

THE LITERATURE OF CHAOS

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by Martine Hollins.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In his book, Chaos, James Gleick refers to the 'Butterfly Effect', whose identification by the scientist Edward Lorenz, prompted the writings concerned with what is now widely referred to as chaos theory. The 'Butterfly Effect', Gleick explains:

acquired a technical name: sensitive dependence on initial conditions. And sensitive dependence on initial conditions was not an altogether new notion. It had a place in folklore:

"For want of a nail, the shoe was lost;  
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost;  
For want of a horse, the rider was lost;  
For want of a rider, the battle was lost;  
For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost!"

In science as in life, it is well known that a chain of events can have a point of crisis that could magnify small changes. But chaos meant that such points were everywhere. They were pervasive. In systems like the weather, sensitive dependence on initial conditions was an inescapable consequence of the way small scales intertwined with large.<sup>1</sup>

Lorenz's work on the aperiodicity of the weather system led to a remarkable discovery: that systems which appear to signal pure disorder are actually governed by a form of order. Hitherto that order had gone unrecognized since the form of order of the 'Butterfly Effect' is non-linear. But the map of the geometrical structure of the 'Butterfly Effect', first drawn by Lorenz, shows an

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1. James Gleick, Chaos: Making a New Science (London: Cardinal, 1991), p.23.

'infinite complexity resembling a kind of double spiral in three dimensions, like a butterfly with its two wings' (p.30). The implication of the 'Butterfly Effect' is that order exists in the external physical world but it can only be perceived by recognizing the interdependence of the different scales: the small initial changes cascade upward through the system. Thus, modern chaos theory is a kind of misnomer, for it is not about chaos at all. It is about complex order hidden within apparent chaos.

It is not surprising that the implication of chaos theory has spilled out of the scientific disciplines: philosophy and science are driven by the same impulse to understand the universe in which we live. In her critical work on postmodern writers, Chaos Bound, Katherine Hayles poses the question 'What in the present cultural moment has energized chaos as an important concept?' (2). Hayles examines in relation to literature the same kind of emergent order within disorder that scientific chaos theory suggests as evident in the physical universe. Indeed, she refers specifically to James Gleick's discussion of chaos theory in science, writing of the early scientists who worked on the theory:

I do not believe that the scientists Gleick writes about acted in isolation. I think that they rather acted like lightning rods in a thunderstorm or seed crystals in a super-saturated solution. They gave a local habitation and a name to what was in the air. It was because the cultural atmosphere surrounding them was super-charged that

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2. Katherine N. Hayles, Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), p.23, hereafter referred to as 'C.B.'

these ideas seemed so pressing and important. Mandelbrot, though he clearly wants to claim the territory for himself, recognizes that earlier mathematicians had penetrated his domain. Because the time was not right, their forays were regarded as dead ends. Now, for reasons that are as complex as the chaotic systems the new paradigms represent, the time is right.

C.B., p.174

Again, Hayles' optimism makes the apparent fragmentation of modern chaos not, as the name of chaos suggests, a descent into disorder, but a gain resulting from a progress hidden from us in its interwoven minutiae since our understanding is only just catching up with what we need to know. 'The time is right' implies a faith in the process of so-called chaos, as if it is an inevitable condition productive of meanings finally recognized as necessary to us in our present world. Hayles views history as a series of evolving paradigms which make chaos the inevitable paradigm of the present day. The volume of information available to modern life, she claims, is not an incoherent mess of de-contextualized fragments, but valuable, interconnected knowledge all of which forms part of what she terms a 'cultural field' and a 'diffuse network' (p.4). These terms are themselves expressive of external order.

This modern notion of chaos, derived from contemporary work on chaos theory, represents a dramatic departure from the original meaning of chaos, in Greek: 'any vast gulf or chasm, the nether abyss, empty space, the first state of the universe' (OED 1). In its original meaning then, chaos implies a primal state, a void; it

does not in any way suggest the sense of unruly abundance which characterizes Hayles' conception of the term.

This thesis is not a development of Hayles' work. I am concerned with the older meaning of chaos but at a personal, thus derived level. I take the view that a personal crisis is more than just the experience of explicable trouble or local distress and minor conflict. Personal crisis can feel like chaos if there is a collapse of the sense of wider implicit order which has been all too easily taken for granted when a person could exist easily within it. This thesis involves an exploration of how or if the self can survive the involuntary creation of situations of personal chaos in which more-than-personal beliefs or orders of meaning are tested, or provoked, by personal catastrophe. As a metaphor for situations of personal chaos I am using the term chaos in its more original meaning - as an unknowable force. Yet it is more than a void. Chaos is 'a state resembling that of primitive chaos; utter confusion and disorder' (OED 3a). To define chaos, as does Hayles, as a form of disorderly order strips it of the sharp discontinuity, shock and paradox implicit in this more original meaning. Hayles' version of chaos is knowable, assessable; it can be tamed and utilized. I take chaos as that which cannot be tamed simply into order; its threat is that of an unknown and anterior force, fearfully destructive of the fundamental human need for order, as

Iris Murdoch implies when she writes about the strength of the human need for 'unity':

The urge to prove that where we intuit unity there really is unity is a deep emotional motive to philosophy, to art, to thinking itself. Intellect is naturally one-making. To evaluate, understand, classify, place in order of merit, implies a wider unified system, the questing mind abhors vacuums. We fear plurality, diffusion, senseless accident, chaos, we want to transform what we cannot dominate or understand into something reassuring and familiar, into ordinary being, into history, art, religion, science.<sup>3</sup>

'Intellect is naturally one-making', as if the mind of itself must seek unity since its very nature is to do just that. Indeed, the 'urge' towards unity may be so powerful as to go deeper; the 'urge' implies an inner need for unity as validated belief. Murdoch's hope is that this 'naturally' ordering impulse of the mind offers reassurance of the existence of a correspondingly natural external order. For if external order is only a fiction created by human need, the consequences are much more disturbing than that we simply misconceive our universe and must think again. A chaotic universe would make the human intellect itself a useless faculty by which to understand either the external chaos or ourselves in it. As a consequence of the need to believe in an inter-relation between inner and outer unity the human being also experiences the second-thought 'fear' of 'plurality, diffusion, senseless accident, chaos' lest the instincts for unity may only be fictive compensations on the

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3. Iris Murdoch, Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals (London: Penguin, 1993), p.1.



rebound from the fear of 'chaos'. The further need to 'prove' that which we can only 'intuit' implies how tenuous order might be. To sceptical modernists and post-modernists the natural character of the mind to create unity may not, in fact, have its objective correlate out there. This possible disjuncture of the human mind and its universe represents the big, disturbing question: whether despite human needs life may actually be governed fundamentally by chaos - a chaos which carries, I repeat, none of the reassuring order of modern chaos theory, but retains its original meaning as a real and frightening primal force.

This thesis is a study of the condition of chaos arising specifically through the defeat of human ordering. We cannot see or think of chaos on its own: the perception of negative chaos is dependent on its breaching of what had been assumed to be a primary order. The paradox that chaos and order are dependent upon one another may seem obvious. But in this thesis it is offered as a thoroughly disturbing notion provocative of something vital in the relation of the human being to its universe. My research work began at M.A. level in terms of the Victorian resistance to what eventually manifested itself as the reluctant scepticism of Thomas Hardy. Both George Eliot and Tennyson in their different ways create external structures of belief through their writing in order to affirm the sense that the relation of the human being to its universe is not a chaotic one. Both perceive a sufficiency of external order for order to be a belief

and not just a false reassurance by artistic transforming of an actual disorder. Tennyson recovers old beliefs; George Eliot translates essentially Christian beliefs into humanist form. For both, the need for order is, riskily, proof of order. 'The strength of our resistance [to chaos]' says Murdoch writing of Hume's philosophy, 'was an aspect, even a proof, of the thing [order] itself; continuous experience provides an orderly world' (p.1).

Thus, my thought about chaos began with the Victorians. In contrast to George Eliot and Tennyson, I saw, as so many readers have, that Hardy's work is illustrative of a fundamental disorder: Hardy's characters suffer from being in a universe which ironizes and defeats human needs. For despite Hardy's emotional need for order, by that very token he cannot create a belief in order or his emotions. Rather than fictively create order when he cannot find belief in his own biological and psychological needs, Hardy drives reluctantly towards what seems to him the disturbing truth - that life is characterized by 'plurality, diffusion, senseless accident, chaos'. Consider what he says of the emotions:

After infinite trying to reconcile a scientific view of life with the emotional and spiritual, so that they may not be inter-destructive I come to the following:

'General principles. Law has produced in man a child who cannot but constantly reproach its parent for doing much and yet not all, and constantly say to such a parent that it would have been better never to have begun doing than to have overdone so indecisively; that is, than to have created so far beyond all

apparent first intention (on the emotional side), without mending matters by a second intent and execution, to eliminate the evils of the blunder of overdoing. The emotions have no place in a world of defect, and it is a cruel injustice that they should have developed in it.

'If Law itself had consciousness, how the aspect of its creatures would terrify it, fill it with remorse'.<sup>4</sup>

In Hardy's work the need for order in a universe of disorder can only be bitterly ironic. 'Law' is split off fundamentally from its creatures since it does not have any connection with them beyond initially having determined their existence. As well as being impervious, 'Law' is also defective. For the emotions have developmentally out-stripped their intended use. This irony typifies Hardy's view that the human being exists in disunity with the physical universe. For Thomas Hardy, human beings are themselves strange anomalies, so unconnected in their nature with the nature of the universe of which they are apparently a part, that the very fact of human existence cannot even be comprehended as a biological or evolutionary necessity. Thus, in his terms, the intuition which perceives order when there really is none is not so much a faculty as a superfluous function, creating at best, delusion; at worst, interminable confusion. Yet the still existing need for order in a universe which so ill-fits its creatures means that there is a continual residue of human suffering in Hardy's work, a suffering made worse by its seeming

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4. Florence Emily Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928 (1928-1930; London: Macmillan, 1962), p.149, hereafter referred to as 'Life of T.H.'

meaninglessness. The strength of Hardy's epithet 'cruel injustice' evidences his attempted retention of the painful meaningfulness of human suffering in some causal object even as he gives up the human emotions as useless and impersonal if the universal agencies are non-responsible and indifferent. In his vision Hardy holds together the terrible contradiction: that life must be meaningless since the human beings in it are such anomalies, but the meaning of this meaninglessness matters, humanly at least, a great deal.

Hardy's emphasis upon life's essential meaninglessness means that his work could be regarded as a literary antecedent to the nihilistic writing of a twentieth-century writer of despair such as Samuel Beckett. But there is an essential difference between twentieth-century nihilism and Hardy's pessimism. That difference is due precisely to the felt meaning of that lack of meaning in Hardy's work; it prevents his writing from collusively expressing blank nothingness. Hardy implies that the end-thought of human thinking is that we suffer from an absurd human need, and part of that suffering is that there is nothing further to be thought or done about it. But nihilism goes further: nihilism, by making absurdity itself an almost aesthetic movement, minimalizes or blackly parodies the real suffering consequent on the absurdity. By a kind of deflection, nihilism weakens the involuntary dignity of the need for order and as such provides only a way of slackeningly

avoiding the resistant emotions involved in the defeated human need.

Avoidance camouflages paradoxes, pales conflicts, defrauds belief. Although Tennyson and George Eliot find authentic belief, avoidance of chaos is more characteristic of Victorian writings. In the opening section of Chapter Two of this thesis, through an analysis of a crucial chapter in John Stuart Mill's Autobiography, I illustrate the reasons why successful avoidance of chaos is a kind of failure resulting in the diminishment of the self. My concern is to explore the destruction of Mill's sense of external order and how that destruction gets inside him. At the time of his youthful nervous breakdown, his very sense of self is destroyed by his no longer having any external belief to support his functioning of mind. I show how, though it must be desirable to resolve chaos, it cannot be better to avoid chaos as Mill does rather than stay in it as does Hardy. But Hardy is, as he himself knows in places like his 'In Tenebris' poems hardly a representative Victorian. Speaking generally, I believe that the Victorians tame and compromise those conflicts which are more raw in preceding periods: this thesis, though it has developed out of my work on the Victorian period, looks to other earlier periods in order to analyse situations of chaos, long before the nineteenth and twentieth-century attempts to avoid or aestheticize the situation.

Despite the fact that Hardy's work retains the tension which arises when there is still passion in the

defeated need for order, alongside doubt in that order's existence, this thesis is not a study of chaos and order through the writings of Hardy. Chaos is admitted in his work, but chaos emerges in his vision as a purely negative force which cripples the human being. Instead, in the second section of my first chapter, I examine, in my search for starting-points embodied in persons, the work of a twentieth-century writer conscious of inheriting the sort of antecedent problems I have here sketched: Saul Bellow. In some important ways Bellow is like Hardy. Both writers are uncharacteristic of the age in which they write and both retain the sense of emotional suffering involved in the need for order alongside the clear experiential conviction that life nonetheless is essentially characterized by disorder.

Bellow gives his major eponymous protagonist, Herzog, the mind of somebody who is not quite in the twentieth-century but, in the midst of personal chaos and unable to perceive any coherent meaning in the present times, Herzog has to look to past philosophical eras for meaningful order or at least meaningful discussion of ordering possibilities. For Bellow uses chaos now to go backwards in time, in search of the lost origins of contemporary confusion. My reason for beginning my analyses with the novel Herzog rather than with Hardy's writings is precisely that, forced beyond the humanism of a George Eliot which collapsed in the person of Hardy, Herzog must now go further back if ever he is to find a way forward. Bellow is belatedly still humanistic,

resisting nihilism. His desire to retrieve meanings from the past marks the crucial difference between Bellow's vision and Hardy's vision. For Hardy there is no way forward and nothing to be retrieved from the past, as his view of history makes evident:

History is rather a stream than a tree. There is nothing organic in its shape, nothing systematic in its development. It flows on like a thunderstorm-rill by a road side; now a straw turns it this way, now a tiny barrier of sand that. The offhand decision of some commonplace high mind high in office at a critical moment influences the course of events for a hundred years [...] Thus, judging by bulk of effect, it becomes impossible to estimate the intrinsic value of ideas, acts, material things: we are forced to appraise them by the curves of their career.  
Life of T.H., p.172

Hardy's simile of the 'thunderstorm-rill' is a kind of paradox since it juxtaposes an image of power with an image of feeble insignificance. History, for Hardy, is the meaningless residue of the tumult of human lives. For Hardy, what really matters is lost in the very act of living; meanings which are left to the fate of outcomes are the merest forgetful indications of the enormity of what has passed. But Herzog is like Citrine in Humboldt's Gift where Citrine speaks of:

Informers to the metaphysical-historical police against fellows like me whose hearts ache at the destruction of the past.<sup>5</sup>

Herzog's need to go back is not mere nostalgia; neither

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5. Saul Bellow, Humboldt's Gift (London: Alison Press/Martin Secker and Warburg, 1973), p.761.

are his reasons for going back sheer reaction against contemporary meaninglessness. The going back is about a retrieval of meanings which still seem to Herzog to have real relevance, a relevance lost in the twentieth-century and occluded in the nineteenth. I explore Herzog's compulsion to re-collect past orders of meanings, as an alternative to Hardy's response of entrenched pessimism to an essentially chaotic world.

There is a support theory behind such a move. In his work After Virtue Alasdair MacIntyre's method of exploring past orders of meanings is an attempt to understand the seeming incoherence of contemporary moral language. We have, he claims, inherited our moral language in piecemeal form of a number of past translations. Through an historically wide-ranging selection of texts MacIntyre goes back, necessarily, in order to try to remember, through what has been forgotten, what contemporary ideas and beliefs really mean when we retrieve them as original wholes in past contexts.

MacIntyre imagines a world which has suffered a catastrophe, fracturing all scientific knowledge so that only fragments remain, and then posits the view that these old ideas and beliefs are still fragmentarily embedded in us:

The hypothesis which I wish to advance is that in the actual world which we inhabit the language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder as the language of natural science in the imaginary world which I described. What we possess, if this view is true, are the fragments of a conceptual



scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived. We possess indeed simulacra of morality, we continue to use many of the key expressions. But we have - very largely, if not entirely - lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, or morality.<sup>6</sup>

We inherit old meanings whose origins we have forgotten and we absorb over them new contemporary meanings, which are partly themselves modifications or developments of old meanings. But because the self is informed by old meanings which have now lost their context, the contemporary self is itself, in a way, confusedly de-contextualized. In order to understand the fragmented beliefs which exist in ruins for this stranded contemporary self, MacIntyre examines philosophical history in terms of conceptual schemes. For his view is that the fragments of the present dimly recall (though they do not fully resemble) the coherent original meanings of the past in which they are part of a whole order. I am going to use this method of detecting past periods of thought - necessary to both Herzog in his personal chaos and to MacIntyre in his sense of the philosophic chaos of contemporary meanings - in order to formulate the characteristics of what I will refer to as a literature of chaos. Necessarily then, this thesis too is eclectically wide-ranging historically - like Herzog looking for works that are responsive to his needs. I choose historical periods in which it is possible to view

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6. Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (London: Duckworth, 1981), p.2.

chaos as the re-emergence of enormous conflict. For there come moments in history when forces do emerge again as if for the first time.

The Scottish enlightenment philosopher Adam Ferguson, influential upon Marx, proposed the view that history, far from representing linear progress, is characterized by oscillating ages of vigour and languor. He writes of the re-emergence of a vigorous age:

Even the weak and remiss are roused to enterprise, by the contagion of such remarkable ages; and states which have not in their form the principles of a continued exertion, either favourable or adverse to the welfare of mankind, may have paroxysms of ardour, and a temporary appearance of national vigour. In the case of such nations, indeed the returns of moderation are but a relapse to obscurity, and the presumption of one age is turned to dejection in that which succeeds.<sup>7</sup>

I take Adam Ferguson's view of history: that there are periods of lassitude and periods of ardour. The recollection involved in those stronger times, in which unresolvable human problems re-emerge with something of the power that accompanied the first time of any occurrence, is so much more than mere remembering. It is the re-experience of the original meaning in a new way.

That chaos is not a purely destructive force has been long recognized. In the Encyclopaedia of Religion N. J. Girardot writes:

Affirmations of the saving power of chaos have had a significant, although largely unorthodox, role to play in the

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7. Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767; London: Gregg International, 1969), p.354.

history of religions; and, as broadly protesting all conventionalized truth, the cult and cultivation of chaos can be said to have inspired a whole spectrum of countercultural irruptions, "interstitial events," or "liminoid phenomena" throughout history. Because it rubs against the customary order of things, the religious, philosophical, artistic, and political "art of chaos" is always a risky enterprise, as indicated by the checkered careers of assorted Taoist mystics, Zen monks, holy fools, clownish alchemists, utopian Ranters, Romantic poets, Nietzschean nihilists, frenzied surrealists, neo-pagan anarchists, the Maoist "Gang of Four", and deconstructionist critics.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the disparaging tone here towards those sects and writers who have challenged the 'customary order of things' by deliberately inciting chaos, there is also recognition that chaos is not necessarily a killing force, that legitimately as well as illegitimately chaos could stand for a deeper truth than does order itself.

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Clearly, my area of investigation is large, and as my historical method involves unorthodox rather than merely chronological movement, I want to sketch and defend briefly the form and purpose of this thesis. In pursuit of the literature of chaos as a genre, in the main body of this thesis I have risked selecting texts from three huge historical cross-sections - the

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8. N.J. Girardot, 'Chaos' in The Encyclopaedia of Religion, ed. in chief Mircea Eliade, 15 vols (London: Macmillan, 1987), iii, p.217.

predicament of Shakespeare and Montaigne, the enlightenment conflicts of Samuel Richardson, and the Romantic revolution. They are periods which re-create the most powerful and primitive sense of chaos as conflict, even as that evoked by Ovid:

Before the Sea and Lande were made, and Heaven  
   that all doth hide,  
 In all the worlde one onely face of nature  
   did abide,  
 Which Chaos hight, a huge rude heape, and  
   nothing else but even  
 A heavie lump and clottred clod of seedes  
   together driven,  
 Of things at strife among themselves, for  
   want of order due[...]

For where was earth, was sea and ayre, so was  
   the earth unstable.  
 The ayre all darke, the sea likewise to beare a  
   ship unable.  
 No kinde of thing had proper shape, but ech  
   confounded other.  
 For in one selfesame bodie strove the hote and  
   colde together,  
 The moist with drie, the soft with hard, the  
   light with things of weight[...]

But yet the maker of the worlde permitteth not alway  
 The windes to use the ayre at will. For at this  
   present day,  
 Though ech from other placed be in sundry coasts  
   aside,  
 The violence of their boystrous blasts, things  
   scarsly can abide.  
 They so turmoyle as though they would the world  
   in pieces rende,  
 So cruell is those brothers wrathe when that  
   they doe contende.<sup>9</sup>

Opposites in violent antagonism to one another, and ever locked together in this warring conflict: this is the powerful relation of strange, almost black magical patterns in deformation in which I am interested in this thesis. I have selected texts which, in their subject-

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9. Ovid, Metamorphoses, trans. by Arthur Golding (1567; New York: Macmillan, 1965), book I, pp.3-5, ll.5-66. I have chosen this translation deliberately: it is known that Shakespeare read this edition.

matter and form, re-create this intense, magical and dramatic sense of original chaos. As a starting-point I take Wilson Knight's view that Shakespeare is a writer who quintessentially releases chaotic forces rather than work dutifully towards order, and that as such he is the origin of a whole tradition of anti-order writings:

Despite his massive moral stability Shakespeare's tragedies derive their central appeal not from the moral framework, which sometimes seems little more than that, nor from statements of 'order', but, as I have often emphasized [...] from the clash of some Dionysian or even nihilistic force against the established order, against even the cosmos itself, the two terms of opposition being excellently defined in the arguments of Nestor and Ulysses in Troilus and Cressida. Shakespearian tragedy accordingly points ahead on a metaphysical level to the revolutionary impetus that was to follow; it is itself perhaps in part the origin of that impetus. There were, of course, others: Rabelais, Marlowe, Moliere, Milton's Satan. All these, and Shakespeare preeminently in Falstaff and the tragedies, point on to what was later to be made of Faust and Don Juan myths; to Gothic Drama and Romantic poetry; to Shelley's Prometheus Unbound; to Byron as anarch and Satanist, for so he was often regarded by his contemporaries; to Ibsen, Nietzsche and Shaw. The whole vast movement is contained embryonically, within Shakespeare.<sup>10</sup>

Wilson Knight refers to the works which he believes have been indirectly generated from Shakespeare's deliberate and revolutionary opposition to order. Likewise, I have selected my primary texts for study from that 'whole vast movement' of revolutionary writings which traces itself back to Shakespeare, though I have had to limit that

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10. G. Wilson Knight, Byron and Shakespeare (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p.8.

selection necessarily. Furthermore, I have deliberately excluded twentieth-century texts concerned with the terrible forces which emerge in the war-periods since they are not writings which present situations purely of personal chaos but exist within the larger context of social, political and civil madness. I could have included an account of our twentieth-century horrors, as versions of universal chaos reminiscent to men such as Jan Kott of King Lear itself. But my thesis is concerned to travel backwards from the twentieth century and from the Victorian period for reasons found in particular texts and persons I examine in both those centuries. My narrower intention instead then is to define what is almost a sub-genre within the Shakespearian tradition outlined by Wilson Knight - a kind of writing which focuses upon personal experiences of chaos and which, almost paradoxically through form itself, re-creates the sense of immediate chaos. I am calling that writing the literature of chaos, literature which I establish less by definition than in practice - across history.

Thus, Chapter Three, in which the detailed work of this thesis truly starts, begins by establishing Shakespeare as the writer who inspired the Romantics. As Peter Conrad argues in The Victorian Treasure-House (11) Shakespeare was, for the Romantics and post-Romantics, the justification for the anti-classical art of the nineteenth-century which was as wild as nature, as

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11. Peter Conrad, The Victorian Treasure House (London: Collins, 1973), p.103.

intermingling of tragedy and comedy as life itself. Peter Conrad quotes Coleridge on Shakespeare, exemplifying the Romantic spirit which though less perfect than the Roman is in its very language 'more rich, more expressive and various as one formed out of chaos by more obscure affinities of atoms apparently heterogeneous' (p.103).

The writers of the Romantic period considered Shakespeare's genius as manifested in his creation of originals - his characters are, William Hazlitt suggests, 'the original models' in whom there lies 'the living principle of nature' (12). William Hazlitt, a second-generation Romantic whose work I shall later relate back to Shakespeare, representatively defines 'genius' in this way:

If 'to invent according to nature', be the true definition of genius, Shakespear had more of this quality than any other writer. He might have been a joint-worker with Nature, and to have created an imaginary world of his own, which has all the appearance and the truth of reality.<sup>13</sup>

I take Hazlitt's stance and use Shakespeare's characters as original models who embody primary feelings in a given human situation. My analysis of Shakespearian chaos begins with Coriolanus whose eponymous hero is a figure of self-defined order derived from his being a separate but representative self. Against his absolutism I put

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12. The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), v, 'Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth', p.187.

13. The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), v, 'On Mr Kean's Macbeth', p.204.

Montaigne, a contemporary of Shakespeare who provides, relativistically, a contrasting secondary mode of sceptical separation. Montaigne sees the paradoxes of chaos but he will not create the tragic paradox for himself as Shakespeare does for his characters.

In the second section of this chapter I compare Othello with Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier as representative of a modernist contrast. The eponymous hero, Othello, is a figure of order whose fall into chaos is a consequence of a loss of belief through betrayal. I am not using chaos as a mere synonym for personal confusion and loss of trust. Chaos has form, paradoxically: the form of an oxymoron. In Othello chaos is embodied in the figure of Iago and emerges as parasitically dependent on order, twisting order back-to-front so that it is warped into a mirror image of itself. Othello's response to his situation presents the primary emotions, whereas the figure of Dowell, in The Good Soldier, stands for the dulled and dislocated emotion of twentieth-century nihilism in the same situation. This analysis of, so to speak, the ancient and the modern versions of the same situation illustrates the difference between a primary and a secondary form of chaos. The primariness, I claim, is characteristic of Shakespearian chaos. The loss of what his life's experience means, and the sense that the loss matters deeply but can hardly be registered deeply, is what Dowell suffers.

Like the Romantics, Richardson considered Shakespeare to be one of the great sources: 'Shakespeare,



Bacon, Newton, are great originals' (14) he says in a letter to Edward Young. Many of Richardson's contemporaries compared Richardson himself with Shakespeare so that though Richardson is not listed in Wilson Knight's 'vast movement' of revolutionary writers, I cite him as a literary heir of Shakespeare. The similarity of the two writers is well-documented by critics. Frank Kermode endorses the persisting opinion that Richardson's work has a Shakespearian quality. He defines that quality quite specifically as the concentration on one conflict:

The aspect of Richardson's novel technique which may legitimately be called Shakespearian, is his refusal to allow the primitive nature of this simple situation to be obscured, and his willingness to let it talk and talk and talk for itself [...] It was a sound instinct that led the older critics to associate Richardson with Shakespeare; both these writers had the great gift of being aware of the unfathomable significance of simple and time-honoured story.<sup>15</sup>

Richardson's Clarissa shares with Shakespearian chaos the evocation of the primary feelings in a situation of clash: as between Iago and Othello, so between Lovelace and Clarissa. I use Hardy's novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles against Clarissa as an example of a contrasting secondary version of a comparable situation just as I contrast Othello with The Good Soldier. In Clarissa chaos and order are presented in their purest

14. Duncan Eaves and Ben Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.433, hereafter referred to as 'S.R.'

15. Frank Kermode, 'Richardson and Fielding', Cambridge Journal (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, Oct. 1950 - Sept. 1951), iv, 106-114 (pp.110-111).

forms, as primary forces in direct opposition to one another. This conflict in Clarissa presents a huge, desperate clash - embodied in Clarissa and Lovelace - of Sex versus Religion or, in Wilson Knight's own terms, a kind of 'clash of some Dionysian or even nihilistic force against the established order'.

Wilson Knight is influenced by Nietzsche's insistence that the human being, far from needing order, needs danger. Nietzsche, raising the question of whether there is a 'pessimism of strength', writes:

The sharp-eyed courage that tempts and attempts, that craves the frightful as the enemy, the worthy enemy, against whom one can test one's strength? From whom one can learn what it means "to be frightened"? What is the significance of the tragic myth among the Greeks of the best, the strongest, the most courageous period? And the tremendous phenomenon of the Dionysian - and, born from it, tragedy - what might they signify? - And again: that of which tragedy died, the Socratism of morality, the dialectics, frugality, and cheerfulness of the theoretical man - how now? might not this very Socratism be a sign of decline, of weariness, of infection, of the anarchical dissolution of the instincts?<sup>16</sup>

Nietzsche's belief is that chaos throws the human being into being. Conversely, Socratic order breeds a kind of rationalized complacency, nurturing the death of being. Nietzsche's view of John Stuart Mill exemplifies Nietzsche's contempt for the degenerated reliance on order. Mill figures in Nietzsche's list of 'Impossibles' in Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ where

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16. Nietzsche, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, trans. and ed. by Walter Kaufmann (1886; New York: The Modern Library, 1992), from 'The Birth of Tragedy', pp.17-18.

Nietzsche refers to 'John Stuart Mill: or offensive clarity' (17). With equal contempt he alludes to George Eliot's positive humanism as a form of complacent order when he writes: 'They have got rid of the Christian God, and now feel obliged to cling all the more firmly to Christian morality: that is English inconsistency, let us not blame it on little blue-stocking à la Eliot' (p.80). Nietzsche's view involves a concern for a re-evaluation of the post-Christian world. Nietzsche's contention is that the experience of chaos, through a clash with 'the worthy enemy', is a kind of necessity since it re-releases the life-forces deadened by comfortable compromising order in the late bourgeois world. Herzog is half attracted to, half repelled by, this willingness to suffer.

At any rate Clarissa constitutes a mix of experiment and revulsion against experiment: the clash of Clarissa and Lovelace breaks order down as a test of belief. Yet, in a sense, Richardson's experiment runs out of his control - or rather he lets it do so - creating the kind of chaos Nietzsche would consider productive rather than negative. What Richardson creates in Lovelace is far more than a negative force; Richardson unwittingly creates a precursor to the cavalier Romantic hero. Indeed, Lovelace was intended not as a neo-classical, but as an original type - 'I intend in him a new Character, not confined to usual rules,' Richardson claimed (S.R. p.211).

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17. Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ, trans. and ed. by R.J. Hollingdale (1889; London: Penguin, 1990), p.78.

'Lovelace,' state T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, 'has one characteristic which foreshadows the hero of the romantic poets: he does not try to control his passions' (S.R. p.256). Lovelace's ungovernable passions instigate the incredible clash of order and chaos, a clash in which his self-consuming energy burns itself out. To Hazlitt, William Godwin and Byron, the energy of the clash would represent the release of a life-force, born out of the paradox that the desire for order actually creates chaos. To Richardson, however, the triumph lies in the creation of Clarissa, not Lovelace; in belief finally and not experiment as such.

The examples I offer of the literature of chaos fall into three historical periods, each of which comprises a chapter. Yet the first two of these chapters, regarding Shakespearian chaos and Richardson's creation of chaos in Clarissa, are closely linked since there are such obvious similarities in the primary chaos evoked by these two writers.

Chapter Five is concerned with Romantic chaos, whose differing characteristics I illustrate in three sections. I show how some Romantic writers use chaos as they perceive it in Shakespeare's work and as I claim is evident in Clarissa, for though Romantic chaos is different it is nevertheless related specifically to Shakespearian chaos. The Romantic writers to whom I refer deliberately pursue the dangerous possibilities of chaos rather than seeking the safety of order, as if they are the first to recognize that chaos can be used. They

test Girardot's thesis that chaos may be used - for good or ill. Byron, for instance, writes a poetic drama, Cain, as if to observe the torments of that ever restless part of the human mind - that part which drives towards chaos and away from order (18). In this sense, the Romantic impulse towards chaos stirs up the immoral element even if it is not in itself an act of immorality. Schlegel writes of Romantic poetry as anti-classical:

Ancient poetry and art is rhythmical nomos, a harmonious promulgation of the eternal legislation of a beautifully ordered world mirroring the eternal Ideas of things. Romantic poetry, on the other hand, is the expression of a secret longing for the chaos which is perpetually striving for new and marvellous births, which lies hidden in the very womb of orderly creation.<sup>19</sup>

The Romantics find excitement in the disaster of order disrupted since it throws open a whole world of tremendous human forces. My claim, through the analyses

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18. Cain caused a virtual outcry amongst his contemporaries due to its revolutionary implications. In Ernest Hartley Coleridge's introduction to the lyrical drama he points out that 'It was taken for granted that "Lucifer was the mouthpiece of Byron", that the author of Don Juan was not "on the side of the angels". Byron's Lucifer, more akin to the human being than the fallen angel, epitomized the spirit of revolt. E.H. Coleridge claims that 'Byron's devil is a spirit, yet a mortal too - the traducer, because he has suffered for his sins; the deceiver, because he is self-deceived; the hoper against hope that there is a ransom for the soul in perfect self-will and not in perfect self-sacrifice. Byron did not uphold Lucifer, but he "had passed that way", and could imagine a spiritual warfare not only against the Deus of the Mysteries or of the Book of Genesis, but against what he believed and acknowledged to be the Author and Principle of Good'. The Works of Lord Byron, ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 7 vols (London: John Murray, 1905), v, pp.201-202.

19. Anthony Thorlby, The Romantic Movement: Problems and Perspectives in History (London: Longmans, 1966), pp.1-2.

of Hazlitt's Liber Amoris, William Godwin's Caleb Williams and Byron's Manfred in particular is that these Romantics batten upon the risky desperation of chaos so that there is huge, albeit temporary, gain before the terrible loss of destruction: chaos generates the power of a creative destruction. For Kierkegaard this whole drive behind Romanticism might be called aesthetic, since the need for the maximum power of the lyric moment denies the grand epic continuity of the austere ethical life. Addressing the aesthetic man in Either/Or the speaker says:

If one would run a race with you for an hour, Satan, as you say, couldn't keep up with you; a three days' race would be too much for you. I remember once telling you this story, and I remember your reply, that it was a ticklish thing to run a race of three days, there was a risk of acquiring such headway that one could never come to a stop, and that therefore you refrained from all such violence, "once in a while I ride horseback, but I neither wish to be a cavalryman nor to pursue any other unflagging activity in life." And to a certain degree this is quite true, for you are always afraid of continuity, principally for the reason that it deprives you of the opportunity of deceiving yourself. The strength you possess is the strength of despair; it is more intense than ordinary human strength, but also it lasts a shorter time.<sup>20</sup>

The diabolic energy of Romantic chaos, most particularly evident in the work of Byron, half wants to burn itself out. This is Byron's secondary (classical) recognition that despair lies behind the lyric bravado. It is as though, for the heroic Romantics, one wild gesture of willed self-defeat is more self-validating in an

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20. Kierkegaard, Either/Or, trans. by Walter Lowrie, 2 vols (1843; London: Oxford Uni. Press, 1944), ii, p.167.

incomprehensible universe than the endurance of submission to the impersonal forces at work in the universe.

All the texts I refer to as the literature of chaos are, in their forms, derivatives of drama. The form of Shakespearian drama and the epistolary form of Richardson's Clarissa contribute to the evocation of a chaotic energy. The immediacy of both forms keep the narrative time in the present tense increasing the exhilarating, unpredictable energy of the clash. With regards to my selection of Romantic writings: Liber Amoris is a hybrid form of dialogue and letters; Caleb Williams is a first-person narrative which, unlike The Good Soldier, is not entirely retrospective since its narrative strategy creates the sense of immediate chaos by its pace and intensity; Byron's Manfred is a lyrical drama of the mind. The form of the writing in both Shakespearian and Romantic chaos taps into the area of intense experience unrelieved by contemplation or retrospection: it is a form which gives the impression at least of being unmediated by art. But Romantic chaos is not as pure as the embryonic Shakespearian chaos: the author is implicated in the narrative techniques of Romantic chaos with the result that objectivity gained by the dramatic (or epistolary) form is disrupted. The Romantic author or narrator becomes the half-willing victim of a chaotic force, and that is why Byron, in revolt against that very tendency in himself, finally kills his Byronic protagonists in an act of nemesis. The

subjectivity of Romantic chaos implies the deliberate stirring-up of chaotic forces, yet the boldness does not always make for a wilder sense of chaos. There is, however, still power in the defeat of the self, for the destroyed self has also gained by pushing the self to its limits. I shall argue that Byron's use of chaos differs from that of Hazlitt and Godwin since he maximizes the gain consequent upon the defeat of the self. His work, by an intensification of the personal, achieves something closer to the Shakespearian creation of the self as a Dionysian force, that which Wilson Knight says acts 'against even the cosmos itself'. And the intensification of the personal leads Byron, ironically, into more-than-personal considerations in the end.

The question provoked by this thesis as a whole is: how is a personal life to be lived when there is knowledge of chaos? My conclusion will suggest that what is fundamental to an understanding of chaos is that it is, in a sense, impossible to live in constant awareness of chaos. For any form of thinking about chaos is ironically disauthenticated by the very effort of thought. Thus, finally, this thesis represents an affirmation of the value of the literature of chaos. For it is only through the literature of chaos, which partly by its form re-creates the experience of personal chaos, that a human being may truly be able to remember and bear, if not utilize, such experience by the means that reading offers. In what follows I try to stay close to the language of my text not least because detailed



respect for the very language of the thoughts helps hold off the emotional temptation towards a merely nostalgic or artificial unification of diverse or conflicting older ways of being through mere paraphrase.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IN SEARCH OF A METHOD

#### I. Mill's Project

Alasdair MacIntyre criticizes liberal, nineteenth-century utilitarianism for the, albeit unintentional, creation of an artificial sense of order produced merely out of the need for tidiness:

When Bentham first turned 'utility' into a quasi-technical term, he did so, as I have already noticed, in a way that was designed to make plausible the notion of summing individual prospects of pleasure and pain. But, as John Stuart Mill and other utilitarians expanded their notion of the variety of aims which human beings pursue and value, the notion of its being possible to sum all those experiences and activities which give satisfaction became increasingly implausible [...] The objects of natural and educated human desire are irreducibly heterogeneous and the notion of summing them either for individuals or for some population has no clear sense. But if utility is thus not a clear concept, then to use it as if it is, to employ it as if it could provide us with a rational criterion, is indeed to resort to a fiction.<sup>1</sup>

MacIntyre is criticizing the fundamental tenet of

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1. Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (London: Duckworth, 1981), p.70, hereafter referred to as 'A.V.'

utilitarianism: that social progress is achievable by determining the degree of satisfaction to be gained by the various human pursuits. This tenet is derived from the nineteenth-century utilitarian pleasure-and-pain model. 'The first principle of Mr Bentham's philosophy are these,' John Stuart Mill explains:

that happiness, meaning by that term pleasure and exemption from pain, is the only thing desirable in itself; that all other things are desirable solely as means to that end: that the production, therefore, of the greatest possible happiness is the only fit purpose of all human thought and action, and consequently of all morality and government; and moreover, that pleasure and pain are the sole agencies by which the conduct of mankind is in fact governed, whatever circumstances the individual may be placed in, and whether he is aware of it or not.<sup>2</sup>

The syntax itself reflects the basic confidence Mill ever had in Bentham's pleasure and pain model, for how easily does each clause build on the last: 'that...that... therefore...consequently'. Morality itself is simplified into a producer of human happiness. Nineteenth-century utilitarianism assumed that happiness was an easily determinable factor in human existence and that all human behaviour could be understood and guided through recognizing pain and pleasure as reference points within a sum. It was an erroneous assumption. MacIntyre points out that whatever it is that makes for human happiness can be neither simply determined nor reliably summed.

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2. John Stuart Mill, ed. by J.M. Robson, Collected Works: Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society, 33 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 'Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy' (1833), x, p.3.

Consequently, utilitarianism is a theory which, despite its quasi-technology, is based on a fictitious concept.

Yet for John Stuart Mill, nurtured by utilitarian thought, and alive during its developing discourse, utilitarianism provided him with a whole structure of belief based on the possibility of human happiness through socio-political order. The thought that his belief might be based on an error in his thinking, and might, therefore, constitute nothing more than a fiction, had initially a far greater effect on him than merely provoking him into (what it only later became) a re-thinking of the ideas he had learned from Bentham and his father. Its effect was so devastating that he had a nervous breakdown. He writes, in his autobiography, of that breakdown:

It was in the autumn of 1826. I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to; unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasurable excitement; one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times, becomes insipid or indifferent; the state, I should think, in which converts to Methodism usually are, when smitten by their first "conviction of sin." In this frame of mind it occurred to me to put the question directly to myself, "Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?" And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, "No!" At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for.<sup>3</sup>

Retrospectively Mill secularizes this catastrophic moment in his mental life by referring to his 'dull state of nerves' and calling his state of mind 'one of those moods' in comparison with the experience of sudden converts to Methodism. But despite this belated attempt to explain the psychological conditions which gave rise to the big, disturbing question of what would make him happy, it is clear that collapse came upon him with all the force of a structured blow: 'At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down'. 'Constructed' becomes artificial. Mill suffers the sudden, profound consciousness of losing all he had lived for, yet without the ability to experience loss as a feeling. Instead he feels hopelessly devoid of all feeling and significant existence at the loss of a framework of existence itself.

All of Mill's ideas - big ideas, that is, for his ambition had been 'to be a reformer of the world' (Mill p.137) - lose their context with his realization that they, of themselves, cannot produce his own personal happiness. Thus to lose the purpose of one's life does not only leave a present gap; it causes the ruination of all that that life had meant in the past and cancels out its expected meanings in the future. That is what happens to Mill: as if the teleological end had ended before its time for Mill, he experiences the strandedness of being

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3. John Stuart Mill, ed. by J.M. Robson and Jack Stillinger, Collected Works: Autobiography and Literary Essays, 33 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 'Autobiography' (1826), i, pp. 137 and 139, hereafter referred to as 'Mill'.

forced to keep moving forward even though the forward movement no longer goes anywhere. For now, the association of purpose and happiness is not straightforward but, incoherently, happiness seems to be based on struggle, not attainment. By a strange inversion, completion leads not to the definable happiness assumed by utilitarian theory, but to a disconcerting kind of anti-climactic non-happiness, which implies that to experience any temporary sense of happiness there needs to be something wrong or missing.

Such incoherence is in contradiction to Mill's whole way of thinking. Consider what he says in his own essay Bentham in which Mill quotes Bentham's assertion that truths must be formally proven:

"There are truths which it is necessary to prove, not for their own sakes, because they are acknowledged, but that an opening may be made for the reception of other truths which depend upon them. It is in this manner we provide for the reception of first principles, which, once received, prepare the way for admission of all other truths". To which may be added, that in this manner also we discipline the mind for practising the same sort of dissection upon questions more complicated and of more doubtful issue.<sup>4</sup>

Mill tacitly approves Bentham's rationalist thinking in which truths are like building-blocks: each sound and tested truth leads to another by logical connections. However, the basis of Mill's discussion of Bentham is partly to show a deficiency in Bentham's vision, for

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4. John Stuart Mill, ed. by J.M. Robson, Collected Works: Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society, 33 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 'Bentham' (1838), x, p.84, hereafter referred to as 'Bentham'.

whilst Mill recognises the full value of precise and acute analysis, he refers to Bentham as a man 'whose general conception of human nature and life, furnished him with an unusually slender stock of premises' (Bentham p.93). 'Premises' like principles are the primary building blocks - the blocks that failed Mill at the time of his breakdown. He writes here as one who has reclaimed his own ground (though with modifications), thus unemotionally recalling that error of mistaken first principles at its point of origin in Bentham's thinking:

We express our sincere and well-considered conviction when we say, that there is hardly anything positive in Bentham's philosophy which is not true: that when his practical conclusions are erroneous, which in our opinion they are very often, it is not because the considerations which he urges are not rational and valid in themselves, but because some more important principle, which he did not perceive, supersedes those considerations, and turns the scale.

Bentham p.93

Bentham's 'conclusions' are invalidated by some prior, but omitted 'important principle' despite the validity and rationality of the process of thinking which has led him to those conclusions. Mill's point is that, once an omission, frighteningly discovered later, is realized, the mind should turn around upon itself. And Mill's mind did turn around upon itself when he realized the inadequacy of his own first principles in the collapse of the entire construct of his belief-system. What makes his recovery from his mental breakdown disturbing is that he manages to accommodate that inadequacy, as if it was no more than philosophical mistake when really it was

experientially a fall into chaos, as if re-thinking after all was the way out.

In After Virtue MacIntyre quotes Sidgwick, a Victorian utilitarian, who had, reluctantly, to admit that:

the moral injunctions of utilitarianism could not be derived from any psychological foundations and that the precepts which enjoin us to pursue the general happiness are logically independent of and cannot be derived from any precepts enjoining the pursuit of our own happiness. Our basic moral beliefs have two characteristics, Sidgwick found himself forced to conclude not entirely happily; they do not form any kind of unity, they are irreducibly heterogeneous; and their acceptance is and must be unargued. At the foundation of moral thinking lie beliefs in statements for the truth of which no further reason can be given.

A.V. p.65

'Where he had looked for Cosmos,' MacIntyre announces of Sidgwick, 'he had in fact found only Chaos' (A.V.p.65). Mill's breakdown had made him face, at the time, the same kind of incoherence which Sidgwick's rigorous enquiry into utilitarian precepts had revealed.

It might have been better for Mill eventually if he had been able to submit to the full implications of the faulty foundations of utilitarian thought. Temporarily, Mill's belief in utilitarianism was so damaged that he could say: 'I felt that the flaw in my life, must be a flaw in life itself' (Mill p.149). Mill almost has Hardy's sense of there being something essentially wrong with the relation between humankind and the world which thinking could not put right. Such a relation challenges



the rationalism of utilitarianism which implies that it is both possible and necessary to impose human forms of order upon the world through socio-political means. For Mill, the thought that life could not be ordered by socio-political means was destructive of his innerly held belief - a belief which was sanctioned by the whole utilitarian movement of the Victorian period.

Hardy, on the other hand, presents life as unexplained by history or politics or any other ordering category. For Hardy's work does function, in Victorian times, as the emergence of other writers' dark suspicions. In Hardy's final, bleak and controversial novel, the life of his protagonist is a kind of ironic microcosm of the impervious disorder of the world:

Jude went out, and, feeling more than ever his existence to be an undemanded one, he lay down upon his back on a heap of litter near the pig-sty. The fog had by this time become more translucent, and the position of the sun could be seen through it. He pulled his straw hat over his face, and peered through the interstices of the plaiting at the white brightness, vaguely reflecting. Growing up brought responsibilities, he found. Events did not rhyme quite as he had thought. Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony. As you got older, and felt yourself to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it.

If he could only prevent himself growing up! He did not want to be a man.

Then like the natural boy, he forgot his despondency, and sprang up.<sup>5</sup>

In Mill's breakdown, it is as though a voice of conscience has finally taken advantage of weariness in the second stage of life in order to expose weaknesses and contradictions in the founding principles established in the very first stage of life. In Hardy's view the second stage of life - adulthood - is achieved or borne only by forgetting, until memory of the inherent flaw comes back in event or in mind. How hopeless it then seems that Jude, as a child, has the premonition of life's defectiveness even in the first stage of his life. He feels separate from Nature's logic, then 'like the natural boy' has to forget that thought again in order to go on living. Jude does not just feel personally unwanted; he feels as if the very fact of his 'existence' is an unnecessary and unrhythmic thing. Indeed, before his story has barely begun, the narrator refers to Jude's 'unnecessary life' (Jude p.56). Yet with cruel absurdity the human life, already useless, is then forever to carry on and become further warped in the useless course of living itself. Life is nothing other than an inescapable imprisonment, a 'little cell called your life'. As such, life does not really belong to the human self at all, as 'called your life' so ironically suggests. Rather it is as if there is fiction in the very words. For life is really perhaps only a set of biologically induced, and thus imprisoning, cells. For the self to find its own terms of existence, life must be

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5. Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (1896; Middlesex: Penguin Classics, 1986), p.57, hereafter referred to as 'Jude'.

hardly lived by the self at all. Hence the time-out here as Jude peers at the sun. Consequently, in their adulthood, the only way that Jude and Sue can apparently make their love feel like their own is to avoid sex, for there is a fear in this novel that sex undermines love, as an ancient biological drive that still defines or defeats evolved sophistication of modern ethics.

Yet though Jude is disturbed by his perception that his own life is, reductively, an unremarkable consequence of biological forces, this is where terrifyingly he starts from. Mill, in contrast, had lost at the time of breakdown his previously unquestioned sense of purpose and experiences a terrible sense of alarm at the thought of determinism:

I felt as if I was scientifically proved to be the helpless slave of antecedent circumstances; as if my character and that of all others had been formed for us by agencies beyond our control, and was wholly out of our power.

