, until the pins frayed it.

Louis. I should have believed that sackcloth means...

La Chaise. No interpretations from Scripture, I charge you from authority, Sire."

The conversations devoted primarily to literary criticism also form a small but noteworthy group. A few of them have almost no dramatic interest and must be characterized as dull and too much taken up with technicalities. Ideas of spelling and grammar reform and personal preferences often influence Landor too much to enable him to criticize the fundamental qualities of literature to the best advantage. But the conversation of Walton, Cotton, and Oldways concerning Donne's poetry is exceedingly spirited and interesting and much sound criticism of Milton's literary work is given in a delightfully conversational manner in various dialogues, such as that of Andrew Marvel and Bishop Parker, and that of Southey and Landor, himself. Landor's dialogues of literary criticism are more dramatic than Dryden's or Hurd's but at the same time more formal and serious than Wilson's.  

The greatest fault in the speculative, satirical, and critical conversations from the standpoint of this study is Landor's tendency to present his own ideas rather than only those which the

1. Edition of 1876, III, p. 178. (Landor's Imaginary Conversations.)

2. Representative critical dialogues are II, 6; IV, 2, 4, 8, 10, 15, 16, 18; V, 19, 28. (Edition of 1876)
characters he chose would have expressed. That he was partly conscious of this tendency is manifested by his defence of one aspect of it in his imaginary conversation between a Florentine, an English Visitor, and himself:

"English Visitor. One objection to your Imaginary Conversations is, that you represent some living characters as speaking with greater powers of mind than they possess, vile as they are in conduct.

Landor. It can not be expected, by those who know of what materials the cabinets of Europe are composed, that any one in them should reason so conclusively, and with such illustrations, as some who are introduced. This, if it is a blench in a book, is one which the book would be worse without. The practice of Shakespeare and Sophocles is a better apology for me than I could offer of my own. If men were to be represented as they show themselves, encrusted with all the dirtiness they contract in public life, in all the debility of ignorance, in all the distortion of prejudice, in all the reptile trickery of partisanship, who would care about the greater part of what are called the greatest? Principles and ideas are my objects: they must be reflected from high and low, but they must also be exhibited where people can see them best, and are most inclined to look at them."

This intruding personal element is almost entirely absent from the type of dialogues which I have designated as artistic. Inspiration and the creative impulse produced them, not an anxiety to convince the world of its faults, or to interpret history in terms of philosophy and economics. They are almost as numerous as the speculative conversations but most of them, unlike the latter, are very short. Almost all the dialogues classed by Forster as Dialogues of Famous Women, as well as many others, are of this type. Landor was the first to realize to the full the dramatic interest to be obtained by giving prominence to women in imaginary conversations. The women of ancient history never speak in the Greek and Latin imaginary conversations—for the goddesses and legendary heroines of Lucian's dialogues do not satisfy our requirement regarding significant historical personalities—and although they appear with consid-
erable frequency in the imaginary conversations of the eighteenth
and nineteenth centuries, yet there is seldom if ever any emotion
displayed, nor is feminine character revealed to any marked extent.
With Landor, on the contrary, from the hard unprincipled Empress
Catering to the gentle Godiva, the individual personalities of the
women are brought into existence again with wonderful distinctness,
and they re-live their joys and sorrows so vividly that one never
tires of reading and re-reading every word of their conversations.
This can be said of very few of Landor's other dialogues and of
almost none of the would-be dramatic imaginary conversations of
other writers. 1 Without stage directions and without the excessive
condensation which obscures many of Browning's dramatic monologues,
these dialogues give the reader an impression of momentous actions
and emotional crises. Sometimes the conversations begin abruptly.