Mill pp.175, 177

Even as a child Jude does not have a belief-structure capable of being destroyed in the way that Mill's beliefs are destroyed as the adult. Instead Jude seems to accept, prematurely and intermittently, that his own personal life is a reflection of the apparent meaninglessness of the universe. There is only noise in the world, not words, not sense, not meaning, but cries of pain.

If Jude is forced to grow into being the sensitively conscious 'centre' of himself even this is still to be a self. But so deep was the damage to Mill's whole sense of

self and purpose that he came to see himself externally as peripheral, as on the 'circumference', as hardly self enough to deserve to live:

I frequently asked myself, if I could, or if I was bound to go on living, when life must be passed in this manner. I generally answered to myself, that I did not think I could possibly bear it beyond a year.

Mill p.145

It is terrible that Mill should give an actual arbitrary limit to the amount that he can bear, as if he is forcing himself to go on for some vague while when really he has stopped inside. 'When the danger is so great that death becomes the hope,' says Kierkegaard, 'then despair is the hopelessness of not even being able to die' (6). It is surprising, given the deep seriousness of Mill's despair, that he recovers from his breakdown at all. That he recovers sufficiently to write the following Carlylean passage is almost remarkable:

Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so. The only chance is to treat, not happiness, but some end external to it, as the purpose of life. Let your self-consciousness, your scrutiny, your self-interrogation, exhaust themselves on that; and if otherwise fortunately circumstanced you will inhale happiness with the air you breathe, without dwelling on it or thinking about it, without either forestalling it in imagination, or putting it to flight by fatal questioning. This theory now became the basis of my philosophy of life. And I still hold it as the best theory for all those who have but a moderate degree of sensibility and of capacity for enjoyment, that is, for the great majority of mankind.

Mill p.147

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6. Soren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, trans. by A. Hannay (1849; London: Penguin, 1989), p.48, hereafter referred to as 'S. Unto Death'.

Yet what Mill says here constitutes a shocking compromise. His ability to compromise puts him in sheer antithesis to Hardy, who strives towards the truth as he perceives it, however consciously disturbing that truth may be. Hardy is like Kierkegaard at least in his refusal to compromise or seek strategies, for though Kierkegaard has religious belief whereas Hardy is haunted by only the ghost of religion, both writers would reject a life based on strategic self-delusion as worthless, or at any rate Hardy would always see his own strategies defeated. But the entire thrust behind Mill's advice on how to live a happy life admits the lack of direct attainable ends. He counsels instead a form of indirection which seems little more than indulgence in emotional dishonesty. His advice stems from his state of breakdown, that 'to know that a feeling would make me happy if I had it, did not give me the feeling' (Mill p.143). Now in order to have the feeling, he has to find out how not to know he wants it. To hide the 'end' of one's pursuit for happiness from oneself is surely an evasive attempt to defeat one's own self-consciousness as well as a loss of philosophical integrity. Hardy might ask what sort of 'end' can that be which, when known, is unattainable and must thus be concealed in preference to being regarded as inadequate.

Before his breakdown Mill, believing in the logical and historical straightforwardness of a pursuit and its end, could write with confidence:

All action is for the sake of some end,  
and rules of action, it seems natural to  
suppose, must take their whole character

and colour from the end to which they are subservient. When we engage in a pursuit, a clear and precise conception of what we are pursuing would seem to be the first thing we need, instead of the last we are to look forward to.<sup>7</sup>

So clear was Mill's original sense of purpose that the end-pursuit seemed to provide a kind of guide to the principles and actions which lead to that end-pursuit. There is no such precise clarity in the end-pursuit of his life after his breakdown. Instead Mill appears to have an incoherent route towards an obscure 'end'. There is no longer a linear narrative leading towards a great social future, but an almost circular side-tracked shift, as he turns back upon his own primary desire for happiness. Mill's 'only chance' for sanity - for such it is - does more than confirm MacIntyre's criticism that utilitarianism creates a 'moral fiction' as a 'resort'.

Mill's philosophy borrows for this exceptional man a formula of mediocrity ('moderate degree of sensibility and of capacity for enjoyment') for the mediocre majority: human beings must have their needs averaged - in keeping with the utilitarian need to sum human happiness, as MacIntyre puts it - in order to find any degree of happiness. The self which could live by such a formula must surely be a diminished self, avoiding intimations of its inner needs and its past principles,

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7. John Stuart Mill, ed. by J.M. Robson, Collected Works: Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society, 33 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 'Utilitarianism' (1861), x, p.206.

and settling instead for a small measure of limited, half-fictive possibilities. Moreover, it would be a wilfully blind self since Mill specifically advises the deliberate diversion of self-consciousness from the immediate concerns of the self: in this way Mill makes himself unconscious of his own despair, and buries his own autobiography within his socialized philosophy again.

In contrast, consciousness, for Kierkegaard, is the crucial thing:

Granted, when raised to the level of a concept all despair is conscious, but this does not follow that the person who is in despair, the one who, according to the concept, may be said to despair, is himself conscious of it. Thus consciousness is the decisive factor. In general, what is decisive with regard to the self is consciousness, that is to say, self-consciousness. The more consciousness, the more will; the more will, the more self. Someone who has no will at all is no self. But the more will he has, the more self-consciousness he has too.

S. Unto Death p.59

For Kierkegaard, to lose the consciousness of despair is to lose the self even if also losing the pain of thus being. In Kierkegaard's terms Mill sacrifices his self through making what Carlyle called 'anti-self-consciousness' conceal from himself the object of his real despair, which is that life now seems to bear little relation to his life-long concepts of it.

Conversely, Hardy implies that Jude's final strength is at least his uncompromising consciousness of his deep doubts. Jude announces, in all his poverty and misery, to the crowd at Christminster:

'And what I appear, a sick and poor man, is not the worst of me. I am in a chaos of principles - groping in the dark - acting by instinct and not after example. Eight or nine years ago when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I am. I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations which do me and nobody else any harm, and actually give pleasure to those I love best.

Jude p.399

Jude's admission that he has lost all his principles and that the 'further' he gets the 'less sure' he is, could hardly be 'called' his strength since Jude feels almost beaten by both the external pressures and the inner pains of his life. But, paradoxically, to be so fallen and to be so conscious of what that fall means is stronger even in obscurity than Mill's public salvaging of Bentham's worn-out ideas. By making his confusion bearable to himself Mill commits an act of self-diminishment, whereas Jude seems larger (not to himself, not to others around, but to the reader outside the life). Both Hardy and Kierkegaard would prefer the wretchedness of Jude's fall into awful chaos to Mill's too-easily quietened trauma, since Jude's fall involves confrontation of the real meaning - or meaninglessness - of what his life has truly implied. All Mill could offer was his formula in 'Utilitarianism' - that it was better to be a dissatisfied Socrates than a satisfied pig.

Mill, too, is in a 'chaos of principles' but he cannot remain 'groping in the dark' as Jude must in order not to compromise his sense of the truth. Instead Mill



the inadequacy of utilitarianism into a safer theoretical debate.

Mill's entire thinking pattern becomes an effort towards modification in order to resolve confusion - 'I never, in the course of my transition' he asserts:

was content to remain, for ever so short a time, confused and unsettled. When I had taken in any new idea, I could not rest till I had adjusted its relation to my old opinions, and ascertained exactly how far its effect ought to extend in modifying or superseding them.

Mill p.163

Mill's rational self has to see his crisis as an emotional disease whose emotional symptoms re-thinking can cure. His refusal to remain 'confused and unsettled', looking like strength of intellect, in fact compounds his weakness of mind, for his new-made surety has been acquired through making adjustments to his opinions without changing the now doubtful premises on which those views were based. There is something disconcerting about his very insistence, as if his mode of thinking does not really resolve his confusion; it only anxiously covers it up. Indeed, in a sense, it is worse than a cover-up, for Mill admits his consciousness of the damaging effects of his mode of analytical thinking. It has, he says, hampered his capacity for feeling:

My education, I thought, had failed to create these feelings [of pleasure in making the good of others] in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis, while the whole course of my intellectual cultivation had made precocious and premature analysis the inveterate habit of my mind. I was thus, as I said to myself, left stranded at the commencement of my voyage,

gets over his despair, gaining what he can out of it in order to avoid total loss. In The Sickness Unto Death, Kierkegaard wants larger breakdown, deeper loss long before any thought or possibility of gain. But Mill persuades himself that he has come out of despair by finding a solution to his loss of principles which reinstates those principles in their old form but without their old power. He asserts:

I found the fabric of my old and taught opinions giving way in many fresh places, and I never allowed it to fall to pieces, but was incessantly occupied in weaving it anew.

Mill p.163

The 'weaving anew' is nothing short of patching up 'old and taught opinions' which are so fragile they might indeed 'fall to pieces' if allowed. His need to prevent the weakness of those old opinions from failing is actually far greater than their real strength. This second-order patching-up of old ideas is really his way of patching up himself by autobiographical uses of philosophy. Moreover, Mill, as MacIntyre observes, diverts the weakness of his own old ideas:

Mill concluded that it was Bentham's concept of happiness that needed reforming, but what he had actually succeeded in putting in question was the derivation of the morality from the psychology.

A.V. p.63

In other words, Mill not only chose self-modification in lieu of breakdown - but transformed his real fears for

mind's thinking by becoming conscious of its failings; yet he could discover no new way by which to think. Thus, 'There seemed no power in nature sufficient to begin the formation of my character anew' implicitly confesses a kind of disappointment in his self, as if he would, were it possible, shake off the old Mill and be something else. Instead he is a pale version of the old Mill, for whom the pursuit of social progress had seemingly provided inexhaustible enjoyment and meaning. The 'new' Mill now wearily continues to propound that worn-out pursuit, become now more like a duty than a pleasure. That coping strategy involves trying to palliate his mental breakdown by calling it merely a 'crisis' (Mill p.137) and rather than seeing it as a period of shocking discontinuity in his life, he regards it as a re-won part in his whole narrative development, referring to it as a 'transformation' (Mill p.137) and a 'transition' (Mill p.175). He even claims that he 'awakened' (Mill p.137) and says that:

In giving an account of this period of my life, I have only specified such of my new impressions as appeared to me, both at the time and since, to be a kind of turning point, marking a definite progress in my mode of thought.

Mill p.175

It is hardly 'progress' to have lapsed back into a 'mode of thought' which had clearly failed him. But Mill's claim is that far from representing a disturbing disjuncture in his life, his 'crisis' was a 'turning point' - a fortunate period within a whole teleology.

with a well equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for: no delight in virtue or the general good, but also just as little in anything else. The fountains of vanity and ambition seemed to have dried up within me, as completely as those of benevolence. I had had (as I reflected) some gratification of vanity at too early an age: I had obtained some distinction, and felt myself of some importance, before the desire of distinction and of importance had grown into a passion: and little as it was which I had attained, yet having been attained too early, like all pleasures enjoyed too soon, it had made me blasé and indifferent to the pursuit. Thus neither selfish nor unselfish pleasures were pleasures to me. And there seemed no power in nature sufficient to begin the formation of my character anew, and create in a mind now irretrievably analytic, fresh associations of pleasure with any of the objects of human desire.

Mill p.143

Like a worn-out young man in the second stage of life, after the initial boost is over, Mill has lost all sense of joy in his life and his life's purpose. And he can even see how his lost enthusiasm is to do with his learnt habit of analysis. Analysis dilutes the ability to feel and weakens associations which are to do with feeling. For with its de-constructing logic, analysis is in opposition to association's early ties, built up psychologically. He finds himself needing non-rational reasons to pursue his rationalistic career, but his rationalistic career has deprived him of the capacity to have such reasons of the heart. What makes Mill's dilemma so powerful is that he consciously thinks his mind 'irretrievably analytic' without being able to think against that habit. It is as though Mill outgrew his own

Mill absorbs his conflict, evasively, into a larger movement and hence, as Adam Ferguson might have argued, we see how in a remarkable individual there is an image of the fall of a period from energy into stasis.

Mill does not regain belief in utilitarianism; he retreats into a vulnerable kind of safety. Thus, Mill does not re-emerge from his crisis as a figure of order but his evasiveness makes his re-constructed sense of order a failure, for order which is based on fear of chaos is secondary and inauthentic.

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Mill is a collusive victim of the liberal progressionist hope that the world is primarily about order and the ordering of thought. Yet however faulty his personal desire for unity, however disguised his autobiography is within his philosophy, there is still in his method one potentially impersonal form of procedure which seems to me valuable. It is his attempt to bring together in his own mind the thoughts of different ages, different people, different views, even when they seem opposed. However vulnerable his attempted synthesis, the method of thinking is admirable when it is most seriously and least defensively involved in the effort to avoid the mutually weakening alternatives of historical dialectics

or present controversy. Here, for instance, he writes of the controversialists:

These opinions, true in the main, were held in an exaggerated and violent manner by the thinkers with whom I was now most accustomed to compare notes, and who, as usual with a reaction, ignored that half of the truth which the thinkers of the eighteenth century saw. But though, at one period of my progress, I for some time undervalued that great century, I never joined in the reaction against it, but kept as firm hold of one side of the truth as I took of the other. The fight between the nineteenth century and the eighteenth always reminded me of the battle about the shield, one side of which was white and the other black. I marvelled at the blind rage with which the combatants rushed against one another.

Mill p.169, 171

Mill almost congratulates himself for having kept a 'firm hold' on the truths of the eighteenth-century when others close to him were denying them altogether. Reaction is, to Mill, a part-blindness since it cannot perceive half-truths and thereby loses struggle of independent men for the whole truth. Mill does not just resist reaction; he finds it astonishing that the nineteenth and the eighteenth centuries should seem more like 'combatants' than potentially progressive and interceding stages within a movement indicative of large-scale historical unity. The progress Mill propounds would take place not by one period merely replacing another in re-thinking history but taking the other into its own mind-set, turning back before turning forward again.

This resistance to mere reaction is a characteristic of Mill's liberal mind, whose bent is to hold thoughts

together even when they only uncomfortably go together. Indeed, even people - people who are distinctly different from one another - even opposing and different ages are turned in Mill's mind into thoughts. 'The human mind' Mill asserts, 'is not capable of embracing a complex whole, until it has surveyed and catalogued the parts of which that whole is made up (Bentham, p.84). Those thoughts often have to come separately in the first place. But then the task is to put the thoughts, the persons, the ages together, without ignoring the differences. Thus Mill refers to Bentham and Coleridge, not as conflicting opposites, but as if each is the 'completing counterpart' of the other:

They employed, indeed, for the most part, different materials; but as the materials of both were real observations, the genuine product of experience - the results will in the end be found not hostile, but supplementary, to one another. Of their methods of philosophizing, the same thing may be said: they were different, yet both were legitimate logical processes. In every respect the two men are each other's 'completing counterpart': the strong points of each correspond to the weak points of the other.<sup>8</sup>

Mill's joining-together of the differences of Coleridge and Bentham is dependent upon his assumption that there is a whole body of possible philosophical truth to which individual philosophers contribute. 'The results will in the end be found not hostile, but supplementary, to one another' implies that Coleridge and

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8. John Stuart Mill, ed. by J.M. Robson, Collected Works: Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society, 33 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 'Coleridge' (1840), x, p.121.

to others; but also, convictions as to what is right and wrong, useful and pernicious, deeply engraven on the feelings by early education and general unanimity of sentiment, and so firmly grounded in reason and in the true exigencies of life, that they shall not, like all former and present creeds, religious, ethical, and political, require to be periodically thrown off and replaced by others.

Mill p. 173

Periodical ages of transition, he hopes, will come to seem training periods, so to speak, as if in preparation for the point at which the numerous strands of philosophical thinking may be brought together eclectically into one unified theory beneficial to human existence. The St. Simonians supply Mill with a model for his own eclecticism, for they do not replace old ideas with new ideas, as if the new make the old false. They provide Mill with a support theory, legitimizing his own resistance to give up on past meanings. 'I was greatly struck,' he says:

with the connected view which they for the first time presented to me, of the natural order of human progress; and especially with their division of all history into organic periods and critical periods. During the organic periods (they said) mankind accept with firm conviction some positive creed, claiming jurisdiction over all their actions, and containing more or less of truth and adaptation to the needs of humanity. Under its influence they make all the progress compatible with the creed, and finally outgrow it; when a period follows of criticism and negation, in which mankind lose their old convictions without acquiring any new ones, of a general or authoritative character, except the conviction that the old are false.

Mill p.171



Bentham, separately, will ultimately contribute valuable ideas even though they seem now almost antithetical to one another. Indeed, Mill goes further in his optimism by calling them 'completing counterparts': he infers that what they each express separately is only fully coherent by knowledge of both their points of view within his own mind. Mill not only salvages the individual philosophies of those two by seeing them as fitting into a wider philosophical history; he also achieves reassurance of the coherent development and translatable unity of the entire history of philosophical thought in his own representative self and, as it were, microcosmic philosophic mind.

Mill has a mind which seeks right connections in order to hold a whole vision. What Mill saw was that he was in an age of transition - and that he needed, as this thesis itself argues, within that period the wisdom of other stronger ages in order to turn what had seemed an aimless age truly into a forward-reaching one again. He admires the St. Simonians' effort to change whole periods into presently accessible thoughts:

But the chief benefit which I derived at this time from the trains of thought suggested by the St. Simonians and by Comte, was, that I obtained a clearer conception than ever before of the peculiarities of an era of transition in opinion, and ceased to mistake the moral and intellectual characteristics of such an era, for the normal attribute of humanity. I looked forward, through the present age of loud disputes but generally weak convictions, to a future which shall unite the best qualities of the organic periods; unchecked liberty of thought, unbounded freedom of individual action in all modes not hurtful

The whole of Mill's effort is characterized by the attempt to turn a critical period into an organic one through the power of his own mind.

This eclectic-synthetic way of thinking clashes with Hardy's reluctant impulse to perceive splits, disharmonies and ironies rather than unities. Consider Hardy's view of cultural disunity, where, writing of church restoration Hardy says:

The first impulse of those who are not architects is to keep, ever so little longer, what they can of the very substance itself at all costs to the future. But let us reflect a little. Those designers of the middle ages who are concerned with that original cared nothing for the individual stone or stick - would not even have cared for it had it acquired the history that it now possesses; their minds were centred on the aforesaid form, with, possibly, its colour and endurance, all which qualities it is now rapidly losing. Why, then, should we prize what they neglected, and neglect what they prized?<sup>9</sup>

What Hardy notices is a rupture of meaning. For Hardy, the original meanings intended in the inception of any ecclesiastical building could never be carried forward through different ages. Not only can the present not hold as beliefs the meanings of the past, but neither would the past care for the meanings re-assigned to it in the present. Although Hardy does not develop his thoughts here, his view is best explicated by MacIntyre's discussion of the difficulty of the translation of traditions. MacIntyre discusses the problems of an

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9. Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings: Prefaces, Literary Opinions, Reminiscences, ed. by H. Orel (London: Macmillan, 1967) p.216.

abstract rational response to different traditions which are rooted in specific cultural and personal contexts from which they can hardly be extracted:

What those problems [of life-meaning] are, how they are to be formulated and addressed, and how, if at all, they may be resolved will vary not only with the historical, social, and cultural situation of the persons whose problems these are but also with the history of belief and attitude of each particular person up to the point at which he or she finds these problems inescapable.

What each person is confronted with is at once a set of rival intellectual positions, a set of rival traditions embodied more or less imperfectly in contemporary forms of social relationship and a set of rival communities of discourse, each with its own specific modes of speech, argument, and debate, each making a claim upon the individual's allegiance. It is by the relationship between what is specific to each individual who confronts these problems, that what the problems are for that person is determined. So that genuine intellectual encounter does not and cannot take place in some generalized, abstract way.<sup>10</sup>

Hardy's opinion of how impossible it is for meanings from different ages to be brought together rests largely on his pained belief in the existence of a fundamental indifference, if not incompatibility, of each age for another. What MacIntyre posits here is more deeply analysed. His argument focuses on the potential irreconcilability of rival meanings. In any culture there will be rival meanings which are irreconcilable. MacIntyre's point is that not only are meanings in contradiction to one another but that these contradictions are further complicated by the differences

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10. Alasdair MacIntyre, Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (London: Duckworth, 1988), p.393, hereafter referred to as 'W.J. W.R.'.

arising within the history of language itself. There are, in fact, so many factors to be considered in the trans-historical translating of traditions that any kind of agreement as to what they mean is difficult. In the face of such complexity a unified view of philosophical history in which meanings are carried forward to a synthetic-eclectic solution comes to look like a naive hope in order. Yet though past meanings cannot be properly translated from one culture to another, meanings of the past are not simply separate or ignorable, for the sake of evading conflict. What MacIntyre believes is that there may come a time when the opposing tradition of thought may be needed as what he calls a 'second' first language, as Coleridge for Mill in mitigation of Bentham:

The possibility to which every tradition is always open, as I argued earlier, is that the time and place may come, when and where those who live their lives in and through the language-in-use which gives expression to it may encounter another alien tradition with its own very different language-in-use and may discover that while in some area of greater or lesser importance they cannot comprehend it within the terms of reference set by their own beliefs, their own history, and their own language-in-use, it provides a standpoint from which once they have acquired its language-in-use as a second first language, the limitations, incoherences, and poverty of resources of their own beliefs can be identified, characterized, and explained in a way not possible from within their own tradition.

W.J. W.R. pp.387-388

In this chapter I have argued that where intellectual synthesis is a psychological avoidance of chaos, such synthesis is fiction which only ensures temporary

personal survival and does not prevent the future historical recurrence in others of the crisis averted in oneself.

That said, the method of turning the views of differing historical world-pictures into translated thoughts within a single mind is an exciting one - especially when there is a determination neither to mis-translate such views nor falsely to synthesize them. For the attempt may do no more and no less than further realize the incompatibility, the chaos, the rival claims felt as equally plausible yet unmarriable necessities.

That is to say: this chapter leads me to try to carry out these thought-experiments in a personal version of MacIntyre's post-liberal, post-Millite project. That personal version is Saul Bellow's eponymous character, Herzog, who tries within his personal dimension to hold in his one mind the different thoughts of different ages. Herzog's personal dilemma, like Mill's crisis, involves a breakdown in his mind's functioning. But Herzog does not avoid the chaos he truly feels by substituting thinking for being as does Mill. Herzog suspects that the world is not first of all, or primarily about the ordering of thought. Thus, Herzog's retrieval of past meanings is not about trying to re-constitute falsely a lost sense of order. For Herzog, looking back is at least to do with not wanting to be at the mercy of current conventions. It is a conscious attempt to bring into his own mind past philosophical meanings as compensation for the 'incoherences, and poverty of resources' in the present

age. He gains access through his reading and thinking to the possibility, at any rate, of identifying or altering his own beliefs or alternatives, experiencing at the intellectual level no more and no less than the sheer confused chaos he is facing anyway in his personal life. Herzog is a philosopher, moreover, in a novel, in a literary book. It is as though literature might be the means of best bringing together the voices of the past, in language retaining those voices' own resonances - bringing those old voices together in search either of a true unity emerging out of the test of chaos or at least a genuine experience of honest failure in a big endeavour. That is why I turn to Herzog in order to imagine for this thesis a twentieth-century human being who would want something equivalent to this thesis' investigation of periods not of certain faith or even definite dynamic transition but chaos, fighting in larger forms the inherited and muddled disquiets of the personal present. Herzog at least eschews the personal as a form of small evasion.

## II. Herzog's Way

Like Mill, Moses Herzog is a man who, in a situation of breakdown, is desperately trying to find a new synthesis amidst his own disintegration. Herzog's suffering lies in the persisting consciousness that he

cannot find any new ideas to help him to live. He goes into collapse rather than, like Mill, manufacture a re-worked solution which is neither a faithful resurrection of his old ideas, nor an authentic adaptation of those ideas. For Herzog, living has become the unsolvable unhappiness of still bearing his own thinking, in which he can make no meaningful connections:

He opened his mouth under the tap and let the current run also into his shut eyes, gasping with satisfaction. Broad disks of iridescent brightness swam under his lids. He wrote to Spinoza, Thoughts not causally connected were said by you to cause pain. I find that is indeed the case. Random association, when the intellect is passive, is a form of bondage. Or rather, every form of bondage is possible then. It may interest you to know that in the twentieth century random association is believed to yield up the deepest secrets of the psyche. He realized he was writing to the dead. To bring the shades of great philosophers up to date. But then why shouldn't he write to the dead? He lived with them as much as with the living - perhaps more; and besides, his letters to the living were increasingly mental, and anyway, to the Unconscious, what was death? Dreams did not recognize it. Believing that reason can make steady progress from disorder to harmony and that the conquest of chaos need not be begun anew every day. How I wish it! How I wish it were so! How Moses prayed for this!<sup>11</sup>

'Reason can make steady progress from disorder to harmony': this is that nineteenth-century belief in social and historical progress which made Mill himself continue to believe that he might not struggle constantly with the presence of chaos. But in the twentieth-century

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11. Saul Bellow, Herzog (London: Penguin, 1965), pp.181-182, hereafter referred to as 'H'.

no such confirmation seems possible to Herzog: rationalist thinking is as worn-out as any other mode of thinking and the age itself is besotted with Freud's so-called 'free' associations. Herzog lacks external reassurance from within his own time, and his own thinking contradicts the past supposition that thinking can unscramble chaos.

The form of Herzog's thinking itself is not susceptible to the Spinozistic connections it desires: the syntax of 'Believing that reason can make steady progress from disorder to harmony and that the conquest of chaos need not be begun anew every day' does not even constitute a complete sentence. The model of syntactic forward progress 'from disorder to harmony' is disrupted by the cruelly circular thought 'that the conquest of chaos' does need to 'be begun anew every day'. What Herzog experiences is the effort of struggling 'every day', only to have to repeat that struggle 'every day'. Believing in reason, for Herzog, would be the blatant avoidance of that chaotic pattern of endless circling which is his mind's experience. His exclamation 'Reason exists!' is not the emphatic assertion it seems; it is more like a plea, for Herzog can only wish that reason exists with urgent helplessness (p.165). That 'wish', intensifying as conviction diminishes, becomes a most earnest secular imprecation: 'How Moses prayed for this!'

For Mill, reason did not only provide the guidelines for his own thinking; analytic philosophy became the basis for reconstituting his very self. As we have



seen, his personal self and its self-interest became hidden in his socio-philosophical thinking. The man was his philosophy in an undercut, or half-unadmitted way. But Herzog's struggle with the sense of chaos is more naked and more undermined. For it is as though twentieth-century 'organized power' makes the personal self smaller to begin with - through the near-fulfilment of the nineteenth-century utilitarian drive towards democratic social organization:

Well, for instance, what it means to be a man.  
In a city. In a century. In transition. In a  
mass. Transformed by science. Under organized  
power.

H. p.201

John Stuart Mill's hope was that the fulfilment of utilitarian principles might create greater human happiness through order on a huge social scale, such that life did not have to 'begin anew every day' with each new, small individual. But Herzog perceives the context of 'organized power' in which he lives as intimidatingly bigger than he is. 'To be a man...in...in...in...in... under': the prepositions make the being less and less significant. The twentieth-century 'reign of multitudes' as Herzog calls it, has not achieved that greater human happiness through controlling disorder; it has only driven shame-faced dissatisfaction deeper inwards (p.164). Inside himself Herzog suffers from 'wild internal disorder' (p.201) as if the external order of organization has only devalued the meaning of the personal even in its revenge. Organization's order

ironically increases the distance of order from the inner human experience. Not only has the apparent increase in external order not made individual existence feel more ordered, existence seems yet more disorientated as the machine becomes impersonally self-generating:

Civilization and even morality are implicit in technological transformation. Isn't it good to give bread to the hungry, to clothe the naked? Don't we obey Jesus in shipping machinery to Peru or Sumatra? Good is easily done by machines of production and transportation. Can virtue compete?

H. p.164

The capacity of 'technological transformation' to organize complex operations on a massive scale does not simplify existence for the self if it removes the need for the self to do 'good'. It renders 'virtue' bewilderingly redundant at the individual level of sentiment and emotion: 'Can virtue compete?' Herzog asks. This is truly what Alasdair MacIntyre means by his term After Virtue: the personal self is divested of an inner ordering principle, though its feelings and needs are still left it, like things of the past.

Thus, Herzog is not a figure of order existing in times of terrible disorder: that dilemma would imply that the self was its own compensation for the deficiencies of the times. Herzog, more complicatedly, is in his own way at least as disordered as the times in which he lives and for reasons that may not be simply attributable to the times themselves. His situation comprises the double failure of the self and the times in which he exists,

creating a chaotic, circular mess unsusceptible of causal explanations, out of which Herzog can look only to the past: 'To bring the shades of great philosophers up to date. But then why shouldn't he write to the dead? He lived with them as much as with the living'. In a way, he haunts the past, as if the memory of past ideas and meanings inform him at least as significantly as do present ideas in the present time's distrust of past meanings. Herzog is bewildered by feeling a stronger relation with the past than with the present: it leaves him without the present context in which he could anchor his thoughts. But the lack of safe context does not cancel out his sense that philosophical thoughts from the past have some meaning for him. However bewildered and tenuous those meanings may be, Herzog's relation to them is more than an aesthetic interest; he is made up of them. For him, meanings are not just information; they are influences which have an effective power over the self and are not simple choices made by the self. Meanings are more powerful upon the self than choice could imply: that is why Mill's eclectic choosing of rationalistic meanings is so unconvincing. Herzog does not simply choose to look to the past for meanings - he is drawn to meanings of the past because, like clues, they have some resonant, residual power over him which give them a veracity far beyond mere nostalgia for lost meanings. This thesis therefore takes as a model Herzog's looking back to the past as a response to present chaos,

in order to try to locate the roots of possible responses to that chaos.

Saul Bellow has claimed that nineteenth-century realism is still significant for modern literature, denying it is nostalgia for a lost order of humanism. It is his contention that the past, and specifically the pastness of humanism, does have relevance now:

Well, I think that the development of realism in the nineteenth century is still the major event of modern literature. Dreiser, a realist of course, had elements of genius. He was clumsy, cumbersome, and in some respects a poor thinker. But he was rich in a kind of feeling which has been ruled off the grounds by many contemporary writers - the kind of feeling that every human being intuitively recognizes as primary.<sup>12</sup>

For Bellow realism is 'still the major event of modern literature' because it accommodates the disorder of personal experience. He values the looseness of realism precisely because it is compatible with some degree of chaos rather than avoiding or intellectualizing disorder. Contemporary writing, Bellow implies, intellectualizes chaos through its emphasis upon aesthetic form - even though not having any real form of understanding is a problem for Herzog. Bellow is more concerned with first creating the 'primary' human feeling before perfecting form. To evoke that feeling, even if it is at the expense of form, gets art closer to life again. Bellow admits the messiness, the awkwardnesses, the rawness which can be

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12. George Plimpton (ed.), Writers at Work: The 'Paris Review' Interviews, 'An Interview with Saul Bellow', third series (London: Secher and Warburg, 1968), ii, p.180, hereafter referred to as 'Writers'.

the consequence of realism, as his assessment of Dreiser shows, but it is as if he thinks these clumsinesses, embodied also in his protagonists, more relevant to the real experience of life than the evasive smoothness of cultivated art. Realism has the feel, he asserts, of 'apparently unmediated experiences' (Writers, p.180).

Like the nineteenth-century realist novel Herzog also has the feel of 'unmediated experience', but nineteenth-century looseness is now under the mad pressure of twentieth-century living. The thoughts are copious; the pace that of thought running away with itself so that content swells out of form, the syntax under constant threat of breakdown even as it strives for breakthrough. It is a novel in search of form - indeed the movement is not so much like searching as stumbling, as if it does not even have the certainty of knowing what it is searching for.

Herzog's thinking is characterized by such uncertainty: he does not feel as though he really knows anything under the pressure of all his scholarly knowledge, and does not know how to think purposefully even as thoughts press upon him. Knowable ideas provide the dependable material on which the analytic mind can justify its own thinking: that is why the only realm for Mill was the realm of philosophy. That is not to say that Mill's recourse to theory was for theory's sake; it was theory for the sake of later practice. But for Herzog, theory and practice seem irretrievably estranged from one another. He cannot even catch hold of any knowable ideas

to be put into practice. 'My thoughts are shooting out all over the place' he tells his psychiatrist, as his thinking runs out of control (p.13). For Herzog cannot hold all his thoughts in his mind with any coherence. He hardly even knows whether he is thinking his own thoughts, or whether his thoughts are, so to speak, thinking him. 'Random association,' he reflects, recalling Spinoza, 'when the intellect is passive, is a form of bondage', 'bondage' that is, to the level of a sub-conscious pattern of nervous thought or feeling.

Herzog is exhausted under the energy of his own excess of thought and on the verge of a total breakdown as if his thoughts have become too fast, too big and too many for his mind to cope. The pace itself is frightening:

Therefore, Herzog's thoughts, like those machines in the lofts he had heard yesterday in the taxi, stopped by traffic in the garment district, plunged and thundered with endless - infinite! - hungry, electrical power, stitching fabric with inexhaustible energy.

H. p.165

The pace of frenetic thought feels like forward movement, yet it is movement without a forward direction. Its real movement is back into itself but with such relentless energy it might cause a kind of implosion. The 'power' of this thinking is 'inexhaustible', yet senselessly so, for the power is more like a symptom of weakness. The only thing of which his thinking can assure him, disconcertingly, is that rather than making sense of the

events of his life, thinking itself opens the gap between thought and human experience:

All the while his heart is contemptibly aching. He would like to give this heart a shaking, or put it out of his breast. Evict it. Moses hated the humiliating comedy of heartache. But can thought wake you from the dream of existence? Not if it becomes a second realm of confusion, another more complicated dream, the dream of the intellect, the delusion of total explanations.

H. p.166

Herzog feels more than just self-pity: his hurt feels like an ache that is physically stuck in him and he just cannot get rid of it, any more than he can get rid of emotions of the heart which seem all but useless, if not counter-productive. Nor can he find resolution by thinking his way out of his pain. Yet it is still his mind's habit to seek order - as if the intellect was originally meant by evolution as a second realm for sorting out the first realm of primary experience, as in Mill's re-construction of his chaos. But the realm of the intellect providing recourse and safety for Mill, represents a further frightening failure for Herzog. Aching with emotional pain, wanting thought to help him out of emotional trouble, Herzog, like Hardy, only finds the further painful failure of thought to do that. For the relation of experience and thinking is far more confused than that of primary and secondary realms, the latter there to order the former. The intellect's own ironic awareness of the failure of the intellect does not lead anywhere either; it only implies the need for a

missing third realm of reconciliation. The ordering impulse of the mind becomes a kind of idiocy:

"Synthesize or perish!" Is that the new law? But when you see what strange notions, hallucinations, projections, issue from the human mind you begin to believe in Providence again. To survive these idiocies ... Anyway the intellectual has been a Separatist. And what kind of synthesis is a Separatist likely to come up with?

H. p.322

The intellectual is a kind of unconnected figure trying, even out of individual isolation, to ideate universal connections. Thus, the very impulse to find a 'synthesis' seems essentially contradictory for the separated and separating intellectual.

Similarly, Herzog's personal collapse entraps him by leading to, as well as impeding, the attempted intellectual reconstruction. For no matter how inadequate his thinking may be, it is the only way he has of even trying to stop his pain: without thought there is only the suffering of the pain. Yet his thinking only leads him back into his own personal collapse; his thoughts are more like solipsism than communication. His mental letters reaching outward - 'I've been writing letters helter-skelter in all directions' he confesses (p.272) - cannot go anywhere but back into a dialogue with the self, just as his whole life now feels stuck in a horrible tautological structure: 'I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed. And then? I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed' he says (p.207). There is no sense now of form or narrative in his life, but repetitions and



circles. His integrity is inseparable from his confusion. It may be that literature and philosophy do not transcend time delivering timeless wisdom; it may be that a man such as Herzog can only take from his reading ahistorically what he needs; it may be that the relation between the meaning of the books in their own time and their meaning to him is no clearer than the balance between personal and social factors in the creation of his breakdown. But at least Herzog will have all the mess, all the problems, together in one.

His own mind's language is the trap: sprawling; crude; wrong; without coherent form - only an ironic circuit. He experiences something of what Dr. Lal describes in Mr Sammler's Planet:

Dr. Lal was saying that we did not get much from our brains, considering what brains were, electronically, with billions of instantaneous connections. "What goes on within a man's head," he said, "is far beyond his comprehension, of course. In very much the same way as a lizard or a rat or a bird cannot comprehend being organisms. But a human being, owing to dawning comprehension, may well feel that he is a rat who lives in a temple. In his external development, as a thing, a creature, in cerebral electronics he enjoys an adaptation, a fitness which makes him feel the unfitness of his personal human effort. Therefore, at the lowest, a rat in a temple. At best, a clumsy thing, with dawning awareness of the fitness of internal organization employed in crudities."<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Lal's thoughts imply that we are dwarfed within ourselves even by what we are: 'What goes on within a man's head...is far beyond his comprehension'. To know of

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13. Saul Bellow, Mr Sammler's Planet (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), p.225, hereafter referred to as 'Sammler'.

how complicated we are 'electronically' yet to be unable to comprehend life with that sophistication is a sort of paradox. Our brains are so separate from our minds that they seem to have actually developed at different rates. In a way, we need a mental idea to give proper form to our sense of ourselves, in order not to be the worst thing - a 'rat in a temple'. But for Thomas Hardy, it would not matter what mental idea we could construct of ourselves, for our intellect is a horrible irrelevancy:

We have reached a degree of intelligence which nature never contemplated in framing her laws, and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfactions.<sup>14</sup>

In Hardy's view we have evolved as mutations so that our 'intelligence', far from making us superior beings within 'nature', is actually an aberration having no necessity or usefulness. For intelligence to become only painful superfluity is in direct antithesis to Mill's sense that our progress should be externally realized in rational utilitarianism. Our conscious intelligence, for Hardy, just makes us realize how little and ungrounded we are. But surely Dr. Lal's claim is even stranger. With intense frustration we can think, we do have a 'dawning comprehension' - sufficient development of mind to think about thinking, that is - but only enough to recognize the gap between the level of electrical organization and that of disordered perception. It is an advance, a 'fitness', which leaves us conscious only of the

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14. F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928 (1928-1930; London: Macmillan, 1965), p.163.

'unfitness' of 'personal human efforts'. But those efforts are not quite rendered futile; Dr. Lal's view does offer just enough hope to entice effort, however apparently fruitless, towards intellectual order, answer or clarity. Hardy's view is far more damning. There can be no hope in any human effort, for even the most extraordinary advance in intelligence could only ever be further ironic evidence of the anomalousness of the intelligence in nature itself. I begin with Herzog, rather than Hardy, precisely because of that hard-maintained hope in being a thinker that Saul Bellow retains from the work of writers such as George Eliot where Hardy does not.

Yet the torment of Herzog's frustrated thinking so fatigues him that he has barely energy left to make any other human effort. He can hardly function - he cannot lecture; he cannot write; he does not care that he shares his food with the rats which over-run his abandoned house in Ludeyville. It would be easier, perhaps even more desirable, to let himself die like an injured animal, rather than have to carry on, humanly:

He could not allow himself to die yet. The children needed him. His duty was to live. To be sane, and to live, and to look after the kids. This was why he was running away from the city now, overheated, eyes smarting. He was getting away from all burdens, practical questions, away also from Ramona. There were times when you wanted to creep into hiding, like an animal.

H. p.27

Herzog feels as though he has lost the internal reasons for living. Only the external claim upon him, of being a father, remains. But although his children need him, Herzog is 'running away'. For their need of him, sufficient to stop him from wishing to die, is not enough to make him want to live. 'To be sane, and to live, and to look after the kids' is a kind of unsteady list, not genuinely connective syntax, to remind himself of his duties, the reasons why he has to stay alive. They are not reasons, coming from inside of him, of the desire to exist. There is little solace for him in being needed. His children's need of him creates a terrible secondary fear of not surviving, so that paradoxically the wish to die - he has tried to be ill so that he could stop being in life - is accompanied by the fear of his death causing his children, whom he so deeply loves, pain far greater than his own. Yet he is no longer even with them; his first wife has custody of his son, and his second wife has found a replacement-father for his daughter in Herzog's best friend.

The external claim made upon him by Ramona, his girlfriend, is only another burden, even though his involvement with her should be a way of recovering from the personal damage of sexual disgrace and emotional hurt. A night with Ramona - a good night, a successful night - does not help him to think by soothing his emotions. Instead, he arrives home, feeling this:

His night with Ramona had given him new strength, and this strength itself revived his fears, and, with the rest, the fear that

he might break down, that these strong feelings might disorganize him utterly.

H. p.207

The 'new strength' could be the thing that allays his fears, but instead it 'revived his fears', as if new energy is only further fuel for the mess he is in. Worse than re-kindling his fears, feeling stronger creates the new fear that he 'might break down' completely. For they are not feelings of strength; they are 'strong feelings' which weaken him because they have more power to disorganize his already disorganized state. But his sense of disorganization goes far deeper than the suffering of his disorderly emotions. The rhythms of Herzog's whole life feel disturbed into disorder. Herzog was once a full-time father, is now Ramona's lover as if a new life, a starting-up again, could be one simple forward step. But his old life is not cancelled-out even though it is in ruins; it mixes with the new one, presenting insurmountable incompatibilities for Herzog. The incompatibility of being the lover and the father is even further complicated by his having been largely usurped by Gersbach as father to June. Herzog is only a part-time father, who also feels more like the vulnerable child than the responsible man:

But Moses E. Herzog, at the top of his lungs, bellowing with pain and anger, has to have justice. It's his quid pro quo, in return for all he has suppressed, his right as an Innocent Party. I love little pussy her coat is so warm, and I'll sit by the fire and give her some food, and pussy will love me because I am good. So now his rage is so great and deep, so murderous, bloody, positively rapturous, that his arms and fingers ache

to strangle them. So much for his boyish  
purity of heart.

H. p.220

Herzog feels like the 'Innocent Party', not solely through being deceived by the adultery of his best friend Gersbach and his wife Madeleine. His whole way of being is made into a kind of childishness by Gersbach's more realistic way - a way which can make nonsense of feelings: 'It's a big deal - such a valuable person dying for love. Grief. It's a lot of bull!' he says to Herzog (p.61). Herzog's repetition of his daughter's favourite nursery-rhyme is a kind of impotent, yet furious, retort to Gersbach's so-called realism. But Herzog is also hurt by Gersbach at a level deeper than the personal. For Herzog believes in the old humanities; he feels sentimental about his friends; he is a man who, simply loving, expected only love back. But those feelings and beliefs, undermined now as childishness, become part of the confusion that all the parts of his life have lost their right reference and sequence. Mr Sammler refers to the loss of 'sequence' in modern life:

The many impressions and experiences of life seemed no longer to occur each in its own proper space, in sequence, each with its recognizable religious or aesthetic importance, but human beings suffered the humiliations of inconsequence, of confused styles, of a long life containing separate lives. In fact the whole experience of mankind was now covering each separate life in its flood. Making all the ages of history simultaneous. Compelling the frail person to receive, to register, depriving him because of volume, of mass, of the power to depart design.

Sammler p.26

'A long life containing separate lives' makes a terrible failure of continuity, for 'long' does not unite the separate lives within that long life together; it prolongs the suffering of the fragmented condition, in which the individual is deprived of being able to understand his or her life as having a coherent sequence. But a loss of life's proper order is suffered as more than a disruption to continuity - contingent upon the loss of order is the worse loss of 'recognizable' significance. Separate lives existing within one life means that those separations cannot mean anything to one another. Instead the separateness suggests sameness through the implicit lack of significance of each separate life. New beginnings are only old repetitively failed starts or meaningless chance variations. Far from gaining more of life through living a number of lives, life's meaning becomes the suffering of changing episodes of fundamental inconsequence.

Not only do individuals suffer from personal inconsequence but the whole of human life is become, in the present age, inconsequential: 'Making all the ages of history simultaneous'. That simultaneity is the large-scale version of the loss of continuity implied by 'long life containing separate lives'. This too relates to After Virtue and the jumble of left-over stuff deprived of coherent original context. 'Covering...making...compelling...depriving': Sammler's verbs drive out any possibility for the individual to feel consequential under the weight of modern existence. For the 'frail

person' does not mean the weak person struggling to cope with his or her situation; it means that the sense of being a person at all is enfeebled, as if the inner self is buried by the sheer mass of what it must 'receive and 'register'.

Twentieth-century living, by destroying the coherence of 'sequence', does not feel so much like a new condition in which life offers more possibilities replacing sequence; living is more like deprivation since the need for sequential meaning persists in people like Herzog. The events of Herzog's life have made his a twentieth-century life of broken sequence, but he still suffers the need for the coherence of old meanings - the old, lost humanities. But I repeat: that need cannot make him a surviving, heroically representative figure of those beliefs - for he is, in himself, such a hopeless mess:

Social organization, for all its clumsiness and evil, has accomplished far more and embodies more good than I do, for at least it sometimes gives justice. I am a mess, and talk about justice. I owe the powers that created me a human life. And where is it! Where is that human life which is my only excuse for surviving!

H. p.220

'Where is that human life which is my only excuse for surviving!' Herzog demands in near-despair. His ache is for some individual human qualities even in himself to prove the value of human life in general. If there are not any still significant individual human qualities - only the imperfect organization of life effected by



societal control, then the relation of the self with the outside world is an inhuman, impersonal relation. Human qualities would be subsumed by human behaviour - behaviour dependent only upon external incentives of reward and punishment. Such a relation would have its compensations, as Herzog recognizes when he says that social organization 'has accomplished far more and embodies more good than I do'. But the compensations are far from representing the utilitarian utopia envisaged by Mill; they are necessary social controls in a nihilistic hell.

In such a situation the old humanistic language itself is as buried as the inner self. But the loss of the words, claims Mr Sammler, still leaves behind the human impulses in men such as Herzog:

What was gone was the old words. Forms and signs were absent. Not honor but the word honor. Not virtuous impulse, but the terms beaten into flat nonsense. Not compassion; but what was a compassionate utterance? And compassionate utterance was a mortal necessity. Utterance, sounds of hope and desire, exclamations of grief. Such things were suppressed, as if illicit.

Sammler p.261

Human impulses seem to have lost their verbal context. The suppression of the words implies that the human impulses are themselves somehow obsolete in the modern world of social organization which makes the expression of human feelings embarrassing and shameful. Yet Mr Sammler's claim that those impulses have had, so to speak, to go underground does carry hope. He implies that

their presence, albeit hidden, contests the defeat of the words themselves. But Herzog's fear is that those human impulses may be like Hardy's view of intelligence - superfluous, and cruelly ironic in making the human beings suffer from feelings which inform them of nothing of any use or value.

As if he has, unconsciously, to test his own human feelings, Herzog goes to the courts. He witnesses organized justice in the trial of a woman and her lover who have murdered her three-year-old child. A prosecution witness describes the event:

So he opened and stepped in. Would he tell the court what he saw? He saw the woman with the boy in her arms. He thought she was hugging him, but to his astonishment she threw him from her with both arms. He was hurled against the wall. This made the noise he had been hearing below. Was anyone else present? Yes, the other defendant was lying on the bed, smoking. And was the child now screaming? No, at this time he was lying silent on the floor.

H. p.239

The trial exhibits more than inhumanity. Herzog listens to a shocking failure of human feeling, implied with horrible irony: 'He thought she was hugging him...she threw him from her with both arms'. There is something sickening in the confusion that the throwing of the boy could have been a mother's embrace of her child. By all tradition the most precious human bond should be that physical and emotional bond between a mother and her child: to witness its vicious denial exemplifies westernism turned monstrous. To be in modern life, 'You

must,' as Mr Sammler says, 'train yourself...You had to be able to bear the tangles of the soul, the sight of cruel dissolution' (p.74). The murder of the child seems an unnatural act, the 'dissolution' of a natural human order; yet it cannot be simply inhuman since the mother and the lover are obviously humans. The reaction such a scene provokes is the giving-up of any value hoped of human life: social organization seems the only way to even deal with such monstrosity. The 'cruel dissolution' of that fundamental human order damns life as chaos, the empty chaos of nihilism in which no human connections can matter, because all beliefs are cancelled out by their incapacity to accommodate the painful anomalies with which they are confronted. This thesis is a response to that giving-up, which is a kind of shrinking under the horror of life's monstrosity and thus an evasion of what it is to be human. In this thesis I am concerned with the residual personal self who, even if in some way defeated by a situation of human chaos, does not evade life's painful contradictions.

The disparity between the potential and expected love of a mother for a child and her actual violence is unpassable even with the understanding. 'I fail to understand' says Herzog (p.238). For this is not just murder; to murder a child carries the deepest offence to all human feelings. The words 'crime', or even 'sin' fall short in categorizing it. But such an event is a terrible reality, so terrible that reported speech here provides a kind of barrier, as if to see it, or bear it,

or understand it more directly would make it too real. It has to come mediated for it to be borne at all - but still the mild questions make us dread the emotionless answers: 'Would he tell the court what he saw?'. The screaming of the child in terror, the mother's cruelty, the lover's indifference - then the child's silence: it is a narrative which both desolates the human feelings and rouses their depths with feelings of protectiveness in reaction to the abuse inflicted on the most helpless human figure, the child. Yet those powerful feelings - good human feelings - only increase the pain for Herzog because they do still seem merely old-fashioned and useless:

With all his might - mind and heart - he tried to obtain something for the murdered child. But what? How? He pressed himself with intensity, but "all his might" could get nothing for the buried boy. Herzog experienced nothing but his own human feelings, in which he found nothing of use. What if he felt moved to cry? Or pray? He pressed hand to hand. And, what did he feel? Why he felt himself - his own trembling hands, and eyes that stung. And what was there in modern, post...post-Christian America to pray for? Justice - justice and mercy? And pray away the monstrosity of life, the wicked dream it was? He opened his mouth to relieve the pressure he felt. He was wrung, and wrung again, and wrung again, again.

H. p.240

'Herzog experienced nothing but his own human feelings, in which he found nothing of use': what should be a wealth of 'human feelings' is made waste by the repetition 'nothing but...nothing of use'. The feelings

remain 'his own', uselessly stuck in him, making him suffer from the suffering he has witnessed and denying him any real purpose to his humanity by yielding nothing that could go outward, to the 'buried' child. The shift to 'buried' worsens 'murdered child' for tears cannot reach a buried child. Yet Herzog, loyally, must cry: 'He was wrung, and wrung again, and wrung again, again'. The repetitions brand his grief as useless; as grief which yields only more grief going nowhere but back into himself, just as his prayer makes him know only his own being. 'And what was there in modern, post...post-Christian America to pray for?' he pleads, hopelessly. The hiatus implies all the lost orders of meanings of the past; 'post-Christian' is not the only lost order, only the most recently relevant to his heedless prayer. But it seems as though that is all we have as modern people - just 'post' orders of meaning:

It was enough to make a man pray to God to remove this great, bone-breaking burden of selfhood and self-development, give himself, a failure, back to the species for a primitive cure. But this was becoming the up-to-date and almost conventional way of looking at any single life. In this view the body itself, with its two arms and vertical length, was compared to the Cross, on which you knew the agony of consciousness and separate being. For that matter, he had been taking this primitive cure, administered by Madeleine, Sandor, et cetera; so that his recent misfortunes might be seen as a collective project, himself participating, to destroy his vanity and his pretensions to a personal life so that he might disintegrate and suffer and hate, like so many others, not on anything so distinguished as a cross, but down in the mire of post-Renaissance, post-humanistic, post-Cartesian dissolution, next door to the Void.

'Post-Renaissance, post-humanistic, post-Cartesian': the only definition which the modern age seems to have of itself is that it is an after-age. It is an age which sees history as in a state of degeneration and itself close to the nadir of that degeneration. The individuals in it are not really individual selves at all. A modern person might scorn the 'burden of selfhood and self-development' as a nineteenth-century bourgeois pretension. It is even to Herzog a temptation to do that, to scorn the old idea of a human self when there is so little within modern life to suggest anything else. Saul Bellow refers to the 'affliction' of what he calls a 'private life':

In some sense it is a genuine affliction;  
it cuts one off from a common life. To me,  
a significant theme of Herzog is the  
imprisonment of the individual in a shameful  
and impotent privacy.

Writers pp.193-194

The suffering implied by 'the bone-breaking burden of selfhood' is the suffering of the self, a self which recognizes its responsibility still to be such, holding on to what both history and society seem to have rejected. But to 'disintegrate and suffer' instead is not the suffering of the self; it is the suffering of the hateful condition of existence without a sense of self. That suffering, as I shall show in Chapter Three, is precisely what is experienced by the figure of Dowell in Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier. Dowell's self effectively 'disintegrates' through the total loss of all

sense of meaning. For Dowell, life becomes 'a picture without a meaning' (15). But Herzog says, 'Life on this earth can't be simply a picture' (p.326). It is not that Herzog cannot face what becomes true for Dowell, but that Herzog's apprehension of life's meaning is of something more than the 'Void'.

That modern chaos - 'the Void' - is an unfeeling emptiness: though a 'post'-world, the modern seems almost a return to the nothingness of a pre-world before human feeling. It goes nowhere; it implies the end-point of degeneration. Herzog's turning to the past is a turning-away from the modern, not in order to evade it, but as a response to it - as this thesis is a response to it. Herzog's response is contempt for 'the mire of post-Renaissance, post-humanistic, post-Cartesian dissolution'. That contempt implies his loyalty to the self, however faulty and distorted. For he does hold onto something amid all the modern meaninglessness: the belief that there may be in the individual something more than the individual:

Anyway, can I pretend I have much choice? I look at myself and see chest, thighs, feet - a head. This strange organization, I know it will die. And inside - something, something, happiness..."Thou movest me". That leaves no choice. Something produces intensity, a holy feeling, as oranges produce orange, as grass green, as birds heat. Some hearts put out more love and some less of it, presumably. Does it signify anything?

H. p.340

Herzog cannot be anything but his own personal self

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15. Ford Madox Ford, The Good Soldier (1915; London: Penguin, 1946), p.228.

with his own human feelings as the only proof of humanity. But 'Thou movest me' puts the self in relation to an Other. It transcends the relation of the self to the world of 'organized power', which is one of the self to an object, an It. Herzog has read Buber. 'Thou movest me' implies a connection with the world which makes the personal self matter through that connection; it creates a context for the self which validates the personal as a form of receiving more than itself, through its emotions. The borrowed archaic language implies the absence of that context in the twentieth-century.

There is too much that is tenuous in Herzog's affirmation of the self's and life's value for there to be a simple solution to his sense of chaos. His words suggest more faith than solution. And the novel itself here is close to being an apology for ideas, for thinking. But the tenuousness itself is vital, for solution is itself a form of complacency - like John Stuart Mill opting for the safe realm of synthetic philosophy. Some sense of risk does seem necessary to human experience, as if chaos might push the self out of the dangers of complacency. That is not to say that to suffer chaos could be what the self chooses, in order to achieve a greater intensity. Herzog, whose unfinished book, significantly, was written against the degenerated western Romantic heroic love of suffering and chaos, writes to Professor Mermelstein:

More commonly suffering breaks people,  
crushes them, and is simply unilluminating.  
You see how gruesomely human beings are



destroyed by pain, when they have the added torment of losing their humanity first, so that their death is a total defeat, and then you write about "modern forms of Orphism" and about "people who are not afraid of suffering" and throw in such other cocktail-party expressions.

H. p.317

Suffering may 'more commonly' lead to the utter defeat of the self rather than create anything positive such as courage or valuable intensity. Hence, nobody could desire suffering unless as a false step, more like an inauthentic aesthetic experiment than real suffering. Yet there is a sense in which suffering, undesired, does make a human being more significant by disturbing him or her out of complacency. That is what Herzog means when he echoes Kierkegaard:

For when will we civilized beings become really serious? said Kierkegaard. Only when we have known hell through and through. Without this, hedonism and frivolity will diffuse hell through all our days.

H. p.151

Life does carry the terrible paradox that light-heartedness can also seem an unbearable hell of meaninglessness whereas suffering carries depth of meaning. That meaning arises since it makes the self recognize itself again as perhaps something more than a passive figure borne along an easeful, half-conscious life of frivolity. A real sense of self is precisely what is so hard to locate in the hedonism and business of the modern world. Bellow writes of modern circumstances in a way that has the idea that we need to get beyond mere

ideas but remains still idea-like, fleshed out by the novel, rather than truly living as the novel's art:

The volume of judgments one is called upon to make depends upon the receptivity of the observer, and if one is very receptive, one has a terrifying number of opinions to render - "What do you think about this, about that, about Viet Nam, about city planning, about expressways, or garbage disposal, or democracy, or Plato, or pop art, or welfare states, or literacy in a 'mass society'?" I wonder whether there will ever be enough tranquillity under modern circumstances to allow our contemporary Wordsworth to recollect anything. I feel that art has something to do with the achievement of stillness in the midst of chaos. A stillness which characterizes prayer, too, and the eye of the storm. I think that art has something to do with an arrest of attention in the midst of distraction.

Writers p.190

To Bellow, modern life is characterized by a bombardment of ceaseless demands. Those demands are 'distractions', for the real danger in modern life is perhaps worse than complacency. The effort of stillness within chaotic movement, which Bellow calls an 'achievement', is so difficult to make because the inner self becomes lost through all the external noise, as if it cannot hear itself any more. Bellow says specifically 'our contemporary Wordsworth' to imply the difficulty of re-locating the self in relation to lost traditions. The loss of the inner self is the terrible consequence of modern living.

For Bellow, art is a way of locating, in the mêlée, that which is important to the human being in danger of disintegrating under the rush of 'distraction'. For art

is a mode of recollection: 're-collect' implies a turning back to the things of the past, a holding-together of the things we have forgotten in a way that is not evasively synthetic as was John Stuart Mill's utilitarian synthesis. This thesis is about such recollection. It is about remembering what original chaos really feels like for the self - not the burnt-out modern self which has forgotten that it has a self at all, but the self that is thrown riskily into being by chaos, to live or die in kill or cure.

Such an original self is to be located in the writings of Shakespeare. In Humboldt's Gift Citrine says:

I had rooted and sorted my way through mankind experiencing disappointment upon disappointment. What was my disappointment? I had, or assumed that I had, needs and perceptions of a Shakespearian order.<sup>16</sup>

By 'needs and perceptions of a Shakespearian order' Citrine means that he wants to experience the big feelings, wants to remember the power of an order of meanings which lifts into a sense of significance the apparently small meanings of his own twentieth-century life. In the main body of this thesis I am going to re-create the big feelings which seem lost to the contemporary human being. Even in Saul Bellow himself, ideas of the contemporary situation seem all too clear, hence all too conscious and static. I turn instead to Citrine's idea of Shakespearian largeness, to an implicit

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16. Saul Bellow, Humboldt's Gift (London: The Alison Press/ Martin Secker and Warburg, 1973) p.186.

Shakespearian space before the decline into a history of loss - and the way in which that Shakespearian grandeur is dramatically primal but not loftily distant or mythic. The Romantic critic, William Hazlitt, claims that the interest in Shakespeare's writing is, in comparison to other writers:

like the sea, agitated this way and that,  
and loud-lashed by furious storms; while  
in the still pauses of the blast, we  
distinguish only the cries of despair,  
or the silence of death! Milton, on the  
other hand, takes the imaginative part of  
passion - that which remains after the event,  
which the mind reposes on when all is over,  
which looks upon circumstances from the  
remotest elevation of thought and fancy, and  
abstracts them from the world of action to  
that of contemplation.<sup>17</sup>

Milton writes as if from above the world of action with the ordering impulse of contemplation, whereas Shakespeare's impulse is to evoke the terrible, chaotic passions called-up in the immediacy and midst of critical event.

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17. The Romantics on Shakespeare, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Penguin, 1992), p.186.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SHAKESPEARIAN CHAOS

#### I. Coriolanus: World in the Self, Self in the World

Coriolanus has so strong a sense of self that he does not question the validity of what he feels or of him who feels it, for the two are related in this figure of unity. 'His heart's his mouth:' says Menenius of Coriolanus, 'What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent' (1). Coriolanus' sense of order derives from his innate belief in his own truth, and he, as a self, is defined by that sense of order. Thus his sense of order contained in himself is unlike John Stuart Mill's reconstructed, secondary form of order, which is but a response to chaos. Coriolanus' sense of order is primary, since it is not so much a need as an untested belief implicit in his very being. Shakespeare's treatment of this unself-consciously single-minded figure of primary order exemplifies the way his art drives towards the creation of chaos in a process of response. That is the force and nemesis of single-mindedness in Shakespeare's

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1. William Shakespeare, ed. by Philip Brockbank, Coriolanus (London: Routledge, 1994), III,i,255-256, hereafter referred to as 'Corio.'

art.

Yet Hazlitt's opinion of Shakespeare's eponymous hero, Coriolanus, is not single-minded but ambiguous, as his criticism of Kean's performance of the part implies:

The intolerable airs and aristocratical pretensions of which he is the slave, and to which he falls victim, did not seem legitimate in him, but upstart, turbulent and vulgar. Thus his haughty answer to the mob who banish him - 'I banish you' - was given with all the virulence of execration and rage of impotent despair, as if he had to strain every nerve and faculty of soul to shake off the contamination of their hated power over him instead of being delivered with calm, majestic self-possession, as if he remained rooted to the spot, and his least motion, word, or look, must scatter them like chaff or scum from his presence.<sup>2</sup>

Hazlitt's French Revolution radicalism makes him somewhat disdainful towards Coriolanus' 'aristocratical pretensions'. Nevertheless Hazlitt does perceive more in Coriolanus than the sheer arrogance, arising out of Coriolanus' high aristocratic will of ego, which characterized the figure in Kean's performance of the part. The actual characteristics of the part are, as Hazlitt interprets it:

inordinate self-opinion, and haughty elevation of soul, that aspire above competition or controul, as the tall rock lifts its head above the skies, and is not bent or shattered by the storm, beautiful in its unconquered strength, terrible in its unaltered repose.

The Romantics p.290

Hazlitt's reference to Coriolanus' 'inordinate self-

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2. The Romantics on Shakespeare, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Penguin, 1992), p.290, hereafter referred to as 'The Romantics'.

opinion' does implicitly admit how Kean could easily interpret Coriolanus as no more than an egotist. Yet Hazlitt also has considerable regard for Coriolanus, despite the adverse political implications of a self who considers himself undemocratically superior to the many. For Coriolanus maintains his sense of superiority out of reasons far more profound than an inflated sense of self-worth. He is a separate self in a more primal and innocent mode: his mother has taught him to be the old virtues of Rome. Hence, his pride is not that ostentatious vanity which, as Kean suggested, could be offended by the opinions of others. On the contrary, his pride is a self-reliant strength whose aspirations make petty the opinions of others.

Hazlitt implies with the words: 'aristocratical pretensions of which he is slave, and to which he falls victim' that Coriolanus' separation contains the seeds of his own destruction. But Hazlitt does not go far enough in his analysis of the cause of Coriolanus' downfall. What Hazlitt does not fully register is the paradox of the social-in-the-individual. For Coriolanus' belief in his self is not just inside him unbonded to anything on the outside. Despite his separation Coriolanus' self is dependent on the social even though he does not recognize it, as his 'haughty answer' to his banishment from Rome implies:

Bru: There's no more to be said, but he is banish'd,  
 As enemy to the people and his country:  
 It shall be so.  
 Citizens: It shall be so, it shall be so.  
 Cor: You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate

As reek o'the rotten fens, whose loves I prize  
 As the dead carcasses of unburied men  
 That do corrupt my air: I banish you!  
 And here remain with your uncertainty!  
 Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts!  
 Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,  
 Fan you into despair! Have the power still  
 To banish your defenders; till at length  
 Your ignorance - which finds not till it feels,  
 Making but reservation of yourselves,  
 Still your own foes - deliver you as most  
 Abated captives to some nation  
 That won you without blows! Despising  
 For you the city, thus I turn my back.  
 There is a world elsewhere!

exeunt

Aed: The people's enemy is gone, is gone!  
 Citizens: Our enemy is banish'd! he is gone!  
 Hoo! hoo!

Corio. III,iii,117-137

Coriolanus' retort to his banishers, 'I banish you', is more than an offended insult. It is a usurpation of the people's power over him. He reverses their casting-off of him into his abandonment of them. His meaning is that they have to remain in place of his having to go, though he is aware that the people do not comprehend the implications of his leaving. The implications, as far as Coriolanus is concerned, are that the people no longer have a claim to his protection and that his protection withdrawn leaves them prey to their own uncertainty. To Coriolanus, their uncertainty is contemptible for being not just fickle, but also weak. 'Feeble', in 'Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts!', though it governs the noun 'rumour', says more about their hearts. What Coriolanus shows by contrast to their feeble ignorance is a greater, though frustratingly lonely, knowledge of the people's needs of him.



That the people should suffer may be Coriolanus' secondary comfort, but he too suffers. The syntax of 'Despising/ For you, the city thus I turn my back' drives into bitterly ironic juxtaposition 'For you, the city', implying that his view of Rome, and Rome as it is represented by the base and uncomprehending mob who get in his vision's way, are painfully divergent. Coriolanus knows that his vision and Rome itself are separate when he declares:

I would they were barbarians - as they are,  
 Though in Rome litter'd'; not Romans'  
 Corio. III,1,236-7

But what he does not realize is that despite that separation his self is still dependent on Rome. The value he holds dear within himself, he does want reflected back to him from the outside. He believes that he embodies a vision of Rome; he believes he is the real Rome; the social in the individual. But since what he sees there does not conform to his internal belief in Rome, his belief is left to slip into the lonely egotism of which both the Romans and Hazlitt accuse him. Yet his need for Rome to embody his ideals is deeper than egotism. It is a need for an external home for his internal beliefs, beliefs in which his very self is founded, blindly innocent as it originally was of distinctions between individual and social. Thus, his banishment from Rome has far greater implications than putting him in conflict with his native Rome; potentially Coriolanus' banishment is productive of chaos. For though

Coriolanus can turn his back on the city, his innerly-held belief is derived still from Rome itself - a belief which has no place in Rome when he is banished. If he is to survive the separation from Rome outside him, Coriolanus must also destroy the very part of his self which he believed was Rome inside his self.

Faced with public banishment, Coriolanus does not address the people as a politician, but as a man, since the 'you' of 'you common cry of curs' makes his angry parting address at the people's shared ignorance personal. Indeed he dwarfs, as one man, his many banishers. His anger makes for a kind of openness of the self's truth which is antithetical to the cautionary keeping-back of the self advocated by Shakespeare's contemporary, Montaigne.

Montaigne, like Coriolanus, maintains a separation of the self. But Montaigne lived during the French civil war and had to cultivate a separate self in an attempt to create inner order as a reaction to external disorder. As a reaction, his separation is in the secondary mode. Montaigne would hide anger in order to keep his self hidden and intact:

We must moderate ourselves, betwixt the hate of paine, and the love of pleasure. Plato sets downe a meane course of life between both. But to affections that distract me from my self, and divert me elsewhere; surely, to such I oppose my selfe with all my force. Mine opinion is, that one should lend himselfe to others, and not give himselfe but to himselfe.<sup>3</sup>

Montaigne's extreme prudence goes further than Plato's classic and philosophic moderation (of which he tacitly approves) by being a form of diplomatic self-protection. For Montaigne the self must exist within, in concealment, making any display of emotion dangerous for revealing the self's real feelings. To show anger, as Coriolanus shows anger, would be to be caught off guard from the continuous check upon the self's outward composure. For the real self to remain so warily hidden must, at the very least, have an effect on the inner self's capacity for spontaneity. In his essay 'Of anger and Choler', Montaigne says:

When I chance to be angry, it is in the earnestest manner that may be, but yet as briefly and as secretly, as is possible.

Montaigne II p.447

Montaigne's cautionary self is only angry if caught unawares, for anger's spontaneity gives the self away; it is too much like what he calls 'giving, not lending the self' - a self which in Montaigne even as it gives, keeps something back.

But Coriolanus' open anger implies an utter disdain for self-concealment from the external world or self-division within it. Indeed, Coriolanus deliberately declares himself by his anger, out of a sort of fidelity to his own truth. Accused by the tribunes of treachery, Coriolanus declares with undisguised fury:

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3. The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne, trans. by John Florio, 3 vols (1603; London: J.M. Dent, 1928), 'How one ought to Govern his Will', iii, p.253, hereafter referred to as 'Montaigne'.

The fires i' the lowest hell fold-in the people!  
 Call me their traitor! Thou injurious tribune!  
 Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,  
 In thy hands clutch'd as many millions, in  
 The lying tongue both numbers, I would say  
 'Thou liest' unto thee with a voice as free  
 As I do pray the gods.

Corio. III,iii, 68-74

The violent energy of Coriolanus' words is felt as more than anger. Enervated, daring, rebellious: his anger declares his truth - that the tribune lies - and declares his right to speak it. The hyperbole of 'twenty thousand deaths' and 'as many millions' dignifies Coriolanus' aggression by suggesting his extraordinary courage, as if he would challenge death itself, so physically sure is he of his own vision of the world. How perilous this declaration would be to one such as Montaigne.

Coriolanus' fearlessness makes Montaigne's view that one should slide through life look like a kind of cowardice:

There are so many dangerous steps, that for the more security, wee must somewhat slightly and superficially slide through the world, and not force it.

Montaigne III p.255

To Montaigne any move in life is so dangerous, that 'for the more security' it is better just to maintain the present level of manageable insecurity, rather than to increase risk by moving out of step. Life seems something to be got through with as little external involvement of the self as possible.

Yet cowardice would be far too simple an explanation for Montaigne's strategic reclusiveness. Indeed, Hazlitt,

writing on Montaigne, claims that Montaigne had unusual courage:

The great merit of Montaigne then was, that he may be said to have been the first who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man. And as courage is generally the effect of conscious strength, he was probably led to do so by the richness, truth, and force of his own observations on books and men. He was, in the truest sense, a man of original mind, that is, he had the power of looking at things for himself, or as they really were, instead of blindly trusting to, and fondly repeating what others told him that they were.<sup>4</sup>

Montaigne may have lived by a kind of stealth, but as Hazlitt's admiration for his courageous honesty shows, Montaigne's concealment of his real self is not cowardly evasiveness. For Montaigne writes with extraordinary honesty about what he truly feels and thinks within. The writing at least reveals what Montaigne would not show to the world: the honest confession of his conscious privacy. Montaigne's writing seems to be written as he thinks, unguarded by evasive strategies or confessing of them. The writing is so apparently lacking in artifice (even as it recommends artifice as a way of retaining a sense of order), that it seems regardless of itself as a work: Montaigne is the 'man' before he is the 'author', putting him in huge contrast to John Stuart Mill whose need for order meant that his philosophical writing must supplant the man. It is perhaps a strange paradox that, as the honest man, Montaigne writes openly about how one should not be open. But Montaigne's writing is not that

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4. The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), vi, p.92.

of a damaged self; rather it is the last outpost of self-validation in an external world which would damage the ordered self if that self had no secondary recourse by which to retain a sense of self. Montaigne does avoid chaos as does John Stuart Mill, but Montaigne's is a different form of avoidance. For Montaigne must think about chaos in order successfully to avoid it; his need is to survive in times which are dangerous, politically. But Mill cannot admit of chaos in the world; it would disturb his conceptual thinking whose assumption, based on utilitarian theory, is that the world is susceptible to human ordering.

Whereas Mill is diminished as an individual self, Montaigne is as much an individual as the fearless Coriolanus. Yet Montaigne, in his separation, still implies a whole different way of being from Coriolanus as a separate self. That difference is most pronounced in the way that Montaigne counsels a split of the inner self from the outer:

All the world doth practise stage-playing.  
 Wee must play our parts duly, but as the  
 part of a borrowed personage. Of a visard  
 and apparance, wee should not make a real  
 essence, nor proper of that which is another.  
 Wee cannot distinguish the skinne from the  
 shirt. It is sufficient to disguise the face,  
 without deforming the breast.

Montaigne III p.262

To borrow is deliberate disguise, even if guileless. Montaigne's view is that life is outwardly a drama that has little to do with the inner - the real - drama, and

that it is a mistake to adopt the borrowed part as if it could become more permanent to the self. Indeed, it would be more than a mistake: to try to become the outward, public self would cause a deformation of the real essence of the inner self. His advice is that the self must be clearly, and consciously, split into two so that there may be no confusion of the inner and the outer selves. It is, he implies, to be simply accepted that 'All the world doth practise stage-playing', as if to adopt a persona outwardly is legitimised and normalised by being the common way.

Montaigne's acceptance of the necessity to act when in a public context looks like calm wisdom. But for Coriolanus to assume a part - to split his inner from his outer self in the way that Montaigne advises - feels to him simply, but painfully, like lying. Urged by Cominius to speak to the people in order to placate them, Coriolanus answers:

Must I with base tongue give my noble heart  
 A lie that it must bear? Well, I will do't:  
 Yet were there but this single plot to lose,  
 This mould of Martius, they to dust should grind it  
 And throw't against the wind. To th'market-place!  
 You have put me now to such a part which never  
 I shall discharge to th'life.

Corio. III,ii 100-106

The shifting pronouns of 'Must I/ With my base tongue give to my noble heart/ A lie that it must bear?' practise a distancing of his acting self from his own truth with genuinely felt pain. He can only persuade himself to jeopardize his belief in his own truth by

believing that he yet serves some noble ideal which is socially greater than his individual self's noble notions. But Coriolanus not only does not want to speak to the people of his regard for them, since it is not what he truly feels; he cannot play this part convincingly: 'which never I shall discharge to th' life'. For so absolute is his concept of what his truth means to him that Coriolanus cannot tolerate any distortion to his sense of his self as truth. To his mother he says:

Why did you wish me milder? would you have me  
False to my nature? Rather say I play  
The man I am.

Corio. III,ii 14-16

With awe-inspiring commitment to his self-conception, Coriolanus declares that he must act in the way that the man he conceives himself to be, would act: integrity here is marvellous but dangerous, for always it is in danger of becoming obstinacy. 'You are too absolute' declares his mother, Volumnia, in her attempt to make Coriolanus yield from his apparent obstinacy (III,ii,41). But Coriolanus has no sense of his self as obstinate; he refers to his way of being as his nature, a nature which cannot conceive of splitting his private self from his public self. Yet the paradoxical phrase 'I play/ The man I am' throws confusion on the relation between will and truth which, in Coriolanus' mind, are related by being almost synonymous. For Coriolanus believes his will only comes from his truth, the truth of



him, as if one's character is one's truth since the two are one for him. Warned that he must now placate the people after having angered them, he replies:

I will not do't,  
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth,  
And by my body's action teach my mind  
A most inherent baseness.

Corio. III, i1120-123

'I will not do't' is a refusal which invests his sense of truth with as much authority over his self as that of his own will. Not to honour his sense of his own truth would be more than a short-falling to Coriolanus; it would seem a way of changing his very self - by teaching it some other corrupt way of being. To split his self, public man from private self, as the stealthy Montaigne can, would mean the destruction not only of a meaningful social world, but of the whole sense of order behind Coriolanus' personal integrity. It is that assertion of order and truth which risks chaos, as Montaigne's secondary defences of peace do not.

Yet that is not to say that Montaigne's way of being implies the loss of his sense of personal integrity. For above all, Montaigne advises a split of the inner from the outer self in order to maintain a withdrawn inner integrity in compensation for a guileful external world. In his essay, 'Of Repenting', he writes:

Every one may play the jugler, and represent an honest man upon the stage; but within, and in bosome, where all things are lawfull, where all is concealed; to keep a due rule or formall decorum, that's the point.

Montaigne III p.27.

Montaigne's approval for the deliberate splitting of the self, keeping the inner self in concealment, does not constitute a disregard for the moral worth of the self. Rather, his point is that the self must be aware of its own moral worth in order to keep its own integrity in a world which is little more than a facade, making its approval worthless. Montaigne, after all, lacks an equivalent to Coriolanus' vulnerable belief in Rome, in what Rome should be. Yet there is something disconcertingly frail in Montaigne's notion of the inner self being the seat of what is 'lawfull' for the self. For the rule to which he refers is neither religious nor social, but an interiorized social rule in lieu of trustworthy social rules. Montaigne's way of being implies that the self must compensate for the lack of social guidelines outside by cultivating special vigilance within. This shifting of social rules from the external world to the privacy of the inner cultivated self means that Montaigne can dismiss all outward action as virtually irrelevant.

But Coriolanus, even despite his contempt for the opinions of the people, cannot regard any social act as irrelevant, since in his vision the truth and the self are externally oriented forces in a world of connecting principles. Hence, he cannot regard the public obligation to put on the gown of humility as simply a matter of form and in itself unimportant. To Coriolanus it is a moral matter, and that he must act with artifice rather than out of what he considers his own real nature is

anathema to all that he truly believes. 'I do beseech you' he implores Cominius:

Let me o'erleap that custom; for I cannot  
Put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them  
For my wounds' sake, to give their suffrage;  
  please you  
That I may pass this doing.

Corio. II,ii,133-136

Coriolanus cannot pretend not to be himself - even to his own political disadvantage. He refuses to appear other than he feels himself truly to be, for truly he is what he does. To put on the gown, by being an 'addition', is actually to subtract meaning from his actions and thus from his own sense of self (I,ix,65). To be a soldier, for Coriolanus, requires no 'addition' afterwards. He is defined, as a very self, by his own immediate action: 'He rewards/ His deeds with doing them' declares Cominius (II,ii,124-5). In this respect Coriolanus conforms to the Aristotelian nature of function as the definition of an individual:

Now if the function of man is an activity of the soul in accordance with, or implying a rational principle; and if we hold that the function of an individual and of a good individual of the same kind - e.g. of a harpist and of a good harpist, and so on generally - is generically the same, the latter's distinctive excellence being attached to the name of the function (because the function of the harpist is to play the harp, but that of the good harpist is to play it well); and if we assume that the function of man is a kind of life, viz., an activity or series of actions of the soul, implying a rational principle; and if the function of a good man is to perform these well and rightly; and if every function is performed well when performed in accordance with its proper excellence: if all this is so, the conclusion

is that the good for man is an activity of soul in accordance with virtue, or if there are more kinds of virtue than one, in accordance with the best and most perfect kind.<sup>5</sup>

In Aristotle's terms to achieve excellence, especially 'distinctive excellence', is not just honourable; it is 'attached to the name of function'. That attachment lifts the function out of the realm of individual self-consciousness and into the realm where action is virtue. In Othello, the eponymous hero farewells 'The big wars,/ That makes ambition virtue' (III,iii,355-356), since for him too his occupation is more than a job but is his function, reflecting the good in him for the good of the state. For the good achieved by a particular function only has value in relation to more general civic purposes. Virtue is thus naturally social, a view which Shakespeare presents in Measure for Measure when the Duke tells Angelo:

Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,  
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues  
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike  
As if we had them not.

1,1,33-36

The virtuous self can only be such if its virtue is illuminated by being in the world as socially-directed action. The Duke's view reflects Aristotle's: that man's function is not an outward role with the real self conceived in some inward way as Montaigne suggests; but man's function is the outward expression of his whole

5. Aristotle, The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics, trans. by J.A.K. Thomson (London: Penguin, 1976) pp.75-76.

self, now socially received and justified.

Like Aristotle's 'good man' Coriolanus' function, as warrior, implies the irrelevance of self-consciousness in his capacity to perform a useful deed. Accordingly, he refuses any later recognition for his military services, expecting them to speak for themselves. This is his answer when praised by the Roman soldiers for his feats in battle:

Pray now, no more: my mother,  
Who has a charter to extol her blood,  
When she does praise me grieves me. I have done  
As you have done; that's what I can; induced  
As you have been; that's for my country:  
He that has but effected his good will  
Hath overta'en mine act.

Corio. I, ix, 13-19

His actions are 'done' in both senses: they lived only in their present. Yet Coriolanus cannot be as separate in his actions as he would wish, for it is not possible to avoid the after-effects of deeds upon others. Coriolanus speaks in an abrupt, almost staccato rhythm in his effort to dismiss his actions. He even uses the past tense in an effort to preclude any response to what he says. Moreover, the parallel, dominant clauses 'As you have done' and 'As you have been' elevate the services of the soldiers and simultaneously denigrate Coriolanus' services. For praise, to Coriolanus, is not the desirable thing it seems. On the contrary, the juxtaposition of 'praise me, grieves me' makes praise almost synonymous with grief. This apparent modesty may seem false, like an inverted pride, since his deeds are

so excellent they could not but inspire great admiration from others. But his modesty is not in relation to his compatriots. There is more in his intent than he has been able to carry out, making his modesty relative to his own will. Praise from others detracts from the dictates of his will by creating an addition to his self - a new aspect that is about him but not fully controlled by him. His lack of control is increased by the preservation of his deeds by the praise of others in time; praise lifts deeds, as it were, out of time, out of him, even to the immortalizing of them. Coriolanus wants his deeds to exist as actions that are accomplished and then finished with. For he is not interested in being a thinking thing involved in either anticipation or retrospective contemplation. The time well spent in action is the end in itself.

Furthermore, by applauding deeds, praise transforms those deeds by showing them in a new and essentially public context. For the people, to give their praises is, as Sicinius the people's tribune says, their public right:

the people  
Must have their voices; neither will they bate  
One jot of ceremony.

Corio. II,ii 136-137

The people's idea of gratitude is not simply that they should thank Coriolanus for his military services. They believe that they are owed some celebratory public event in which they have a share, as if Coriolanus' services

have become their property by their arbitrary recognition of his worth. By shunning their praises Coriolanus is refusing to give himself as an object of adulation. What he wants is to remain in possession, as it were, of himself, of the ideal public meaning of his acts.

Montaigne might approve of Coriolanus' dismissal of the regard of others for his self, for this is what Montaigne has to say of the opinions of others:

None but your self knows whether you be demiss and cruel, or loyal and devout. Others see you not, but ghesse you by uncertain conjectures. They see not so much your nature as your arte. Adhere not then to their opinion, but hold unto your owne.

Montaigne III p.26

For Montaigne the opinions of others about the self are based on such frail evidence - art being so separate from nature - that their opinions could have no reliability. Montaigne's form of order is founded upon this recognition of the necessary practice of artifice in an artificial world. Indeed to regard external opinions of the self's public face would be dangerous. For external views of the self might sway the inner self's confidence in its inner knowledge of itself: the shift from 'adhere' to 'hold' implies the opposite pulls of 'their opinion' and 'your owne'. For Montaigne to hold onto one's own opinion is the only available holdfast in a shifting world. Hence his need for what Hazlitt praises in Montaigne: inner honesty. Nevertheless, it is disturbing that what are socially directed, and what should be

easily discernible, feelings such as loyalty or cruelty cannot be externally distinguished. But from Montaigne's defensive secondary stance the implication that the inner self cannot find in the external world any evidence of the worth of others, or validation of its own worth, is only to be accepted with a kind of shrugging politic complacency.

Coriolanus, whose incapacity for complacency would make him rather follow his enemy into 'a fiery gulf/ Than flatter him in a bower', could hardly survive in such a distrustful and private mental world as that suggested by Montaigne's vision (III,ii,91-92). In being banished from Rome Coriolanus, I have argued, is not only parted from Rome but also parted from himself so that this figure of uncompromising belief incites chaos, albeit unconsciously, within his own ordered self while he wreaks near-destruction upon the external world. Offering his vengeful services to Aufidius in order to attack his beloved Rome, Coriolanus, of his own name, says this:

Only that name remains.  
The cruelty and envy of the people,  
Permitted by our dastard nobles, who  
Have all forsook me, hath devour'd the rest;  
Corio. IV,v,74-77

Coriolanus cannot simply separate the people from Rome. He has to separate himself from Rome, himself from Rome's rewards till, if he cannot have integration, he will have revenge instead. But he does not claim revenge in his old name Coriolanus; what he was, he implies, has



been destroyed by the very thing which gave him being, leaving him, in a sense, obliterated. Poised with Aufidius to attack Rome he refuses to answer his friend and compatriot, Cominius, who reports, with some awe, of his attempted meeting with Coriolanus:

Coriolanus

He would not answer to: forbad all names;  
 He was a kind of nothing, titleless,  
 Till he had forged himself a name o' the fire  
 Of burning Rome.

Corio. V,i 11-14

The nothingness is still Coriolanus because it is his own self-willed negation, his potent refusal. Even as this 'kind of nothing' Coriolanus is yet himself, even in anonymous waiting. He is still his deed at the moment of doing it, so that the burning of Rome will be the re-proving of his old shape in new deeds. In this in-between time, in-between deeds, Coriolanus lacks the force - but not the potential - in himself called forth only in the state of action and makes him feel the lack of the very cause of himself.

In battle Cominius had described Coriolanus as 'a thing of blood, whose every motion/ Was tim'd with dying cries' (II,ii,109-110). He is still that strangely inhuman 'thing of blood', more frightening in its waiting stillness than in the pulsing action of its death-blows. For Coriolanus is held in the awe appropriate to a God, to Mars. 'When he walks,' says Menenius:

he moves like an engine and the ground shrinks  
 before his treading. He is able to pierce a  
 corslet with his eye, talks like a knell, and  
 his hum is a battery. He sits in his state as

a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity, and a heaven to throne in.

Corio. V,iv,18-25

There is something magnificent about Coriolanus, a magnificence which makes even the Romans he is poised to destroy only able to admire him, since his valour is ever what it was, and valour Cominius says 'is the chiefest virtue and/ Most dignifies the haver' (II,ii,84-85). Coriolanus is both elevated beyond the human and also something closer to the inhuman. For as this God-like thing Coriolanus seems to have no humanly available self left at all. Thus, he is seemingly resistant even to Menenius' tears: 'O my son, my son, thou art preparing fire for us: look thee, here's water to quench it' (V,ii,70-71). Coriolanus' ideal of military virtue is hardened by revenge into impervious principle.

Yet, caught unawares - faced with his wife, his mother, his child - Coriolanus is, of a sudden, not impervious to his human bonds:

I melt, and am not  
Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows,  
As if Olympus to a molehill should  
In supplication nod; and my young boy  
Hath an aspect of intercession which  
Great nature cries, 'Deny not!' Let the Volsces  
Plough Rome and harrow Italy; I'll never  
Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand  
As if a man were author of himself  
And knew no other kin.

Corio. V,iii 28-37

Coriolanus' strongly-forged self, defined by principle, is now powerfully awed by the strength of its own

weakness. The juxtaposition which crushes together 'Great nature cries: 'Deny not!' and 'Let the Volscies/ Plough Rome' suggests a clash of nature and will, face to face, as if the one with the greater imperative can drive the other out. But this is more than the conflict of two opposing parts of his self, as is implied by Aufidius' inadequate explanation: 'He bow'd his nature, never known before/ But to be rough, unswayable and free' (V,vi,25-26). The simplicity of such an explanation - that Coriolanus became soft in the melting moment of test - does not express the deep confusion of what is really at stake in Coriolanus' situation. Coriolanus is torn apart by the paradox of the opposite, yet equally powerful pulls of his very self - a self he had known previously as single-minded, integral. This is chaos. For his wife, mother and child are not just his family. They are him too, outside of him - as his family and also as aspects of Rome, aspects which reflect back to him his own proud and believed-in meanings. To destroy them would be to destroy a greater and deeper part of himself than that devoured by the people's cruelty and envy. Yet not to destroy them is still to destroy some principle, equally vital, in his self. For what he realizes is that as a man and not the God he seemed, he is not author of himself.

Coriolanus only temporarily re-asserts his will, and defies instinct by a kind of defiantly admitted pretence. 'Like a dull actor now,' he says as he weeps, 'I have forgot my part and I am out,/ Even to a full disgrace'

(V,iii 40-41). Earlier Coriolanus had resisted acting with a kind of contempt for such shameful artifice: 'It is a part/ That I shall blush in acting' (II,ii,145) he had announced. Now, as if he perceives himself becoming two where before he had been ever one, he can recognize in himself the (Montaigne-like) guise of acting, or he pretends that his self was just a 'part', even as he speaks from another piece of himself. For there is a vital difference between Montaigne's form of self-protective acting and Coriolanus' sudden awareness of a split between his principles and his feelings. For Montaigne, acting is a way of avoiding chaos. But Coriolanus is not deliberately dissimulating in order to avoid a terrible situation; he is caught unawares, as if suddenly conscious that the truth is not the simple thing it seemed, related only to and founded upon the self's own will.

The extent to which Shakespeare creates this paradox of chaos for his character, Coriolanus, without resolving it, finally, is highlighted by John Dennis' version of the play in which Coriolanus subsequently defeats his rival, Aufidius, and emerges as simply a hero (6). This ending makes his choice of opting for his family uncomplicated and smoothly justified by the treachery and

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6. See Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage, 1693-1733, ed. by Brian Vickers (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), ii, p.14: 'For Coriolanus Dennis invoked another critical canon, poetic justice, to protest against what is evidently a deliberately unjust and ironic ending by Shakespeare. By making Coriolanus himself kill his crooked adversary Aufidius (together with three tribunes) Dennis gives Shakespeare's most complex character a simple, heroic status'.

ultimate defeat of Aufidius. Yet in Shakespeare's original version Coriolanus seems defeated by something more subtle, more disturbingly ambiguous, more tragic. For so little does Coriolanus truly comprehend of acting as deliberate strategy that he virtually gives Aufidius the opportunity to betray him. Hazlitt writes of that betrayal:

He admires in an enemy that courage which he honours in himself; he places himself on the hearth of Aufidius with the same confidence that he would have met him in the field, and feels that by putting himself in his power, he takes from him all temptation for using it against him.<sup>7</sup>

It could be that Coriolanus is just too naively trusting when he offers himself into Aufidius' hands without anticipating a possible betrayal. But Hazlitt makes no reference to a weakness of trust. On the contrary, he calls Coriolanus' trust in Aufidius, 'magnanimity'. For believing in his own character as truth, Coriolanus assumes that likewise Aufidius' belief in his own similar self transcends self-interest (8). It is a primary assumption of linkage, as deep as magic, as instant as sheer being. Coriolanus takes it for granted that the offering of the opportunity to kill him will preclude Aufidius' betrayal of him, since to do so would

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7. The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), iv, 'On the Characters of Shakespear's Plays', p.217, hereafter referred to as 'Hazlitt, IV'.

8. Hazlitt would be interested in the matter of self-interest since he himself in his first major essay 'An Essay on the Principles of Human Action' wrote against the primacy of the Hobbesian view that the sense of pleasure and pain is the sole spring of action, and self-interest the source of all affections.

require a treacherous deceptiveness of which he himself has no comprehension. Thus, Shakespeare's treatment of Coriolanus throws open a terrible possibility: that the strength of belief might actually be more like a weakness, that the world in which the self believes might be no more than the self's own unconscious creation and that, separately, independently, the world can ignore or subvert the version of itself so deeply cherished as the very source of that self's existence. All this would not be news to Montaigne in his canny relativism; but the loss of the absolute is to Coriolanus first the experience of utter chaos and then finally the cause of his life's death. This is a paradox characteristic of the antithetical order I am calling Shakespearian chaos.

Like Coriolanus, Othello is a Shakespearian hero whose implicit sense of the need for trust is a vulnerable and unconscious consequence of his strength of belief in something greater than mere self-interest. He believes in Desdemona as Coriolanus believes in Rome. And likewise, it is precisely that heroic quality of trusting belief in Othello which, though a seeming strength, acts as a kind of magnet to the chaotic force as it is embodied in Iago, making that apparent strength the source of its own devastating ruin. Where the very world denies Coriolanus, Iago now fools Othello. It is with Othello that Shakespeare takes chaos fully into the personal realm in which Coriolanus ended.

## II. Othello: Chaos as Order

Trust can be a simple term. According to the Oxford English Dictionary it can mean 'The confident expectation of something; hope' (OED 2). As such, as hope rather than, say, belief, trust implies only the risking of confidence in somebody or something and, if broken, such trust might easily be withdrawn with nothing lost. But to give trust so lightly that it could be thus rescinded, as if given on credit, is trust in its weaker sense: 'Confidence in the ability and intention of a buyer to pay at a future time for goods supplied without present payment' (OED 3). A lightly given trust is merely a loan, a well-considered gamble, the losing of which would be only a degree less expected than the winning.

Trust in its biggest sense has a deeper definition; it relies on 'some quality or attribute of a person or thing, or the truth of a statement' (OED 1a). For in its biggest sense trust is really more than a hope. It is a deep implicit belief in the truth of something or in the truth of another person. Trust given to another person represents so strong a belief in the truth of that person that the vulnerability it risks seems safe or even taken for granted, transformed from vulnerability into something which offers itself to be treasured, not abused. The marriage vow is an example of a deep trust, in promise given to another person - a kind of contract of faith, ratified by law:

not to be enterprised, nor taken in hands  
 unadvisedly, lightely, or wantonly, to  
 satisfie mens carnal lustes and appetites,  
 like brute beastes that have no understanding:  
 but reverently, discretely, advisedly, soberly.<sup>9</sup>

The solemnity of the words is all-important for it implicitly recognizes that the breaking of marital trust is far more serious than merely disappointing the confidence which each partner invests in the other. Nobody would trust if trust felt as though it in any way implied the expectation of that trust being broken, even though trust is given without guarantee. But the lack of guarantee does not make trust foolish gullibility. By definition trust carries discernment; its belief is in 'the quality of being trustworthy; fidelity; reliability; loyalty, trustiness' in the other person (OED 4). The discernment of the trusting self comes from feelings which validate the belief in the fidelity of the other. Thus, trust is not just felt as a permanent belief in another person; it is also trust in the permanency of the self's own personal judgment of that other. It is, then, a terrible thing to break the promise of the Prayer Book:

And forsaking all other kepe thee onely to  
 him, so long as you bothe shall live? - I will  
 Prayer Bk p.253

Finally, trust is not an isolated element of dependency upon another person; it represents a whole sense of inner order for the self who trusts.

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9. The First and Second Prayer Book of King Edward the VI (London: J.M. Dent, 1910), p.252, hereafter referred to as 'Prayer Bk'.



The breakdown of that whole ordering-principle of trust, inside and out, creates chaos, for without a previous sense of order chaos could not occur. Such a breakdown of the order of trust is what one classical figure of tragedy, Othello, suffers when he is told of Desdemona's apparent infidelity, for he has lived unquestioningly in the surety of his trust in her. But his strong sense of safety through trust is, like Coriolanus' belief in his separate self, paradoxically, a vulnerability:

Excellent wretch, perdition catch my soul,  
But I do love thee, and when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again.<sup>10</sup>

To 'love her not' seems, at the moment of speaking, an impossibility. For Othello says this to Desdemona before his whole life is overwhelmed by the humiliatingly personal loss of his previously uncontested order. 'Perdition catch my soul, / But I do love thee': as if the strength of his present feeling of love is as substantial as an action ('do') and, furthermore, constitutes a sign of the permanently present safety of his feelings. He is sure too, of love itself - so sure that he can playfully dare 'perdition'. He even dare say 'when I love thee not', not 'if I love thee not', precisely because there seems no risk. His words bespeak only a delight in loving Desdemona; his sense of order comes from trusting her and trusting love itself.

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10. William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. N.J. Sanders (Cambridge: The New Cambridge Shakespeare, 1984), III,iii,91-91, hereafter referred to as 'Othello'.

Othello can have no real comprehension of his own words 'Chaos is come again'. Living within a structure of order, he cannot truly imagine what chaos is. Quite naturally, he has not thought how destructive it might be that his whole sense of order does depend upon Desdemona. But chaos does come. It comes as the immediate, unapprehended consequence of the fracturing of Othello's strong sense of trust in Desdemona's love. The greater the strength of trust's order, the larger is the capacity for chaos, tearing apart order like the returning revenge of a primal power only temporarily tamed. Chaos is not experienced merely as loss; it arises like a nemesis upon human ordering in all its frailty.

The dramatic creation of immediate chaos is achieved partly through Shakespeare's method of laying bare the 'anterior states of mind' of character. Schlegel writes of Shakespeare's art:

If Shakespeare deserves our admiration for his characters, he is equally deserving of it for his exhibition of passion, taking this word in its widest signification, as including every mental condition, every tone, from indifference or familiar mirth to the wildest rage and despair. He gives us the history of minds; he lays open to us, in a single word, a whole series of their anterior states. His passions do not stand at the same height, from first to last, as is the case with so many tragic poets, who, in the language of Lessing, are thorough masters of the legal style of love. He paints, with inimitable veracity, the gradual advance from the first origin; 'he gives,' as Lessing says, 'a living picture of all the slight and secret artifices by which a feeling steals into our souls, of all the imperceptible advantages which it there gains, of all the stratagems by which it makes every other passion subservient to itself, till it becomes the sole tyrant of our desires and

our aversions.'

The Romantics p.100

Shakespeare dramatizes the human passions, not as constants within a character, but as chaotic powers working upon the 'soul' of a character. These primal powers, shown in their first origins as working through 'anterior' states of mind, mean that Othello is not a drama merely about the destructive passion of one man's particular jealousy. When Othello says 'Chaos is come again', it is, as I have said, an affirmation, fearlessly stated, of his unthreatened sense of order. His words 'lay open to us' the 'history' of his mind's experience. That 'history' displays a state of hitherto uncontended trust - precisely the state of stability, which, when disturbed, is most productive of disorder, just as Coriolanus' belief in his separate self is an assurance which harbours its own vulnerability.