1. Critics have been quick to recognize Landor's unusual abili-
ty in this regard. Evans writes: "These dialogues (of action) are
especially and justly noted for their delicate insight into woman-
hood. In a letter to Southey, Landor makes us aware of the source of
this power. 'I delight', he says, 'in the minute variations and al-
most imperceptible shades of female character, and confess that my
reveries, from my most early youth, were almost entirely on what this
one or that one would have said or done in this or that situation.
Their countenances, their movements, their forms, the colors of their
dresses were before my eyes!'"(pp.144-5). Elton comments: "His port-
raiture of feminine bravery and patience can hardly be matched, it
is not too much to say, between the end of the old drama and the
The Ring and the Book. The sifted purity of his prose idiom well
suits the lips of women, and their talk runs more easily than that
of his men; it has less the air of being a distinguished translation
from an ancient classic. It is not easy to put words into the mouth
of Dante; and Landor does so twice, without our feeling that Dante
had demeaned himself; but the honours rest with Beatrice in the
first dialogue and in the second with Gemma Donati, his wife, who
has named her own child Beatrice." (pp.34-35). But there are also
expressions of a less favorable attitude. Professor Saintbury
speaks of Landor's "artificial and namby-pamby conception of the fe-
male character." (p.99). Professor Newcomer sums up Colvin's opinion
thus: "His women, nobly conceived as some of them are,—Mr. Colvin
would set them next to Shakespeare's!—are likely to be now mannish
and coarse-fibered, now, in Mr. Colvin's own phrase, 'giggly, missish
and disconcerting.'" (p.XXVII).
just as feelings are often aroused without forewarning. The beginning of the tense dialogue between the young weak-willed Tiberius and his wife Vipsania is a striking instance of this.---

"Tiberius. Vipsania, my Vipsania, whither art thou walking?"

Vipsania. Whom do I see? my Tiberius?
Tiberius. Ah! no, no, no! but thou seest the father of thy little Drusus. Press him to thy heart the more closely for this meeting, and give him...
Vipsania. Tiberius! the altars, the gods, the destinies, are between us...I will take it from this hand; thus, thus shall he receive it.
Tiberius. Raise up thy face, my beloved! I must not shed tears. Augustus! Livia! ye shall not extort them from me.
Vipsania! I may kiss thy head...for I have saved it. Thou sayst nothing. I have wronged thee; ay?
Vipsania. Ambition does not see the earth she treads on: the rock and the herbage are of one substance to her. Let me excuse you to my heart, O Tiberius. It has many wants; this is the first and greatest."!

There are dialogues of this type also which begin in a manner so casual and so commonplace that the reader for a time does not suspect the crisis which is impending or the feeling which is underlying the self control. The conversation between Essex and Spencer is a notable example of Landor's use of this device.

With all his genius for portraying ennobling emotions and actions of the greatest ferocity or tenderness, Landor was equally adept in using the form for the exhibition of the most petty traits of character. How distinctly and how naturally Elizabeth Tudor is made to reveal the less admirable side of her nature along with its strength, in her conversation with her half-sister!--

"Mary. My dear, dear sister! it is long, very long, since we met.
Elizabeth. Methinks it was about the time they chopped off our uncle Seymour's head for him. Not that he was our uncle though...he was only Edward's.
Mary. The Lord Protector, if not your uncle, was always doatingly fond of you; and he often declared to me, even within your hearing, he thought you very beautiful.

1. Landor's Imaginary Conversations - Edition of 1876-11, p.420
Elizabeth. He said as much of you, if that is all; and he told me why..."not to vex me"...as if, instead of vexing me, it would not charm me...I beseech your Highness, is there anything remarkable or singular in thinking me...what he thought me?

Mary. No indeed, for so you are. But why call me Highness? drawing back and losing half your stature in the circumference of the curtsey.

Elizabeth. Because you are now, at this blessed hour, my lawful queen.

Mary. Hush, prythee hush.* The parliament has voted otherwise.

Elizabeth. They would chouse you.

Mary. What would they do with me?

Elizabeth. Trump you.

Mary. I am still at a loss.

Elizabeth. Bamboozle you.

Mary. Really, my dear sister, you have been so courted by the gallants, that you condescend to adopt their language, in place of graver.

Elizabeth. Cheat you then...will that do?

Mary. Comprehensibly.

Elizabeth. I always speak as the thing spoken of requires. To the point. Would our father have minded the caitiffs?

Mary. Naming our father, I should have said, our father now in bliss; for surely he must be; having been a rock of defence against the torrent of irreligion.