Othello's situation of broken trust, resulting from Desdemona's supposed infidelity, releases the power of a primal human chaos. Such primal chaos unleashes the human feelings at their most raw, their most unprepared and seemingly original - the primary feelings. Indeed, William Hazlitt admires Shakespeare's work for getting closer to the original feelings in a situation than perhaps any other writer:

It is observed by Mr. Pope, that "If ever any author deserved the name of an original, it was Shakespear".

Hazlitt IV p.171

Hazlitt uses Pope to support his claim that Shakespeare's genius is to create models which capture the 'living principle of nature' (11) rather than being mere artistic copies. Othello, I am saying, is the original model of the feeling of horror in a situation of sexual betrayal.

Othello suffers a fall from the very ordering principle of his life, but that fall is only one part of the chaos in this drama, for there is a double chaos in Othello. Othello's trust is broken but what characterizes this chaos is not just disappointment in the loss of order. For, frighteningly, Desdemona was also not untrustworthy. The transmutation of her trustworthiness into its seeming opposite signals the real nature of this chaos: that it effects a terrifying inversion of order in which people and feelings are turned back-to-front. Iago effects, and embodies, this inversion of order. He can bring about the inversion of order because his cynical vision, for all its perversity, does know more than Othello by knowing both how trust thinks and how cynicism thinks. Othello's trusting vision can only, through its nature, know trust, cannot conceive of chaos: he is a figure of order engulfed by a seemingly external situation of chaos. From his more knowing standpoint Iago, in a kind of experiment, puts on trial Othello's hitherto untested trust. It is an experiment in which Iago creates outside himself the very idea of himself: 'I am not what I am' he declares (I,i,65), in verbal exhibition of his own paradoxicalness. He makes manifest

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11. See Chapter One, note 12.

a whole world of paradox, a conception of his own vision of twisted meanings. Hazlitt writes of Iago:

His gaiety, such as it is, arises from the success of his treachery; his ease from the torture he has inflicted on others. He is an amateur of tragedy in real life; and instead of employing his invention on imaginary characters, or long-forgotten incidents, he takes the bolder and more desperate course of getting up his plot at home, casts the principal parts among his nearest friends and connections, and rehearses it in downright earnest, with steady nerves and unabated resolution[...]

The Romantics p.492

Iago knows the character of the Moor as a playwright knows his characters: 'Were I the Moor,' he says, 'I would not be Iago' (I,i,57). Iago is, in a sense, the other side of Othello's vision of trust. For though they are in one sense opposites (12), there are terrifying connections between Iago and Othello, sufficient to make

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12. For a discussion of Iago's relation to Othello see Jane Adamson, Othello as Tragedy: Some Problems of Judgment and Feeling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.74: 'Increasingly clearly, we realize that his [Iago's] power as a hunter and 'poisoner' derives, not from any splendid intellect, but far more from the particular constitutions of his chosen victims. This is true not only in his relations with Othello, but equally with Roderigo and with Cassio, with Brabantio, even (in a rather different way) with Emilia and Desdemona. In each case Iago is more a catalyst that precipitates destruction than a devil that causes it: without his victims' infirmities - including their propensity to trust him - he is in fact utterly impotent'.

F.R. Leavis classically over-emphasizes Iago's success as dependent upon Othello's actual 'readiness to respond'. See The Common Pursuit (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), pp.140-141: 'And it is plain that what we should see in Iago's prompt success is not so much Iago's diabolic intellect as Othello's readiness to respond. Iago's power, in fact, in the temptation-scene is that he represents something that is in Othello - in Othello the husband of Desdemona: the essential traitor is within the gates...The tragedy is inherent in the Othello-Desdemona relation, and Iago is a mechanism necessary for precipitating tragedy in a dramatic action'.

the two seem one in the transfer of meanings. Critics have long noted how Iago and Othello are affined in a relation which makes Iago's influence over Othello as powerful as if another part of Othello himself leads Othello to destruction. For it is not the case that Iago simply lies, telling Othello that Desdemona is unfaithful. Straightforward lies do not invert order; they lie about the truth without fracturing the order of truth itself. More disturbing than a liar, Iago feeds Othello's imagination with inner doubts so that Othello's own thoughts create a countervailing belief in Desdemona's infidelity. For that is all Othello can do - believe, either way. He cannot simply disbelieve in, let alone merely suspect, Desdemona. He believes she is a whore, finally and inevitably.

Othello's first unconscious response to Iago's perverse suggestion of betrayal is a collapse of personal confidence, his confusion not yet deeply inside him, but yet deeply productive of destructive thoughts. His distress is a dawning sense of his own physical unworthiness:

Haply, for I am black,  
 And have not those soft parts of conversation  
 That chamberers have, or for I am declin'd  
 Into the vale of years, - yet that's not much -  
 She's gone, I am abus'd, and my relief  
 Must be to loathe her

Othello III,iii,267-272

Othello seems never before to have had such thoughts. The shock that his own face, his speech, his age may not please Desdemona is felt as if for the first time. For

his are always now the primary feelings - the feelings which arise in dramatically immediate response to betrayal. Othello is unprepared for this new sense of himself and this new idea about Desdemona. The failure to apprehend a reason for her apparent abuse of his trust is worse than discovering some explicatory reason. 'She's gone, I am abus'd, and my relief/ Must be to loathe her' implies instead the dreadful possibility that she deceives him wantonly, without cause. The sequence of the tenses - past, present, future - implies a whole new reality, full of hopelessness. For 'gone' really means that he is deserted, as if she never existed as well as her being lost to his future. Desdemona's apparent desertion leaves him now with the terrible alternatives of loving her still, or loathing her through a desire to replace the humiliation and confusion he would suffer through his still loving her. To loathe her in place of loving her would be that hellish inversion of extremes of emotion I call chaos, the sense of order seen through a terrible looking-glass. That chaos of hellish inversion is just what Iago seeks, he who finds 'gaiety' in 'treachery' and gets his 'ease' from 'torture'.

But to carry on loving Desdemona would make Othello loathe himself; for in a mechanism in which people as well as emotions are caught now in distorted reflection of themselves, Othello becomes to himself an image of the loathing he wants to feel towards Desdemona:

I had rather be a toad,  
And live upon the vapour in a dungeon,  
Than keep a corner in a thing I love,

For others' uses

Othello III,iii,274-277

'I had rather be a toad' is the self-loathing he would feel, as his own proud self, were Othello not to cast her off. For Othello is Desdemona to himself when he becomes that loathed 'toad'. Othello has reflected back to him the loathsomeness he passes on to Desdemona, for loathsomeness is what Iago, in his perverse identification with Othello, passes on to him. 'Now do I love her too' Iago says of Desdemona:

Not out of absolute lust [...]  
 But partly led to diet my revenge,  
 For that I do suspect the lustful Moor  
 Hath leap'd into my seat, the thought whereof  
 Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards  
 Othello II,i,290-293

As he talks of revenge upon Othello it is as if he, Iago, has been cuckolded by Othello. This is frightening: not because there seems any truth in Iago's suspicion, but because as he wrongs him, Iago identifies so closely with Othello, that he assumes the very emotion with regard to Emilia that he is trying to incite in Othello in respect of Desdemona. In this chaos of inversion there are terrible identities between people and feelings, both changing places madly. Thus, Iago's jealousy of Cassio - '(For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too)' (II,i,302) Iago claims - is turned instead into Othello's jealousy of Cassio. I quote Hazlitt, writing of how, strangely, Iago becomes victim of his own strategies:

He is quite or nearly as indifferent to his own fate as to that of others; he runs all



risks for a trifling and doubtful advantage;  
and is himself the dupe and victim of his  
ruling passion - an insatiable craving after  
action of the most difficult and dangerous  
kind.

The Romantics p.492

For all his manipulative skill, Iago is careless of his own 'fate', as if he is so absorbed in preying on the lives of others that he is not really engaged in his own life at all. In this sense his experiment is out of his own control though he does not think so. Regardless of how his own experiment affects him, it means for Othello that, like a parasite, Iago gets under Othello's skin, into his wife, behind Othello's forehead. Iago substitutes himself in place of Othello's identification with Desdemona, without Othello realizing it.

Indeed, Othello has not realized, until he begins to lose his identification with Desdemona, how much his own identity has been dependent, naturally, upon his love for her. 'My name,' mourns Othello:

that was as fresh  
As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd, and black  
As mine own face

Othello III,iii,392-394

The cadence of 'as...as...as' effects a merging of the nouns 'name', 'visage' and 'face' so that by implication Othello's and Desdemona's identities were one and the same. For in a sense people's identities do not remain separate when they love: the two are really one, just as any ideal located outside self is really also inside too, as in Coriolanus' case. Othello had experienced loving

as if it simply came from him and to him, not fully realizing how deeply that shared experience was him. Now, losing identification with Desdemona, that sharing is twisted into incomprehensible division for both of them. 'I saw Othello's visage in his mind' Desdemona had said, lovingly (I,iii,252), innocent of the possibility that the 'visage' of Othello's mind could change. Now, Desdemona does not even understand Othello's language: 'I understand the fury in your words,/ But not the words' becomes her bewildered plea, full-up with fear (IV,ii,32-33).

Othello, losing identification with Desdemona, is damaged on more than a personal level. There is a kind of ricochet effect, so that the private, humiliated self undermines the public man just as the sexual betrayal gets in behind or below Othello, so to speak, unmanning him:

O now for ever  
 Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,  
 That makes ambition virtue: O farewell,  
 Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,  
 The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife;  
 The royal banner, and all quality,  
 Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!  
 And, O ye mortal engines, whose wide throats  
 The immortal Jove's great clamour counterfeit;  
 Farewell, Othello's occupation's gone!

Othello III,iii,353-363

This is more than a farewell to his past and to what he thought he was in it. 'O now for ever' gapes into the future so that his lost past takes with it the expected future that belonged to it. But his farewell to 'The big wars,/ That makes ambition virtue' is deeper than

nostalgic grief for the loss of meaningful action. It is the loss of the transmuting upgrading of basics: Othello's basic 'ambition' gets its motivating justification by becoming the way to 'virtue', a specifically public 'virtue'. 'Not I, I must be found' he could insist earlier, urged by Iago to flee Brabantio's wrath (I,ii,30). With pride in the knowledge of his reputation, this announced his confidence in a real and complete self defined by honourable action. But now, the man of action he thought himself has no public justification for underlying motives as means to an end for the state. Othello's 'occupation', like his love turned into loathing, is transmuted into its opposite, for 'gone' again swallows the fullness of his public life, reducing it to nothingness.

Unconscious of the nature of this chaos, Othello still speaks with the sort of logic and sense of personhood that seemed to exist before his fall into chaos:

If I do prove her haggard,  
Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,  
I'd whistle her off, and let her down the wind,  
To prey at fortune.

Othello III,iii,264-267

So little does Othello understand the chaos which has now got inside him, he thinks his situation could be solved or corrected by the simple soldierly dismissal of unwanted feelings. But logic is reduced to clumsy banality by the experience of real jealousy. 'Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings' implies 'even if'

they were, but what is so terrible is that it is true, they are his 'heart-strings', through the dependence which mutual love creates. Othello, betrayed, does not just feel hurt, he feels cast out, made homeless and yet - and this is the characteristic Shakespearian contradiction - he is trapped in the place of his 'heart'.

For Othello cannot simply stop himself from loving when he thinks his love betrayed. He only imagines that he can exercise such authority over his deepest feelings. 'Away at once with love or jealousy!' he declares, as if feelings are disposable (III,iii,196). His words, though, are a kind of injured boast: better to break his own heart in casting her off than to have her break it, he thinks in his simpler account of inversion in the play. He thinks that putting his indignation into action would be the resolving of his hurt: what he does not realize is that such proposed action only imitates his passive suffering in re-creating it from the other direction, showing as ever the nature of a two-sided coin in this chaos. Othello's intention to cast off Desdemona feels like strength to him here, seems like the strength to make his own pain bearable by pushing it and its cause away. But to punish her by banishing her only looks like a logical solution: really it would take the creating of another emotion for him both to effect and recover from her banishment:

Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy?  
To follow still the changes of the moon  
With fresh suspicions? No, to be once in doubt,

Is once to be resolv'd: exchange me for a goat,  
 When I shall turn the business of my soul  
 To such exsufflicate and blown surmises,  
 Matching thy inference:

Othello III,iii,181-187

Disconcertingly 'To be once in doubt,/ Is once to be resolv'd' is a horrible echo of Othello's earlier assertion: 'But I do love thee, and when I love thee not' (III,iii,91). For the rhythm of the first clause in both cases too easily yields the alternative of the consequent clause. Still it is the case that Othello thinks he is the man of action. He thinks he can do something immediately. For this is Othello not in doubt, only thinking about the doubt caused by jealousy. He speaks proudly of 'the business of my soul', as though to live upon suspicion would be a stooping of his honourable 'soul' denied by the nature of his very being. What Othello does not recognize is that he is now steeped in a chaos which makes his whole way of being as a man of honourable and publically-honoured action, redundant.

Iago, whose instinct is to know the truer nature of this chaos, more knowingly, says this:

That cuckold lives in bliss,  
 Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger:  
 But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er  
 Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves!

Othello III,iii,171-174

Iago, with ironic amusement, almost mocks Othello's ingenuous response with these words. The rhythm of Othello's language is productive of straight-forward, albeit too quickly arrived at thoughts. But the stops,

like turns here, in Iago's words: 'Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves!' suggest the contradictoriness characteristic of suspicion. Each pairing ('dotes, yet 'doubts'; 'suspects, yet strongly loves') is not composed of two separately opposite things, but more confusingly each pairing is the one thing unable to live with itself. Iago's and Othello's understandings of suspicious jealousy differ crucially. Othello's words: 'To follow still the changes of the moon/ With fresh suspicions?' imply the suffering in narrative time, of moving, humiliatingly, from one suspicion to another. They do not recognize, as Iago's swivelling syntax does, the wretched restlessness of suspicion which ranges back and forward in 'damned minutes'. Iago recognizes too, how suspicion creates, simultaneous with its frantic seeking after knowledge to solve its own doubts, the desperate desire to know nothing. ''Tis better to be much abus'd/ Than but to know't a little' Othello says echoingly (III,iii,342-343). To know only a little does not feel like knowledge; the 'little' implies, tormentingly, that there is still more to know, so that knowing a little is really the agony of infinite, monstrous suspectings.

Suspicion is so much a torment that it makes knowing nothing look like 'bliss' or happiness:

I had been happy if the general camp,  
Pioners, and all, had tasted her sweet body,  
So I had nothing known:

Othello III,iii,352-353

Othello's wish to be 'happy' inside the imagined illusion of knowing 'nothing' is a self-contradictory attempt to get away from his real feelings. What he does feel, in his sexual confusion, is a despairing kind of revulsion for what he still desires. For Othello's chaos is such that feelings are no longer simply one emotion or another, despite his efforts to make them seem so. The memory of Desdemona's sweetness is felt alongside the present feeling of thinking her unfaithful, and this is a confusion which is temporal as well as sexual. What makes for the contradiction - a contradiction that he is now in, as it were - is that he says he would settle for a happiness whose hidden ingredient is itself the cause of his present unhappiness. If only her unfaithfulness could have remained hidden it could not have mattered, is what he wants to think. But ignorance is not really 'bliss'. Iago's 'bliss' ('That cuckold lives in bliss/ Who...loves not his wronger'), like Othello's 'had been happy' then, in some retrospectively conjectural past, really means deeply unhappy now. For Iago is not saying that to love without knowing of the cuckolding is 'bliss'. He is really saying the reverse: that love, knowing of the cuckoldry, is hell. 'Bliss' is a perversion, a kind of hell. 'Divinity of hell!' exclaims Iago, as if this is precisely where his pleasure lies - in the perversion of meanings (II,iii,341). The loss of the true nature of meanings is a characteristic of a chaos which uses order as a form for its own creation of disorder.

Thus, terrifyingly, the chaos Iago creates uses the terms and forms of order, but does so back-to-front and in disordering ways that reverse order by order's very own principles. Hence, Iago's delight is in trapping Desdemona, and 'em all', through her very own goodness:

So will I turn her virtue into pitch,  
And out of her own goodness make the net  
That shall enmesh 'em all.

Othello II,iii,352-353

What is so frightening about Iago's words here is that 'virtue' and 'goodness' come to seem the reverse of what they really are. Were Iago to use faults in Desdemona to effect his plan, he would still be guilty of sadistic mischief, but there would be some little justice in Desdemona's faults being the instruments of evil. But for goodness to be able to seem so changed that it effects its own 'trapping' suggests it is a sickening mockery of itself. Iago embodies that spirit of mockery.

As Othello's trusting vision crumbles under the new order of crossed-over meanings, that mockery is precisely what he is forced to conceive in heaven:

Desdemona comes,  
If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself,  
I'll not believe it.

Othello III,iii,281-283

A heaven that mocks itself is emblematic of a whole order of inversion which Iago makes accessible to Othello's mind. Buckminster Fuller has written of the 'self-interfering pattern' of the knot: that is what Othello is, a play that twists itself, its relations and all



order inside-out, back-to-front (13). For this is Othello on the brink of chaos: he is not just saying that Desdemona may be false; he is saying that if she is, then the order of all meanings is steeped in some form of ghastliness. 'O then Heaven mocks itself' does worse than destroy goodness; it turns goodness into a kind of madness. It suggests a whole world of meanings insanely deceptive for not taking the meanings of goodness seriously. Such a heaven is the hellish creation of Iago's twisted vision of the world.

Simulating the same concern - that the very concept of goodness is its own mockery - in a language whose irony mocks Othello's bewilderment, Iago rails at a world that may be so 'monstrous' that honesty cannot safely exist in it:

O monstrous world, take note, take note, O world,  
 To be direct and honest, is not safe,  
 I thank you for this profit, and from hence  
 I'll love no friend, since love breeds such offence.  
 Othello III,iii,383-386

Iago's pretends this injured rebuke to Othello's accusation that Iago, in slandering Desdemona, tortures him. The pretence itself exhibits precisely Othello's fear of a mockery which inverts meanings. Frighteningly, though, Othello does not here recognize Iago's pretence. For Othello, Iago's words, like Othello's own serious horror at a heaven which mocks itself, see in the world an inversion of heaven and hell - as ever in a sort of mimicry or reverse identification. Othello's conceiving

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13. Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (London: Faber, 1972), pp.145-146.

of that 'monstrous' world marks the culmination of Iago's hellish wish:

I ha't, it is engender'd; Hell and night  
Must bring this monstrous birth to the  
world's light.  
Othello I,iii,401-402

As if he has just thought of a sudden solution to an issue that is troubling him, but with more improvisation than Othello's immediacy, Iago reacts to his own idea with hideous delight. The idea is itself a contradiction; 'Hell and night' are associated with death, not birth. Moreover, for the idea to be a kind of birth makes for the creation of destructive chaos at the very heart of meanings. Iago's ability to so intertwine opposites - 'night' with 'light'; 'birth' with the implied death of 'Hell'; 'Hell' with its implied heaven - twists order into tangled meaninglessness so that Iago can say - as if it makes him, the source of its conception, an innocent! -

And what's he then, that says I play the villain,  
When this advice is free I give, and honest,  
Probal to thinking, and indeed the course  
To win the Moor again?

Othello II,iii,327-330

'Indeed the course': the most terrible thing behind Iago's manipulative skill is that he so deliberately works within the orders of honesty and guilelessness, like a seducer within another man's wife. The advice he gives is, hypocritically, just that advice that would be the way for Cassio to win his way back into Othello's

favour. This makes his a villainy so closely resembling honesty it can hardly be detected for what it really is, just as he himself is ever to evade being known: 'Demand me nothing, what you know, you know' are his final, maddeningly elusive words (V,ii,302). Though scrutiny could not determine Iago's villainy, yet he is the villain. But since his villainy acts like honesty, it is not just hidden beyond detection. It is 'probal to thinking'. It should be possible, surely, to effect evil without needing to disguise it as good. But here meanings are not just disordered through a villainy which operates within the forms of goodness; their very fabric is disintegrated. The effect on Othello not only makes him unable to probe Iago's meanings, he can barely think at all:

By the world,  
I think my wife be honest, and think she is not,  
I think that thou art just, and think thou art not;  
I'll have some proof.

Othello III,iii,389-392

Othello is bewildered by contradictions, his language threatening to collapse into the sort of meaninglessness characteristic of Iago's language. In mock explanation of Othello's violence towards Desdemona, Iago tells Lodovico:

He's that he is; I may not breathe my censure,  
What he might be; if, as he might, he is not,  
I would to heaven he were!

Othello IV,i,266-268

Iago's language is laced with clauses which twist back on themselves, making for a nonsense of contradictions. Othello is beset with the contradictoriness of his own incompatible thoughts: now somehow Desdemona seems both honest and dishonest, and Iago both just and unjust. Desdemona's honesty has not been replaced by knowledge of her dishonesty; now it exists alongside it, as an equally plausible possibility. Likewise, if she is honest, then Iago is unjust; but he also seems just - in which case Desdemona is not honest. So how can it be that Desdemona is honest and Iago is just? The two - Iago and Desdemona - have become inextractable from one another. This is reason itself making for more chaos. The lines read as statements, but it is as if there should be a question mark at the end of each line. Again, with the desire for immediacy which is left over from his man-of-action mode, Othello demands: 'I'll have some proof'. The demand seems to Othello like a temporary, external answer, as much a relief as hating her, for 'think' going inward only spins inside the paradoxes, making a failure of 'thinking'. Resolution seems only possible in external proof, but proof that can only prove her guilt (and therefore Iago's justness). But the demand is in fact now a psychological defence outside the competence of action. Innocence really cannot be proven: 'Her honour is an essence that's not seen' (IV,i,16) Iago perversely advises Othello. Iago renders that essence powerless, simply by knowing that it is not tangible.

What Iago puts into effect should appal, should so offend that the order of goodness he perverts ought to react, if there were any force in it. Othello, in near-desperation, believing goodness more than a private essence, warns Iago:

If thou dost slander her, and torture me,  
 Never pray more, abandon all remorse.  
 On horror's head horrors accumulate:  
 Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amaz'd,  
 For nothing canst thou to damnation add  
 Greater than that.

Othello IV,iii,373-378

Othello says this, still believing in an order of meanings that is not yet become chaotic, which nonetheless does feel threatened, but which may, like Othello, avenge. Horrified that there is the possibility of a false Desdemona, Othello stands yet more appalled that the falseness could come from Iago instead. This is because for Othello, that Iago should 'slander' Desdemona and simultaneously 'torture' him, is an inconceivably greater crime than any personal cruelty could imply; it represents the conception of a horror so grave that his heaven, a heaven that does not mock itself, would 'weep' with the pity of it. The meaning of horror spreads as does the confusion itself. 'Earth', as if in shocked response, would look on 'amaz'd' at such self-perpetuating horror.

But, despite the power of his words, Othello's 'warning' comes from a sense of powerlessness. For he is already himself in 'damnation'. Suffering in this hell - Iago's creation - but without recognizing its disorder of

meanings, Othello's resolve upon revenge feels like justice. To punish a wrong is ratified by the old lost order of meanings; it feels like meaningful, just action:

Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic sea,  
Whose icy current, and compulsive course,  
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on  
To the Propontic, and the Hellespont:  
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace  
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,  
Till that a capable and wide revenge  
Swallow them up. Now by yond marble heaven,  
In the due reverence of a sacred vow,  
I here engage my words.

Othello III,iii,460-469

The solemnity and control of Othello's contractual words are more dangerous than his previous naked violence: 'I'll tear her all to pieces' (III,iii,438). He appears to be sane again when really he is, unknowingly, so disturbed by Iago's dire vision that he now uses religious language with unwitting perversity: 'heaven...reverence...sacred'. He does not call it murder, because this act of his feels like the right thing displaced into the wrong context and still feels so right to him that nature itself would conjoin in his revenge, would 'swallow them up'.

He can only effect this awesome commitment by denying the influence of his love. This is why he repeats 'never' four times: it is the other side of fidelity's 'for ever'. 'Ne'er feels returning ebb' is absorbed by 'ne'er ebb to humble love': the verb 'ebb' has a momentum lacking in the noun, so that the love that Othello really feels is to be swept aside by the pace of revenge. By likening his 'bloody thoughts' to the flow of the Pontic

Sea, Othello borrows its powerful, inexorable force so that his purpose has a 'violent pace' as 'compulsive' and as permanent as the natural ordering movement of the oceans. To make himself strong enough to 'keep due on', to 'ne'er look back', he has to make his love seem weak. He proudly dismisses it as a 'humble' love. By the end of this speech Iago, in lieu of Desdemona again, kneels with Othello. Like a parody of the wedding vow the speech marries them in a single purpose.

The magnificence of Othello's language is mocked into repulsive savagery through the disorder that lies behind it. For the disorder in Othello's mind has swollen now from the specific doubt of Desdemona's fidelity into a whole dreadful sympathy with Iago, and tightened upon itself like the self-involved structure of a knot. Othello's action of revenge upon Desdemona seems to him an act, however terrible, which restores some kind of order. But, in fact, it turns out to be action which perverts and ties up the very order it thinks it stands for. And even knowing at last that he has been ensnared by Iago, knowing that Desdemona was not false, Othello's final act is yet a contour of the pattern of disorder:

I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee, no way but this,  
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.

Othello V,ii,359-360

'No way but this': there is no 'way' out of chaos for Othello. Dying, his 'kiss' for his dead Desdemona does not signify the restoration of order, but is the mark of a love mutated into an emotion more like pain - 'The

stroke of death is as a lover's pinch': only the erotic of Antony and Cleopatra has become horribly grotesque (14). Othello carries its horror all the way through to its end.

In my next chapter I shall analyse Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier in relation to Othello. The primary feelings evoked by Othello's original suffering of betrayal are what Dowell has lost in the context of twentieth-century nihilism, which does not remember the big tragic feelings but suffers them half-consciously as the blank loss of such. The implication of Dowell's secondary form of loss is not merely that Dowell cannot, cathartically, overcome his own grief in his situation of personal chaos; it is also that his whole world exists in want of the human dimension which validates the primary human feelings of an Othello. The Good Soldier is a counter-example, showing what it would be like to have a (modern) literature of neo-chaos that emphatically did not belong, as it were, to the school of Shakespeare.

### III. Not Othello: The Good Soldier

Alasdair MacIntyre writes about the relation between the ancient tradition to which the heroic virtues are intrinsic and the apparent 'freedom' of choice of values

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14. William Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra, ed. by D. Bevington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), V,ii,289.



in modern society:

The exercise of the heroic virtues [...] requires both a particular kind of human being and a particular kind of social structure. Just because this is so, an inspection of the heroic virtues may at first sight appear irrelevant to any general enquiry into moral theory and practice. If the heroic virtues require for their exercise the presence of a kind of social structure which is now irrevocably lost - as they do - what relevance can they possess for us? Nobody now can be a Hector or a Gisli. The answer is that perhaps what we have to learn from heroic societies is [...] that there is no way to possess the virtues except as part of a tradition in which we inherit them and our understanding of them from a series of predecessors in which series heroic societies hold first place. If this is so, the contrast between the freedom of choice of values of which modernity prides itself and the absence of such choice in heroic cultures would look very different. For freedom of choice of values would from the standpoint of a tradition ultimately rooted in heroic societies appear more like the freedom of ghosts - of those whose human substance approached vanishing point - than of men.<sup>15</sup>

Nobody can now be an Othello. Even Othello himself began to mark the move from outward-looking public function to underminingly private feelings and inner responses. But what MacIntyre is saying here about the relation between modern morality and ancient morality is analogous to the relation between Othello's response to his situation and that of Dowell in the twentieth-century novel, Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier. Othello, as the model of the original feelings in a situation of sexual betrayal, suffers what I have called a primal human chaos; Dowell suffers a secondary form of chaos in a modern situation

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15. Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue (London: Duckworth, 1990), pp.126-127.

of sexual betrayal. I am going to compare Dowell with Othello in order to define the terms of this thesis more clearly, in practice, showing how Othello figures as the ancient hero that haunts Dowell as the loss of earlier powers of response.

To be able to act upon the power of feeling requires more than the strength of feeling; it requires some moral structure to ratify response and action dictated by feeling. Othello can be affected and can act upon his feelings because a whole social and moral structure has been transgressed, as well as the fact of his being personally hurt. Othello's suffering is not just about being affected emotionally as it is for Dowell - whom I will now cite as representative of the twentieth-century loss of structures of meaning. Othello's powerful emotions determine his conduct, which is validated by his cultural context. 'Even if the individual moved freely,' Kierkegaard asserts of classical tragedy, 'he still rested in the substantial categories of state, family, and destiny' (16).

What happens to Othello - in becoming the murderer of his own beloved Desdemona, an innocent - presents an outcome of twisted meanings which disabuses trust, appals belief in any kind of order. But for all the identification, it is also true that finally chaos remains outside Othello, in the figure of Iago. Othello himself lives and dies with a belief in definite

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16. Soren Kierkegaard, Either/Or, trans. by Swenson and Swenson, 2 vols (1843; London: Oxford University Press, 1944), i, p.116.

boundaries of meaning. The anagnorisis of Desdemona's innocence means that Othello, outwardly, was wrong. But discovering the truth - that he made a mistake, a mistake which appals his own sense of justice - makes his own suicide itself an act of justice. He had become the enemy of order, the 'Turk'. As himself, Othello, he kills that enemy and, in his terms, suicide rights the inversion of order. His final apprehension of his situation is that he, being 'wrought', got it wrong, but the right, the good - all the impersonal absolutes - were ever there. Though personally Othello dies in the wrong order, as I have shown, nonetheless for him, his suicide is the final powerful gesture of his self which gives meaning, albeit tragic meaning, to his life even at the cost of his own physical destruction. Furthermore, the inversion of order, though frightening and destructive of meanings, provokes profound horror, a horror which is itself testimony to an underlying belief in order.

For Dowell, betrayal is not a transgression to be understood through some underlying social and moral structure. Morality in his twentieth century can no longer resolve the blurring distinctions of sexual relations. Though a blurring of distinctions could be construed as the greater freedom of modernity, my intention is to illustrate that what MacIntyre says is true of Dowell: the so-called 'freedom of choice of values' characteristic of modernity is not experienced as a desirable state at all. In Dowell's case the lack of structures of meaning is contributory to his whole sense

of chaos as energy-less limbo. 'There is nothing to guide us' he says:

And if everything is so nebulous about a matter so elementary as the morals of sex, what is there to guide us in the more subtle morality of all other personal contacts, associations, and activities? Or are we meant to act on impulse alone? It is all a darkness.<sup>17</sup>

Without structures there are no clear, morally-directed actions or emotions, only nebulosity. The loss of structures of feeling in relation to morality, unreplaced by any new orders of meaning, causes a dislocation of Dowell's self from his own feelings. For Dowell seems to have no feelings at all. Consider what he says of his situation:

You ask how it feels to be a deceived husband. Just heavens, I do not know. It feels just nothing at all. It is not Hell, certainly it is not necessarily Heaven. So I suppose it is the intermediate stage. What do they call it? Limbo. No, I feel nothing at all about that. They are dead; they have gone before their Judge, who, I hope, will open to them the springs of his compassion. It is not my business to think about it.

G.Soldier p.68

The ordinariness of the language and the casual rhythm of the syntax are disconcerting. The form itself drives out concernedness: foreshortened sentences, repetitions, colloquialisms. Dowell's words seem to express loose thoughts about a situation - not his own

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17. Ford Madox Ford, The Good Soldier (1915; London: Penguin, 1946), p.18, hereafter referred to as 'G.Soldier'.

personal situation - towards which he is rightly indifferent. But the language is not just ordinary: it is jaded and the feelings are so diluted that apparently not even the mildest distress is expressed for a situation which should make Dowell damn heaven. For Dowell has so distanced himself from his emotions that the situation itself seems nothing to do with him. It is not 'how I feel as a deceived husband' but, more evasively, 'you ask how it feels to be a deceived husband'. The evasion becomes outright dismissal of the real and terrible disasters which have left his life in ruins, with 'It is not my business to think about it', as though Dowell is washing his hands of the whole affair.

Chaos cannot be dramatically great for Dowell as it is for Othello; Dowell's chaos is apparently subdued through his blankness. For how cold and emptily unconcerned this man seemingly is. What can be wrong with somebody who, knowing himself to be a deceived husband, and speaking of the deaths of his wife and her lover - his best friend, can say that it feels 'just nothing at all'? His talking is more a cursory 'just nothing' than an outraged 'Just heavens', as in Othello, for this novel is more like temporary talk than the permanency of writing. Indeed, Dowell seems the antithesis of the outraged and hurt hero, as if there is no conflict in his situation: he expresses no jealousy, no anger, no blame, only numbed detachment. Dowell appears to be not only emotionless, but also strangely not surprised at his own lack of reaction, just vaguely exasperated as if it is

all no more than a 'damnable nuisance', without that old word 'damnable' quite coming to life (p.40). It is as if what John Fowles' Daniel Martin says of sexual emancipation and the eagerness to experiment - 'perhaps it was really our first step into the twentieth-century' - were here true of a curiously flat acceptance of adultery (18).

This is the twentieth-century Novel after the Drama has long since taken place. Dowell's emotionless attitude exemplifies Ford Madox Ford's advice to another writer, Lucy Masterman, to forget any importance of past orders of meanings:

Forget about Piers Plowman, forget about Shakespeare, Keats, Yeats, Morris, the English Bible and remember only that you live in our terrific, untidy, indifferent empirical age, where not one single problem is solved and not one single Accepted Idea from the past has any more any magic.<sup>19</sup>

Ford's severing of the modern age from its entire cultural history effects more than a rejection of past orders of meanings. The epithets he uses: 'terrific, untidy, indifferent, empirical' cast the modern age adrift so that it is a post-age stranded from a historical context or tradition - the posteriority of the twentieth-century is precisely what concerns and dismays both MacIntyre and Herzog. On a personal level, Dowell is likewise stranded from the context of his own life's past

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18. John Fowles, Daniel Martin (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), p.103.

19. Ford Madox Ford, The Letters of Ford Madox Ford, ed. by R.M. Ludwig (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p.55

events. But though Ford denies the relevance of past orders, the very denial implies that the 'post' age of modernism exists still in memory of the past, experienced as blank loss. The 'magic' of Othello haunts The Good Soldier as the memory of the lost first-order reactions to a situation of sexual betrayal.

Dowell's sense of betrayal comes from the back-dated discovery of his wife Florence's affair with his best friend Edward Ashburnham. He discovers the truth not only after the affair is over, but also after the suicides of both his wife and Edward. Furthermore, the story reaches him second-hand, through Leonora, Edward's wife, who had known of the affair from its onset. Hence, Dowell's chaos is posterior as well as secondary. He is unable to respond to such second-hand and belated discovery of infidelity by experiencing feelings of outrage and hurt which are traditionally and classically called-up by a situation of sexual betrayal. I cite, in contrast, Othello's open and immediate, first-order reaction of insuppressible rage at being a 'deceived husband' -

Had it pleased heaven  
 To try me with affliction, had he rain'd  
 All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,  
 Steep'd me in poverty, to the very lips,  
 I should have found in some part of my soul  
 A drop of patience; but, alas, to make me  
 A fixed figure, for the time of scorn  
 To point his slow unmoving finger at...Oh, oh.  
 - Yet could I bear that too, well, very well:  
 But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,  
 Where either I must live, or bear no life,  
 The fountain from the which my current runs,  
 Or else dries up, to be discarded thence,  
 Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads  
 To knot and gender in!

Othello IV,ii,48-61

Othello communicates the torment of feelings which he cannot thus get away from even verbally. The collapsing syntax of lines 56 and 61 ('But there where...gender in') is not evasive, but is evidence of Othello's dramatic emotion, so strong that public language can only partly express what he feels. He can only articulate partly present feelings about partly imagined alternatives: 'Had it pleased heaven...had he rain'd...I should have found...yet could I bear'. These forms of public suffering are less than he does feel in his present situation. Othello has to imagine other forms of suffering which are relative to what he does feel, knowing as he does how bad his real situation feels. In contrast, Dowell, feeling nothing partly through no longer knowing how he should feel, cannot even imagine the situation he actually is in.

'But there, where I have garner'd up my heart' marks the move to now, to Othello's real feeling in his real situation, though he cannot quite bear to say 'here', admitting how close his private pain really is. The words enfold a space that is like a gasp of horrified pain, felt even as he speaks. The tortuous paradox - 'Where either I must live, or bear no life' - leaves him with no resource in himself to bear the sum of betrayal since what is betrayed is his very self's source. For the shift from verb to noun ('live'...'life') is not the even-handed choice it seems - to live or to die. Instead, life is more like a kind of continuous dying in sustaining still a life he cannot bear. Thus, to 'bear' life is



quite unlike Dowell's continuing to live in emotional emptiness. The weight of Othello's suffering has become his life's meaning. But as if his life's suffering has been mere drudgery, all Dowell can say is 'So life peters out' (p.227).

Othello cannot contain his agony, but exposes it. He is belittled by his humiliation, but there is something in his ability to express his immediately felt hurt in big, emotional language which makes his suffering itself of consequence. But though Othello's chaos leads him to destruction, Dowell is no less destroyed in a sense. For Dowell's utter blankness evidences the cancelling-out of his very self. Conversely, the very power of Othello's furious reaction to betrayal means that Othello opposes that which threatens his sense of order: the power of the man is still there in that defiance of his situation. But Dowell's numbness means that his survival is worse than Othello's death for, in a way, Othello's death still throws him into being, as I have said. But Dowell's surviving blankness constitutes a statement of the futility of existence, a futility which swamps his own personal life.

In fact, through denying his own suffering Dowell damages his self even more than it has been already damaged by the humiliation of sexual betrayal. To hide his pain from the world is an attempt to protect himself from shame, but to hide it from himself is a more serious form of emotional dishonesty. It is a semi-deliberate coping strategy to survive the real hurt, but it does not

make his painful feelings go away. Instead those feelings become distorted so that rather than being expressed as anger and pain and outrage, they come out not as emotion, but in a twisted form, such as Dowell's shocking indifference to his wife's suicide:

From that day to this I have never given her another thought; I have not bestowed upon her so much as a sigh.

G.Soldier p.113

Dowell's external appearance of indifference belies his real inner experience. His real inner experience is despair, but a secondary despair since, in Kierkegaard's phrase in The Sickness Unto Death, Dowell has really despaired of despairing (20). Dowell has given up on his pain, without being able to get rid of it.

Dowell is stuck in a kind of emotional paralysis caused by the first shock of betrayal:

And yet I swear by the sacred name of my creator that it was true. It was true sunshine; the true music; the true splash of the fountains from the mouth of stone dolphins. For, if for me we were four people with the same tastes, with the same desires, acting - or, no, not acting - sitting here and there unanimously, isn't that the truth? If for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover its rottenness only in nine years and six months less four days, isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple?

G.Soldier p.14

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20. Soren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, trans. by A. Hannay (1849; London: Penguin, 1989), see pp.74-75 for Kierkegaard's discussion of the relation between ignorance and despair: 'Compared with the person who is conscious of his despair, the despairer who does not know he is in despair is simply one negativity further from the truth and deliverance. Despair is itself a negativity, ignorance of it a new negativity'.

That he still suffers from shock is implicit in the precision of the time of discovery: 'nine years and six months less four days'. The externally countable fact is in frightening contradiction to Dowell's internally stunned feeling of disbelief:

I can't believe it's gone. I can't believe that that long, tranquil life, which was just stepping a minuet, vanished in four crashing days at the end of nine years and six months.

G.Soldier p.13

'Vanished in four crashing days': these words admit shock, they know the factually manifest truth, as if Dowell is pushing his hiding to breaking point. But Dowell is so traumatized that he cannot let, or make, himself believe in the truth (for this is 'can't', not 'don't' believe). For instead of truth seeming like straightforward knowledge, it is now complicated by the actual truth having been always hidden inside false knowledge. Dowell's knowledge of his past comes as a brief moment of disclosure which disproportionately ruins all his past - so that four days count for more truth, yet make for far less meaning, than nine years.

Dowell can barely register the horror he really feels inside. 'Isn't that the truth?...isn't it true to say?', he weakly asks, without daring to probe the terrible issue which his questions actually raise - that his past happiness was not true, that he was cheated and betrayed by his wife and his friends. Rather, his questions trail off into blankness, for they are

themselves already tired-out, as if there is a time-lag which makes the questioning redundant anyway in the worn-out present.

The whole narrative is characterized by such implicit, fatigued purposelessness. Dowell does not even know where in time to tell his story from:

I don't know how it is best to put this thing down - whether it would be better to try to tell the story from the beginning, as if it were a story; or whether to tell it from this distance of time, as it reached me from the lips of Leonora or from those of Edward himself.

G.Soldier p.19

'This thing' he calls it, in almost-horror, since it so little resembles a story and since he does not understand his own relation to the telling. Indeed, he does not speak with the authority of a protagonist at all. He is more like a voice without a context, unable even to decide from which perspective to tell the story. It has, after all, several possible perspectives and as he has no belief in the veracity of his own perspective, there is no clear, right one from which to tell it. Moreover, since he only found out about the betrayal after it happened, the story does not seem to have any coherent sequence. Yet Dowell is aware that it does constitute a series of contingent events. As if in pursuit of its true sequence the narrative keeps turning back on itself, but without the sense of being able to get anywhere:

One remembers points that one has forgotten and one explains them all the more minutely since one recognizes that one has forgotten to mention them in their proper places and

that one may have given, by omitting them,  
a false impression.

G.Soldier p.167

'Recognizing' the 'forgetting' is not quite the same as remembering. Dowell's memory of the past brings things to light, makes for new understandings which disturbingly stupefy old understandings by throwing new light on them. But the new understandings do not replace the old; they just complicate the whole process of retrospection. Though there seem to be 'proper places' they do not make the 'points' any clearer or any more real to him.

Freud writes of the complexity of the process of remembering:

The other group of psychical processes - phantasies, processes of reference, emotional impulses, thought-connections - which, as purely internal acts, can be contrasted with impressions and experiences, must, in their relation to forgetting and remembering, be considered separately. In these processes it particularly often happens that something is 'remembered' which could never have been 'forgotten', because it was never at any time noticed - was never conscious. As regards the course taken by psychical events it seems to make no difference whatever whether such a thought-connection was conscious and then forgotten or whether it never managed to become conscious at all. The conviction which the patient obtains in the course of his analysis is quite independent of this kind of memory.<sup>21</sup>

Freud's claim is that there is frequently a strange, complex relation between experienced events and the

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21. Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, International Psycho-Analytical Library Series, 37 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through', xii, pp.148-149.

mind's subsequent understanding of those events. 'Connections' may be made afterwards which seem to the process of remembering to have been forgotten. Yet 'forgotten', Freud implies, is the wrong term, for not all that seems remembered was conscious to the mind at the time to which memory assigns the importance of the remembered thing. But Dowell never reaches what Freud calls 'conviction'; Dowell's memory is so damaged that he can only get as far as recognizing significant points without being able to identify their significance. Dowell's remembering does not help him to find synchronized meanings in his life which untangle the past; remembering just tangles the past up even more. Dowell's personal history remains an unsettled thing, and ever a source of interminable, muted misery. For though this story is all over, Dowell cannot himself finish with it or put it into narrative order.

How greatly does this contrast with Othello's relation to his experience of a primary chaos. 'I pray you in your letters' he says to Lodovico, Brabantio's kinsman:

When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,  
 Speak of them as they are; nothing extenuate,  
 Nor set down aught in malice; then must you speak  
 Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well:  
 Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,  
 Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,  
 Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away,  
 Richer than all his tribe: of one whose  
 subdu'd eyes,  
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
 Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
 Their medicinal gum; set you down this,  
 And say besides, that in Aleppo once,  
 Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk  
 Beat a Venetian, and traduc'd the state,

I took by the throat the circumcised dog,  
And smote him thus.

Othello V,ii,341-357

These are Othello's final words. He is concerned with how the terrible events of his personal life will be reported in Venice; the concern itself assumes that a life has narrative order since it can become meaningful story. Fantastically, by killing himself Othello re-defines the meaning of his narrative. He splits himself into three: he is the guilty barbarian and the victim of the barbarian, the Venetian; but more importantly he is still the 'I': the self who finally refuses to let his story alone condemn him, the self who feels so much the power of his own being that he can act in near-separation from his story, even to end that being and take hold of the story's final meaning.

But Dowell is alienated from his own story. He does not feel as though he has been instrumental in any of its events. He feels no connection with his personal life that would justify any action whatsoever. Besides, his experience has implied that his is a world in which the individual self is not only dislocated from its own story, but has no meaningful connection with others. On the other hand, Othello's need to kill himself reflects precisely that there are meaningful connections between the self and the world. The story of Othello's life matters greatly; it is the memory of what he was, as a self, for all time. Othello's act of suicide is not private as Edward Ashburnham's suicide is private and as

Dowell's suffering is private. Othello's suicide is public and as such it supposes a human world which will feel both terror and pity for his story.

Conversely, Dowell's secondary chaos is characterized by a sickening loss of any humanist dimension in his life and in life in general. 'It is a picture without a meaning' he says as if life, losing its nineteenth-century humanist third dimension, is become like poor quality art: two-dimensional, the third an illusion (p.228). But in fact the sort of art Ford is interested in is precisely that in which the third-dimension is hidden. Consider what Ford says about Henry James' fiction, offering the following episode as an analogy:

The thing will be at its climax tomorrow. You cannot stand the strain in town and you ask your best friend - who won't be a friend any more to-morrow, human nature being what it is! - to take a day off at golf with you. In the afternoon, whilst the Courts or the Stock Exchange or some woman up in town are sending you to the devil, you play a foursome, with two other friends. The sky is blue; you joke about the hardness of the greens; your partner makes an extraordinary stroke at the ninth hole; you put in some gossip about a woman in a green jersey who is playing at the fourteenth. From what one of the other men replies you become aware that all those three men know that to-morrow there will be an end of you; the sense of that immense catastrophe broods over all the green and sunlit landscape. You take your mashie and make the approach shot of your life whilst you are joking about the other fellow's neck-tie, and he says that if you play like that on the second of next month you will certainly take the club medal, though he knows, and you know, and they all know you know, that by the second of next month not a soul there will talk to you or play with you. So you finish the match three up and you walk into the club house and pick up an illustrated



paper [...] That, you know, is what life really is - a series of such meaningless episodes beneath the shadow of doom - or of impending bliss, if you prefer it. And that is what Henry James gives you - an immense body of work all dominated with that vibration - with that balancing of the mind between the great outlines and the petty details. And, at times, as I have said, he does this so consummately that all mention of the major motive is left out altogether.<sup>22</sup>

The golf game is all surface, like a two-dimensional world. The private self exists in concealment, from oneself as much as from others, behind the orderly enactment of public life. Feeling is manifested, not as distinct emotions felt honestly inside the self, but dispersed into an indefinite brooding dread almost tangible as an external atmosphere. Neither the underlying reality nor the actual game are fully real, so that life is acted out in a peculiarly remote way.

That the people all know that they know that they are acting is the acquired and shared secretiveness necessary to preserve the social orderliness. Social orderliness requires rules; it implies a whole world of conformity to social conventions. Freud views some degree of conformity as a necessity:

Human life in common is only made possible when a majority comes together which is stronger than any separate individual and which remains united against all separate individuals. The power of this community is then set up as 'right' in opposition to the power of the individual, which is condemned as 'brute force'. This replacement of the power of the individual by the power of a community constitutes the decisive step of civilization. The essence of it lies in the

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22. Ford Madox Ford, Henry James: A Critical Study (1913; New York: Octagon Books, 1980), pp.154-155.

fact that the members of the community restrict themselves in their possibilities of satisfaction, whereas the individuals know no such restrictions.<sup>23</sup>

For human life in a community to become civilized demands the subjugation of the individual self to the power of the larger community. The conventions developed within a civilized community do not then provide moral guides; they are not to be taken inside as meaningful order, such as the order in which Othello believes so unquestioningly that he can think himself an instrument of external justice. These are rules which require instead a kind of tacitly agreed obedience of the individual to the social machine, not only in the giving-up of individual power, but also in accepting 'restrictions' which reduce individual fulfilment. The self, in other words, must be tamed in order that the community survive. A tamed society merely creates a safe world of people safely adjusted to rules. Such a world, by creating such inert safety in its tameness, has its own kind of meaninglessness, especially in the degenerated forms that Ford and James recognize. It is as if the revenge upon civilization of its own need to tame its creatures is that it produces, even out of the very orderliness, the kind of nihilistic chaos Herzog resists.

Dowell's experience of betrayal makes him conscious

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23. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, International Psycho-Analytical Library Series, 37 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 'The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents and Other Works', (1927-1931), xxi, p.95.

of this second-order tameness in lieu of meaningful human ordering. In his version of the game of golf, he suffers horror at a world which has nothing real about it:

I know nothing - nothing in the world - of the hearts of men. I only know that I am alone - horribly alone. No hearthstone will ever again witness, for me, friendly intercourse. No smoking-room will ever be other than peopled with incalculable simulacra amidst smoke wreaths. Yet, in the name of God, what should I know if I don't know the life of the hearth and of the smoking-room, since my whole life has been passed in those places?

G.Soldier pp.14-15

Having once known the world of the 'smoking-room', but now conscious only of its lack of human substance, Dowell cannot recover or cling to a form of living which seems mere surface. Yet the cadence keeps returning to it, uselessly: 'I know nothing - nothing in the world - of the hearts of men. I only know that I am alone - horribly alone'. But 'only' is residual, the survivor, the vulnerable word - just as 'Yet' in 'Yet what should I know if I don't know' leaves him no refuge outside the place he can barely stay inside anymore. Dowell suffers a disorientating disappointment in his own species so deep that people do not seem like other human beings to him, but like utter strangers. Neither can he trust his own inner senses because they apparently betrayed him as much as he was betrayed by the world he did not fully understand. But Dowell cannot simply reject his world, for he does not lose the need for it. Dowell truly suffers the concern of After Virtue - that the loss of

values exists, baffled, alongside the still existing painful need for such.

But Leonora, who has secretly shared the situation of sexual betrayal with Dowell, does not suffer the same profound disillusionment with a world ordered by such tameness. For Leonora's life has ever been the conscious acting-out of conventions of which she is a product. She can live a life of utter pretence without being horrified by such a life for she does not quite know it as such, as Dowell belatedly does. She requires nothing deeper than a life dictated by convention. Thus, she cares only 'to keep a shut mouth to the world' about her private suffering in order to have respectability in her version of the game of golf or the smoking-room (p.163). For Leonora is 'normal'. Her normality means that she has to live within conventions, for without them and with nothing deeper within her self, she can barely survive:

All the world was mad around her and she herself, agonized, took on the complexion of a mad woman; of a woman very wicked; of the villain of the piece. What would you have? Steel is a normal, hard, polished substance. But, if you put it on a hot fire it will become red, soft, and not to be handled. If you put it in a fire still more hot it will drip away. It was like that with Leonora.

G.Soldier p.215

Leonora is shaped by her own story. As molten steel takes the shape of the mould, she becomes monstrous through what happens to her as easily as she could be moulded into conventional goodness, if her circumstances

permitted. But unable to live without rules, even if inverted ones, Leonora becomes 'wicked' as a way of forcing some inverted form of morality into what for her is a senseless situation: namely, that Edward, after a life-time of sexual betrayals, will not succumb to his desire for their ward, Nancy. Leonora wants to despise Edward, but could only feel pure hatred if it was caused by Edward's faults, when what she actually hates him for, inversely, is his 'final virtue' of resisting Nancy (p.184). With her very being dripping away, Leonora has to borrow the persona of 'the villain', take on the 'complexion of a mad woman' as if in this guise she can give her painful rage a conventional context to express itself. For it is better for her to be bad herself, in the way that she would prefer Edward to be, than to float painfully in a situation which seems otherwise to defy all conventionally moral terms.

Yet the transference to herself of the wickedness she thinks she suffers from Edward's infidelity does not mean that Leonora is conscious of the degree of her hurt any more than Dowell is conscious of his. Her wickedness is not conscious revenge. At another moment she can make herself believe that by condoning an affair between Edward and Nancy, she is being selfless and righteous. How unbearable is this loose twentieth-century world, in which it is not possible for responses to be anything but secondary, distorted things, mimicking and unauthenticated because they are disconnected from real feelings. Thus, Dowell, losing the sense of betrayal, can

even say that he identifies with Edward, conventionally his wronger:

For I can't conceal from myself the fact that I loved Edward Ashburnham - and that I love him because he was just myself. If I had had the courage and virility and possibly also the physique of Edward Ashburnham I should, I fancy, have done much what he did.

G.Soldier p.227

Dowell's feelings towards Edward are disturbing, for they do not express his liberal, forgiving understanding of his wronger. Dowell grieves for Edward not as Edward, but as if what Dowell knew of Edward was what Dowell himself really was. Yet his grief is not regret that he did not, like Edward, behave like the polygamist. Instead Dowell's admission of potential polygamy implies the fearful thought that human beings may not have anything at all that distinguishes them as individuals. Only biological accidents make them behave as they do: 'If I had had the courage, the virility...the physique'. This is a move on from the notion of the self as a scientifically determined product of external circumstances, such as was feared by John Stuart Mill. Here the self is not even a derived thing. It is something so unstable that a self seems no more than an aspect of a situation rather than a creature of will reacting to a situation. Hence, the external situation of Dowell, Edward, Leonora and Nancy does not resemble a moral predicament in which four people are personally involved. Instead it is more like an impersonal, self-generating, fluid shape which keeps changing and changing

with it the apparently finished past. 'As for Nancy,' Dowell observes:

I know what was passing in her mind, for Leonora has told me that, once, the poor girl said she felt like a shuttlecock being tossed backwards and forwards between the violent personalities of Edward and his wife. Leonora, she said, was always trying to deliver her over to Edward, and Edward tacitly and silently forced her back again. And the odd thing was that Edward himself considered that those two women used him like a shuttlecock. Or, rather, he said that they sent him backwards and forwards like a blooming parcel that someone didn't want to pay the postage on. And Leonora also imagined that Edward and Nancy picked her up and threw her down as suited their purely vagrant moods.

G.Soldier pp.226-227

This chaos has its own senseless rules in which people are involved, not as people, but as mechanical things endlessly transferring pain in an entrapping configuration. Life is reduced to a two-dimensional game, lacking all depth. The relations between them all are governed, not by human feelings, but by their positions in the game. Leonora, in order to keep Edward, persuades Nancy to become his mistress. Thus Leonora is becoming again, through Nancy, Edward's desire. But Edward can resist desire by resisting those two in their different pressures. Not one of them - Edward, Leonora, Nancy - can actually act separately. Almost inconceivably, all three are at once victims and perpetrators, the hurt to-ing and fro-ing between them like 'shuttlecocks'. It is perplexing that victim and perpetrator can seem only versions of one another: it makes for the confusion of feeling the nebulous mix of both hurts. The pain they all

cause and the pain they all suffer is blurred - suffering and inflicting suffering is become the same thing in different modes for all of them.

With no distinguishable feelings and no separate selves, only one terrible, simple truth emerges from the complicated relations between people: that there are no meanings to be extrapolated from the complexity. 'Well, it is all over' is all that Dowell can say, his words idly giving-up even on the meaninglessness of his life's story:

Not one of us has got what he really wanted. Leonora wanted Edward, and she got Rodney Bayham, a pleasant enough sort of sheep. Florence wanted Bradshaw, and it is I who have bought it from Leonora. I didn't really want it; what I wanted mostly was to cease being a nurse-attendant. Well, I am a nurse-attendant. Edward wanted Nancy Rufford, and I have got her. Only she is mad. It is a queer and fantastic world. Why can't people have what they want? The things were all there to content everybody; yet everybody has got the wrong thing. Perhaps you can make head or tail of it; it is beyond me.

G.Soldier p.213

Dowell seems to accept that life is just what happens. He shrugs off the possibility of there being any meaning, even of wrong, to this story, as if its lack of a serious, tragic dimension is of no consequence. All that there is for those who survive - Nancy, Leonora, Dowell - is puzzlement over the recalcitrant facts of experience which are pitiful but not without comic absurdity.

Yet there is no real sense of survival: Nancy is driven mad by her experience; Leonora is unchanged, even despite her terrible emotional breakdown:



Upon her return from Nauheim Leonora had completely broken down - because she knew she could trust Edward. That seems odd but, if you know anything about breakdowns, you will know that by the ingenious torments that fate prepares for us, these things come as soon as, strain having relaxed, there is nothing more to be done.

G.Soldier p.183

Leonora can recover from this breakdown since her acquired distrust of Edward was never quite an inner state of her being. It was a desperate strategy of bitter accommodation to control a situation which already controlled her. When her attempt at cynical distrust failed, she broke down because of having no sense of order left at all. A new situation, replacing the unbearable one of marriage to Edward and conditioned by more conventional rules, permits Leonora's recovery. Consequently her second life with Rodney Bayham is defined by only a different form of complicity from that of her earlier complicity in Edward's repeated infidelities.

Dowell's survival has nothing of recovery about it. For the form of distrust from which he suffers is far more than a secondary strategy. Dowell's distrust is a frightening development which leaves him with no belief left in life at all. 'How is it possible to have achieved nine years and to have nothing whatever to show for it?' he asks:

And, as for experience, as for knowledge of one's fellow beings - nothing either. Upon my word, I couldn't tell you offhand whether the lady who sold the so expensive violets at the bottom of the road that leads to the station, was cheating me or no; I can't say

whether the porter who carried our traps across the station at Leghorn was a thief or no when he said that the regular tariff was a lira a parcel. The instances of honesty that one comes across in this world are just as amazing as the instances of dishonesty. After forty-five years of mixing with one's kind, one ought to have acquired the habit of being able to know something about one's fellow beings. But one doesn't.

G. Soldier p.39

Dowell's words look like facetious chat. Indeed the polite word 'one' suggests the language of the 'good people', the language of a conventionalized society which keeps up appearances and conceals the truth (p.37). But this is not Dowell becoming conventionalized. This is a borrowed model of language by means of which Dowell holds his real pain at a distance, trivializing the full horror of what his experience of living has really meant for him. For behind his apparent drollery Dowell betrays the terrible truth about his life: that living has meant nothing whatever. Not only does Dowell feel betrayed by personal experience; he has not gained 'either' a sort of cynically bitter wisdom about people. Instead of such cautionary knowledge enabling him to go on, even if cynically, he gains what feels more like loss - 'just' uncertainty. This uncertainty, in which honesty and dishonesty appear equally unlikely is the ever-present anxiety symptomatic of profoundly damaged trust.

To live on trust is risky. It can fail; it can lead to the kind of broken-heartedness Othello suffers. But to live on distrust out of fear of betrayal does not provide the safety it seems to ensure by denying trust's

vulnerability. For the order of distrust is not founded on belief; it is a contradictory secondary-ordering principle which continuously cancels out meanings, since it cannot afford to hope for meaningfulness. Dowell's distrust is no external dilemma but is inside him, is him. It is as if Dowell could not afford to stay in chaos; but chaos stays in him, lobotomizing him.

Nobody could wish to be at the centre of the terrible conflict where the need for meaning is felt and yet the only evidence is of meaninglessness. Yet there is a sense in which to remain within the tension of a clash is far more productive for the self than the kind of surrender that Dowell makes. In his work An Essay on the History of Civil Society, Adam Ferguson writes about how whole ages can fall into decay:

The manners of rude nations require to be reformed. Their foreign quarrels, and domestic dissensions, are the operations of extreme and sanguinary passions. A state of greater tranquillity hath many happy effects. But if nations pursue the plan of enlargement and pacification, till their members can no longer apprehend the common ties of society, nor be engaged by affection in the cause of their country, they must err on the opposite side, and by leaving too little to agitate the spirits of men, bring on ages of languor, if not of decay.<sup>24</sup>

In a view such as Ferguson's the world as Ford Madox Ford presents it, through Dowell, is one which has fallen into the soft, false and polite delicacy of a degenerately false civilization. In such a world there

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24. Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767; London: Gregg International Ltd., 1969), pp.366-367, hereafter referred to as 'Civil Society'.

would be 'too little to agitate the spirits of men' for Adam Ferguson's claim is that humans are, by nature, rightly compelled to seek conflict:

The most animating occasions of human life, are calls to danger and hardship, not invitations to safety and ease: and man himself, in his excellence, is not an animal of pleasure, nor destined merely to enjoy what the elements bring to his use; but, like his associates, the dog and the horse, to follow the exercises of his nature, in preference to what are called its enjoyments; to pine in the lap of ease and of affluence, and to exult in the midst of alarms that seem to threaten his being. In all which, his disposition to action only keeps pace with the variety of powers with which he is furnished; and the most respectable attributes of his nature, magnanimity, fortitude and wisdom, carry a manifest reference to the difficulties with which he is destined to struggle.

Civil Society pp.74-75

For Ferguson, humankind's drive for conflict is innate. But the drive towards conflict is also far more than mere necessity of nature. It is more, too, than a seeking after excitement as a relief from 'ease'; it is of greater moment than the egoistic wish of the self to find a worthy challenge to stimulate the self's powers. Ferguson's claim is that to be in situations which 'threaten his being' creates in the human being the least egotistical, and the most admirable, of human attributes: 'magnitude, fortitude and wisdom'.

In the following chapter I offer the eponymous heroine of Clarissa as an example of one who does display the most admirable of human attributes even through the most terrible personal experiences. In a way that Adam

Ferguson would see as a consequence of the very threatening of her meanings, Clarissa, in massive contrast to Dowell's surrender to meaninglessness, transcends the smaller meanings of her social world, even despite her ultimate physical destruction. Indeed, she prefers that physical destruction to the loss of her own order of meanings. That, I shall argue, is of Shakespearian stature, arising out of a series of chaotic and almost magically primitive dynamics such as we have witnessed in Othello.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CLARISSA: RICHARDSON'S VERSION OF THE SHAKESPEARIAN MAGICAL DYNAMIC

To Adam Ferguson, as we have seen, historical periods of complacency constitute, not a desirable stability, but a loss of the 'vigorous and ardent spirit' which characterizes periods of activity (1):

May the society be again compared to the individual? And may it be suspected, although the vigour of a nation, like that of a natural body, does not waste by a physical decay, that yet it may sicken for want of exercise, and die in the close of its own exertions? May societies, in the completion of their designs, like men in years, who disregard the amusements, and are insensible to the passions of youth, become cold and indifferent to objects that used to animate in a ruder age? And may a polished community be compared to a man, who having executed his plan, built his house, and made his settlement; who having, in short, exhausted the charms of every subject, and wasted all his ardour, sinks into languor and listless indifference?

Civil Society pp.359-360

Ferguson's view is that a prolonged state of order is not sustainable since it is the drive towards stability, not the actual state of stability, which fulfils the real

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1. Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767; London: Gregg International, 1969), p.359.

human need by producing a vigorous existence. This might have horrified the youthful J.S. Mill. For indeed, Ferguson identifies the achievement of stability as precisely the state which creates its own demise through a collapse into complacent atrophy and forgetful indifference to the motivating drive which led to that state. Order, here, is more like loss than gain.

Samuel Richardson referred to his own age as a degenerate time, careless of real values (2). To Richardson, the degeneracy manifested itself in a kind of moral torpor. His criticism of the moral torpor of his age is implicit in his postscript on the preference of the public for Nahum Tate's version of King Lear:

Yet so different seems to be the Modern Taste from that of the Antients, that the altered King Lear of Mr Tate is constantly acted on the English stage, in preference to the Original, tho' written by Shakespeare himself!- Whether this strange preference be owing to the false Delicacy or affected Tenderness of the Players, or to that of the Audience, has not for many years been tried. And perhaps the former have not the courage to try the Public Taste upon it. And yet, if it were ever to be tried, Now seems to be the Time, when an Actor and Manager in the same person, is in being, who deservedly engages the public favour in all he undertakes, and who owes so much, and is gratefully sensible that he does, to that great Master of the human passions. <sup>3</sup>

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2. Richardson makes it explicit in a letter to Lady Bradshaigh that he considered the age in which he lived to be degenerate. Clarissa, he says, appears 'in the humble Guise of a Novel only by way of Accommodation to the Manners and Taste of an Age overwhelmed with a Torrent of Luxury, and abandoned to Sound and senselessness'. Samuel Richardson, Selected Letters, ed. by John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), p.117, hereafter referred to as 'Letters'.

3. Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage 1733-1752, ed. by Brian Vickers (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), iii, p.326.

Richardson's contempt for the 'Modern Taste' is implicit in his terms 'false Delicacy or affected Tenderness'. He considers the presentation of Shakespearian drama to have become meek, pandering to polite second-order 'Taste' rather than regardful of Shakespeare's original seriousness about the human state. Nahum Tate's decision to cut the death of Cordelia from the original script palliates the tragic chaos in which King Lear originally ends.

In its original ending Albany delivers truisms in order to impress some meaning upon a situation of widespread civil and personal destruction: 'All friends shall taste/ The wages of their virtue, and all foes/ The cup of their deservings' (4). But as if already in unconscious, terrible mockery of Albany's too inadequate words that life could be governed by such order, Lear speaks his famous dying words, holding his dead Cordelia and addressing her as if she breathed yet:

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!  
 Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
 And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,  
 Never, never, never, never, never!  
 Pray you, undo this button: thank you, Sir.  
 Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,  
 Look there, look there!

K.L. V,iii,279-284

Cordelia's death classically makes nonsense of an ordered universe; her contingent death is the evidence that notions of punishment, retribution or a sense of

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4. Shakespeare, The Tragedy of King Lear, ed. by Jay L. Halio, The New Cambridge Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), V,iii,276-278, hereafter referred to as 'K.L.'



deserving do not exist. The only meaning created by Cordelia's senseless death is Lear's personal human suffering of her loss: the repeated 'no' and 'never' cannot get over this chance, the fact. With a kind of envy of all living creatures, Lear questions the bewildering small difference between Cordelia dead and Cordelia alive: the difference is not even life, so cheaply widespread, but the frailest indication of life - 'breath'. The small shift from 'life' to 'breath' traverses a huge gap despite the near synonymy of the words. For 'life' takes in, abstractly, life in general in the outside world. But 'breath' seems the real and tangible thing to Lear now, even as he speaks of his own personal loss; a thing which though so small a fraction of 'life', would mean that his Cordelia lived, even if only just breathing. But the fact of Cordelia's death is unendurable and Lear's subsequent madness of imagining that he can see the living breath on Cordelia's 'lips' makes more sense than Cordelia's senseless death. For Lear's experience implies a universe incomprehensible to human understanding.

Despite so many of his readers objecting to the death of his own heroine at the end of the novel (5),

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5. Mrs Bradshaigh recalls Colley Cibber's response when she informed him that Richardson's character, Clarissa, must die: 'G-d d-n, if she should; and that he should no longer believe Providence, or eternal Wisdom, or Goodness governed the world, if merit, innocence, and beauty were so destroyed: nay, (added he) my mind is so hurt with the thought of her being violated that were I to see her in Heaven, sitting on the knees of the blessed Virgin, and crowned with glory, her sufferings would still make me feel horror, horror distilled'. Duncan Eaves and Ben Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p.180, hereafter referred to as 'S.R.'

Clarissa, Richardson defended its necessity. For Richardson creates, as does Shakespeare in King Lear, a situation of tragic chaos whose resultant horror in the death of a young woman is felt in all its deep original seriousness. That seriousness challenged the fashion and luxuriance of the age in which Richardson lived. It is the loss of such a tragic seriousness which Dowell suffers in his situation of personal chaos since, in the looseness of the modernist age, comic absurdity demeans seriousness.

Even in his own time Richardson was considered to be the literary heir of Shakespeare. Sir John Hawkins quoted Samuel Johnson's opinion of Richardson:

Johnson 'was inclined, as being personally acquainted with Richardson', to favour the opinion which celebrated Richardson 'as a writer similar in genius to Shakespeare, as being acquainted with the inmost recesses of the human heart, and having an absolute command of the passions...'

S.R. p.338

The comparison between Shakespeare and Richardson still holds. A modern critic, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, points out Richardson's propensity for creating, like Shakespeare, situations of powerful conflict:

Yet Richardson was I think the first novelist to merit comparison with Shakespeare in both the power to explore 'free' characters, and the struggle to comprehend and make the centre hold against the strongest challenge he could mount.<sup>6</sup>

Making the centre he creates hold (or not hold) against

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6. Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist (London: Methuen, 1973), p.456.

the strongest challenge he could also create implies the power of what I term a situation of primal chaos. That chaos is unleashed in Clarissa by the clash of order and disorder, in their sheerest forms, in the figures of Clarissa and Lovelace, respectively. Clarissa is a figure of order who is assailed by disorder, as if stability, in order to prove its reality as something other than complacent, must meet that which might challenge it. For in this dialectical novel, Clarissa's absolutism of religious order is put in direct, related opposition to the laxness of Lovelace, a sexually-motivated rake. This concentration on one central conflict makes Clarissa more reminiscent of Othello than of King Lear.

It is partly the epistolary form of the novel Clarissa which enables Richardson to present the human passions with a power equivalent to Shakespearian drama. For the epistolary form shares with the dramatic form the vividness of experiences seeming to happen even as they are written about. Richardson was conscious of achieving an effect of immediacy:

The nature of Familiar Letters written, as it were, to the Moment, while the Heart is agitated by Hopes and Fears, on Events undecided, must plead an Excuse for the Bulk of a Collection of this Kind. Mere Facts and Characters might be comprised in a much smaller Compass: But, would they be equally interesting?'

S.R. p.598

Richardson's concern to catch the emotion as it arises out of the 'Moment', before the outcome of events has its final, settled effects on the emotions, gives the

impression of the primary emotion, immediately experienced. Lovelace himself recognizes the advantages of writing to the moment as productive of such first-hand emotion, though for him the method is more a strategy for managing, or even stage-managing like Iago, the primary feelings through speed. To Belford he says:

Thou'lt observe, Belford, that though this was written afterwards, yet (as in other places) I write it as it was spoken and happened, as if I had retired to put down every sentence as spoken. I know thou likest this lively present-tense manner, as it is one of my peculiars.<sup>7</sup>

Creating the impression of a continuous present-tense narrative, without a mediating narrative voice, makes for an intense subjectivity. The characters in Clarissa are created as if from the inside so that their words have the raw subjectivity of direct experience. In The Good Soldier Dowell's inability to regard his experiences as authentic is due to the time-lag between the event and the emotion of recognition. But the form of Clarissa is so close to Shakespearian drama that in contrast to the novel The Good Soldier, Clarissa seems not like a novel at all. Letters create the sense of thought going on within the privacy of a mental theatre, for like soliloquy, they hold open that vital area of mentality between contingent happening and its aftermath. Consider, for example, how Clarissa writes of the event in which she flees with Lovelace from her family:

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7. Samuel Richardson, Clarissa (1747-1748; London: Penguin Classics, 1985), p.882, Letter 256, hereafter referred to as 'Cl.'

Thus terrified, I was got out of sight of the door in a very few minutes: and then, although quite breathless between running and apprehension, he put my arm under his, his drawn sword in the other hand, and hurried me on still faster: my voice, however, contradicting my action; crying, No, no, no, all the while, straining my neck to look back, as long as the walls of the garden and park were within sight, and till he brought me to the chariot: where, attending, were two armed servants of his own, and two of Lord M.'s, on horseback.

Here I must suspend my relation for a while: for now I am come to this sad period of it my indiscretion stares me in the face; and my shame and grief give me a compunction that is more poignant methinks than if I had a dagger in my heart.

Cl. p.380, L.94

The effect of immediacy of fear is achieved through the mix of past and continuous present tenses, and through the very length of the sentence, hurried forward clause upon clause. The pace is fast, giving the impression of the excitement of the moment. But what also contributes to the sense of the immediate is that though Clarissa writes a letter to Anna Howe, the re-telling has the quality of interior monologue. Anna Howe is a sort of surrogate self of Clarissa. They are after all intimate friends: 'is not your honour my honour? And is not your friendship the pride of my life?' Anna asks of Clarissa (p.751, L.229). Familiar letters, by narrowing the gap between writer and audience, make the thinking carry the privacy of the writer's inner mind, so that when Clarissa says she must 'suspend her relation' it is not in order to create suspense for her friend Anna, as if her narrative is story: rather, she stalls in her writing as if she has just realized something about how she

genuinely feels through the re-telling of this event. The writing has driven her, beneath the level of premeditated consciousness, into a recognition of her indiscretion. The literature of chaos is characterized by the way in which it taps into that area between thought and event for thus it re-creates the very experience of chaos even in its emergence.

Terry Eagleton recognizes the significance of the closeness of the form of Clarissa to drama when he observes of Richardson's writing:

What threatens to proliferate beyond personal control in his writing is nothing less than writing itself. It is writing - that sprawling mesh of dangerously open-ended signs - which Richardson and his characters strive to leash to a personal intention [...] his writing springs from a mode of cultural production more akin to the collective, open-ended, revisionary strategies of modern 'epic' theatre than it is to the modern novel.<sup>8</sup>

But Eagleton stops short with his observation that this is writing which runs out of control. For he is too concerned to 'explain' the novel simply in terms of its wider cultural context to recognize that the dramatic potential of this form of writing is that it taps into the vital area of experience before it is settled by thought. Like so much over-ordered, retrospective criticism, Eagleton's reading creates distance between the reader's imaginative experience of the text and the text itself; I propose that the power of this novel

8. Terry Eagleton, The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), pp.11-12, hereafter referred to as 'T.E.'

arises precisely out of the way in which it closes that distance through the evocation of chaotic forces spreading from character to reader.

Yet the two forms - drama and epistolary novel - are not simply synonymous. To commit to writing that which happens as it happens, makes for a deeper consciousness of the self in the epistolary account of the self's relation to its own story. Though both Clarissa and Othello are figures of belief in situations which test their belief, Clarissa's involvement in actually writing her story makes for a crucial difference in how the reader/audience view the character. In Othello the audience is conscious of how Othello's meanings have been inverted, and the horror is to witness his lack of consciousness of what is happening to him through that inversion. His soliloquies, often imprisoned within dialogue with Iago, exhibit him experiencing the force of primary emotions, but without the watchfulness which writing implies. But in Clarissa, Clarissa is conscious that her order of meanings is threatened, the threat itself intensifying her consciousness of what her meanings are. Othello never has to make a conscious defence of his meanings, he has but to re-affirm their right order - albeit with his act of suicide - once he recognizes his unconscious breaching of that order. But Clarissa has to take the terrifying responsibility for her self as an embodiment of her order of meanings, knowingly. Clarissa has to defend her order of meanings over a prolonged period of time, in which the length of

time is itself an aspect that could defeat her defence. Her situation represents a move on from that of Othello in which his notion of his self is defined at once by his actions. Clarissa's only form of defence of both herself physically and of the reality of her order of meanings, lies not in action but in her writing - or in her language.

Thus, in contrast to the unstable twentieth-century figure of Dowell, whose voice is but the hollow echo in a borrowed language of a cancelled-out self, Clarissa is her language. She speaks as she writes. Her refusal to allow her articulation to be overcome is an assertion of her own character, a finding of room amidst moral claustrophobia, despite her situation as the victim of cruelty. That cruelty is falsely and confusingly dressed in the language of kindness. 'Power holds a smoother language,' says John Stuart Mill in The Subjection of Women, 'and whomsoever it oppresses, always pretends to do so for their own good' (9). Clarissa writes to Anna Howe, her only friend, of an enforced interview with Solmes, whom her family are forcing Clarissa to marry for their own financial gain. Clarissa defends herself against this victimization by trying to expose the real physical truth of the situation through an insistence on the true meanings of words:

Mr Solmes, after a little while, came in again by himself, to take leave of me: full of scrapes and compliments; but too well tutored and encouraged, to give me hope of his declining his



suit. He begged me not to impute to him any of the severe things to which he had been a sorrowful witness. He besought my compassion, as he called it [...]  
 Am I to be cruel to myself, to show mercy to you? Take my estate, with all my heart, since you are such a favourite in this house! Only leave me myself. The mercy you ask for, do you show to others.

Cl. p.318-319 L.78

Clarissa's response to Solmes may look to a casual twentieth-century reader like a kind of haughtiness, as if she is merely concerned with the cleverness of her words. But what is at stake is much more serious: Clarissa's words are really a desperate attempt to save herself from being married to a man she hates. The fact that Clarissa only has words to defend herself is testimony to the desperation of this situation, for words seem so powerless against the physical and psychological forces used by her family to compel her to accept Solmes' proposal.

But there is power in Clarissa's language. Solmes' meaning has nothing at all to do with compassion; he uses the term lyingly as a way of not only excusing his own cruelty, but also gaining Clarissa's strength against herself. Clarissa has to be very precise with her words in order to prevent the slide into what he calls 'compassion', which, looking like the natural response, would actually be a surrender to the meanings created by Solmes' false use of language. Her resistance to such falsity is to return to Solmes the truth of what he has imposed on her - to show 'mercy' to him would be to sanction his cruelty to her. For the syntax of 'Am I to

be cruel to myself, to show mercy to you?' links two clauses in such a way that both distinguishes 'myself' and 'you', and shows that the price of this so-called mercy is itself really cruel. In exposing the real terms of Solmes' deal, Clarissa is able to realize the duties of self-preservation without collapsing before the imputation of selfishness. In this way Clarissa's use of a language of incisive accuracy, both of diction and syntax, corrects Solmes' false use of the term 'compassion'.

Clarissa needs this language of truth in lieu of any immediate help from her environment. She insists on the meanings of her own language as a desperate, yet still principled, attempt to control what is happening to her. The accuracy of her language constitutes a mental refusal to let people confuse or obscure the truth of what is at stake, even as physical events threaten to overtake her inner sense of reality and order and truth. Yet what is so frightening is that the truth, even conveyed in such scrupulous language, still has not the power of defeating truthlessness, which Clarissa's passionate faith in true meanings implies. For truth depends also upon the disposition of the person to whom it is offered. Tricked into running away with Lovelace and estranged from her family, Clarissa is beginning to fall into Lovelace's power, and thus she tries to create a disposition to truth in Lovelace in order to make him her protector, not a predator:

You talk of generosity, Mr Lovelace, said I. Let me tell you what generosity is, in my sense of the word. TRUE GENEROSITY is not confined to pecuniary instances: it is more than politeness; it is more than good faith; it is more than honor; it is more than justice since all these are but duties, and what a worthy mind cannot dispense with. But TRUE GENEROSITY is greatness of soul. It makes us do more by a fellow-creature than can be strictly required of us. It obliges us to hasten the relief of an object that wants relief, anticipating even such a one's hope or expectation. Generosity, Sir, will not surely permit a worthy mind to doubt of its honourable and beneficent intentions: so much less will it allow itself to shock, to offend anyone, and, least of all, a person thrown by adversity, mishap, or accident into its protection.

Cl. pp.594-595, L.185

Despite her personal, urgent need for help Clarissa does not appeal directly to her particular situation since she believes that help should be morally undertaken out of general principles and not merely manipulated into local existence. In order to make Lovelace comprehend the general morality implicit in their particular relation she appeals to a shared understanding of a common language, alluding to herself as the 'person', not 'myself'. But what she is actually, and desperately still asking of Lovelace, even through her strong and impersonal language, is that he help her. Her strong sense of truth knows that generosity as a moral concept cannot be demanded as natural; by definition it can only be freely given. A free feeling still has its own requirements: generosity makes us 'do more', and it 'will not...permit' its intentions to be overlooked. But its meaning depends upon the readiness of the self to undertake generosity's demand to be acted upon. The

effect of the commitment is not only upon the recipient, but also upon the bestower. Within, the soul is made greater by the outward-going action of generosity, if there is a soul ready to make that commitment for disinterested reasons in the first place.

Clarissa's refusal to use a manipulative form of language is evidence of her faith in a language of truth. But to choose to rely upon an impersonal language still leaves her at the mercy of Lovelace's soul, whether it has any generosity or not. Her very real fear is that he has no true generosity - that his conduct is a disguise of his real intentions. But through her language she tries to hold open for herself an area of existence or possibility, instead of its being subsumed in time and plot. To Lovelace, however, 'generosity' is no more than a word, as 'You talk of generosity' implies. Lovelace writes as he speaks - his is a speaking language, a love of passing tone, of mere talk. Conversely, words, for Clarissa, convey meanings which exceed their literal symbols: they are 'something more than a name' (p.930, L.275). Her understanding of generosity has the quality of Dr. Johnson's concept of kindness - it transcends itself:

Justice is indispensably and universally necessary, and what is necessary must always be limited, uniform and distinct. But beneficence, though in general equally enjoined by our religion, and equally needful to the conciliation of the Divine favour, is yet, for the most part, with regard to its single acts, elective and voluntary. We may certainly, without injury to our fellow-beings, allow in the distribution of kindness something to our affections, and change the measure of our

liberality, according to our opinions and prospects, our hopes and fears. This rule therefore is not equally determinate and absolute with respect to offices of kindness, and acts of liberality, because liberality and kindness, absolutely determined, would lose their nature; for how could we be called tender, or charitable, for giving that which we are positively forbidden to withhold?<sup>10</sup>

For Johnson the rule of duty does not apply to kindness or liberality, for they are by their very nature characterized by being undetermined or determined only by being a free obligation beyond duty or strict justice itself. The quality of offering more, and never less, than the need they answer makes Johnson's kindness and Clarissa's generosity more like grace than justice. Justice gives what is 'strictly' due, whereas grace is a state of being which in giving freely also gives without measure and without condition.

In order to express this greatness in the concept of generosity Clarissa has to say what generosity is not, as though to comprehend 'TRUE GENEROSITY' it is necessary first to recognize those things which are 'but duties', even though they resemble generosity. The use of the relative term 'more than' provides the linguistic props which, falling away, leave the transcending term 'TRUE GENEROSITY' raised in their stead. The larger meaning of generosity as 'greatness of soul' or 'magnanimity' (11)

10. Samuel Johnson, The Works of Samuel Johnson, ed. by W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, Yale Edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), iv, Rambler no. 81, p.63.

11. In Dr. Johnson's dictionary magnanimity is defined as 'Greatness of mind; bravery; elevation of soul'. A Dictionary of the English Language, in 4 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme + Brown, 1818).

is achieved through this pyramid-rise. In this way - through the language of the self - Clarissa builds on ethics to create out of the self some structure which is theologically greater than ethics. It is a structure which, based on earth's morality, still transcends it.

But Clarissa's reclamation of a language of truth is not loftily abstract. Her effort at trying to make Lovelace realize the link between the language of morality and its real use constitutes her need to establish the practice, not just the theory of a moral order. Clarissa's belief in the direct and unified relation between theory and its practice reflects a whole way of being; an ordering based on hierarchical structures of language which create boundaries within which a human being can know how to be. Clarissa's belief in her language has as its impulse the making of a better world, one fitting the real human need for life to be governed by a form of order which has a depth of meaning far beyond any order to be achieved by social organization. It is a far cry from Freud's observations of organized civilized society, restrictive of individuality by the necessity to conform to social, not moral, rules.

Clarissa's faith in the meaningfulness of language is implicit in her response to Lovelace's declaration that he wishes to reform: 'Surely, my dear, the man must be in earnest' she writes to Anna Howe. 'He could not have said this, he could not have thought it, had he not' (p.443, L.116). To expect that his language means

something to him and that her words, urging his better self, might reach Lovelace are the natural assumptions of her own deep and serious sincerity in what she says.

How greatly does Clarissa's fundamental trust in her own language under-estimate Lovelace's whole way of being. For Clarissa's sincerity is mocked by something far worse than levity in Lovelace's relation to her. Lovelace's resistance to Clarissa's appeal lies not just in a lack of understanding of Clarissa's meaning, the expression of which reflects the quality of her mind. More than lacking understanding, Lovelace is positively impervious to Clarissa's mental influence. Her body is all that he sees. If he adopts her language, he only does so while his physical actions bespeak something else, exploitatively. With the exact inverse of the moral response of protectiveness which Clarissa tries to invoke in him, Lovelace intends a stranger experimental desecration of Clarissa's so-called virtue. He speaks of virtue as if virtue were just a word, nothing more:

Then who says Miss Clarissa Harlowe is the paragon of virtue? - is Virtue itself? Has her virtue ever been proved? Who has dared to try her virtue? To the test then, since now I have the question brought home to me whether I am to have a wife? and whether she be to be a wife at the first or at the second hand?

I will proceed fairly. I will do the dear creature not only strict, but generous justice; for I will try her by her own judgment, as well as by our principles.

Cl. p.427, L.110

Lovelace wants to dare Clarissa's virtue as a challenging sexual game debasing her concept of 'generous

justice'. By false logic Lovelace puts his supposed generosity against Clarissa's supposed strict judgment, as if his intended assault upon her virtue is a way of softening a hard woman. He implies that he, however, out of generous leniency, is giving her virtue a winning chance, so to speak. But his word 'generous' really means lax and bears no resemblance to Clarissa's sense of magnanimity. Moreover, his game is an utter perversion of justice. Either way he does not lose. If he wins, he has her and virtue does not exist. If he loses - and finds her virtue - he wins the best of wives. The gloating delight of 'At the first or at the second hand' as he splits himself into being his own sexual predecessor, anticipates the success of Lovelace's intention to have Clarissa sexually, regardless of the morality he will even thus prove to be non-existent in the world.

Lovelace's plan to seduce Clarissa is more than a game of chance. It is a kind of experiment, just as Iago's plan to pervert Othello's truth is a kind of experiment. Indeed, Iago has been cited as a prototype for Lovelace:

The prototypes for Lovelace, himself the object as well as subject of resentment, are Iago, Milton's Satan, and the Restoration rake.<sup>12</sup>

Both Iago and Lovelace share the same debasedly theatrical impulse towards the spoliation of the qualities which they, perceiving, half-admire. But

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12. James Maddox, 'Lovelace and the World of Resentment in Clarissa', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 24, (1982), 271-292.



whereas Iago's perverse joy comes from the corruption of goodness into its opposite, Lovelace's delight is based on trying to make Clarissa's virtue fail - at the same time that he half wants it not to fail. For Lovelace is, more complicatedly, the defeated moralist rather than the confirmed cynic, like Iago. Lovelace does not wholeheartedly want virtue to fail; he half wants his attempted corruption of Clarissa's virtue to reflect back to him her unspoiled virtue intact.

What Lovelace does not even question is whether or not losing her virtue will have any deeper effect on Clarissa, or whether she could ever recover from it. To imagine the long-term effects of seducing Clarissa would imply some anticipation on a much more serious level than that of whether or not he wins a virtuous wife or wins instead the gratification of his sexual desire. But Lovelace is a different creature from Clarissa; he has no interested sense of what effect his actions might have on another's life, or even in the future of his own life. The fundamental difference between Clarissa and Lovelace should make them naturally separate from one another, since they have no mutually shared understandings. But their juxtaposition does not just highlight their difference. It is like the Duke's experiment in Measure for Measure, which juxtaposes the two equally antithetical characters, Angelo and Isabella. The juxtaposition of Angelo and Isabella makes for the creation of a strange third force of chaos in the

dialogue of the two (13). 'Which had you rather' Angelo asks Isabella:

that the most just law  
Now took your brother's life or, to redeem him,  
Give up your body to such sweet uncleanness  
As she that he hath stained?

Isabella:                                 Sir, believe this,  
I had rather give my body than my soul.

Angelo:     I talk not of your soul. Our compelled sins  
Stand more for number than for account.

Isabella:                                 How say you?

Angelo:     Nay, I'll warrant that, for I can speak  
Against the thing I say. Answer to this.  
I, now the voice of the recorded law,  
Pronounce a sentence on your brother's life;  
Might there not be a charity in sin  
To save this brother's life?

Isabella:                                 Please you to do't,  
I'll take it as a peril to my soul  
It is no sin at all, but charity.

Angelo:     Pleased you to do't, at peril of your soul,  
Were equal poise of sin and charity.

Isabella:   That I do beg his life, if it be sin  
Heaven let me bear it; you granting of my suit,  
If that be sin, I'll make it my morn prayer  
To have it added to the faults of mine,  
And nothing of your answer.

Angelo:                                 Nay, but hear me.  
Your sense pursues not mine; either you  
  are ignorant,  
Or seem so craftily, and that's not good.

M.M. II, iv, 52-76

This exchange of words can hardly be called dialogue for the intended meanings of both Angelo and Isabella are deflected by the mutual misunderstanding of one another's words. But this dialogue does not simply exhibit a cross-purpose. The antithetical difference between Angelo and

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13. Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, ed. by S. Wells, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), hereafter referred as 'M.M.'

Isabella is there, indicated by their different meanings of the same words: Angelo's words 'Might there not be a charity in sin' becomes in Isabella's language 'It is no sin at all, but charity'. Angelo tries to distort the meaning of sin so that it may accommodate what he calls charity, making it not sin at all. But Isabella's language separates the two terms so that 'it' is one thing or the other, sin or charity. Hence, there are very fundamental differences in the meanings of what should be a shared language, as if two different world-views - one of Sex, the other of Religion - existed here in the same world at the same time.

But, as I say, their meanings do not remain so separate: there is also a kind of rebound effect which makes for a chaotic over-lapping in their meanings. 'Pleased you to do't, at peril of your soul' says Angelo, echoing Isabella's words back to her but with a consciousness that he alters her meaning. For Angelo's ulterior motive of trying to seduce Isabella is, as with Lovelace, an encroachment upon her meanings. He tries to direct and control the dialogue by tailoring her meanings to meet his design, knowing that he is urging forward a suggestion which he cannot yet openly declare. But the dialogue is fraught with a third force between them: 'Your sense pursues not mine' says Angelo. This third force, though instigated by Angelo's concealed design, is itself ungovernable: it is more like a force of chaos, resultant upon the meeting of two opposite yet attracted poles of being.

Thus Angelo's relation to Isabella is characterized by a predatoriness which assumes a control Angelo does not quite have. Likewise, through his letters Lovelace invades the very space which exists between him and Clarissa, thinking he thereby controls their relation. But the letter is far more than 'the site of a constant power struggle', as Terry Eagleton calls it (T.E. p.49). The dialogue between Clarissa and Lovelace is no straightforward conflict producing only a two-sided politicized battle, as Eagleton claims:

The letter in Clarissa is double-edged: it is private confidence and political weapon, intimacy and intrigue, a jealously protected space in which you never cease to be publicly at stake [...] The letter is the sign doubled, overhearing itself in the ears of the addressee; and in this sense 'public' and 'private' are inseparably interwoven within it [...] you must write with a wary eye on the other, who may confiscate or abuse your most secret reflections.

T.E. p.51

It is not as if in the experience of reading the conflict is clearly on the socio-political level alone. It is Lovelace who thinks in terms of the individualist society with its power politics and sexual politics. But Clarissa and Lovelace, by their conflict, produce a third force of chaos which is beyond the control and understanding of either of them (whilst both unconsciously experience that force). Eagleton's conflict is no real conflict for him: he knows too well what it is really about. But chaos is that crisis when two orders of meaning are thrown into wholly experimental opposition to

each other, changed by the very force of their clashing. Literary criticism does not like such chaos or offer much of a language in which to register it.

Lovelace, like Eagleton, underestimates the terms of the power struggle. So sure is Lovelace that it is a simple power struggle in which he has the upper hand, that once he has Clarissa in his physical power he does not even consider her resistance with any seriousness. It has no separate level of meaning for him. He even looks forward to her resistance to his sexual pressure as the spur of his sexual excitement, since his control feels so certain:

But there lie before me such charming  
difficulties, such scenery for intrigue,  
for stratagem, for enterprise.

Cl. p.413, L.103

Lovelace refers to Clarissa's virtue as 'difficulties', as if her virtue presents a merely physical obstacle to seducing her. Lovelace's manipulative strategies, he himself assumes, will easily outwit any obstacles she tries to create. Thinking that he is master of his own devices, Lovelace enjoys the sense of invasion. His intention to distort her meanings - 'may not her virtue be founded rather in pride than principle' he asks, mockingly (p.426, L.110) - is a metaphorical rape before it becomes the literal rape of her physical body.

For Clarissa, as for Isabella, the permanence of her truth and absolute principles is almost literally undermined by the way in which Lovelace's motives work

beneath the surface of dialogue, secretly. Indeed, it is as though Clarissa's virtuous integrity (and likewise Isabella's) acts as a very magnet to the chaotic force as it is embodied in Lovelace, a force that would spoil her integrity, just as Othello's need to believe energizes Iago's instinct for cunning. Lovelace writes to Belford of how Clarissa questions him regarding a treaty he has fabricated and of a meeting he had arranged between Clarissa and two imposters posing as his aunts. The form of this letter has Clarissa's words inside Lovelace's as if, in the strange overlapping of their different worlds, each trespasses upon the other's, however unwillingly in the case of Clarissa:

Tell me, then, is there any reality in the treaty thou hast pretended to be on foot between my uncle and Captain Tomlinson and thyself?

This was a cursed thrust. What could I say? In short I solemnly averred that there was!

Let me ask thou next, said she, if really and truly, they were Lady Betty Lawrance and thy Cousin Montague? What sayest thou - hesitate not - what sayest thou to this question?

Astonishing, my dear, that you should suspect them! [...]

She lifted up her hands and eyes - What can I think! - What can I think!

Cl. p.910, L.266

Lovelace's sense of control is implicit in the very form of the writing. For the structure of Clarissa's pleas followed by Lovelace's replies is split up by Lovelace's disclosures to Belford of the part he is playing in the manipulation. This means that Clarissa cannot with her truth make Lovelace truthful: he is never

really dealing with her straight, one-to-one. Even now knowing his framing deceitfulness does not make Clarissa able to know what she is to believe. Her directness, in its demand for truth, only increases her vulnerability by making Lovelace have to lie more. With a horrible twistedness, truth is made more remote through the very effort which should bring it closer. It really is as though words, unknowingly for Clarissa, have become redundant, since there are no words that she can say to make him stop this cruelty towards her. Instead, the effect of asserting her own meanings can only generate more possibilities for Lovelace to distort them, rather than for Clarissa's meanings to claim their truth. Lovelace is the force of chaos invading and purposefully disrupting Clarissa's world of order before her very eyes.

And what chance can Clarissa's truth have against the dexterity of Lovelace's lies? He does not just plan his lies, as he did in the fabricating of the treaty and the setting-up of the meeting. Contriving to master his deceits, Lovelace lies as close to the truth as possible - 'I love always to go as near the truth as I can' he boasts (p.412, L.103). Lovelace is surprised into lying by Clarissa's demand for truth - and is partly surprised too at his own improvised adeptness in creating the tone of truth: 'I solemnly averred' he says, astonished at his own unintended solemnity for the moment. He can afford to act sincerity so well that he himself is momentarily convinced of it. For mainly Lovelace fails to pity

Clarissa's obvious suffering even as he watches it, since he is too delighted with what he considers his own ingenuity to recognize the real despair and panic of her cry 'What can I think! - What can I think!'

But though Lovelace looks in command of the situation, the messy structure of the dialogue increasingly represents dislocation as much as control. More and more, in the very mess he creates, Lovelace is taken over by the chaos he tries to effect. Consider Lovelace when he first has Clarissa in his power - Lovelace writes to Belford, who is audience to his boast; at the same time his words are addressed at first to Clarissa as if she too is audience to the thoughts he conceals from her:

But O my best-beloved fair one, repine not thou at the arts by which thou suspected thy fruitless vigilance has been overwatched. Take care that thou provokest not new ones that may be still more worthy of thee. If once thy emperor decrees thy fall, thou shalt greatly fall.

Thou wilt not dare, methinks I hear thee say, to attempt to reduce such a goddess as this to a standard unworthy of her excellences. It is impossible, Lovelace, that thou shouldst intend to break through oaths and protestations so solemn.

That I did not intend it is certain. That I do intend it I cannot (my heart, my reverence for her, will not let me) say. But knowest thou not my aversion to the state of shackles? And is she not IN MY POWER?

Cl. p.401, L.99

Firstly as if to Clarissa, then as if to Belford, Lovelace is really his own audience here as he revels in the role of successful kidnapper. Ever like the seeming order through a looking-glass, his mode is to delight in



the creation of an inversion. He uses the loving language of the comforter - 'my best-beloved' - at the same time that his words are both a warning and a threat to Clarissa of his own intentions to use his power to harm her.

Yet despite his sense of power over her, in a situation which makes her his prisoner without her yet knowing it, there is a terrible incoherence in what he is saying. For in the midst of his improvisations Lovelace himself (as well as Clarissa) does not clearly know what his intention is, as the abrupt change in paragraph to 'That I did not intend it is certain' implies. His present uncertainty is itself confused by the parenthesis 'my heart, my reverence for her, will not let me', as though admitting that he is not entirely committed to make her fall. Yet the fact that he cannot say it, still implies that he might intend to ruin her all the more without saying it and making it explicit even to himself. His intentions are impossibly confused, for, at the same time and with disconcerting contradictoriness, Lovelace wants his feelings of love and reverence to stop him from ruining Clarissa, and wants to ruin her for the excellence which he genuinely admires. Strangely, the very thing he admires - her worthiness - is the thing which inspires him to contrive more awful arts to match her unusual excellence. He even imagines her in roles that elevate her only so that he can the more thoroughly reduce her: 'If thy emperor decrees thy fall, thou shalt greatly fall'. His power makes for a shift to a different

set of rules to her own, with a different 'standard' of what is worthy of her. But as he himself says, though the Evil seek Wrong and the Good seek Right, they both are seekers.