Elizabeth. Well; in bliss or out, there, here, or anywhere, would he, royal soul! have minded parliament? No such fool he. There were laws before there were parliaments; and there were kings before there were laws. Were I in your Majesty's place (God forbid the thought should ever enter my poor weak head, even in a dream!) I would try the mettle of my subjects: I would mount my horse and head them."

In several of the dialogues which Landor composed solely for their artistic effect, we find the imaginary conversation in its perfection as a literary form. The dialogues between Leofric and Godiva, Catharine and Princess Dashkof, the Maid of Orleans and Agnes Sorel, and about twenty more are absolutely flawless in structure. It is safe to assume that, in this special type of imaginary conversation, Landor can never be excelled. The final conclusion to be drawn from an attempt to classify Landor's imaginary conversations is that it is in many ways a futile and impossible. Landor's Imaginary conversations - Edition of 1876 V p.236.
ble task. He occasionally wrote conversations, for example, in which his aim seemed to be the incorporation of a narrative or several narratives in a slight dialogue structure. Such an aim finds no place in my classification and indeed does not accord with the essential idea of the imaginary conversation as a literary form. A few of Landor's dialogues seem in structure and subject matter rather to be short stories than imaginary conversations: for example, the dialogue between General Kleber and the French Officers—a piece of work which suggests Kipling's method rather more than Landor's own.

Even the one-hundred forty-seven imaginary conversations do not exhaust the possibilities of the form, for Landor. In the Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare, Euseby Treen, Joseph Carnaby, and Silas Gough, Clerk, before the Worshipful Sir Thomas Lucy, Knight, Touching Deer-Stealing, on the 19th Day of September, in the Year of Grace 1582, "an elaborately expanded conversation, embellished with an ingenious "Editor's Preface" and a "Post-Scriptum by Me, Ephraim Barnett", Landor has used the imaginary conversation in a novel way. The work is rather anomalous in form on account of the prominent narrative element, yet it is an imagined conversation between characters of whom two, at least, are real personalities, and therefore deserves to be classified with the other imaginary conversations. Its value, as such, is very unequal, some parts being dramatic and true to life, and others prosy or overdrawn. The subject was a daring one; hence it is considerably to Landor's credit that he even partially succeeded in reproducing the spirit of an Elizabethan manorial court and in revealing the budding genius of the youthful Shakespeare.¹

¹ Elton makes a concise statement of the faults and merits of this work when he declares, "The Citation goes on too long, and is
The *Pentamerone* is also an expansion of the usual form of Landor's imaginary conversations, with its five distinct divisions for the five days of scholarly discussion, and its extended narrative passages. If classified according to purpose, it would be placed with the dialogues of literary criticism, but the human touches so frequently introduced, and the delicately shadowed background, are of more importance to us in this study than the rather unsatisfactory criticism of Dante's work. The dialogues specifically labelled "Imaginary Conversations" show the immense range of characters and subjects possible to the form, and the *Citation* and *Pentamerone* show the length and elaborateness to which individual works written in this form may be developed.  

To summarize Landor's contributions to the form and use of the imaginary conversation: he brought more characters into play than any other writer of this type of literature, and covered a greater range of time; he was the first to excel even Plato in the faculty of introducing natural, dramatic touches into dialogues of discussion and reflection; he dramatized satire,—that is, he embodied in historical personalities the faults he wished to ridicule; he gave importance to women in his imaginary conversations, and produced many wonderfully emotional dialogues; and, lastly, though he all too frequently intruded his own ideas and traits, nevertheless in a few unforgettable instances he manifested to a truly remarkable degree the power of revealing the human soul.

> in the nature of a feat; but it is one of the freest and raciest of Landor's books, and is charged with life and spirit." (p.41).

1. The *Pentamerone* is a favorite with the critics. Colvin says that in it Landor is "at his very best"(p.157); Herford calls it "the choicest of all the discursive dialogues"(p.282); Elton's comment, however, is less favorable:"Petrarch and Boccaccio are prone to talk too much like eighteenth century essayists of the ponderous tribe, and their disquisitions on universal monarchy and the vices of the French are unrefreshing...Moreover they say of Dante what Landor thought, and not what either of them could have dreamed of thinking (p. 43).
BIBLIOGRAPHY

General.