As his theatrical language shows, Lovelace is caught up in his own fantasies so that he even ventriloquizes Belford's voice: 'Thou wilt not dare, methinks I hear thee say', as if he imagines Belford as the awe-struck spectator to Lovelace as the stage villain. Now playing the role of Belford he contradicts the perverse self which spoke as if to Clarissa of 'arts' more 'worthy of thee'. Now he says 'a standard unworthy of her excellences', as if his role-change means an inversion in moral perspective. Lovelace's theatricality is frightening, for his references to Clarissa bear no sense of the reality of her, and what he may do with her now that she is in his power is as unpredictable as whatever fantasy his mind may construct. His capacity to slip in and out of different minds is almost schizophrenic. Lovelace has no sense of a separate, distinct self governed by a believed-in order of meanings. He is more frightening than Iago: whereas Iago can say, as if he has no need of an inner self, 'I am not what I am' (14), Lovelace, more unknowingly unstable in his self, tells Belford 'Thou knowest my heart, if any man living does. As far as I know it myself, thou knowest it' (p.143, L.31). There is something strange about his being half-aware that he does not fully know his own self. But

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14. Shakespeare, Othello, ed. N.J. Sanders (Cambridge: The New Cambridge Shakespeare, 1984), I, i, 65.

Lovelace has multiple selves with nothing to stop him and no boundaries; he can be anything. He can even be Clarissa, temporarily. Clarissa re-counts to Anna Howe a meeting between herself and Lovelace. As if she is still in shock from Lovelace's behaviour towards her, Clarissa describes the meeting by giving an exact transcription of Lovelace's words to her:

Darkness, light; light, darkness, by my soul! - just as you please to have it. O charmer of my heart! snatching my hand, and pressing it between both his, to his lips, in a strange wild way, take me, take me to yourself; mould me as you please; I am wax in your hands; give me your own impression, and seal me for ever yours. We were born for each other! - you to make me happy, and save a soul - I am all error, all crime. I see what I ought to have done.<sup>15</sup>

This is reported speech, but Clarissa speaks with Lovelace's voice so that even as Lovelace declares how he will give way to Clarissa, the form itself reflects Lovelace's invasive, metaphorical rape of her. His voice is inside hers as he takes her over. And yet how like are his words to passionate love, sincerely meant, as if she were inside him or he would want her so to be: 'give me your own impression'. His wish for total subjection, so at odds with his desire at other times to overpower Clarissa, is itself overpowering in its desire to be made powerless: 'take me to yourself; mould me as you please'. The two impulses are really the same thing in different modes - the symptom of sexual desire which wants,

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15. This letter is retained by the editor, George Sherburn, in the abridged version of Clarissa (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962). See p.171.

simultaneously, to possess and to be possessed.

For Lovelace is still in his own mode, despite this identification with Clarissa and despite his passionately expressed feeling for her: 'Darkness, light; light, darkness' he says, the very speed of his words implying that he does not know or care about any difference between the two opposing modes implied by the terms, providing he achieves his confused and confusing desire. His declaration that Clarissa has power over him is really the willing loss of his power over her in his enjoyment of her (albeit unconscious) sexual power over him. It is no more than a kind of inversion of his sexual desire for her, for Lovelace always has to feel that he holds the power even when he does not.

And Lovelace does exercise the physical power he has over Clarissa. Clarissa's language, her whole way of being, her beliefs: they do not save her from Lovelace's sheer physical brutality towards her. Lovelace reduces Clarissa to begging him on her knees not to harm her, not to ruin her. But still he does not stop. Lovelace writes openly of Clarissa's pleas after he has half-drugged her so that she has no chance of resisting his intended rape of her:

Down sunk she at my feet, as soon as she approached me; her charming bosom heaving to her uplifted face; and clasping her arms about my knees, Dear Lovelace, said she, if ever - if ever - and, unable to speak another word, quitting her clasping hold, down prostrate on the floor sunk she neither in a fit nor out of one [...]

I lifted her, however, into a chair; and in words of disordered passion, told her, all her fears were needless: wondered at them: begged of her to be pacified: besought her reliance on

my faith and honour: and re-avowed all my old vows, and poured forth new ones.

At last, with a heart-breaking sob, I see. I see, Mr Lovelace, in broken sentences she spoke, I see - that at last - at last - I am ruined! Ruined, if your pity - let me implore your pity! And down on her bosom, like a half-broken-stalked lily, top-heavy with the over-charging dews of the morning, sunk her head, with a sigh that went to my heart.

Cl. pp.880-881, L.256

The horror of this letter to Belford is that it shows the obliviousness of Lovelace to his own lack of pity. Indeed, his view is external, for with almost voyeuristic pleasure, he experimentally watches even the effect of her pain on his own heart. Her 'heart-breaking sob' and 'sigh that went to his heart' do not move him to real pity even though he recognizes the pitifulness of her plight. Though he has emotions from Clarissa, they do not trigger him as a separate person. Instead Lovelace enjoys Clarissa's sorrow like an aesthetic spectator, and enjoys the pity she creates for his heart as if there is beauty, but not feeling, in sympathy. All that is pitiful about Clarissa only flatters his sense of power over her and intensifies his sexual desire. For he describes Clarissa's distress as if it enhances her beauty and her pleading itself is sexualized: 'charming bosom heaving to her uplifted face'. Lovelace sadistically enjoys Clarissa's frantic fear of his imminent rape of her.

## II. From Magic to Religion: Richardson, Not Hardy

Lovelace's rape of Clarissa is a vicious parody of the sexual act. Forced to participate in the worst version of the sexual act, which reduces her as a human being, Clarissa suffers from the rape as if her whole being has been defiled and degraded beyond her own recognition of her self. She writes, once she is able, to Anna Howe:

Forgive my rambling. My peace is destroyed. My intellects are touched. And what flighty nonsense must you read, if now you will vouchsafe to correspond with me, as formerly!

O my best, my dearest, my only friend! What a tale have I to unfold! But still upon self, this vile, this hated self! I will shake it off, if possible; and why should I not, since I think, except one wretch, I hate nothing so much? Self, then, be banished from self one moment (for I doubt it will for no longer), to inquire after a dearer object, my beloved Anna Howe! - whose mind, all robed in spotless white, charms and irradiates - but what would I say? -

Cl. p.974, L.295

Clarissa hates her self at this point since the self cannot be a thing totally separate from event. Her self seems defined now by a vile sexual experience which makes her nothing more than a body, a thing without a soul, whilst simultaneously affecting all of her. That definition by rape clings to her, like a fact about her self, so that she no longer feels like a person in command of her own account of herself. 'Except one wretch' she says that she hates nothing so much as herself: the association is significant for the self is

made wretched by the wretch and she hates both. In contrast to her wretched self, Anna Howe, her friend, seems now a spotless 'object' beyond Clarissa. How ironic does Clarissa's earlier assurance to Anna seem now. 'His insolence' Clarissa had said of Lovelace:

shall never make me discover a weakness  
unworthy of a person distinguished by your  
friendship; that is to say, unworthy  
either of my sex or of my former self.

Cl. p.434, L.112

Humbled by the shame of her experience, Clarissa now thinks herself that unworthy person, unworthy of her former friendship with Anna - and yet so much more in need of the comfort of their friendship than ever before. The novel is full of these terrifying contradictions as if originally, as Clarissa says, we were all one great family, and even as the family breaks, there remain ironic links throughout the fallen world.

The rape means that Clarissa has been condemned without crime or guilt and her fundamental trust in a whole world of order is rewarded with physical and emotional betrayal. For despite all her caution she is a victim: the rape is the undeniable fact. But 'Self, then, be banished from self' is not the defeated expression of a cancelled-out self. It is a move towards selflessness wresting the character free from the facts of its own story. Her selflessness does make for a realignment of the self in relation to the self's story so that despite the utterly damaging effects of the rape, at another created level of being Clarissa's meanings are not simply

defeated by the sheer event of the rape. 'Character' and 'story' become complex terms in this novel, the one seeking independence of the other precisely because of its effect.

In order to make explicit Clarissa's relation to her own story, which makes her death a poignant survival of her meanings over the events of her life, rather than her death being the culmination of what her life seems to mean, I am going to show the effects of rape upon another character - Tess, in the nineteenth-century realist novel Tess of the d'Urbervilles.

Tess, early raped by Alec d'Urberville, does not respond with the primary feeling of outraged justice, like Clarissa. On the contrary, the rape marks the beginning of a continuing affair with Alec, so that, in a sense, Tess colludes with the implication that she does not matter as a force in what happens to her. Having confessed to Angel her affair with Alec d'Urberville, Tess expects Angel to respond with the forgiving understanding which she has previously shown to his confession. This is her response to Angel's unforgivingness of her:

She perceived in his words the realization of her own apprehensive foreboding in former times. He looked upon her as a species of imposter; a guilty woman in the guise of an innocent one. Terror was upon her white face as she saw it; her cheek was flaccid, and her mouth had almost the aspect of a round little hole. The horrible sense of his view of her so deadened her that she staggered; and he stepped forward, thinking she was going to fall.<sup>16</sup>



Emotion has no framework to give it meaning in Hardy's vision, so that Tess' and Angel's suffering are painfully, but merely, residual. With horrible senselessness, their feelings, having nowhere else to go, bounce off one another like the endless reflections of facing mirrors, though Tess suffers the impact of this far more than Angel. Tess does not here suffer shame inside herself, as Clarissa does, so that Tess has here to be depicted from the outside. Thus, her feelings are suggested by the obscene and dehumanized image of her own physical shame on facing Angel: 'her mouth had the aspect of a round little hole'. Her terror, though powerful, is not like an experienced emotion, but is manifest externally, like a sincere mask, showing the externalized expression of recoil from shame, as her past guilt is resurrected by Angel's implicit accusation of imposture. Clarissa feels shame primarily not because of external judges, but because of external acts as if for her, shame were the victim's half-way house between injustice and deserved guilt; a sort of impenitent remorse. But Tess cannot separate off her feelings from the external events, implications and infernal appearances that surround her. Tess' feelings are secondary, acquired from her perception of how Angel views her, rather than being feelings which arise from within her self.

Just as Alec's treatment of Tess immersed her in story, so here she is caught, on reflection, in Angel's

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16. Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891; London: Macmillan, 1974), p.272, hereafter referred to as 'Tess'.

view of her character. Tess is 'deadened' because she thinks she has become to Angel a dead love. This feeling of being repulsed is more like a stultifying blow than an emotion; Tess almost falls down physically. Angel's accusation makes for a terrible retribution: punishment without meaning - the suffering of something more like a curse than the deserved penalty for error. Indeed all Tess' past guilt, just like her revived guilt in front of Angel, worked itself inside her unconsciously from the outside, rather than being what she felt originating inside herself. Whilst pregnant by Alec, she wanders the countryside in search of a place of time-out from her story:

On these lonely hills and dales her quiescent glide was of a piece with the element she moved in. Her flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene. At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed a part of her own story. Rather they became a part of it; for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were. The midnight airs and gusts, moaning amongst the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulae of bitter reproach. A wet day was the expression of irremediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood, and could not comprehend as any other. But this encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy - a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out of harmony with the actual world, not she. Walking among the sleeping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism she was quite in accord. She had

been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.

Tess p.121

The terrible irony is that Tess cannot know that she should not feel guilt. She is subject to the 'psychological phenomenon' so that she perceives her self through the reflection of the outside world reflecting back to her what she unconsciously imposes upon it from the inside, endlessly, like a series of facing mirrors. Her relation to the world is paradoxical, for though Tess feels lonely within herself, yet she feels as if the natural world seems, claustrophobically, part of her inescapable story.

Tess is trapped in this distorted relation to the world which makes her feel judged; yet, paradoxically, she has half-created the externalized feeling of judgment by her own (unadmitted) projection of guilt. It is only the external narrator, and not Tess, who can separately perceive how the psychological phenomenon creates paradoxes which imprison the inner and outer worlds within one another. To the narrator Tess is actually 'of a piece with the element she moved in', she is 'integral to the scene'. But Tess herself has no sense of her harmonious existence within nature. She, in the scene, imagines herself an 'anomaly' due to the past events of her life. Just as the events in Clarissa's life do not, finally, define her life's meanings, so the events in Tess' life are separate from the real meanings of her

life, which cannot, nonetheless, be wrenched clear by her.

But Tess' unconsciousness of the real, yet unrealizable meanings of her life, makes for a crucial difference between Tess' story and Clarissa's story. There can be no transcendence over the events of her life for Tess. She is oblivious even to the most critical moment of her life: that of not, finally, asking help of Angel's parents -

Then she grieved for the beloved man whose conventional standard of judgment had caused her all these latter sorrows; and she went her way without knowing that the greatest misfortune of her life was this feminine loss of courage at the last and critical moment through her estimating her father-in-law by his sons. Her present condition was precisely one which would have enlisted the sympathies of old Mr and Mrs Clare.

Tess p.347

Tess' passing-over of this most decisive moment in her life, without being able to know that it represents the 'greatest misfortune' in her story, exemplifies the cruel irony at work in Hardy's universe. That irony makes it impossible for Tess to be anything other than the product of her story, rather than being a character who generates the meanings of her own story. Indeed, she can only generate more wrong meanings since she cannot perceive the right ones - and she will never know that she does not. Even though she comes to recognize her entrapment in her own story, that recognition does not constitute a greater awareness of the real meanings of her story. For awareness in Tess of the d'Urbervilles only intensifies

the certainty that to exist is to despair. 'Once victim, always victim - that's the law' she declares to Alec, as if with acceptance of her position, not in deepening knowledge (p.379).

But though Clarissa is Lovelace's victim, and though the event of the rape seems proof of how event may subsume or mock the meanings which the self intends, yet Clarissa does not become the victim which her life-story seems to make her, as Tess does. Immediately after the rape, when she feels mad with the sense of terrible injury to herself, Clarissa writes thus:

Thou pernicious caterpillar, that preyest  
upon the fair leaf of virgin fame, and poisonest  
those leaves which thou canst not devour!

Thou fell blight, thou eastern blast,  
thou over-spreading mildew, that destroyest the  
early promises of the shining year! that mockest  
the laborious toil, and blastest the joyful  
hopes, of the painful husbandman!

Thou fretting moth, that corruptest the  
fairest garment!

Thou eating canker-worm, that preyest upon  
the opening bud, and turnest the damask rose  
into livid yellowness!

If, as religion teaches us, God will judge  
us, in a great measure, by our benevolent or  
evil actions to one another - O wretch! bethink  
thee, in time bethink thee, how great must be  
thy condemnation!

Cl. p.892, L.261

Clarissa's writing looks almost senseless. But though the sentences are fragmented the verbs do have coherence since they are all metaphors of invasion, not surrender: 'preyest...poisonest...destroyest...corruptest'. Later, Clarissa can say of her experience that 'it has not tainted my mind; it has not hurt my morals' (p.1254, L.428). For her virtue has been defiled in some

primitive, magical sense, but she has not fallen from her notion of virtue. Her religious belief has not failed her either despite the primitive magic, even though she says 'If, as religion teaches'. The doubt implied by this is not that religion teaches wrongly; it is a kind of call for the higher justice that Lovelace be punished. Thus, Clarissa's belief in virtue and order insists upon a gap between the events of her life and what her life really means to her, rather than - as in Tess' case - the gap between meaning and story being beyond useful knowledge and control.

That is not to say that Clarissa has any power to control the events of her life. But it is crucial that Clarissa's power comes now from submitting to her powerless situation. Lovelace imagines that when he sees Clarissa for the first time after the rape, her speech will be 'lost in sighs - abashed'. 'What a triumphant aspect will this give me,' he boasts to Belford 'when I gaze in her downcast countenance!' (p.898, L.262). But here is his letter to Belford of the actual first meeting with Clarissa after he has raped her:

But tell me (for no doubt thou hast some scheme to pursue), tell me, since I am a prisoner, as I find, in the vilest of houses, and have not a friend to protect or save me, what thou intendest shall become of the remnant of a life not worth the keeping? Tell me, if yet there are more evils reserved for me; and whether thou hast entered into a compact with the great deceiver, in the person of his horrid agent in this house; and if the ruin of my soul, that my father's curse may be fulfilled, is to complete the triumphs of so vile a confederacy? Answer me! Say, if thou hast courage to speak out to her whom thou hast ruined, tell me what further I am to

suffer from thy barbarity? [...]

What - what-a - what has been done - I,  
I, I - cannot but say - must own - must  
confess - hem - hem - is not right - is not  
what should have been - but-a - but - but -  
I am truly - truly - sorry for it - upon my  
soul I am - and - and - will do all - do  
everything - do what - whatever is incumbent  
upon me - all that you - that you - that you  
shall require, to make you amends!

O Belford! Belford! whose triumph now!  
HERS, OR MINE?

Cl. pp.900-901, L.263

Expecting her to 'rave and exclaim' Lovelace is disarmed by Clarissa's dignity (p.899, L.263). 'If thou hast courage to speak out to her whom thou hast ruined' is not spoken by Clarissa in the faltering tones of a frightened victim. On the contrary, Clarissa's implicit claim is that she, the prisoner, is to be feared by Lovelace. And Lovelace's reply is so full of fear that he can hardly speak. Clarissa's eloquence awes him into inarticulacy and replaces his eloquence by putting into words, his meaning - the meaning of what he has done to her, in her.

Lovelace does not want his plans spelt out as meaning. He does not want to face the seriousness of his actions, or feel his own responsibility for them. But by showing herself as the embodied consequence of what he has done, Clarissa exposes the utter worthlessness of what Lovelace is and turns his magic against him. Thus, the rejection of her own life is far from being subdual to Lovelace's power. In contrast, Tess' affairs with Alec, both before and after her marriage to Angel, constitute a surrender to Alec's power. Tess' final

submission to Alec implies a despairing resignation to her own life's worthlessness. It is an action reminiscent of Jude's return to Arabella. Jude seems to use the passive action of going back to his first wife to say physically 'I deserve this', so that he, like Tess, invites his own self-condemnation. Conversely, Clarissa, by rejecting her life, implicitly proclaims condemnation of Lovelace's whole way of being - not her own - since he has made her life what it now must be. Yet the purpose of her rejection of the rest of her life is not simply, vengefully, to condemn him, as he himself supposes. When she speaks of her life as a 'remnant', it is because she really is partly outside of it now, as she recovers a sense of internal separation from her own life's events. This transcendent separation from her own life-story - implied here in the shifting pronouns of 'to her whom thou hast ruined, tell me what further I am to suffer' - is crucial, despite her involvement. For her separation makes for a strange reversal of the power conflict between herself and Lovelace - a reversal which, whilst proving her the victim of his deliberate cruelty, paradoxically gives her the advantage.

To win, for Lovelace, is now to begin to lose as chaos loses its earlier easy logic. For it is better to be Clarissa, better to suffer than to cause suffering, and not just because traditional morality makes it so. 'Tis a choice comfort,' Clarissa tells Belford:

at the winding-up of our short story, to be able to say I have rather suffered injuries myself than offered them to others. I bless



God, though I have been unhappy, as the world deems it, and once I thought more so than at present I think I ought to have done; since my calamities were to work out for me my everlasting happiness; yet have I not wilfully made any one creature so. I have no reason to grieve for anything but for the sorrow I have given my friends.

Cl. p.1345, L.471

Despite what happens - that Clarissa is to die - her suffering implies the relation of the moral world to the psychological one, wholly now as in a vision of order, albeit order offended. Lovelace suffers remorse. Remorse is not simple regret. It comes as a psychological surprise. Clarissa does grieve for having brought sorrow to others, but such a grief is, as Clarissa knows, far different from the self-reproach of remorse. Clarissa's grief is more like sympathy for those who have suffered on her behalf. But remorse has not the comfort of being able to give sympathy, and it is so much more than a guilty conscience awakened by external blame. Lovelace, after all, has little regard for the world's censure. Lovelace's remorse arises from within him as the inward torment of yearning, with a too-late contrition, to prevent the damage his cruelty has already caused. It is as if morality is a powerful force upon the self even for the self who does not believe in it. It returns within the very same strange psychological shapes and forces which previously dispelled it.

For Lovelace, the experiment of which he was the instigator goes on - but with the unanticipated result that he now suffers from having caused Clarissa's

suffering: moreover, as she suffers more, the greater is his sin. For though she is separate from him, yet Clarissa, in her absoluteness for death, still has a relative and exponential effect upon him:

Strange, confoundedly strange, and as perverse (that is to say, as womanly) as strange, that she should refuse, and sooner choose to die (O the obscene word! and yet how free does thy pen make with it to me!) than be mine, who offended her by acting in character, while her parents acted shamefully out of theirs, and when I am now willing to act out of my own to oblige her: yet I not to be forgiven!

Cl. p.1107, L.350

Lovelace prefers to think that Clarissa's dying is a form of revenge simply relative to him and evidence of her perversity. He imagines her death to be a matter of choice and artifice. So unlike her sense of inherent meanings, his assumption is that all things, even suffering, are governed by free choice. 'The more she makes of it, the more painful to herself, as well as to me' he could say of his first assault upon Clarissa (p.728, L.226). Lovelace uses the language of the therapeutic, which has, as Philip Rieff states in The Triumph of the Therapeutic, 'nothing at stake beyond a manipulatable sense of well-being' (17). Recovery in these terms makes the psychological aesthetically separate from the moral. For what Lovelace is really saying is, crudely, 'take it easy on yourself in order to go easy on me'. Lovelace has not conceived of the idea

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17. Philip Rieff, The Triumph of the Therapeutic (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), p.13.

that the extent of inflicted hurt is not defined by the hurter, but registered in and by the person hurt. Neither is he aware that the past is not simply over as an action is. Hence, he thinks he should be able simply to remove Clarissa's hurt now by giving the commitment to marriage which he withheld then, obliging her to forgive him and thus absolving him from having to suffer his own remorse. This is not really an attempt to make amends or to put things right morally; it is merely tidying up with nothing moral about it at all. He had anticipated this escape beforehand, as if to deny story and future as real. Lovelace has no real comprehension of what atonement or forgiveness really mean:

Oh, that she would forgive me! - Would she but generously forgive me, and receive my vows at the altar, at the instant of her forgiving me, that I might not have time to relapse into my old prejudices!

Cl. p.930, L.275

Lovelace's phrase 'Would she but generously forgive me' (itself miming Clarissa) betrays his misapprehension of what forgiveness really means. Forgiveness is a generous act, but its meaning here is corrupted by the qualifier 'generously'. Lovelace speaks of forgiveness as if it is an act of mere forgetting, whereas forgiveness involves recognizing a fault in order even to be able to excuse the fault. When Clarissa really forgives him, he cannot bear it because it is a reminder of her real generosity against his cruelty: 'But I'll have none of her forgiveness! My own heart tells me I do not deserve

it; and I cannot bear it' (p.1346, L.472). Unable to bear the meaning implied by real forgiveness, Lovelace wants Clarissa's forgiveness only to save himself from himself. 'Would she...receive my vows at the altar...that I might not have time to relapse into my old prejudices!' he says, as if strangely half-aware of how his own habitual fast pace might outrun his present desperate attempt to redeem himself. Indeed it has, for Lovelace now is outpaced by the chaos he has set in motion by the threat to Clarissa's survival (and so his own, in his relative dependence upon hers). His desperation as the story goes on and on is his shocked response at the failure of his expectation that her loss of virtue was to be, as he had boasted to Belford, his gain of cohabitation:

But people's extravagant notions of things alter not facts, Belford: and, when all's done, Miss Clarissa Harlowe has but run the fate of a thousand others of her sex - only that they did not set such a romantic value upon what they call their honour; that's all [...]

Hitherto she is all angel: and was not that the point which at setting out I proposed to try? And was not cohabitation ever my darling view? And am I not now, at last, in the high road to it? - It is true that I have nothing to boast of as to her will. The very contrary. But now are we come to the test, whether she cannot be brought to make the best of an irreparable evil.

Cl. pp.885-886, L.259

There is thinly concealed panic beneath the apparent bravado of 'And was not cohabitation ever my darling view?' For Lovelace is not quite sure that he has controlled and won his own game. Moreover, what he had not considered in his original test of Clarissa's virtue was that his forced taking of her virtue may not be the

same as her yielding it. He very quickly dismisses the unanticipated issue of her unconquered will, even attempting, perversely, to offer her consolation from him who ruined her: 'Hitherto she is all angel'. Itself a contradiction of tenses, his statement contradicts his whole effort to normalize his abuse by trivializing her belief in virtue and making her seem no more than ordinary. Yet how easily Lovelace can depend here upon that 'thousand others of her sex', for most others would not have the kind of exceptional belief which makes sheer survival not in itself a sufficiently valuable reason for living. Lovelace himself so lacks belief in anything but temporal and temporary meanings that it is inconceivable to him that Clarissa will not try to recover. He has no concept of the force of her beliefs. Indeed, his is the horror of disbelief as the hope of Clarissa's physical survival runs out. 'A jest, I call all that has passed between her and me; a mere jest to die for' is his desperate inversion of the extent of the real injury to Clarissa, even as that injury belies his trivializing of it (p.1308, L.452). So like his prototype Iago, Lovelace creates chaos by inverting meanings. But Lovelace here seems not fully conscious of the effect of his own inversion, for to invert meaning now is to protect himself from his own miscalculation of his abuse of Clarissa.

Anna Howe's attempt to persuade Clarissa to marry Lovelace does not represent the same inversion of the real meaning of the rape. Out of loving concern for the

life of her friend, Anna Howe urges her to marry Lovelace in order to repair Clarissa's external reputation, and thereby create a situation, albeit a compromised one as Anna knows, which might enable Clarissa's physical recovery. Yet this is Clarissa's response to Anna Howe's suggestion:

What! shall I, who have been treated with such pre-meditated and perfidious barbarity, as is painful to be thought of, and cannot with modesty be described, think of taking the violator to my heart? Can I vow duty to one so wicked, and hazard my salvation by joining myself to so great a profligate, now I know him to be so? Do you think your Clarissa Harlowe so lost, so sunk, at least, as that she could, for the sake of patching up, in the world's eye, a broken reputation, meanly appear indebted to the generosity, or perhaps compassion, of a man who has, by means so inhuman, robbed her of it?

Cl. p.1116, L.359

For Clarissa to marry, now that she knows what Lovelace is, would be to make herself not just ruined but also, in some sense, like him, immoral. It would be to collude in his meanings, making her appear 'meanly...indebted to [his] generosity'. But the sentence goes on morally to include 'a man who has...robbed her of it' in order to give the fullest sense of how wrong it would be to marry Lovelace. Now to accept his 'generosity' (maddeningly squared with 'robbed'), would be to sink, as a self, more greatly whilst he would be raised. The whole meaning of his robbing her would be changed from its true meaning; he would be absolved in the world's eyes and her suffering would be trivialized in condonation of his view of it. The outcome would be an

achieved inversion of the real meaning of what she has suffered - and the creation of a foundation for her whole future based on his chaotic meanings, as if compromise is only a second-order settlement of a chaos still essentially beneath it.

To opt for survival by marrying Lovelace now would be an action like Tess' of living with Alec d'Urberville in order to survive in a world which has really already defeated her. There is a difference: for Tess, going back to Alec is partly in reaction to the hurt she has suffered from Angel, not from Alec. That there are two men, not one, in Tess' story only increases the final irony of Angel Clare's too-late impulse to put things right. Arriving back from Brazil to find Tess living with Alec, he says:

'Ah-it is my fault!' said Clare.

But he could not get on. Speech was as inexpressive as silence. But he had a vague consciousness of one thing, though it was not clear to him till later; that his original Tess had spiritually ceased to recognize the body before him as hers - allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will.

Tess p.429

That Tess is defeated by the forces against her is horribly implicit in Angel's perception that Tess' suffering has altered her. Indeed, it is worse than an alteration: she is the same, for the original Tess still exists in his memory of her, but separated from the distorted version she has become. This stranded relation to her original self is a version, manifest in the

individual self, of the huge-scale loss of originals which I have shown as a condition of being in much writing of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hardy's novel is ever haunted by the lost narrative of how it should be.

Tess' split from her true self has, in a sense, destroyed Tess. For she lives as one who is already dead inside, with the will towards life slyly defeated by life's cruel illogic. She seems to Angel like 'a corpse upon the current, in a direction disassociated from its living will'. Her life's events have deadened the very tendency vital to life: 'The irresistible, universal, automatic tendency to find sweet pleasure somewhere, which pervades all life' (p.140). But it is not just Tess' own particular will which is deadened by peculiar events. Angel's words - 'Ah-it is my fault' are like a hollow echo. They do not express the reason which explains the ruin both their lives have become. Both, not just Tess, suffer the painful bafflement of having no full comprehension of the parts they have played or not played in creating their situation. Earlier, Angel had been able to recognize the gap between event and will:

Who was the moral man? Still more pertinently, who was the moral woman? The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay, not among things done, but among things willed.

Tess p.388

Angel's thought here comes as a sort of awakening consciousness. But the outcome of the events of his own



and Tess' life casts the hope implied by a deeper consciousness of things into grotesque irrelevance. The 'true history' is the story of what would have happened if character could direct, or in some way influence, its life's events. But the true history exists unseen and even perhaps unknown even to those leading the life. The only meaning of its hidden existence seems to be that of making more painfully ironic the false, yet physically manifest, story of wrong meanings wrought in spite of the moral character and in spite of the human will - hence Hardy wants truly to call Tess 'a pure woman'. Tess cannot get out of this terrible parody of her true story either by action or by thought. For morality gropes in a universe blind to it; truth bears only an ironic relation to action; character and story cannot come together save in the latter destroying the former. Even if Tess had been able to know from the beginning how wrong her story was to be, her response could only have been, even then in her fear of Alec, the same powerless bafflement which she and Angel are doomed to share at the end:

Thus the thing began. Had she perceived this meeting's import she might have asked why she was doomed to be seen and coveted that day by the wrong man, and not by some other man, the right and desired one in all respects - as nearly as humanity can supply the right and desired; yet to him who amongst her acquaintance might have approximated to this kind, she was but a transient impression, half forgotten.

In the ill-judged execution of the well-judged plan of things the call seldom produces the comer, the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving. Nature does not often say 'See!' to her poor creature at a time when seeing can lead to happy doing; or reply 'Here!' to a body's cry of 'Where?' till the

hide-and-seek has become an irksome, outworn game. We may wonder whether at the acme and summit of human progress these anachronisms will be corrected by a finer intuition, a closer interaction of the social machinery than that which now jolts us round and along; but such completeness is not to be prophesied, or even conceived as possible. Enough that in the present case, as in millions, it was not the two halves of a perfect whole that confronted each other at the perfect moment; a missing counterpart wandered independently about the earth waiting in crass obtuseness till the late time came. Out of which maladroit delay sprang anxieties, disappointments, shocks, catastrophes, and passing-strange destinies.

Tess p.72

Tess only might have asked why she was doomed to figure in the distorted version of her life, for the question itself is rendered inappropriate in the face of a universe which twists order into a regular chaos of wrong meanings. It is not even the case that Tess makes some wrong first move which, as it were, shifts her true history onto a wrong course. Any human ordering seems utterly separate and irrecoverable from the events which actually take place. For this is not even the beginning of Tess' story. It is a 'thing' prior to the human, as if her story has gone wrong, insidiously, even before it has begun. Thus, the forces against Tess go far beyond the mere events which afflict her story as she lives it - they get in before or behind her story, as if her story is, somehow, a second-hand tale. 'She was not an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations, to anybody but herself,' says the narrator:

To all humankind besides Tess was only a passing thought. Even to friends she was no more than a frequently passing thought. If

she made herself miserable the livelong night and day it was only this much to them - 'Ah, she makes herself unhappy.' If she tried to be cheerful, to dismiss all care, to take pleasure in the daylight, the flowers, the baby, she could only be this idea to them - 'Ah, she bears it very well'.

Tess p.127

With characteristic irony the narrator points out that Tess' life's story is of little consequence even to her friends. What matters to her matters little to anyone else; the universe in her head is not the universe outside it. Thus the Shakespearian tragic paradoxes become sorrowfully familiarized. Viewed from the outside, Tess' story is a mild, worn-out tale provocative only of idle chat. She too eventually begins to see her story as just another repetition of the old, old story as of Adam and Eve.

Human ordering has no real place in a universe such as Hardy's. It is already defeated by a form of regularized chaos which de-synchronizes paths which could - and the implication is that they should - lead away from, not towards, catastrophe. For behind these wrong paths is the sense of how things could have been right so that stories should be just and not merely arbitrary. As it is, even by chance, they are cruel mutilations of real order. Yet even the notion of real order is not simply the primal order, with the distorted order as an imperfect secondary ordering. For the narrator cancels out his possibilities even as he suggests them: 'but such completeness is not to be prophesied' he says in dismissal of his own prophesy. 'Or even conceived as

possible' is his bitter assurance, as though he has foolishly dared contemplate any notion of order. Indeed, though the narrator appears to be establishing how the right thing was superseded by the wrong, a perfect order is never really contemplated save as a fiction. The right man is only right 'as nearly as humanity can supply'. That right man and Tess, even if events brought them together at the right time, and even if they could recognise their compatibility, would not be 'the two halves of a perfect whole'; they would only be counterparts. Not only is the mechanism which governs the universe a mutilating force, but human ordering itself is a poor mechanism; it is a yearning shadow of real order and that real order is lost, if not non-existent anyway, existing now only as unfulfilled need deprived of the right and necessity.

Even instances of happiness can only be secondary. In The Mayor of Casterbridge Elizabeth-Jane's second-order happiness is wholly dependent upon the absence of suffering - Elizabeth-Jane's youth, the narrative voice says, 'had seemed to teach that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain' (18). Likewise, for Tess, life's pattern is a treadmill of suffering, broken ever so briefly by a few days of happiness with Angel before her capture. Elizabeth-Jane does not feel that she has created her own happiness but lives in some wonderment that she has

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18. Thomas Hardy, The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge (1886; London: Macmillan, 1955), p.383.

gained any happiness at all. Similarly, Tess' brief happiness with Angel is a kind of anomaly, unlike the mechanisms which govern the outside world. 'What must come will come' she tells Angel when they hide in the deserted house:

And, looking through the shutter-chink: 'All is trouble outside there; inside here content.'

He peeped out also. It was quite true; within was affection, union, error forgiven: outside was the inexorable.

Tess p.442

Angel and Tess' shared happiness hardly constitutes the result of event defined by character. On the contrary, their happiness occurs in a sort of interlude in their story which is still going on, on the outside and with no possibility of their avoiding the pain of the unrolling story. Even the act of murdering Alec, though an assertive gesture of Tess' self and seemingly a way of stopping her continuous suffering, is yet an aspect of a chaos which makes character but a pawn in its own story. The narrator points out, at the first meeting of Alec and Tess that Alec 'is one who stood fair to be the blood-red ray in the spectrum of her young life' as if the murder ever lurked in her life's possibilities (p.71). Indeed the murder is the final act of severance of real meaning from actual story; it does not alter the meanings which have defined Tess' story or her self in it. For the murder is a kind of revenge. As revenge it is an act which is defined by the story which gave rise to it without transcending the meanings of that story. In this sense Tess' murder of Alec is like a smaller,

inarticulate version of Othello's suicide. Both are desperate gestures of the self to resolve, in some way, the chaos in which each character is immersed. Yet both acts, as response, remain aspects of the chaos out of which they arose.

Clarissa's death differs profoundly in not being fully an aspect of the chaos which so damages her worldly existence, even though only chaos could have driven her to wish for her own death. Her death is not self-destruction like Othello's suicide. On the contrary, Clarissa recognizes suicide as a sin, so that for her to cause her own death would damn her, not save her. Nor is her act of dying like Tess' act of murder. Clarissa's death is not a consequence of her character being overcome by the events of her story. Yet it is true that she has suffered so greatly that the worldly damage done to her is irreparable, as she explains, in her attempt to console Anna Howe:

'If I die not now, it may possibly happen that I may be taken when I am less prepared. Had I escaped the evils I labour under, it might have been in the midst of some gay promising hope; when my heart had beat high with the desire of life; and when the vanity of this earth had taken hold of me.

But now, my dear, for your satisfaction let me say that, although I wish not for life, yet would I not, like a poor coward, desert my post when I can maintain it, and when it is my duty to maintain it.

Cl. p.1117, L.359

These words are not Clarissa's willing of her own death as deliberate martyring, or some petulant refusal

to repair her life. She is reconciled with dying, but even though she has this readiness to die, how unconsoling it really is that to die in grief is better than to die 'in the midst of some gay promising hope'. For that her hopes were never realized is the terrible reminder that she is too young to die. 'But nineteen, Belford! - nineteen cannot so soon die of grief' Lovelace exclaims in disbelieving despair (p.1308, L.453). The measure of Clarissa's grief in this long book is such that it cancels out the hope and time-scale of youth - youth which should be so much in the world, youth whose heart should 'beat high'. The pain of Clarissa's nineteenth year has overwhelmed the value of all the previous eighteen. Yet the deep consciousness of the suffering she has endured makes Clarissa able to turn what should be regret for the unfulfilment of what is naturally expected in the youth of life into a rejoicing that she has not had to lose what she may have gained. Her death is a kind of saving, by killing the tendency to suffering which Tess is unable to stop.

But Clarissa's death does so much more than stop her own suffering. By dying, Clarissa's story lifts into significance the errors of human ways and shows them in all their real cruelty and folly. Human error acquires a religious seriousness. The permanence, and yet remoteness, of an after-world is brought to bear upon temporal life with a set of values other than that implied by the temporary, human desires of Lovelace. This sense of the vastness of eternity through death makes

for a feeling of great awe in Clarissa so different from the vastness of Tess of the d'Urbervilles. In Tess of the d'Urbervilles the hugeness of time casts human life, for Tess, into awful insignificance:

She philosophically noted dates as they came past in the revolution of the year; the disastrous night of her undoing at Trantridge with its dark background of the Chase; also the dates of the baby's birth and death; also her own birthday; and every other day individualized by incidents in which she had taken some share. She suddenly thought one afternoon, when looking in the glass at her fairness, that there was yet another date, of greater importance to her than those; that of her own death, when all these charms would have disappeared; a day which lay sly and unseen among all the other days of the year, giving no sign or sound when she annually passed over it; but not the less surely there. When was it? Why did she not feel the chill of each yearly encounter with such a cold relation? She had Jeremy Taylor's thought that some time in the future those who had known her would say: It is the -th, the day that poor Tess Durbeyfield died, and there would be nothing singular to their minds in the statement. Of that day, doomed to be her terminus in time through all the ages, she did not know the place in month, week, season, or year.

Tess pp.134-135

Tess's death, far from making her life significant, will reduce her, she already knows, to little more than a passing thought. As an entity she will be stamped out by the forward passage of time, yet - and this is the disturbing thing - the date of her death exists as an inevitable fact in time before she has reached it. 'Through all the ages' is not the contemplation of how important that date is, but how, on the contrary, her entire existence is made irrelevant by the inexorable passing of time whose vastness overwhelms her small life.



But Tess's thought is worse than that the span of her life is made smaller by the sense of the ages of time. What makes the date of her death so frightening is that, unlike other significant dates in her life which become known as event defines them, the death date is 'sly and unseen', as if it waits, without purpose of its own, for her life to catch up with it. Mockingly, it exists (albeit concealed) as an annual reminder that the days that seem significant because she has had a 'share' in them are as nothing compared to the day of death which cancels out life. Tess has Jeremy Taylor's thought that life is so insubstantial that it seems less than real:

A vapor, and phantastical, or a meer appearance, and this but for a little while neither: the very dream, the phantasm disappears in a small time, like the shadow that departeth, or like a tale that is told, or as a dream when one awaketh. A man is so vain, so unfixed, so perishing a creature, that he cannot long last in the scene of fancy: a man goes off and is forgotten like the dream of a distracted person.<sup>19</sup>

For Tess, Jeremy Taylor's thought confirms her human anticipation of lack of meaning, and what that lack means to the human. Yet the lack of meaning does still matter since it is felt subjectively: Death, objectively, matters so very little to anyone else: it is merely 'like a tale that is told'. But Taylor's real meaning in pointing out the brevity of life is that its brevity is the very thing which indicates how relevant life is:

Though we must not look so far off, and

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19. Jeremy Taylor, Holy Living, ed. by P.G. Stanwood (1650; Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p.20.

prey abroad, yet we must be buisie neer at hand; we must with all arts of the Spirit seize upon the present, because it passes from us while we speak, and because in it all our certainty does consist. We must take our waters as out of a torrent and sudden shower, which will quickly cease dropping from above, and quickly cease running in our chanel's here below; This instant will never return again, and yet it may be this instant will declare, or secure the fortune of a whole eternity.<sup>20</sup>

Richardson, in contrast to Hardy, would have understood Jeremy Taylor's meanings with this deep religious seriousness. Indeed, in a letter to Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson asks her to honour Clarissa as aspiring towards the same piety as Holy Living, Holy Dying:

Be pleased in this Case to honour the Volumes with a Place with your Taylors Living and Dying, with your Practice of Piety, and Nelson's Fasts and Festivals not as being worthy of such Company, but that they may have a Chance of being dipt into Thirty Years hence.

Letters p.117

Clarissa's piety is avowed in her consciousness of the Christian imperative as given by Jeremy Taylor: 'we must not look so far off...we must be buisie neer at hand...we must with all arts of the Spirit seize upon the present...We must take our waters as out of a torrent'. The brevity of life is the much quoted reason why it is so vital that life is used - though not used in the worldly sense of mere self-seeking of the reward of heaven - as the only dramatic opportunity to gain everlasting life, to 'secure the fortune of a whole

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20. Jeremy Taylor, Holy Dying, ed. by P.G. Stanwood (1651; Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p.30, hereafter referred to as 'H.D.'

eternity': this, Clarissa believes. For Clarissa, to die is not to stop as it is for Tess. Clarissa's contemplation of death transcends Tess' human fear of oblivion, for Clarissa's hope is that she has earned, through the living-out of a Christian life, beatification. Consoling Anna Howe, Clarissa writes, in her final letter to her friend:

Know then, and let your tears be those, if of pity, of joyful pity! for I permit you to shed a few, to embalm, as I may say, a fallen blossom - Know then, that the good doctor, and the pious clergyman, and the worthy apothecary, have just now with joint benedictions taken their last leave of me: and the former bids me hope - do, my dearest, let me say hope - hope for my enlargement before tomorrow sunset.

Adieu, therefore, my dearest friend! Be this your consolation, as it is mine, that in God's good time we shall meet in a blessed eternity, never more to part!

Cl. p.1349, L.473.2

Tess is conscious of how the length of a human life is diminished in the context of aeons of time. But Clarissa has no concern for earthly time, of whatever scale. She separates 'God's time' from earthly time as a 'blessed eternity'. For Clarissa, her death will effect her 'enlargement' in eternity, not her disintegration. William Law, a writer admired by Richardson, writes of eternity as truer to the original state of being than that suggested by the punctuating time of the world:

Thou beganest as time began, but as time was in eternity before it became days and years, so thou wast in God before thou wast brought into the creation: and as time is neither a part of eternity, nor broken off from it, yet come out of it; so thou art not

a part of God, nor broken off from Him, yet born out of him.<sup>21</sup>

Existence is not 'time-out' from time eternal - though it can be made to seem so by immorality and amorality. What Law implies is that eternity cannot be understood through earthly time; yet there is a connection in the way that time is a product of and a probation for eternity. Clarissa's death removes her from the whole realm of the world's time, taking her back, in Law's terms, into the unknowable but implicitly more stable and Godly state of a 'blessed eternity'.

Clarissa's anticipation of a 'blessed eternity' means that she can face her death with the kind of acceptance that Jeremy Taylor would say makes for a good death:

He that would die well must all the dayes of his life lay up against the day of death, not only by the general provisions of holinesse and a pious life indefinitely, but, provisions proper to the necessities of that great day of expence, in which a man is to throw his last cast for an eternity of joyes or sorrows; ever remembering, that this alone well performed is not enough to passe us into Paradise, but that alone done foolishly is enough to send us to hell; and the want of either a holy life, or death, makes a man to fall short of the mighty price of our high calling.

H.D. p.50

'A holy life, or death': this distinction between life and death makes the process of dying not the fading out of life but a phase of equal consequence with life. To die well in the culminating moment by moment, matters

21. William Law, Selected Mystical Writings, ed. by Stephen Hobbhouse (London: Daniel, 1938), 'An Appeal', p.36.

as much as living well. All this is doctrine: what Clarissa does is to make it both imaginatively alive and unimaginable in her death.

So conscious is Clarissa of this importance of the day of death that her preparations for it include the ordering of her own coffin, and instructions as to its inscriptions. 'To persons in health,' she says to Mrs. Lovick in explanation:

this may be shocking; and the preparation, and my unconcernedness in it, may appear affected: but to me, who have had so gradual a weaning-time from the world, and so much reason not to love it, I must say I dwell on, I indulge (and, strictly speaking, I enjoy) the thoughts of death. Believe me, my good friends, it does what nothing else can do: it teaches me, by strengthening in me the force of the divinest example, to forgive the injuries I have received, and shuts out the remembrance of past evils from my soul.

Cl. p.1306, L.451

Clarissa is aware that her coffin, to those in living health, is like an impingement of morbid horror upon the mortal world. But Clarissa does not say that she indulges in 'the thoughts of death', as if admitting a self-indulgence. Rather, since it takes a long time for her to die, she becomes accustomed to the thoughts which the dying must have. Her enjoyment of those thoughts is not a wallowing in morbidity, but the contemplation of transcendence over her earthly suffering through religious meanings. She experiences within herself the peaceful realization of her own order of meanings in the course of dying.

And Clarissa's death is decisive. It makes order the primary force - that is to say, order is not an avoidance of chaos but a real response to it. Yet this final triumph of order over chaos is imbued with a kind of unimaginable shock, not simple resolution, since order is achieved at such great cost and only out of chaos. Partly that shock is expressed through Lovelace's own disbelief that Clarissa would go that far, or be that absolute in her preference for death. After Clarissa has died Lovelace, in mad restlessness, moves about from place to place with frenetic meaninglessness:

I shall first to Paris; and, for amusement and diversion's sake, try to renew some of my old friendships: thence to some of the German courts: thence, perhaps, to Vienna: thence descend through Bavaria and the Tyrol to Venice, where I shall keep the carnival: thence to Florence and Turin: thence again over Mount Cenis to France: and, when I return again to Paris, shall expect to see my friend Belford, who by that time I doubt not will be all crusted and bearded over with penitent, self-denial and mortification; a very anchorite, only an itinerant one, journeying over in hope to cover a multitude of his own sins, by proselyting his old companion.

Cl. p.1432, L.513

This is one sentence which, tautologically, returns in its conclusion to its opening clause. The main verb is missing from the opening clause so that each new clause makes for a new crippled start, as if Lovelace's intention lacks real purpose. For his journeying, looking like action, is really like a frantic running around in circles, stopping only to start again as the tautological syntax implies. For Lovelace is not really enjoying

extravagant worldly travel; he is creating distractions for himself in order to avoid how he really feels about Clarissa's actual death. Through the contrast, he creates, in part, in himself the seriousness of religious belief in Clarissa. Indeed, his suffering is worse than his trying to run away from the pain of feelings of which he is not even quite conscious; Lovelace is trying to escape from his very self. For Clarissa's death, as well as being the realization of her order of meanings also makes real the meaning of Lovelace's chaos: the creator of chaos is now most horribly beset by it.

It really is now as though Lovelace has become his own torment. 'Reading over the above,' Lovelace writes, as if he has not been truly conscious of what he was writing:

I am ashamed of my ramblings; but what wouldst have me do? Seest thou not that I am but seeking to run out of myself, in hope to lose myself; yet that I am unable to do either?

Cl. p.1347, L.472

'I...me...I...myself...myself...I': the oscillating pronouns suggest multisplits in his sense of self, as if there is nothing coherent left about Lovelace at all. He does not even know which part of himself he would escape. 'To run out of myself in hope to lose myself' seems at first to be the way to lose his self. But 'I am unable to do either' splits the two actions - 'to run out' and 'to lose' - into separate ways of escaping. His language is all confusion in his one desire to effect an escape from

his self. The wish for escape is the sickness of the self which Kierkegaard identifies as a form of despair:

This then is the manner in which despair, this sickness in the self, is the sickness unto death. The despairer is mortally ill. It is, although in a sense quite different from any physical illness, the most vital parts that the sickness has attacked; and yet he cannot die.

Death is not the end of the sickness, but death is incessantly the end. To be saved from this sickness by death is an impossibility, for the sickness and its torment - and death - are precisely to be unable to die.<sup>22</sup>

Lovelace is ashamed of his 'rambling' because he thinks it a kind of lack of self-command. It is worse: he is nailed to himself so that his torment has its source in his self, without his being able to recognize his self as the cause of his own despair. Thus, what happens to Lovelace is far worse, yet far smaller, than Clarissa's dying. His self is already in its own living hell without his knowing it - he still thinks that Clarissa, externally, is the cause of his despair:

Living or dying, she is mine - and only mine. Have I not earned her dearly? Is not damnation likely to be the purchase to me, though a happy eternity will be hers?

An eternal separation! O God! O God! How can I bear that thought!

Cl. p.1358, L.478

For Lovelace, Clarissa's dying turns his sin against her into murder, even though he does not understand how he could have killed her. Clarissa resists Lovelace's

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22. Soren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, trans. by A. Hannay (1849; London: Penguin, 1989), p.51.



relativistic and all-too-human insistence that her dying is to punish him by increasing the consequences of his sin, for she rejects relative consequences even for herself. Her belief is that there must be order primarily, even though she knows that the absoluteness of a belief in order will have relative consequences on earth. But Lovelace has no comprehension of the absolute. Nearly mad with guilt and a despair of which he is barely fully conscious, he tries to make his sin against her itself the relative linkage with her, as if, in the worldly terms of purchase and return, he has paid the price for her with his soul. The more sane thought, but the thought he tries to avoid even as his own thoughts drive him into it, is that he has lost her, and himself, forever.

The feeling left by Clarissa dying is deeper and more terrible than that of Lovelace's own personal tragedy and grief. Clarissa's death has tragic significance which goes far beyond the personal, since to die, for her, is a matter, not of revenge or defeat, but belief. It is this transmutation of the religious level into an imagination of the unimaginable which Terry Eagleton's analysis of the novel wholly mis-comprehends when he sums up the meaning of Clarissa's death in these terms:

What Clarissa's death signifies, in fact, is an absolute refusal of political society: sexual oppression, bourgeois patriarchy and libertine aristocracy together.

If Clarissa's death was just a 'refusal of political society' it would be a secondary reaction to the values of the world. Eagleton himself, like a politicized Lovelace, interprets Clarissa's reason for dying as no more than a 'gesture' when he writes:

the public nature of Clarissa's death is the whole point: her dying is in a profound sense a political gesture, a shocking, surreal act of resignation from a society whose power system she has seen in part for what it is.

T.E. p.74

On the contrary, Clarissa's death is far beyond the very idea of political gesture, as Eagleton's own word 'surreal' implicitly admits. The whole point is that there is nothing relative about her dying. It is absolutely a dying to this world.

Clarissa's belief in eternal values means that to live or to die - even at so young an age - is not itself of any relative importance. Doctrine says that it is not the length of a life, but what a life has meant that lives on afterwards, in assertion of eternal values. Nevertheless, the scale of Clarissa's transcendence is itself dependent on the horror of the loss on the human level. Anna appeals to Clarissa; she tries to create external human demands on Clarissa to make her need to live:

For Heaven's sake, then, for the world's sake, for the honour of our sex, and for my sake, once more I beseech you, try to overcome this shock; and if you can overcome it, I shall then be as happy as I wish to be; for I cannot, indeed I cannot, think of parting

with you for many, many years to come.

Cl. p.1150, L.372

'Try to overcome this shock' she urges, in her incredulity that shock might kill Clarissa. Her pleas imply that Clarissa need not die, that another individual might not allow herself to die. But that - incredibly to Lovelace, to Anna, to the reader - Clarissa does allow herself to die is the crucial thing. For it is only through the individual that values which are greater than the individual can be felt. In a less free universe the truth would assert itself, leaving no risk to the individual and no terrifying opportunity for the individual to create values which have significance for more than an individual self. The sense that she may not die is the valuably fragile thing, as if the only way that eternal values can be felt is through the temporary experience which life is.

The outcome - life or death - stays so close to chance that until the point of death, Clarissa's death is not an inevitability. The possibility - that she may not die - is ever present in the presentness of the narrative, whose form makes reading time very close to actual time, expressive of intense immediacy. The immediacy itself holds open the space in which chaos and order vye with one another in their closest relation of thought to event, value to destruction. It is as if order has to be re-made out of chaos, every second almost, even if order's meaning is said to be of eternal value. For chaos and order are not separate forces. They are

reciprocally dependent upon one another even if, paradoxically, by working together they must come more apart. It is this strangeness in their relation which is implied in the words of St. Paul to the Romans:

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.<sup>23</sup>

Sin, as a form of chaos can only be an effective force through the very condemnation created by the law. This relation makes law the primary force and sin a sort of secondary, predatory and reactive force upon the law. Indeed, in a sense the law creates sin, for without the law sin cannot be at all. This strange closeness in their relation, despite the absolute difference in the meanings of the two, like that of chaos and order, makes them inseparable. Their difference is made all the more apparent by the closeness of their opposition. That closeness makes sin the relative consequence of the law, a consequence which nonetheless cannot be a reason for the law not to exist. This, Clarissa cannot but believe, even as the affirmation of this belief, tested by the force of chaos, drives her to her death.

In a thesis which claims that chaos is closer to the experience of living than order, it may seem odd to place such emphasis on a text such as Clarissa which affirms order, finally. But Clarissa's sense of order, far from

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23. Romans, 7. 7-8

being a compromise - like Mill's patched-up reconstruction of an already failed belief in socio-political order - constitutes a powerful rejection of compromise. Clarissa's need for order does not try to palliate the force of chaos, as Mill's reconstructed secondary order tries to ignore chaos. Neither is it an avoidance of chaos, reminiscent of Montaigne's sense of order through deliberate avoidance. Clarissa does not escape into a religious order in lieu of faulty human ordering, making her death a retreat from life. Clarissa dies in a terrifying commitment of belief in the absolute which will settle for nothing less than the primary order it implies. For the reader her death feels as unbelievable, I say, as it does for Lovelace, whose frantic words to Belford express his incredulity:

An eternal separation! O God! O God! How can I bear that thought! But yet there is life! Yet, therefore, hope - enlarge my hope, and thou shalt be my good genius, and I will forgive thee everything.

For this last time - but it must not, shall not be the last - let me hear, the moment thou receivest this - what I am to be - for at present I am / The most miserable of men.  
Cl. p.1358, L.478

Lovelace's desperate clinging to hope is more a way of holding off the unbearable thought of Clarissa's death than a real expectation that she may live. To accept that she is to die would be to accept the incredible - that she would go so far. Yet the sense of disbelief is the signal that mundane belief is left behind by Clarissa's unbelievable belief.

I do not know of another text in which the final transcendence of order over chaos, in the very act of re-asserting order, retains all of the power created by the clash of order and chaos. The kind of power in the ending of Clarissa is akin to that of King Lear in which the power arises out of terrible destruction and defeat. Resolution, such as we have it in Clarissa, however desirable, usually seems to be a lesser force than that which it resolves. But Clarissa's death does not feel like resolution uncomplicating that which it ensues; her death is testimony to the power of her belief, a belief which is made awesome as Clarissa destroys destruction in her own person. This novel belongs to the literature of chaos even in the very way in which the final order is killingly brought about.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ROMANTIC CHAOS: PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, STRANGE MONOLOGUE IN THE SUBJECTIVE WORLD.

#### I. Othello in Autobiography, Not the Drama

In her essay, 'Satire and the Images of Self in the Romantic Period: The Long Tradition of Hazlitt's Liber Amoris', Marilyn Butler uncovers some of the literary allusions made in the original letters which Hazlitt wrote to his friend Patmore, before they were published in Hazlitt's prosework Liber Amoris. Despite subsequent excisions Liber Amoris is still laced with literary allusions. They are, as Marilyn Butler goes on to say, intrinsic to Hazlitt's whole intention:

From the start he depicts a series of scenes in which he plays, by turns, the parts of Young Werther, Hamlet, Othello, Iago, and Lovelace. The last two roles are significant: Hazlitt's self-image includes the notion of the ingenious contriver who is himself like a stage-manager, or like the author's surrogate within his fiction. It is, then, the most self-conscious, the most continuously literary of love affairs, though some of the sense of contrivance arises because Sarah has scarcely any words of her own, and seems to be waiting, like an actress, for her part to be written. Hazlitt, stage-managing as well as writing and performing, takes all the initiatives and dictates the course of the scenes.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Marilyn Butler, 'Satire and the Images of Self in the Romantic Period: the Long Tradition of Hazlitt's Liber Amoris' in The Yearbook of English Studies (Birmingham: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1984), xiv, pp.215-216.

It is impossible not to associate Hazlitt as the writer of the work with a figure such as Lovelace, whose delight it is within Richardson's work to act out the various literary parts which his situation suggests. Indeed, the actorly aspect of Lovelace associates him with Kierkegaard's aesthetic man. But it is not so much the posturing of both Iago and Lovelace which makes them a memory to 'H.' in Liber Amoris, as the stage-managing propensity of both. However, there is of course a crucial difference in the way that the stage-managing works in Liber Amoris. In both Othello and Clarissa Iago and Lovelace respectively, as the embodiments of chaotic forces, seem to act of their own accord. They conduct experiments whose impetus seems to arise out of a spirit of mischief lying in the hearts of both characters. The author in both texts is a silent presence. Richardson and Shakespeare hand over the authority of conducting, or stage-managing, the plots to their characters with the result that the authors are not implicated in the chaos produced. But by becoming himself 'the ingenious contriver' Hazlitt is implicated in the production of chaos - not for others but for himself, since he is, as Marilyn Butler implies, apparently the only realizable protagonist in Liber Amoris. For that reason the creation of chaos is highly self-conscious. In this chapter I am going to show that self-consciousness is characteristic of the Romantic uses of chaos.

Hazlitt does not simply present, in his equivalent self, H., a literary development of the meddlesome



stage-manager figure in Iago and Lovelace. When Lovelace quotes lines spoken by the classical lover, Othello: 'Perdition catch my soul, but I do love her' (2), the irony is that he is playing the part of the betrayed, when he is in fact the betrayer. In Hazlitt's allusions to the figure of Othello in Liber Amoris there is irony, but it operates on a wholly different level - not to do with manipulation, but with comparative indignity.

Of Othello, Hazlitt writes of Shakespeare's power in:

painting the expiring conflict between love and hatred, tenderness and resentment, jealousy and remorse, in unfolding the strength and the weakness of our nature, in uniting sublimity of thought with the anguish of the keenest woe, in putting in motion the various impulses that agitate this our mortal being, and at last blending them in that noble tide of deep and sustained passion, impetuous but majestic, that 'flows on to the Propontic, and knows no ebb'.<sup>3</sup>

Hazlitt's syntax brings into paradoxical juxtaposition the force of opposites, for in Othello strength and weakness do not seem remote and antithetical; their relation is such that the one can become the other 'through rapid but gradual transitions...raising passion to its height from the smallest beginnings and in spite of all obstacles' (4). Othello is a heroic figure, larger

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2. Samuel Richardson, Clarissa (1747-1748; London: Penguin, 1985), see p.146, L.31 where Lovelace quotes from Othello (II,iii,339), hereafter referred to as 'Cl'.

3. The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934) vi, p.118, hereafter referred to as 'Hazlitt VI'.

4. The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), iv, 'On the Characters of Shakespear's Plays', p.201, hereafter referred to as 'Hazlitt IV'.

than life despite his weakness, since his weakness is inextricable from his strength, however magnificent his strength may be.

This is Hazlitt writing without irony, writing as the revered and serious Shakespearian critic. In his own experience of personal betrayal Hazlitt suffers a conflict of unresolvable passions such as that he can so eloquently express in Othello's case. But the maelstrom of Hazlitt's emotions has nothing heroic or magnificent about it. Even though the Renaissance dignity of man is subverted by the great degradation of Othello's jealousy there is yet something in the very largeness of his fall which commands terrified respect. But of his own humiliating passion Hazlitt writes:

I am tossed about (backwards and forwards)  
by my passion, so as to become ridiculous.<sup>5</sup>

Far from it dignifying him, being passion's slave makes Hazlitt a figure of ridicule even to himself. If, in his own situation, Hazlitt could feel that there had been some huge betrayal of a deep trust - a trust born out of his own magnanimity, such as I have made explicit in the situations of the Shakespearian heroes Coriolanus and Othello, and of Richardson's heroine, Clarissa, - that worst of betrayals productive of the wildest of passions could be more than something merely ridiculous. For at least then Hazlitt, the great Shakespearian critic, could have some relation to the great Shakespearian heroes

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5. The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), ix, p.130, hereafter referred to as 'L.A.'

about whom he writes. Instead, the irony of Hazlitt's situation of betrayal is that it cannot even quite be called betrayal. For his is a situation of unrequited and self-deceptive love. This is Othello in autobiography, not drama, in self-caused, self-confused prosaic life.

Unrequited love is itself humiliating. But Hazlitt's humiliation is magnified by the circumstances and character of his beloved: not only is Sarah Walker of a lower class, being the daughter of his landlord, but she is also probably, as Hazlitt knows afterwards, a wanton flirt, if not a prostitute. To have felt love for so unworthy an object of love is far from magnificently tragic; it is shamefully belittling. Hazlitt is degraded by this small affair with a working-class girl who apparently could have no understanding of the depth of the passion he feels for her. Moreover, it is embarrassing that the social gap between himself and his uneducated lover is a smaller-scale reflection of Coriolanus' aristocratical pretensions, to which Hazlitt is so averse. Hazlitt cannot but recognize his own pride in feeling thus:

this dreadful passion - it gives me a kind of rank in the kingdom of love - but I could have wished it had been for an object that at least could have understood its value and pitied its excess.

L.A. p.124

Hazlitt almost becomes a mini Coriolanus himself, assuming an emotional superiority of rank which in the original he would criticize.

Yet despite his embarrassment, and despite the knowledge that his object of love is not only beneath him socially, but unworthy of him emotionally, Hazlitt feels love still, even when the half-inconclusive end of what never really happened has taken place. He loves Sarah with such passion that his own expression resonates with Shakespearian language. Echoing Othello's very words to Desdemona, Hazlitt writes:

But 'she's gone, I am abused, and my revenge  
must be to love her!'

L.A. p.132

This is a deliberate misquotation of Othello's words. Othello declares 'my relief/ Must be to loathe her' (III,iii,271-272). The alteration is significant, for Hazlitt is more knowing than Othello about the paradoxical nature of emotions. He knows that love cannot be changed to loathing simply by a willed necessity for revenge. Instead, this literary lover mocks his own perversity in still continuing lamely to love her: some revenge! some hero this! Unable to take quite seriously the inappropriateness of his seriously-felt passion, and yet unable to cast aside this self-ridiculing love-affair, Hazlitt submits, with a kind of masochistic irony, to both the torment and the ridicule. Indeed, he is almost perverse in his continuance of such hopeless love. Misquoting Shakespeare's sonnet 116 he writes again:

Love is not love that alteration finds:  
Oh no! it is an ever-fixed mark,

That looks on tempests and is never shaken.  
L.A. p.133

Shakespeare's lines actually read 'love is not love/  
Which alters when it alteration finds'. Shakespeare's  
love acknowledges alteration even as it accepts it. It  
can take in the fact of change in its sure rhythm. But  
there is abrupt hurry in Hazlitt's line, not the  
certainty of belief. Hazlitt's omission of a few words  
alters the meaning crucially: love, for Hazlitt, should  
not attempt to discover any alteration which might  
disrupt its continuance. Hazlitt's love is one-sidedly  
self-deceiving love which now would almost dispense with  
its object of love, in order to ensure love's  
continuance. 'Shall I not love her for herself alone,'  
Hazlitt asks, as if, spurned by Sarah, he might  
stubbornly treasure the emotion of love almost despite  
its real object:

She has robbed me of herself: shall she also  
rob me of my love of her? Did I not live on  
her smile? Is it less sweet because it is  
withdrawn from me? Did I not adore her every  
grace? Does she bend less enchantingly,  
because she has turned from me to another?  
Is my love then in the power of fortune,  
or of her caprice? No, I will have it  
lasting as it is pure; and I will make a  
Goddess of her, and build a temple to her in  
my heart, and worship her on indestructible  
altars, and raise statues to her; and my  
homage shall be unblemished as her unrivalled  
symmetry of form; and when that fails, the  
memory of it shall survive; and my bosom  
shall be proof to scorn, as her's has been  
to pity; and I will pursue her with an  
unrelenting love, and sue to be her slave,  
and tend her steps without notice and without  
reward; and serve her living, and mourn for  
her when dead. And thus my love will have  
shewn itself superior to her hate; and I  
shall triumph and then die. This is my idea

of the only true and heroic love! Such is mine for her.

L.A. pp.133-134

The syntax separates 'My love of her' from Sarah 'herself' in Hazlitt's attempt to preserve the former since he has no control in keeping the latter. This continuance in himself of the emotion of love is complex since it chaotically reflects both his inability and his refusal to stop loving Sarah. For there is anger as well as pain in losing Sarah and by a kind of 'revenge' Hazlitt will prevent Sarah's rejection of him from stopping him feeling what he cannot and would not stop. The churning confusion of his feelings means that, simultaneously, he is defiant as well as subservient in his relation to the object of his love, even though his defiance is itself self-damaging. The terrible thing about chaos at this level is that the protagonist himself can no longer work out what are his primary and what his secondary feelings - how far what he feels is compensatory, how far tormenting, how far involuntary or willed.

That equivocal defiance in his refusal to give up loving Sarah is not mere childishness; it is partly his defence against the real pain of defeat - he really cannot bear to lose the emotion as well as the object of his love. His series of questions in the above quotation, whose alternating tenses half-answer one another in his effort to rationalize a split of his emotion from its object, are a poignant reminder that Sarah's smile is

still going on, her form still moving with grace - but separate from him now in time and place: 'Did I not live on her smile? is it less sweet because it is withdrawn from me?' Hazlitt might well have recalled Donne: 'it cannot be/ Love, till I love her, that loves me' ('Love's Deity'). For arguably love is not love in which a pair are thoroughly separate and have no living relation to one another. Hazlitt's love, which can dispense with any recognition from the beloved for its devotion, must get some gratification in suffering pain instead. Indeed, Hazlitt's desire, if he cannot be Sarah's mutual lover, is to be in his own mind her doting slave, subservient to her very existence, however separate. The only purpose of his suffering existence is to prove, as if by an inverse triumph, his loving devotion to hers.

But the ludicrousness of continuing to love in this way is implied by the syntax of the long, edificial sentence beginning 'No, I will have it lasting'. It builds-up, top-heavily clause upon clause, as if he is creating, through second-hand literary language, an art object. This 'heroic love', as an ironically over-enlarged substitute for the real thing, is a failure as Hazlitt knows it will be: the syntax must collapse, and with it the thought. For the emotion it expresses is as remote from love expressed in the context of living experience as the Goddess is from the real Sarah, the landlord's daughter.

Remarkably, the form of the book itself allows the reader to register the absurdity in Hazlitt's

idealization of his ordinary lover. Hazlitt amended and contextualized the real letters to Sarah Walker, inserting her voice objectively in both dramatic and reported dialogue. This dialogue thus represents a whole other discourse in which the book, if not the protagonist, allows Sarah her blunt resistance to Hazlitt's idealizing of her: 'You sit and fancy things out of your own head, and then lay them to my charge' she says (p.108). This kind of humiliatingly brief, and quasi-factual comment from Sarah is connected with the way that Hazlitt calls himself H. in dialogue with Sarah, not Hazlitt. But H. is not a coy persona, or an objectified and comfortably separate 'he'; H. is even less than 'the author's surrogate within his fiction' as Butler calls him. H. is but a kind of third-person Hazlitt still registered in the first-person, so that Hazlitt can be the writer unsparing to himself as H., by silently allowing the dialogue with Sarah to expose the situation. H. says to Sarah:

Thou art divine, my love, and canst make  
me either more or less than mortal. Indeed  
I am thy creature, thy slave - I only wish  
to live for your sake - I would gladly die  
for you -

L.A. p.101

To this Sarah replies:

That would give me no pleasure. But  
indeed you greatly overrate my power  
L.A. p.101



Not only is Sarah's response an implicit rebuttal of his adoration, but there is also a deliberate gap created by the difference in their registers. That gap has the potential of exposing H. to criticism which he cannot himself control. Hazlitt does not merely display the autobiographical situation of personal chaos: he gives to all the awful suffering that he continues to feel, a context in which other viewpoints of his dilemma are opened-up to reveal whatever they might. It is as if Hazlitt himself does not even know how great is his humiliation, but rather than avoiding its extent he makes H. vulnerable to it. Thus, the form of this book is the most vital thing about it: it actually produces chaos by putting the subject-matter outside not only H.'s control but even Hazlitt's, for Hazlitt himself simply lets the dialogue happen without comment. The form, almost paradoxically, permits content to master form. The result is extraordinary: the book is actually unique in the critical exposure of its writer's personal hurt and folly, without his losing commitment to the seriousness of his emotional plight. Liber Amoris as a result becomes far more revealing on the boundary between subject and object than is Stendhal's investigation of subjective projection of feeling in De L'Amour (6).

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6. Stendhal, Love (1822; London: Penguin, 1988), see p.49, where Stendhal admits the difficulty and even falsity of naming the madness called love, but nevertheless does name it. He adopts the word 'crystallization' and says of it: 'In my opinion this word does express the principal process of the madness known as love, a madness which nevertheless provides man with the greatest pleasures the species can know on earth. If I had not used the word crystallization I should have had to replace it repeatedly by an awkward

Hazlitt's capacity to allow the definition of his plight to be beyond his control implies a certain complex generosity of self. He shares with Montaigne, whom he so admired, the same kind of courageous honesty which is willing to expose the man behind the author. Of Montaigne's frankness, Hazlitt writes:

There is no attempt or imposition or concealment, no juggling tricks or solemn mouthing, no laboured attempts at proving himself always in the right, and everybody else in the wrong; he says what is uppermost, lays open what floats at the top or the bottom of his mind.

Hazlitt VI p.92

Yet despite Montaigne's exceptional lack of concealment, to expose willingly the vulnerability of his feelings as Hazlitt does, would be, for Montaigne, to create precisely the kind of chaos that should be defused. As I have tried to show in Chapter Three, Montaigne's honesty is to do with creating within his self an integrity which could survive the potentially damaging conditions of a slippery external world. But Hazlitt's admission of vulnerability represents a different strategy from Montaigne's self-defensive mastery of his own feelings in the avoidance of chaos. Hazlitt battens upon the chaos of being unable to be anything but vulnerable:

I can settle to nothing: what is the

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periphrasis, and my description of what happens in the head and in the heart of a man in love would have become obscure, heavy, and wearisome even to me, the author.' Even that Stendhal wants to describe the passion called love implies a drive towards understanding it. But Hazlitt's version of the madness of love in Liber Amoris retains the sense of chaos.

use of all I have done! Is it not that very circumstance (my thinking beyond my strength my feeling more than I need about so many things) that has withered me up, and made me a thing for Love to shrink from and wonder at?

L.A. p.125

Hazlitt's thoughts and feelings are, with disturbing disproportion, more excessive than his human capacity to bear them. But by an inverse version of the paradoxes which govern the Shakespearian heroes Othello and Coriolanus, Hazlitt's admitted weakness here is his strength. For Hazlitt is not a weak person as a result of being diminished by thoughts and feelings he has sought to master. His belief is rather that self-mastery itself is finally impossible, as he implies in his essay 'Mind and Motive':

We waste our regrets on what cannot be recalled, or fix our desires on what we know cannot be attained. Every hour is the slave of the last; and we are seldom masters either of our thoughts or of our actions. We are the creatures of imagination, passion, and self-will, more than of reason or even of self-interest.<sup>7</sup>

Self-mastery would be a vain striving against primary desires for Hazlitt, since the mind itself, so far from being a controller, is no more than that part of the reality within which it operates. To attempt to think or feel less, or to gain control of strong emotions, would be a vain conflict capable only of increasing the self's distress. Instead Hazlitt, conscious that he is defeated

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7. The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: Dent, 1934), xx, 'Mind and Motive', p.43.

by the power of his emotions, deliberately enslaves himself to that defeat. Liber Amoris' creator is most aware of himself as a 'creature'.

By deliberately writing as this weakened self, Hazlitt is more like a strong version of Dowell in The Good Soldier than a weak version of Montaigne. Dowell is cancelled-out as a self; Hazlitt self-consciously relinquishes self-authority by his claim in the advertisement to Liber Amoris that the writer, H., is dead at the point of publication. The narrative is thus cast adrift, so to speak, as if in contempt of the possibility and presumption of a shaping writerly authority. Whereas in Montaigne's autobiographical essays the very writing itself is an attempt at self-validation, Hazlitt's autobiographical Liber Amoris, by contrast, negates any such possibility in its leaking subjectivity. It is writing suggestive of a defeated consciousness, still desperately suffering the baffling contradictions which the writer knows will not be resolved by the writing itself, as the form so powerfully admits.

The fact that the narrative consciousness assumes a large perspective, by being both retrospective and apparently objective, does not suggest the supposed self-authority of detachment. For Hazlitt's objectivity does not present his love for Sarah as an experience settled and resolved by detached memory. Instead the form of this work keeps putting his present thoughts about the situation actually within the situation itself, without a closing definiteness. Overcome with despair when Sarah,

escaping his protestations of love leaves him alone in the room, he reports:

I could not stay where I was; I had no one to go to but to the parent-mischief, the preternatural hag, that had 'drugged this posset' of her daughter's charms and falsehood for me, and I went down and (such was my weakness and helplessness) sat with her for an hour, and talked with her of her daughter, and the sweet days we had passed together, and said I thought her a good girl, and believed that if there was no rival, she still had a regard for me at the bottom of her heart; and how I liked her all the better for her coy, maiden airs: and I received the assurance over and over that there was no one else; and that Sarah (they all knew) never staid five minutes with any other lodger, while with me she would stay by the hour together, in spite of all her father could say to her (what were her motives, was best known to herself!) and while we were talking of her, she came bounding into the room, smiling with smothered delight at the consummation of my folly and her own art; and I asked her mother whether she thought she looked as if she hated me, and I took her wrinkled, withered, cadaverous, clammy hand at parting, and kissed it. Faugh! -

L.A. pp.153-154

This is one sentence as untidy and yet as on-going as the affair itself: the syntax brings together the past and the present by the use of frequent parentheses. Indeed, parentheses become a syntactical device to cope with the contradictory upsurges of Hazlitt's feelings (8). They suggest a split consciousness: the 'I' of

8. See John Lennard, But I Digress: the Exploitation of Parentheses in English Printed Verse (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), a book concerned with the exploitation of lunulae, the notation for the parenthesis in English verse within a framework of historical narrative. Lennard claims that: 'The exploitation of lunulae in the nineteenth century offers evidence for a 'tradition' of exploitative punctuation linking Byron with Owen, which developed out of the lines of influence connecting Marvell, Swift, and Sterne. That would be one way of

reported memory and the 'I' of the emotional present are oddly not comfortably separate. The 'I' of memory seems to be the foolish victim of deceits, easily detected in retrospect: the indignation of the second consciousness acknowledges this self-humiliation in the telling parentheses. Yet this heavy use of parentheses itself indicates in the very form of the writing the actual inability and unwillingness of Hazlitt to wrest himself out of the past into an independent presiding present. He has simply not got over it - the present is the aftermath not the culmination of the experience. Instead the book exists unsteadily in the dimension of a floating present-tense, adding to the sense that the act of writing is an attempt to hold open the area of emotional confusion in all its unresolved rawness.

Hazlitt's inclusion of a male friend as the recipient of most of H.'s letters reinforces the sense of a floating present-tense. For Hazlitt's use of the epistolary form is quite unlike that of Clarissa, of which Hazlitt wrote:

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looking at it; but it is more productive to regard the development of all punctuation in the nineteenth century as a broad response, some aspects of which have here been sketched, to the coercive theorizing of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Armed by Caslan and Baskerville and given the example of Sterne and other satirists the authors, publishers, and printers of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries developed for English a clear, precise, and widely understood but infinitely plastic system of pragmatic punctuation, superbly adapted to the intensely analytical grammar that distinguishes modern English. The development began with individuals; and after 1850 what is remarkable is less an emergent tradition of use, than a diversity anticipating the ubiquitous idiosyncracies of punctuation in the twentieth century' (p.179).

we listen with the same attention as we should to the particulars of a confidential communication.

Hazlitt VI p.118

There is no sense of 'confidential communication' in Hazlitt's letters. In fact, the letters of the male friend are only ever alluded to in Hazlitt's letters to him; they are not actually included in the narrative. The immediacy of the epistolary form, lacking an active other voice, does not create the same dramatic effect as that in Clarissa. There is little sense of a forward movement in time as if events are happening with characters responding spontaneously to those events: Hazlitt's own inner, confused emotional outpourings dominate the book, as if he writes to another in order to overhear himself and leave his feelings both stranded and exposed in the act of life. Likewise, Sarah's voice in the dialogue does not drive the narrative forward as in a drama. The dialogue so often seems unconsummated as if what Hazlitt says to Sarah is something he is conscious of as being liable to be overheard or read by someone else. Consider:

No betrothed virgin ever gave the object of her choice kisses, caresses more modest or more bewitching than those you have given me a thousand and a thousand times. Could I have thought I should ever live to believe them an inhuman mockery of one who had the sincerest regard for you? Do you think they will not now turn to rank poison in my veins, and kill me, soul and body? You say it is friendship - but if this is friendship, I'll forswear love.

L.A. p.107

The churning grammar of 'Could I have thought I should ever live to believe them an inhuman mockery of one who had the sincerest regard for you?' does not have the immediacy of direct communication but is like stranded thought. It thus bespeaks a stranded 'I' more aware of himself, on the rebound, as 'one' who is mocked by 'you' - as 'one', not even 'me', but me solely in her unseeing eyes. The tenses are confusing as if there is some retrospective thought about what is being said hidden within what purports to be direct speech. It is as though Hazlitt is trying to say to Sarah now what he thinks about what she did then. He uses dialogue so that he can say 'Do you think' as if to Sarah, when really his thought is 'did she think': but to say 'did you think' would offer the closing resolution of separating the past from the present, rather than staying loyal to the confusion of a floating and residual present.

To Sarah, could she overhear this backdated allusion to her supposed mockery of his genuine feelings, H.'s words might sound simply unjust. It may be that she never promised the loving future for which he hoped. For the extent of Sarah's insincerity is never clear either to the reader or, as Hazlitt implicitly admits, to himself either. Though H. claims that her behaviour indicated to him a mutual sexual desire natural to love, the fact that she is seen here to make an attempt to get the sexual element put to one side by calling their relationship a friendship, suggests that her reciprocated love for him may have been the misinterpretation of his



own wishful thinking and not just her flirtatiousness. Indeed, Hazlitt will not spare himself that possible deep humiliation.

Equally, there is no doubt that Sarah, at the very least, did flirt with Hazlitt. But it is as if the indifference of a mild flirtation would be the thing he could least bear. He tries to make it seem that she is either one extreme or the other: the virgin whose kisses are modest caresses, or the cunning witch whose kisses are rank poison. Hence, his response here transparently anticipates a huge betrayal rather than simply have his strong feelings denigrated to friendship. His belief and trust in a moral order would be violated by discovering her behaviour to be a horrible masquerade, and yet he is also shocked at his own unthinking assumption that his sincerity would preclude the monstrosity of such mockery. But the narrative of chaos constantly resists definiteness as to whether she was cruelly duplicitous; or whether he was too emotionally committed in seeing her lapses as cruel and immoral, when she may only have been flighty and amoral. Hazlitt makes his outrage available to be undermined even as he continues to express it.

His own increasing awareness of how wrong he may have been does not help him to find a solution to all the turmoil of his feelings. Indeed, the possibility that his feelings may have been out of proportion to Sarah's offence only increases his chaos. For what that possibility would imply is that his love was only ever fictitious. His own sensibility made more a fool of him

than did ever Sarah herself, and that means that the relation between his emotion of love and its object was actually incoherent. 'Ah dear girl,' H. professes to Sarah:

these are the ideas I have cherished in my heart, and in my brain, and I never found anything to realize them on earth till I met with thee, my love!

L.A. p.100

Through H.'s declaration to Sarah here, Hazlitt is implicitly recognizing that the cause of his love may have had no authenticity outside him but was ever an invention of his own literary sensibility. But the recognition is far from being a casual allusion to possible error. It represents the un-doing of the profundity of love as it is expressed in Shelley's notion of love, given in Shelley's essay On Love:

Thou demandest what is love. It is that powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves.<sup>9</sup>

Shelley's neo-Platonic definition of love is of an irresistible objective magnetism and community which goes far beyond sexual attraction towards another. Love, for Shelley, has its source in the mind's dawning awareness of the loneliness of its own thoughts. To love, is to find not only in another some correspondently responsive sympathy with the self, but to find that sympathy as

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9. Romanticism: An Anthology, ed. by Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 'On Love', p.861.

magically equivalent to the mind's 'insufficient void' when left to itself (10). The two - the lack in the separate self and the fulfilment through another - are kin, are marriable. But psychologically this creates a huge dependence of the inner self upon locating the correlative external object of love. That dependency may go into creating rather than discovering just such a second self, another half. And that dependency suggests a terrible potential danger, for the hugeness of the emotional aspirations of love which give validity to the self may also destroy the self if the missing half is missing or mistaken. Hazlitt suffers from such a dependency on Sarah, who he says is the only woman to have 'found out [his] true character', as if by simply embodying the ideals he has treasured she gives being to his real self (p.128).

Thus, when he finds himself without any relation to Sarah at all, what Hazlitt is left with is more than self-tormenting folly; he suffers a life-wrecking paradox:

My heart is torn out of me, with every

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10. Shelley's idea of love is derived from Plato's Symposium in which Plato claims that lovers are like the two halves of one whole. See Nathaniel Brown, Sexuality and Feminism in Shelley (London: Harvard University Press, 1979). Brown writing of Shelley in relation to Hume says: '[Hume] illustrates this idea by reference to Plato's Aristophanic fable of the division of the sexes, according to which each is half of an original whole and forever searching for the other half or sympathetic double. When Shelley defines the sentimental or sympathetic longing for likeness in his description of erotic attraction in On Love, he clearly has this fable in mind too, as his very personal rendering of the relevant passages in the Symposium (192C-193C) makes plain' (p.35).

feeling for which I wished to live. The whole is like a dream, an effect of enchantment; it torments me, and it drives me mad. I lie down with it; I rise up with it; and see no chance of repose. I grasp at a shadow, I try to undo the past, and weep with rage and pity over my own weakness and misery.

L.A. p.123

Separated from Sarah by her silence before his entreaties of love, Hazlitt's heart seems, paradoxically, torn out of him but felt as such inside him: he suffers from the pain of his own feelings. Though Sarah is absent, 'it' - the dislocated, torn-out heart - is still attached to him outside-in as a persecutor and destroyer of his chance of peace. Hardly believing in his own separateness, he lives in a state of anxious suspense in which days and nights no longer seem properly differentiated, but exist only to agitate him into remembering his sense of a perpetual lack of repose. The clauses turn this way and that, as if they are not coherently connected but rather start away from one another as does his panic in trying to escape from the burning but fruitless desires of his feverish passion. 'A raging fire is in my heart and in my brain, that never quits me,' he complains, as if his love for Sarah has become more like an illness than a delight in an exclusive affection (p.121):

I am a little, a very little better to-day. Would it were quietly over and that this misshapen form (made to be mocked) were hid out of the sight of cold, sullen eyes! The people about me even take notice of my dumb despair, and pity me.

L.A. p.122

Love, unexpressed, feels like an almost unnatural emotion. Hazlitt suffers his loving feelings, rejected, as the leaden despair of lovesickness - the paradoxically self-consuming fever of powerful emotion that has nowhere to go but prey upon the self. As if lovesickness is truly a deforming malady, his deformity feels visible to others, who are really a version of himself. Unloved, Hazlitt's mis-placed and unused love makes him feel ugly. With the Othello-like mechanism which transfers meanings back and forth from the one to the other, Sarah too seems transformed in his eyes by a love which has gone horribly wrong. She seems to Hazlitt like the fabled lewd cockatrice:

The cockatrice, I said, mocks me: so she has always done. The thought was a dagger to me. My head reeled, my heart recoiled within me. I was stung with scorpions; my flesh crawled; I was choked with rage; her scorn scorched me like flames; her air (her heavenly air) withdrawn from me, stifled me, and left me gasping for breath and being. It was a fable. She started up in her own likeness, a serpent in place of a woman. She had fascinated me, she had stung me, and had returned to her proper shape, gliding from me after inflicting the mortal wound, and instilling deadly poison into every pore; but her form lost none of its original brightness by the change of character, but was all glittering, beauteous, voluptuous grace. Seed of the serpent or of the woman, she was divine.

L.A. p.153

Hazlitt suffers his own intense fury at Sarah as if he has been physically attacked and poisoned by the cockatrice he imagines as her. His hellish torments could hardly be worse. Yet how simple it would be for him if Sarah was the worst possible version of woman - as bad as

this and as much deceitful. Her satanic duplicity would make his relation to the object of his love terrible but at least straightforward - he would be her victim; she would be a natural betrayer. He could even submit to her power over him as a thing beyond his control, since his fascination would not be a response from within him which he must defend, but caused by a poison from without by which he was mortally infected. But this book moves away from, not towards, such possible solutions. Sarah may seem to embody the horror of Hazlitt's own angry self-repulsion, but Hazlitt knows that his actual relation to Sarah is much more complicated and disturbing than that of the outrageous seduction he imagines. He can even say 'I care not what thou art while thou art still thyself', admitting the paradox that she might be anything without it affecting his desire for her (p.103). It is as if Hazlitt is fascinated by the very absurdity of his strong feelings and bound to Sarah by something stranger than loving regard or trusting admiration: 'Her arms embraced another; but her mock-embrace, the phantom of her love,' he confesses, 'still bound me, and I had not a wish to escape' (p.153).

Hazlitt's desire to remain imprisoned by his own destructive passion may look like sado-masochistically willed slavery. But, in fact, it is also the refusal to resolve a chaotic situation by means of a Montaigne-like tameness. Hazlitt does not understand why he suffers as he does, but he does know that his situation of personal chaos defies the moderation Montaigne might advise:

S.L. might have been mine, and now never can - these are the two sole propositions that for ever stare me in the face, and look ghastly in at my poor brain.

L.A. p.124

The propositions are so utterly irreconcilable they seem to Hazlitt like two separate, implacable faces outside him, bewildering by their alien stare his already diminished inner reality. He cannot get between them; he cannot understand how one became the other. The conclusiveness of Hazlitt's words cancels-out any possibility of merely adjusting his situation.

'What is to be done?' is his bleak cry: 'I cannot forget her; and I can find no other like what she seemed' (p.122). Hazlitt's inability either to forget Sarah or replace her goes far deeper than stubborn attachment to a lost love. It represents a disturbing contradiction:

I can scarce make out the contradiction to myself. I strive to think she always was what I now know she is; but I have great difficulty in it, and can hardly believe but she still is what she so long seemed.

L.A. p.160

The clauses spin the sense back upon itself as if Hazlitt does not know which way to turn to discover any resolution of his contradiction - that he still disbelieves that Sarah is not what he hoped. But it is not just the difference between the two Sarahs of past and of present which troubles Hazlitt. The word 'believe' complicates the disparity. He could believe that Sarah was always what he had hoped; but disbelieving this now can never be a belief in itself. Yet he can never

positively believe she always was what he now sees, although she must have been. For there is a daunting complexity in the relation between belief and knowledge, as if they cannot be emotionally reconciled by the powers of reasoning. Hazlitt experiences his contradictory situation as an unbreachable split not only between two Sarahs but also between his own factual memory which attests to the reality of events, and his recalled imagination which still attests to the truth of his prior feeling. It may seem ludicrous to credit such imagination with as much validity as retrospective proof. But Hazlitt from the first always argued for the huge significance of a faculty which seeks a future for the present - a faculty 'by means of which alone I can anticipate future objects' (11) - rather than a faculty which merely re-writes the self in terms of its past:

To suppose that the imagination does not exert a direct influence over human actions is to reject the plain inference from the most undoubted facts without any motive for so doing from the nature and reason of things. This notion could not have gained ground as an article of philosophical faith but from a perverse restriction of the use of the word idea to abstract ideas, or external forms, as if the essential quality in the feelings of pleasure, or pain, must entirely evaporate in passing through the imagination; and, again, from associating the word imagination with merely fictitious situations and events, that is, such as never will have a real existence, and as it is supposed never will, and which consequently do not admit of action.

Human Action p.23

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11. The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), i, p.1, hereafter referred to as 'Human Action'.



The natural human way is forward, not backwards. Thus, Hazlitt's claim is that the imagination is not a weak secondary faculty, but a primary instigator of immediate action whose importance for the self's ability to form ideas is hugely underestimated by rationalist philosophers who would denigrate the imagination to the realm of fancy or fantasy. Yet, disconcertingly, Hazlitt's own problem of being unable to resolve the split between the truth of his past imagination and the truth of hindsight represents a terrible half-discovery: that, after all, his own imagination may have operated at least on this occasion - the most vital of all - in the realm of fantasy. It is as if as he recalls this, his whole natural way of being has turned back on itself.

It is consistent with the disarming honesty of the book that Hazlitt should permit a view, which in abstract he does not himself hold, to be both produced by and brought against his own narrative. But, strangely, the implicit admission that his feelings for Sarah may only have truth in his imagination gives to his loving feelings a lasting, if strange, validity. After all, Hazlitt believes that memory and imagination are not the distinct faculties they seem by their mode of operation, but are actually essentially alike:

For there is no reason to be shewn why the ideas of the imagination should not be efficient, operative, as well as those of memory, of which they are essentially compounded. Their substance is the same. They are of one flesh and blood. The same vital spirit animates them both.

Human Action pp.22-23

But here what Sarah now seems to have been in herself, and what she had seemed to Hazlitt to be in his imagination, cannot be synchronized since although memory and imagination are of the same substance and power, they operate in such utterly opposite directions as to tear apart his flesh and blood.

Both imagination and memory fail Hazlitt. For if the two lie too far apart - if imagination was, according to memory, mere fantasy; and if memory now seems to imagination mere factual reductiveness - the man who is both of them preys upon himself and is destroyed by an unresolvable present. Like the Sarah of the present and of the past, imagination and memory cannot be the same, cannot be quite separate either. No more can Hazlitt's feeling and she who seemed to make him feel it be either separate or one. And yet there was a third thing, however deluded: the experience, the relationship, now the book, as an alternative to reductive memory. Sarah was something unique to him and she seemed to make him feel love in a way that he had never before experienced it, regardless of any rational explanations as to why he should not have felt as he did. It is as if this is the only marriage they have: the inextractable, overlapping space in which what is wrong on her side and excessive on his have yielded this terrible love-child, Liber Amoris.

Even if to stay loyal to the reality of what he truly felt is in some way self-denigrating, Hazlitt cannot dismiss that loyalty as if it is no more than a mere desire for fantasy. The future that imagination

promised is made past by memory, relative to a deluded present, and so this future remains as something that has never been. There is no time left Hazlitt now, save that of hanging aftermath. Hazlitt can only wait and suffer, hoping that time will effect the merging of his image of Sarah into the truth of what memory makes her:

I am afraid she will soon grow common to  
 my imagination, as well as worthless in  
 herself. Her image seems 'fast going into  
 the wastes of time', like a weed that the  
 wave bears farther and farther from me.  
 Alas! thou poor hapless weed, when I  
 entirely lose sight of thee, and for ever,  
 no flower will ever bloom on earth to glad  
 my heart again!

L.A. p.162

Though these words are ostensibly a farewell to Sarah's image, the shift in the pronouns from 'she' to the poetic 'thou' brings her closer, even as it anticipates the growing distance of her image from Hazlitt. Yet the poeticised language does not simply imply that Hazlitt is unable to accept the inevitability that time will make commonplace his image of Sarah. There is irony in his poeticism. Hazlitt half-remembers Shakespeare's sonnet when he says 'Fast going into the wastes of time':

That thou among the wastes of time must go,  
 Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake,  
 And die as fast as they see others grow  
 sonnet 12

The sonnet celebrates beauty even through the anticipated loss of it. Hazlitt cannot be a sonneteer for the loss of Sarah's beauty. She is incapable, he says, 'of feeling the commonest emotions of human nature, as they regarded

herself or any one else' (p.162). Sarah is no full-blooming flower but a weed, if not a lily that festers. This is the loss of what may have been, but certainly for him will never be again. His grief is real if only because never again will anybody ever recreate in him, or he find again in himself, the feelings he had for her. It is a fatal sadness, like death, not marriage. After Liber Amoris Hazlitt was finished, lobotomized by the power of chaotic paradox. If the 'I' was chaotic during all this - when in love, as if it could not believe the self was merely separate - it was non-existent thereafter when finally proven separate. But that separate 'I' is greatly different from Montaigne's separate 'I' as a form of survival; here it is a form of death.

## II. Strange Dialogue: Godwin's Dramatic Dialectic.

It is not surprising that Hazlitt considered William Godwin's Caleb Williams to be a 'masterpiece' (12), since it is a novel which, in a manner closer to Hazlitt's beloved Shakespearian drama, stirs up turbulently related forces. Caleb Williams, unlike Liber Amoris, keeps the literature of chaos within the realm of drama, in which the private life is not, as in Hazlitt's work, a source of humiliating confusions where what is outer does not

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12. The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), xi, p.24.

conform with what is within. On the contrary Caleb Williams works the other way: the forces within the private world seem to have become a distortion of the outer world, and the problem is not existential indignity, but horror in the displacement.

The relation between the two characters, Falkland and Caleb, is reminiscent, Hazlitt implies, of the frightening symbiosis set up between Othello and Iago:

The re-action and play of these two characters into each other's hands (like Othello and Iago) is inimitably well managed, and on a par with any thing in the dramatic art; but Falkland is the hero of the story, Caleb Williams is only the instrument of it.

Hazlitt VI p.131

The see-saw clash between Falkland, the master, and his servant Caleb is caused, initially, by Caleb's suspicion that Falkland may be a secret, unpunished murderer. Caleb writes:

Sometimes I was influenced by the most complete veneration for my master; I placed an unreserved confidence in his integrity and his virtue, and implicitly surrendered my understanding for him to set it to what point he pleased. At other times the confidence, which had before flowed with the most plenteous tide, began to ebb; I was, as I had already been, watchful, inquisitive, suspicious, full of a thousand conjectures as to the meaning of the most indifferent actions. Mr. Falkland, who was the most painfully alive to every thing that related to his honour, saw these variations, and betrayed his consciousness of them now in one manner and now in another, frequently before I was myself aware, sometimes almost before they existed. The situation of both was distressing; we were each of us a plague to the other; and I often wondered that the forbearance and benignity of my master was not at length exhausted, and that he did

not determine to thrust from him for ever  
so incessant an observer.<sup>13</sup>

Caleb's private, inner suspicion does not simply make him a separate, external watcher of Falkland. Instead, Caleb's silent spying upon Falkland's secret thoughts generates a mechanism by which Caleb becomes as much watched by Falkland as Falkland is by Caleb, until they are a 'plague' to one another. Caleb is not the controller of his own confidence in Falkland; rather he surrenders himself to Falkland's mental view of things, even despite the fact that he begins as the encroacher upon Falkland's secret thoughts. Godwin, in Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, sees confidence as related to, and grounded in, truth. 'The principle of confidence' he says must be governed by private understanding, otherwise:

where I make the voluntary surrender of my understanding, and commit my conscience to another man's keeping, the consequence is clear. I then become the most mischievous and pernicious of animals.<sup>14</sup>

Godwin wants confidence to be what Shelley wanted love to be: ontological, not psychological (as it is in Caleb's case). For Godwin's theory of the human mind suggests a hierarchical system. Only when confidence is a consequent of some antecedent truth can it be called a principle. When confidence is not so clearly rooted in truth, it is

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13. William Godwin, Caleb Williams (1794; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.122, hereafter referred to as 'C.W.'

14. William Godwin, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793; London: Penguin, 1985), p.243, hereafter referred to as 'Pol. Justice'.

'mischievous' since it is forced to deduce or rely upon what it cannot be sure of. Thus it is that confidence becomes more like suspicion and psychological doubt despite itself, rather than knowledge. So in the second half of my quotation on page 274, the confidence at one time turns back upon itself into suspicion at another, even as Caleb and Falkland likewise prey upon each other at the same time.

The opposition of Falkland and Caleb unites them almost in one divided person so that they are in the grip of one another's comprehension and psychologically controlled by one another's responses. The strangest consequence of this mental pursuit is that even before Caleb is conscious of watching Falkland, Falkland is so intensely aware of being scrutinized that he actually stimulates the watchfulness in Caleb. Falkland's thoughts do not seem to be produced simply by his own thinking but are more like the thought of Caleb secretly stealing into his mind. Knowing how thoughts are not the separately conceived products of one single mind is what made Iago able to call up jealous thoughts in Othello's mind. But, in a sense, the re-action between Caleb and Falkland is more complicated than that between Iago and Othello. Falkland realizes that his thoughts are being preyed upon in a way that Othello never does, and by a reciprocal consciousness Caleb, as he preys, is conscious that his own thinking is not a process of his free and separate mind, but is directly conditioned by the thoughts he suspects to be existent in Falkland's mind. It is a world

of psychological chaos, of intermingled subjectivities, in lieu of a world of objective public justice.