Merrill, Elizabeth. The Dialogue on English Literature, New York, 1911.

The following is a bibliography of the authors whose dialogues are discussed in this thesis. It is arranged, so far as possible, in the chronological order of the original publication of the imaginary conversations and in each instance the critical works which were consulted are appended.

Plato.

Byron, Wm. Lowe and Charlotte Lowe. Plato the Teacher - Selections from the Dialogues, New York, 1897.

Burnet John, Plato's Phaedo, Oxford, 1911.


Knight, M. J. Editor, A. Selection of Passages from Plato for English Readers, Oxford, 1895, Vol. I.

Taylor, A. E. Plato, New York. (n, d.)

Zeller, Dr. Eduard. Plato and the Older Academy, Translated from the German by Sarah Frances Alleyne and Alfred Goodwin, London, 1888.

Xenophon.

Works, Translated by H. G. Dakyns, London, 1897.

Cicero.


Strachan-Davidson, J. L. *Cicero and the Fall of the Roman Republic*, New York, 1900.


Watson, J. S. *Cicero on Oratory and Orators - Translated or Edited*, London, 1903.


Lucian.


Petrarch.


Hutten.

Castiglione.


Dryden, John


(Fontenelle)


OEuvres, Paris, 1758, Tome Premier.

Gottsched, Johann Christoph. Editor and Translator, Herrn Bernhards von Fontenelle, Auserlesene Schriften, etc., Leipzig, 1751.


Brown, Thomas


Sheffield, John.


Fenelon.


Choix, de Fables et de Dialogues, Edited by P. Andraud, Paris, 1913.

Vauvenargues.


Fielding, John

Hurd, Richard, D. D.


Lyttelton, George Lord.


Campbell, Archibald

The Sale of Authors, London, 1767.

Voltaire

Oeuvres Complètes, Paris, 1875, Tome Sixième

Diderot, Denis

Oeuvres Complete, Paris, 1877, Vols. II and XVII.

Paine, Thomas

Writings, Collected and Edited by Moncure Daniel Conway, New York, 1902, Vol. I.

Tyler, Thomas

Conversations, Political and Familiar, London, 1784.

Ferriar, John.

Illustrations of Sterne, etc., London, 1812.

Wilson, Professor John.

Works, Edited by Professor Ferrier, Edinburgh, 1855, Vols. I - IV.

Douglas, Sir George, "The Blackwood" Group, Edinburgh, 1897.

Mackenzie, R. Shelton, Editor, Revised Edition with Memoirs and Notes of the Noctes Ambrosianae, New York, 1866.

Oliphant, Mrs. Margaret. William Blackwood and his sons, Their Magazine and Friends, Edinburgh, 1897. Vol. I.
Landor, Walter Savage.


The Last Fruit Off an Old Tree, London, 1853.


Selections from the Writings of Walter Savage Landor, Edited by W. B. Shuibrick Clymer, Boston, 1898.

Selections from the Writings of Walter Savage Landor, Edited by Sidney Colvin, London, 1902.

Selections from the Imaginary Conversations of Walter Savage Landor, Edited by Alphonso G. Newcomer, New York, 1899.

Biography and Criticism.

Colvin, Sidney. Walter Savage Landor, New York, 1884.


Elton, Oliver. A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830 London, 1912, Vol. II.


Gosse, Edmund. A Short History of English Literature, 1897


Long, William J. English Literature, Boston, 1909.


Newcomer, Alphonso G. English Literature, Chicago, 1905.

Oliphant, Mrs. Margaret. The Victorian Age of English Literature, New York, 1892. Vol. I.


Scudder, Horace E. Men and Letters - Essays in Characterization and Criticism, Boston, 1887.

Simonds, William E. A Student's History of English Literature, Boston, 1902.

Stedman, Edmund Clarence. Victorian Poets, Boston, 1903.


Macaulay, Thomas Babington.

Works, Edited by Lady Trevelyan, Philadelphia, 1898. Vol. XVIII.

Southey, Robert.


Hunt, Leigh.

Table Talk, London, 1902.

Brougham, Henry Lord.

Works, Edinburgh, 1872, Vol. VI.

Mills, Charles


Watson, William.


Moore, George.