Significantly, Hazlitt recognizes how the juxtapositioning of Clarissa with Lovelace (15) is as vital as the relation between Othello and Iago, or that between Falkland and Caleb, when he says of Lovelace:

There is a regality about Lovelace's manner, and he appears clothed in a panoply of wit, gaiety, spirit and enterprise, that is criticism-proof. If he had not possessed these dazzling qualities, nothing could have made us forgive for an instant his treatment of the spotless Clarissa; but indeed they might be said to be mutually attracted to and distinguished in each other's dazzling lustre!<sup>16</sup>

Separately Clarissa and Lovelace are dazzling; but in entangled juxtaposition their difference is highlighted

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15. See Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) where Marilyn Butler points out that Falkland is, like Lovelace, a hero-villain: 'In Caleb Williams, if not in Political Justice, Godwin attempts to emulate his opponent by glancing over human history, and particularly over the period that most fascinated him, English political history of the mid-seventeenth century. The name Falkland is after all associated with one of the best-known royalists of the Civil War - like the name of another aristocratic hero-villain of a Puritan novel, Richardson's Lovelace - Lucius Cay, Viscount Falkland, anticipated many of the traits of Godwin's Falkland' (p.70).

Butler also likens Caleb's imprisonment to that of Clarissa: 'The period of Caleb's imprisonment, which brings about his triumphant realization that his spirit cannot be enslaved, strongly recalls both the spirit and the phrasing of Milton's Comus - 'You may cut off my existence, but you cannot disturb my serenity'. The situation also echoes Bunyan's real-life imprisonment, and Clarissa's fictional one: the motif is, as we have seen, natural both to Puritan and to revolutionary literature, for it is the situation in which the stature of the individual ultimately proves itself' (p.72). Hereafter referred to as 'Butler'.

16. The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), xvii, pp.249-250.



so as to make them, together, extraordinary. In a sense, only their being brought paradoxically together in a terrible clash could release all their inter-related, but also finally distinct, powers. In Clarissa, as in Caleb Williams, the conflict is essentially dramatic, however much in these cases the Shakespearian drama takes place inside the novel.

There is something in the very clash of order and chaos which is exhilarating as well as terrible. An incredible energy is released even through the pressure of a terrifying destructive force. The dramatic dynamic which is created in the three texts Othello, Clarissa and Caleb Williams - as literature of chaos - is the same despite their differences. They share the sense of an experiment having been set-up - partly through the juxtapositioning of opposing figures; and partly through their forms pertaining to dramatic art, involving as they do, art 'written to the moment'. In Liber Amoris the pull between two forces - the world within and the world without - goes on within one of those forces, inside subjectivity itself. Caleb Williams takes that psychological world of conscious confusion and restores it to the world of dramatic narrative again. Hazlitt knew what was at stake in these works: he identifies the experimental element in Shakespeare's work specifically:

In Shakespeare there is a continual composition and decomposition of its elements, a fermentation of every particle in the whole mass, by its alternate affinity or antipathy to other principles which are brought into contact with it. Till the experiment is tried, we do not know the

result, the turn which the character will take in its new circumstances.<sup>17</sup>

Hazlitt implies, by his scientific language, that Shakespeare sets up experiments in his drama by presenting character as essentially re-active, not fixed, coming into being through oppositional processes. The outcome of forces immediately brought to bear on character is thus not predictable, but essentially chaotic, until or unless order emerges by its own force or not at all.

Caleb's curiosity is itself a kind of experimental drive. Curiosity, he says:

gave me my mechanical turn; I was desirous of tracing the variety of effects which might be produced from given causes. It was this that made me a sort of natural philosopher; I could not rest till I had acquainted myself with the solutions that had been invented for the phenomena of the universe. In fine, this produced in me an invincible attachment to books of narrative, and romance. I panted for the unravelling of an adventure, with an anxiety, perhaps almost equal to that of the man whose future happiness or misery depended on its issue. I read, I devoured compositions of this sort. They took possession of my soul; and the effects they produced, were frequently discernible in my external appearance and my health.

C.W. p.4

Caleb's curiosity is no idle inquisitiveness wanting to gather factual information in pursuit of small meanings. Caleb says that he wants to know the underlying meanings which govern Life - 'the phenomena of the universe'. In a

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17. The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), v, p.51.

way, Caleb's hungry curiosity makes him a Romantic version of Renaissance man, taking us back closer to the age of Shakespeare's natural philosophy and its dynamics. The personalized pursuit of knowledge means that it is the unpredictability of the 'adventure' narrative which enthralled Caleb in his reading. For the unravelling of such a narrative displays a mechanism of causal relations which drives the reader forward by the desire to know what come to emerge as inevitable effects, out of a host of possibilities. Caleb is not just engrossed in the narratives of adventure; as he aggressively devours them, they aggressively consume him. His need actually invites possession of his self. His external appearance and his health likewise become effects of his secret inner quest. By a strange kind of irony Caleb literally becomes part of a narrative like that which, in his reading, possessed his very soul. This novel, Caleb Williams, has the same tracking mechanism as those books which 'possess' Caleb; it is a novel which possesses the reader by presenting a series of adventures which, seeming to arise out of various converging accidents, drives inexorably to one determined end.<sup>18</sup>

Caleb's curiosity possesses him with much the same overwhelming a power as does Frankenstein's in his own attempt to discover the secret of life. 'No one can

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18. See The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), xvi, p.394 where Hazlitt recognizes this quality of the novel: 'There is not a moment's pause in the action or sentiments: the breath is suspended, the faculties wound up to the highest pitch, as we read. Page after page is greedily devoured'.

conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane,' says Frankenstein in his first enthusiasm of success:

One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself; and the moon gazed on my midnight labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding-places. Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless, and almost frantic impulse, urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit.<sup>19</sup>

Frankenstein's pursuit, for all its fervid energy, feeds off him physically so that Frankenstein, like Caleb, is worn-out by an uncontrollable passion. Frankenstein implies that he wants to discover nature's secret but still keep it secret to himself, in himself, as if to take over nature microcosmically in his own mind. But the secret is really no more than a 'hope' - worse, a 'pursuit' - which actually possesses him, not he it, even if he has willingly given himself up to it. For though he, like Caleb, starts out with the sense of knowledge as power and control, Frankenstein has lost control even by the strength of his passion for his pursuit, till the pursuit becomes an unadmitted end in itself. Frankenstein's simile of the 'hurricane', which characterizes his passionate pursuit, is significant. For

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19. Mary Shelley, Frankenstein (1818; London: Penguin, 1992), p.53, hereafter referred to as 'Frankenstein'.

his act of creation is also an act of destruction. Thinking that he taps into the forces of life, he releases forces which will spiral way beyond his control in their destructive energy.

For Hazlitt, the power of the novel Caleb Williams is in its battenning upon the creative-destructive force arising out of the strange re-active relation of Caleb and Falkland. The re-action, once actuated between them, baffles the distinctions between their separate minds. A whole area of subjective-objective confusion explored within the subjectivity of Liber Amoris is opened up here in the dialogue of Caleb Williams. For example, in front of Falkland, Caleb comments on the ungovernable passion of Alexander the Great, whom he criticizes as a man whom 'a momentary provocation can hurry into the commission of murders'. But his words are a half-deliberate allusion to Falkland's guilt. Moreover, Caleb then sees this himself and rebukes himself thus:

The instant I had uttered these words, I felt what it was that I had done. There was a magnetical sympathy between me and my patron, so that their effect was not sooner produced upon him, than my own mind reproached me with the inhumanity of the allusion. Our confusion was mutual.

C.W. p.112

In this world which hearkens back to Shakespeare's world of magical, magnetic forces, Caleb's words almost visibly wound Falkland; but those words, spoken to Falkland almost immediately rebound so that Caleb experiences the impact of his own hurtful words as if he is Falkland. His

act of inhumanity makes him feel simultaneously unjust to Falkland and unworthy of himself. For Caleb's term 'magnetical sympathy' means far more than that they feel a mutual understanding for one another as separate beings: 'sympathy' is not merely a moral word here. Caleb and Falkland magnetize one another so that, as if by a physical law, they pass on to one another what they themselves feel and think. In his distance from Sarah, despite all his attempts to create loving connections, Hazlitt in Liber Amoris had to create in his own mind the connections which, incredibly to himself, did not have their reality outside him. But in Caleb Williams thoughts are passed on, one to the other, with a frightening fluidity. The result is that: like a chemical experiment, the minds of Caleb and Falkland together energize a force whose capability is fearfully destructive of their separate selves - and yet also fearfully exciting. 'To be a spy upon Mr. Falkland!' Caleb exclaims, 'That there was danger in the employment served to give an alluring pungency to the choice' (p.107). The danger of spying inflames Caleb's interest.

Caleb's allusion to Alexander the Great implies the instability of direct objective speech in the relation between Caleb and Falkland. In the first phase of this novel the dialogue between Caleb and Falkland is remarkable for what it does not say. 'Was it possible after all that Mr. Falkland should be the murderer?' Caleb asks, 'The reader will scarcely believe that the idea suggested itself to my mind that I would ask him'

(p.107). Yet the belief that truth requires an articulate honesty is at the heart of Enquiry Concerning Political Justice. Godwin states that the hopes and prospects of human improvement are to be founded upon these propositions:

Sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error: Sound reasoning and truth are capable of being so communicated: Truth is omnipotent: the vices and moral weakness of man are not invincible: Man is perfectible, or in other words susceptible of perpetual improvement.

Pol. Justice p.140

Godwin attests such deeply felt faith in openly communicated truth since it is, for him, the way towards human perfectibility. But in the secret injustices of the private world of Caleb Williams honest and open communication becomes terrifying if to ask a naturally direct question about the truth of guilt, expecting a direct answer, has become an almost insane thing to do. To be able, truthfully, to ask for the truth assumes a social world governed by generosity, truth and justness. It ought to be a primal state, for man's power of speech implies the fundamental ability of the human being to communicate thought openly. In fact, to articulate his suspicion would not just be naive of Caleb in assuming such a world; it might incur the loss of all his worldly prospects, perhaps even of his life. In Thoughts on Man, his Nature, Productions and Discoveries Godwin quotes Moliere's sentiment that 'Speech was given to us, that by

it we might express our thoughts'. 'We then', claims Godwin:

therefore best fulfil the scope of our nature, when we sincerely and unreservedly communicate to each other our feelings and apprehensions. Speech should be to man in the nature of a fair complexion, the transparent medium through which the workings of the mind should be made legible.<sup>20</sup>

Speech, for Godwin, should be the window to the mind. In Caleb Williams speech is silenced, in a fallen world of psychology not legality, by the mind's veiling of its own thoughts; it is a silence which deceitfully distracts others from seeing what is really there. Caleb's own honesty has itself become twisted into a tool of deceit by his own curiosity. It is a drama of subjectivity, where Hazlitt's Liber Amoris was less drama and more broken autobiography in the stranded realm near fiction.

The consequence is that the silence between Caleb and Falkland becomes more full of secret meaning than express words themselves. Caleb is present at the trial of a murderer in which Falkland is the presiding justice of the peace. Caleb thinks he might witness Falkland's guilt by watching Falkland's response to a kind of parody of his guilt in the peasant's murder trial. When Hamlet stages 'The Mousetrap' to catch the conscience of Claudius, his hope is to expose, publicly, the guilt he suspects. But what is so odd about Caleb's similar interest in Falkland's response is that Caleb shares

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20. William Godwin, Thoughts on Man, His Nature, Productions and Discoveries (London: Effingham Wilson, 1831), Essay XII 'Of the Liberty of Human Actions', p.300, hereafter referred to as 'Thoughts on Man'.



Falkland's fear of any outward exposure of his guilt:

It happened in this, as in some preceding instances; we exchanged a silent look by which we told volumes to each other. Mr. Falkland's complexion turned from red to pale, and from pale to red. I perfectly understood his feelings, and would willingly have withdrawn myself. But it was impossible; my passions were too deeply engaged; I was rooted to the spot; though my own life, that of my master, or almost of a whole nation had been at stake, I had no power to change my position.

C.W. p.126

Falkland and Caleb do not look at one another; they exchange a look, as if the secret workings of each other's mind are displayed and transferred to the other, in silently acknowledged secrecy. Godwin's own idealistic view is that a free and open social world would permit public confession, an individual's truthful direct speaking about a situation even whilst inside it:

It has been justly observed that the popish practice of confession is attended with some salutary effects. How much better would it be if, instead of an institution thus equivocal, and which has been made so dangerous an instrument of ecclesiastical despotism, every man were to make the world his confessional and the human species the keeper of his conscience?

Pol. Justice pp.311-312

Godwin wants a genuinely social, not a private, world of genuine dialogue, not monologue, in which neighbours, not spies, would be the keepers of each other's conscience. But in Caleb Williams, in almost direct contradiction to Godwin's political idealism, public justice is split off from private justice by the secrecy of Falkland's guilt. That guilt is known only in the psychological world of

Caleb and Falkland, not in the world of external justice. A publicly-spoken confession of the murder by Falkland is subsumed by the privately unspoken thoughts of Falkland and Caleb. Falkland does not want thought to exist in the world, for if he can hide his thoughts (from himself as well as from the world), then his guilt does not, in a sense, even exist. For Caleb, the knowledge of Falkland's guilt makes him a kind of second conscience to Falkland (21). Caleb's existence now represents Falkland's own secret thoughts escaped out of him. It is as if Falkland's very guilt has leaked out of the psychological world into the physical world.

Thus, the experiment, instigated by Caleb's curiosity, goes on - yet utterly beyond Caleb's control. Caleb is a servant but likewise, Frankenstein the master has no control whatsoever over the monster, once he has given it life. The interest in Caleb Williams and Frankenstein is focused upon the two eponymous figures; both Caleb and Frankenstein become victims of their own ungovernable experiments by dealing with secret subjective forces. Yet there is a crucial difference between these two novels, vital to this thesis. Frankenstein is a novel which is undoubtedly concerned

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21. The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1934), xi, p.24: 'The restless and inquisitive spirit of Caleb Williams, in search and possession of his patron's fatal secret, haunts the latter like a second conscience, plants stings in his tortured mind, fans the flames of his jealous ambition, struggling with agonized remorse; and the hapless but noble-minded Falkland at length falls a martyr to the persecution of that morbid and overpowering interest, of which his mingled virtues and vices have rendered him the object.' Hereafter referred to as 'Hazlitt XI'.

with chaos as a force. But it is not literature of chaos in the sense that I have tried to define it by exemplification. For the subsequent pursuit between Frankenstein and the monster, however interesting the swinging inversions of identity and role, is not characterized by the same kind of frenzied disorder which remains frighteningly active through the sustained relation between Frankenstein and the monster. In Frankenstein the monster embodies the chaotic force in the novel. Chaos becomes some recognizable, definable thing which, though creating havoc, still implies limits. Moreover, Frankenstein distances himself from his creation, morally, from the point at which he infuses the monster with life. This is Frankenstein recalling that momentous event:

It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

Frankenstein p.56

This event of the monster's creation should represent the triumph of all Frankenstein's hopes, but it is written retrospectively so that Frankenstein is aware that what is to come out of this experiment is to be catastrophic. Yet even inside the event, the sense of

defeat precedes and even seems to anticipate the outcome. Frankenstein works with an almost exhausted agony; he does not excitedly infuse life into the creature; the verbs are tired-out: 'that I might infuse a spark of being,' he says, as if his actions now are almost mechanical. In Frankenstein the act of creative destruction embodied in the monster releases a powerful secret force during the process of creation itself. But by the time the monster is infused with life it is as if the energy is already burned out by its being an object outside Frankenstein. For this reason this novel has none of the immediacy which I have defined as characteristic of the literature of chaos.

However, in Caleb Williams Falkland's ultimate secret confession to Caleb that he did murder his enemy Tyrrel represents an escalation in the linkage of Caleb and Falkland, so that the energy created by their clash is not defused or contained. 'My mind was full almost to bursting' Caleb says, when he leaves the murder trial of the peasant:

In the very tempest and hurricane of the passions, I seemed to enjoy the most soul-ravishing calm. I cannot better express the then state of my mind, than by saying, I was never so perfectly alive as at that moment.

C.W. pp.129-130

Caleb's feelings are massively paradoxical: he is wild yet calm, splitting his emotions between Falkland and himself. The language expresses the sheer dangerous energy of his mutually destructive feelings. Yet despite

the manic uncertainty of Caleb's feelings there is in his passionate intensity something so vital to a human being that Caleb has a greater sense of being alive than ever before. The knowledge of Falkland's guilt, far from palliating the energy in the reaction between Caleb and Falkland, fuels it. The condition of the pursuit between these two shifts, the paranoia and the persecution change places regularly, the pace actually speeds up, and the sense of duly-ordered narration is broken by being accelerated and blurred. 'Incident followed upon incident in a kind of breathless succession', Caleb reports as if he can hardly keep up with the physical telling of his own narrative (p.131).

The actual power of Caleb Williams has little to do with external events bringing about catastrophe, even though there is a series of physical adventures. The plot seems subordinate to an almost indefinable quality which Marilyn Butler calls the writing's 'abnormality':

Godwin's description of his state of mind at the time of writing emphasizes its abnormality, its heightened creative fervour, and so, again, stresses the strangeness of the story he has to tell - as though it were an inexplicable product of the subconscious, rather than an intelligible description of a reality which the reader might recognize in the common world of everyday.

Butler p.58

There is something inexplicable in this novel which makes Frankenstein seem straightforward in comparison. For the writing in Caleb Williams is not just the recounting of a narrative of physical pursuit, as Frankenstein

simplifies itself into becoming, through the final necessity of stamping out the possibility of the monster's forming a race, whatever liberalism's claims that the originating fault is the creator's. The pursuit in Caleb Williams is as much mental as physical so that the writing itself has the quality of a mind thinking, more than of characters generating plot by their actions. Some life-force is doing its thinking thus, displacedly.

Moreover, the content of Caleb Williams is dense with socio-political, religious and psychological issues held in this confusion. They are not presented as separate and definable, contributing to an 'intelligible description' of an external reality. Though there is an external reality, the narrative strategy makes for its subsumation by the inner reality, so that all the big human problems and categories are there but mixed-up, unresolved, raw. As the mental and physical pursuit of Falkland and Caleb accelerates, confusing the bounds between the two protagonists, the momentum itself becomes part of some bigger force in the wider human world, less definable than anything embodied in Frankenstein's monster.

Strangely this fiercely disruptive chaotic force in Caleb Williams does not even arise directly out of the clash between Falkland and Caleb before it gathers its own terrifying momentum. It was released by the feud between Tyrrel and Falkland even before Caleb knew Falkland. Summing up the early particulars of Falkland's antagonistic relationship with Tyrrel, Caleb writes:

The death dealing mischief advances with an accelerated motion, appearing to defy human wisdom and strength to obstruct its operation.

C.W. p.37

Even here the antagonism between Tyrrel and Falkland, though provocative of human consequences, gets left behind by a third force which emerges as almost foreign to the human lives it affects - a third force invisibly present between two agents rather than present in just one of them. It works on, through and between them. Of the feud between Tyrrel and Falkland, Caleb writes:

The feud that sprung up between them was nourished by concurring circumstances, till it attained a magnitude difficult to be paralleled; and, because they regarded each other with a deadly hatred, I have become an object of misery and abhorrence.

C.W. p.19

That the 'concurring circumstances' nourish the feud between Tyrrel and Falkland suggests an opportunistic force at work, creating a terrifying sense of the immediate in the process of creating the inevitable. Force feeds on force in a kind of mad turbulence, so that human emotions themselves seem like ungovernable social forces, not privately suffered emotions, in secret nemesis or parody of the sort of ordered society Godwin wanted. Once stirred up, the emotions are capable of effects which swell far beyond their personal contexts. Of Falkland, Caleb writes:

All I have farther to state of his history is the uninterrupted persecution of a malignant destiny, a series of adventures that seemed to take their rise in various accidents, but

pointing to one termination. Him they overwhelmed with an anguish he was of all others least qualified to bear; and these waters of bitterness, extending beyond him, poured their deadly venom upon others, I being myself the most unfortunate of their victims.

C.W. p.16

Falkland does not suffer his personal pain individually. His feelings, brimming over and out of his own control, want outlets to affect others, as if others were a part of him in the dark side of human connections. More like a contagion, Falkland's bitterness towards others is something he simultaneously suffers in himself. He is presented as 'unqualified' to carry the weight of his anguish; it swells out of him since he cannot passively 'bear' it within him. The human being, far from being safely separate, even in what feels like private suffering, is in some deep, albeit perverted, sense here, still acutely social - albeit in some back-to-front or inside-out malformation.

'In society,' Godwin claims, 'no man possessing the genuine marks of a man can stand alone. Our opinions, our tempers and our habits are modified by those of each other' (Pol. Justice p.757). Godwin's mild word 'modified' becomes something grotesque in Caleb Williams: thus Falkland of himself declares:

I was the fool of fame. My virtue, my honesty, my everlasting peace of mind were cheap sacrifices to be made at the shrine of this divinity. But, what is worse, there is nothing that has happened that has in any degree contributed to my cure. I am as much the fool of fame as ever. I cling to it to my last breath. Though I be the blackest of villains, I will leave behind me a spotless and illustrious name



[...] I despise myself; but thus I am;  
things are gone too far to be recalled.

C.W. p.136

It is not that it does not matter to Falkland that he is not what his false 'illustrious name' makes him, or that his 'name' is a substitute for what he could have been. Rather, by a sort of Nietzschean anti-morality, Falkland is almost heroic in defying his own guilt.

Yet he is also a villain - somewhere, in a realm that ought to be public and objective but is secret and yet still existent, as buried truth. There is something implicitly insane in the bitter contradiction between his knowledge and his being: 'Though I be the blackest of villains, I will leave behind me a spotless and illustrious name'. By a frightening transference it is precisely this inversion of the internal and external stories in his own life that Falkland actually creates in Caleb's life correspondingly. Falkland's story makes him appear to be virtuous, though he is a murderer; Caleb is innocent, but Falkland's fabricated story about him makes him appear to be a dangerous thief. This inversion is a manifestation of Falkland's persecution of Caleb which makes Caleb an equivalent to Falkland whom Falkland projectively persecutes. McCracken emphasizes the similarity between Caleb and Falkland:

In intelligence, in concern with personal reputation, and, by the end, even in crime and accompanying remorse, each character mirrors the other.<sup>22</sup>

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22. See David McCracken's introduction to Caleb Williams (1794; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.xxi.

Caleb's situation is a kind of mirror-image distortion of Falkland's loss of fame just as Caleb Williams is like Enquiry Concerning Political Justice through a looking-glass. 'My fame, as well as my happiness has become his [Falkland's] victim,' Caleb says, for though he may be the keeper of Falkland's guilty conscience, Falkland is now the gaoler of Caleb's innocence (p.3). Whereas earlier Caleb had seemed like an Iago preying upon Falkland, Falkland now plays Iago to the world's Othello. And the world, like Othello, believes the lies told by Falkland. It is as if, far from these two works being counterparts, by a terrible twist, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice has started to exist inside the narrative of Caleb Williams and instead of its truth combating the corruption, the corruption perverts the truth. If Caleb's truth has no power to assert itself even to a truthful, honourable person such as Laura (23),

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23. Laura echoes Othello's words 'I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver' (I,iii,90) when she says: 'That tale which, in its plain and unadorned state, is destructive of the character of him to whom it relates, no colouring can make an honest one [...] Virtue, sir, consists in actions, and not in words. The good man and the bad, are characters precisely opposite, not characters distinguished from each other by imperceptible shades.' (p.299). The horrifying thing about what she says is that her right principles are in the wrong place. Moreover, her words echo Caleb's earlier trusting belief that: 'Innocence and guilt were, in my apprehension the things in the whole world the most opposite to each other. I would not suffer myself to believe, that the former could be confounded with the latter, unless the innocent man first allowed himself to be subdued in mind, before he was defrauded of the good opinion of mankind. Virtue rising superior to every calumny, defeating by a plain, unvarnished tale all the strategems of vice, and throwing back upon her adversary the confusion with which he had hoped to overwhelm her, was one of the favourite subjects of my youthful reveries' (p.160).

then his whole life is contained by the situation in which he is locked. Godwin says in Thoughts on Man:

But we are fully penetrated with the notion, that mind is an arbiter, that it sits on its throne, and decides, as an absolute prince, this way or that; in short, that, while inanimate nature proceeds passively in an external chain of cause and effect, mind is endowed with an initiating power, and for us its determination by an inherent and indefeasible prerogative.

Thoughts on Man p.229

Caleb's own mind is not the centre, the controller of meaning, but a symptom of the external chaos it recognizes.

Falkland's control over Caleb goes far deeper than the physical, as if Caleb were just a body, pursued by Falkland's mind. 'Falkland is the hero of the story,' Hazlitt claims, 'Caleb Williams is only the instrument of it' (24). As Falkland's instrument Caleb is no longer the perpetrator of any aspect of his own life - he cannot even write his own 'memoirs'. Instead, with horrible irony Caleb has to write Falkland's history, not his own since his entire history is possessed by Falkland's history (25). Consequently, before Caleb recounts the history of Falkland he acknowledges how strange it may seem that he should tell the history of somebody else in

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24. See footnote 2.

25. Caleb's story is so merged with Falkland's that he cannot extricate the one from the other. He says: 'To the reader it may appear at first sight as if this detail of the preceding life of Mr. Falkland were foreign to my history. Alas, I know from bitter experience that it is otherwise. My heart bleeds at the recollection of his misfortunes as if they were my own [...] To his story the whole fortune of my life was linked; because he was miserable, my happiness, my name and my existence have been irretrievably blasted.' (p.10)

all the detail and with all the passion which would normally seem relevant only to the history of the self. There is thus a strange logic whereby Caleb finds himself saying finally, as if to Falkland:

I began these memoirs with the idea of vindicating my character. I have now no character that I wish to vindicate: but I will finish them that thy story may be fully understood; and that, if those errors of thy life be known which thou so ardently desiredst to conceal, the world may at least not hear and repeat a half-told and mangled tale.

C.W. p.326

Such an astonishing reversal of the mind makes Montaigne's belief that it is both possible and necessary to order the inner self in a world of disorder a hopeless aspiration. Conscious avoidance assumes that the mind, though it cannot control the external world, can at least, compensatingly, be master of the inner reality. But here avoidance is not even an option. In finally exposing Falkland, Caleb thought he was bringing Falkland to justice: he then finds that his own mind has tricked him, his own motivation is far more insidiously vengeful. For just as in the external world truth is rendered an instrument of disorder, so in the psychological world justice can be used by the untameable, unruly passions to effect deeper confusion.

There is no force left at the end of Caleb Williams: it expires, of a sudden, with this final reversal. It is as though the fierce energy which drives the novel inexorably to the emblazoning demise of Falkland leaves

nothing behind but Caleb's weak and dislocated voice. Despite the deliberate battering upon chaos, the end of this novel results in a tamer chaos than that of either Clarissa or Othello whose powers resonate. It is only in Byron's work that the deliberate battering upon self-defeat, such as I have analysed in both Liber Amoris and Caleb Williams, as Romantic symptom, retains the power generated by the self-conscious creation of chaos. Byron exploits the creative-destructive power of chaos to its maximum, as if he, rather than Hazlitt or even Godwin, is the true inheritor of a literature of chaos.

### III. Byron: The Personal and Beyond

Hazlitt refers to Byron as 'in a striking degree, the creature of his own will'. Significantly, Hazlitt quotes from Coriolanus in order to illustrate the degree to which Byron aristocratically presides over his self:

'As if a man were author of himself,  
And owned no other kin.'

He is like a solitary peak, all access to which is cut off not more by elevation than distance. He is seated on a lofty eminence, 'cloud-capt,' or reflecting the last rays of setting suns; and in his poetical moods, reminds us of the fabled Titans, retired to a ridgy steep, playing on their Pan's-pipes, and taking up ordinary men and things in their hands with haughty indifference. He raises his subject to himself, or tramples on it; he neither stoops to, nor loses himself in it. He exists not by sympathy, but by antipathy.

Hazlitt XI, p.69

Hazlitt not only quotes Coriolanus' own words here, but applies to Byron that 'haughty indifference' he had himself seen as characteristic of Coriolanus. But just as Hazlitt's disdain for Coriolanus' aristocratical pretensions is mixed with a high regard for Coriolanus' independence of spirit, so his opinion of Byron is ambivalent. Hazlitt's reference to the 'fabled Titans' implies the Promethean greatness of Byron's poetical figures, who are so much a reflection of the will of the man himself (26). 'He is more than a writer' claims Wilson Knight, who attributes to Byron just the kind of Shakespearian power suggested in Hazlitt's implicit comparison with Coriolanus. Wilson Knight sees Byron as the very spirit of creativity:

his virtues and his vices alike are precisely those entwined at the roots of poetry. He is poetry incarnate. The others are dreamers: he is 'the thing itself'.<sup>27</sup>

'The thing itself' is a Shakespearian force or an amalgam of conflicting forces. Hazlitt's claim that Byron 'exists not by sympathy, but by antipathy' suggests moreover how Byron's characters seem to embody and play out in a large

26. Matthew Arnold also referred to Byron as a Titan. See Arnold's essay 'On the Study of Celtic Literature' in Lectures and Essays in Criticism, ed. by R.H. Super (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1962), pp.372-373, where he writes: 'And all Byron's heroes, not so much in collusion with outward things, as breaking on some rock of revolt and misery in the depths of their own nature; Manfred, self-consumed, fighting blindly and passionately with I know not what, having nothing of the consistent development and intelligible motive of Faust, - Manfred, Lara, Cain, what are they but Titanic?'

27. G. Wilson Knight, 'The Two Eternities', in Byron: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Paul West (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p.16.

form the entwined oppositions Byron held within himself. Byron himself claimed 'I, of course, embody myself with the character while I draw it' (28).

For Coriolanus, to stand apart from other men is an affirmation of his belief in his separate self, a self subject to his own will and invested with a sense of order by his own self's truth. But in Byron's lyrical drama, Manfred - set in a near-wilderness of Gothic splendour - the eponymous figure is separate in so far as he is a figure of chaos, not order:

This should have been a noble creature: he  
 Hath all the energy which would have made  
 A goodly frame of glorious elements,  
 Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,  
 It is an awful chaos - light and darkness -  
 And mind and dust - and passions and pure thoughts,  
 Mix'd, and contending without end or order,  
 All dormant and destructive:<sup>29</sup>

Manfred knows he should have been a 'noble creature': he is conscious of his self as separate from humankind by his simultaneous proud elevation from, and moral degradation in relation to 'ordinary men and things'. It is not just his elevation from others, as a man who has probed the mysteries of a spiritual world, that makes Manfred such a solitary figure. Manfred has committed a sin which, though it is never made explicit, is strongly suggested as being an incestuous affair with his sister, Astarte. Their relationship has in some unspecified way

28. Byron's Letters and Journals, ed. by Leslie Marchand, 12 vols (London: John Murray, 1982), ix, pp.118-119, hereafter referred to as 'L.J.'

29. Byron, The Complete Poetical Works, ed. by J.J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), iv, Manfred, III,iii,160-161, hereafter referred to as 'Manfred'.

led to her death. Manfred is thus a figure of guilt who, like Lovelace, has caused the death of his beloved (30). In the aftermath of guilty mourning Byron does not present in Manfred that clash of two opposing figures which I have illustrated in all the other texts I have cited as literature of chaos. Manfred, as a single figure, embodies the clash of opposites within his self. For Hazlitt the focus for the chaotic shifting of boundaries is love in the personal realm; for Godwin it was truth and justice displaced into the personal realm. In Byron the personal and more-than-personal are held together, albeit in chaos, in one man. In Manfred's basic make-up there is an awesome mixture of good and evil, and this mixture then experimentally contends within itself redoublingly 'without end or order'.

The conflict of these elements releases in the single figure of Manfred what the abbot calls an 'energy' which is simultaneously creative and destructive. He is, as Manfred says of himself, like the Simoom wind, which though a natural force, is yet averse to life. 'I would not make,/ But find a desolation' he says:

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30. See 'L.J. Vol III', p. 108: in a letter to Lady Melbourne, Sept. 5th. 1813, Byron, referring to Annabella Milbanke before he married her, wrote: 'She seems to have been spoiled - not as children usually are - but systematically Clarissa Harlowed into an awkward kind of correctness - with a dependence upon her own infallibility which will or may lead her into some egregious blunder - I don't mean the usual error of young gentlewomen - but she will find exactly what she wants - and then discover that it is much more dignified than entertaining'. Clearly Byron has little regard for 'correctness'. Byron's scathing attitude towards Clarissa implies a kinship with Lovelace.



like the wind,  
 The red-hot breath of the most lone Simoom,  
 Which dwells but in the desert, and sweeps o'er  
 The barren sands which bear no shrubs to blast,  
 And revels o'er their wild and arid waves,  
 And seeketh not, so that it is not sought,  
 But being met is deadly.

Manfred III,i,126-133

The Simoom wind does not wilfully destroy, but is poison to anything that which might stray into its wild and lonely path. Manfred embodies this negative yet vital, dangerous yet majestic energy as if he is microcosmically constituted of elemental forces rather than being a mere personality. The abbot, perceiving Manfred's energy, thinks it may have been employed to make up a being of noble excellence, useful to society. But like Falkland, who had the potential to be either a model of virtue or a figure of mischief, Manfred is not what he should have been, but a fallen angel like so many of Byron's heroes. 'But still I quiver to behold what I/ Must be, and think what I have been' says the Doge in Marino Faliero in anticipation of his fall (31). 'And to be thus,' says Manfred in conscious despair of his fallen state, 'eternally but thus,/ Having been otherwise!' (I,ii,65-71). Indeed, the pageant of unearthly spirits in Manfred implies a whole cosmology suggestive of Gods and Titans in mythic lands rather than human beings in social environments. For this is a strange and fantastical drama which Byron himself called 'inexplicable', beyond any

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31. Byron, The Complete Poetical Works ed. by J.J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), iv, Marino Faliero, III,ii,497-498, hereafter referred to as 'Marino'.

single ordering explanation (32).

Kenneth Graham, in his work The Politics of Narrative: Ideology and Social Change in William Godwin's Caleb Williams, points out the influence of Godwin's novel on Byron's Manfred:

In its depth and intensity, the portrait of Manfred owed much to Godwin's Falkland, a similarly larger-than-life projection, the magnificent transgressor wracked by his own guilt yet superior to the timid who follow the rules that others make for them.<sup>33</sup>

Both Manfred and Falkland are as 'magnificent' as transgressors as they might have been had they been virtuous, as the evil within offers proportionate revenge upon the failure of the good. But in a sense Manfred could never have been the 'noble' being the abbot speculates upon. For the opposing elements within Manfred are not a harmonious, wisely balanced mixture. They exist in continual and terrible juxtaposition to one another, as if Manfred's very nature is a dramatic experiment with its own chemistry.

Moreover, Manfred reproduces and redoubles that chaos within him, wilfully, as if to see what he is made of. For he is not a simple embodiment of evil. He is an

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32. See 'L.J. Vol V', p.170: in a letter to John Murray, Venice, February 15, 1917, Byron writes: 'I forgot to mention to you that a kind of poem in dialogue (in blank verse) or drama, from which "The Incantation" is an extract, begun last summer in Switzerland, is finished; it is in three acts; but of a very wild, metaphysical and inexplicable kind'.

33. Kenneth W Graham, The Politics of Narrative: Ideology and Social Change in William Godwin's Caleb Williams (New York: A.M.S. Press, 1990), pp.177-178, hereafter referred to as 'The Politics of Narrative'.

exceptional being who, like Faustus and Frankenstein, studies that which is beyond the scope of a human being. 'And then I dived', he tells the witch whom he conjures up with his supernatural powers:

In my lone wanderings, to the caves of death,  
 Searching its cause in its effect; and drew  
 From wither'd bones, and skulls, and heap'd up dust,  
 Conclusions most forbidden. Then I pass'd  
 The nights of years in sciences untaught,  
 Save in the old-time.

Manfred II,ii,79-85

Like Faustus and Frankenstein, Manfred is driven by intellectual daring. He seeks forbidden knowledge in relation to the opposition of life and death. He is not immortal, but his life is longer than that of ordinary mortals, and the spirits with whom he communes recognize that 'his sufferings/ Have been of an immortal nature, like/ Our own' (II,iv,53-55). In his spirit of profound curiosity, moreover, Manfred is as much like Caleb as like Falkland, as Kenneth Graham points out:

Manfred is a character like Caleb, driven from society as a result of a curiosity that probes towards forbidden knowledge. The tension central to Caleb's self-projection between the gifted individual and a prejudiced, complacent, unreflective, reactionary society runs through the third and fourth cantos of Childe Harold and through The Corsair. The same tension exists also in Manfred.

Politics of Narrative p.177

Although Caleb is in conflict with his society, he does still seek human connections. But Manfred can live neither with society nor without it: his proud defiance of conventionality is mixed up with a conflicting guilt

at his own moral failure. Both forces alike, and yet so different, drive him into solitude.

Urged to reconcile himself with Lord Carlisle, Byron wrote in a letter to Samuel Rogers that he refused to 'teach [his] tongue a most inherent baseness'. Byron's repetition of Coriolanus' words imply Byron's similar belief in his own truth against that of society. Byron slights conventional society when he goes on to declare in the letter that:

All the sayings and doings in the world  
shall not make me utter another word of  
conciliation to anything that breathes.  
I shall bear what I can, and what I cannot  
I shall resist. The worst they could do  
would be to exclude me from society. I  
have never counted it, nor, I may add,  
in the general sense of the word, enjoyed  
it - and "there is a world elsewhere!"

L.J. Vol IV p.61

Byron was prepared to be driven into the kind of solitude he constructs for his character Manfred. Like Coriolanus, Byron pre-empts society's rejection of him, by rejecting it. In doing this, Byron is making his situation subject to his will. He defines it before it can define him. That effort towards making his mind the controller of the situation is most powerfully expressed in his words 'I shall bear what I can, and what I cannot I shall resist'. If his situation should become greater than his own strength to 'bear' it, he claims that he would not despair but defy it. Yet 'what I cannot I shall resist' still implicitly admits that the situation does in some way control him even by his having to resist it. Always

there is this secondary fall-out in Byron, this secret admission of final constraint itself exacerbated by his redoubled efforts against it. It is as if a self cannot truly exist alone and yet it has to.

The horror of chaos in Byron is thus that the mind is, even as the director of a situation, simultaneously a symptom of it. This horror is different to Caleb's discovery that his situation controlled him whilst he had thought his mind directed it: the knowledge for Caleb is back-dated. But in Byron, the self is already well aware of living in such a horrific paradox. In Manfred, Manfred echoes Byron's proud defiance when he tells the chamois hunter:

I can bear -  
 However wretchedly, 'tis still to bear -  
 In life what others could not brook to dream,  
 But perish in their slumber.

Manfred II,i,76-79

That the primary guilt is, secondarily, proud guilt makes it only more desperately bearable in the almost conscious illusion of his still partly directing his own situation. The result of this mix of levels is that Manfred's suffering and capacity for suffering are made extra-ordinary. Manfred's resistance to his suffering agitates it into greater intensity: 'I have gnash'd/ My teeth in darkness till returning morn,/ Then cursed myself till sunset' he says of his self-recriminating torture (II,ii,131-132). Manfred himself is made terrifyingly stronger by the convulsions of his pain: 'Yet, see,' says a spirit witnessing Manfred's pain, 'he

mastereth himself, and makes his torture tributary to his will' (II,iv,160). Indeed, the over-riding impression of Manfred is of a self tormented by enormous guilt yet insisting on the right to self-authority in defiance of his sin.

When Manfred despairs - even to the point of contemplating suicide by flinging himself from the cliffs - there is a kind of secondary dignity even in his despair. Surveying the mountains beneath him, he says:

There is a power upon me which withholds  
 And makes it my fatality to live;  
 If it be life to wear within myself  
 This barrenness of spirit, and to be  
 My own soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased  
 To justify my deeds unto myself -  
 The last infirmity of evil.

Manfred I,ii,23-29

It is alarming that Manfred should refer to himself, almost - but impossibly - from outside himself, as his 'own soul's sepulchre', implying paradoxically that his body is the living coffin of his self-destroyed soul. It is 'my fatality to live' he says, conscious that his very existence constitutes a paradox of chaos, his body and his mind still paradoxically alive in a living death called damnation. But it is not the case that his sin has made him lose his self; Manfred is not overcome by despair. 'I dwell in my despair' he says (II,ii,149), not 'my despair dwells in me', for his despair has not entirely got him in its grip, reducing him, nor can he simply contain it either. He is in hell. Neither do his words 'for I have ceased/ To justify my deeds unto

myself' represent an avoidance of his guilty grief: he is past that. Instead, the whole sense of Manfred's suffering is of a kind in which his enlarged but almost empty self still wilfully and manically presides over his own despair in such a way that despair and defiance are not antithetical, but terrifyingly near-synonymous.

All three of the Romantic writings I am considering are anxious to find forms which elude their own control. Manfred only retains a sort of command over his ruined life by making that ruin, paradoxically, the most important thing about his self. He can survey the simple yet respectable life of the chamois hunter with envy:

Thy humble virtues, hospitable home,  
 And spirit patient, pious, proud and free;  
 Thy self-respect, grafted on innocent thoughts;  
 Thy days of health, and nights of sleep; thy toils,  
 By danger dignified, yet guiltless; hopes  
 Of cheerful old age and a quiet grave

Manfred II,i,64-70

Manfred's pensive longing for such a life - a life of guilt-free hope and peace - is implied in the rolling syntax. Each successive thought is the natural consequence of the last, as if in imitation of the harmonious rhythm of the life Manfred imagines. But Manfred interrupts himself with:

This do I see - and then I look within -  
 It matters not - my soul was scorch'd already!

Manfred II,i,72-73

This interruption does not represent a mournful collapse of Manfred's contemplation of what his life could have been had he not become the guilty sinner. It is always

quicker than that in Byron, the speed that cuts off the possibilities being at one with a sense of the immediately unspeakable. He halts his own thoughts, knows suddenly again that he never could have lived a life blessed with normal comforts, for there is something 'within' his very being which would have driven him to damnation in any case. Yet Manfred speaks neither with regret nor defeat when he says that his 'soul was scorch'd already'. 'Already' is quicker still. There is an awesome anterior commitment to the wrongness within him. The feelings with which he realizes damnation are, he realizes, no 'matter' compared to the fact of damnation itself, despite any feelings one has about it. He embraces damnation because it already embraces him.

Just as Manfred suddenly embraces, rather than slowly laments, the ruination of his life, so the Doge in Marino Faliero says of himself: 'there was that in my spirit ever/ which shaped out for itself some great reverse' (V,ii,11-12). With near perversity, the Doge battens on to the chaotic force within himself that will distort his glorious life from its straight path into one of predestined infamy. The chaos I define in the Romantic period involves this inclination towards the exciting destructive force of chaos in lieu of safe order. But neither the Doge nor Manfred simply wills the destruction of order in their lives. The will is simply the secondary human expression of an inhuman predestination. Manfred is cursed; the star which rules his 'destiny' is:



A wandering mass of shapeless flame,  
 A pathless comet, and a curse,  
 The menace of the universe;  
 Still rolling on with innate force,  
 Without a sphere, without a course,  
 A bright deformity on high,  
 The monster of the upper sky!

Manfred I, i, 117-123

The paradox of the chaos which Manfred embodies is reiterated in the oxymorons 'shapeless flame...pathless comet...bright deformity'. Manfred's star of destiny suggests that he is a virtual aberration in the universe, but nevertheless the energy of the chaotic force which governs him has its secondary aesthetic magnificence.

Kierkegaard's idea of the aesthetic individual is of a person who lives to the moment, ever in a kind of disguise and never coming in contact with the universal. Kierkegaard cites Don Juan as a model of the aesthetic individual. The speaker of Either/Or says to the aesthetic man:

Now you know very well that the most intensive pleasure consists in holding fast to the enjoyment with the consciousness that the next instant it perhaps will vanish. Hence, the last scene in Don Juan pleases you greatly. Pursued by the police, by the whole world, by the living and the dead, alone in a remote chamber, he once again collects all the power of his soul, flourishes the goblet once again, and once again delights his soul with the sound of music.<sup>34</sup>

Like Manfred, Kierkegaard's Don Juan is alone, in antagonism with the external world and yet somehow magnificent in his self. Though Kierkegaard does not

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34. Kierkegaard, Either/Or, trans. by W. Lowrie, 2 vols (1843; London: Oxford University Press, 1944), ii, pp.21-22, hereafter referred to as 'Either/Or'.

admire the aesthetic individual since aestheticism is essentially despairing, he does recognize the tremendous energy implicit in the aesthetic individual. Manfred has such energy. He is a version of the serious aesthetic man who requires, says Kierkegaard, 'that [he] become something definite, that [he] permit the germ deposited in [him] to develop completely' (p.189).

As this marvellous but despairing figure, Manfred is both the product and the cause of his own fate: he is cursed but he is himself the 'innate force' of chaos affecting that which is around him. Hazlitt's humiliated confusion over himself is here energized and enlarged. In this mix of product and cause it is impossible to determine how far Manfred's blighted life is due to a flaw in his own wild nature or to the inevitability consequent on a cursed destiny - or, indeed, if the two are not different names for the same thing. For Byron always evades definition and explanation, but further intervenes as 'the thing itself' those elements of being which are already difficult to separate out.

The Doge, knowing that he has within his very self a destructive drive, refers to his decision to join the conspiracy to overthrow the patricians of Venice as his 'destiny':

This will I - must I - have I sworn to do,  
Nor aught can turn me from my destiny.

Marino III,ii,490-496

Behind that impressive determination in which will and obedience seem blurred, the Doge's situation in becoming

the leader of the conspirators is far stranger than if he were merely called upon by external pressures to act as the fated instrument of justice against tyranny. He declares to his fellow-conspirator Bertuccio, who has entreated the Doge to lead the conspiracy:

And yet I act no more on my free will,  
 Nor my own feelings - both compel me back;  
 But there is hell within me and around,  
 And like the demon who believes and trembles  
 Must I abhor and do.

Marino III,ii,513-521

The Doge is horrified at his own intention to murder the patricians; the strength of his abhorrence for the act makes the then resolution of 'Must I abhor and do' menacing. But this resolution is not the result of an inner conflict in which one part of the Doge overcomes the other. It is not a war between his will and his destiny. Instead this is chaos, more even than conflict: his simile 'like the demon who believes and trembles' expresses the strange and paradoxical nature of what drives the Doge in his demonic determination to overthrow the state, despite himself, like two people in one: the head of state and the overthrower. For like an inverse version of Coriolanus, who wanted Rome to reflect outside him the belief he felt for it within, the Doge feels infected within himself by what Venice has become. 'Yes, proud city!' declares the Doge addressing his beloved Venice in its 'violated majesty' (II,i,497):

Thou must be cleansed of the black blood  
 which makes thee  
 A lazar-house of tyranny: the task  
 Is forced upon me, I have sought it not;

And therefore was I punish'd, seeing this  
 Patrician pestilence spread on and on,  
 Until at length it smote me in my slumbers,  
 And I am tainted, and must wash away  
 The plague-spots in the healing wave.

Marino III, i, 8-15

The Doge's decision to join the conspiracy is no simple bid for political power. Neither is it the result of confusing self-interested revenge with the noble resistance to tyranny, as it is for Bertuccio, his fellow-conspirator. The Doge acts out of a form of guilty patriotism for not having acted earlier. Now the 'pestilence' he perceives is so virulent that only the force of a violent usurpation of the patrician's power could restore healthy rule to Venice. Thus, though the Doge calls that which is within him a kind of hell, the evil implicit in that hell (by a kind of reversal such as is reflected in his own distorted life) must bring about good. 'Strange good,' says Cain of God's goodness in Cain: A Mystery 'that must arise from out its deadly opposite' (35). The Doge knows that he does not represent the power of good which must overthrow evil, as did Brutus. Bertuccio refers to Brutus as an inspiration: 'What were we/ If Brutus had not lived?' (II, ii, 101-102). Byron himself clearly admired Brutus. In his journal he wrote:

To be the first man - not the Dictator -  
 not the Sylla, but the Washington or the  
 Aristides - the leader in talent and truth  
 - is next to the Divinity! Franklin, Penn,

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35. Byron, Poetical Works, ed. F. Page (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), Cain: A Mystery, II, ii, 288-289, hereafter referred to as 'Cain'.

and, next to these, either Brutus or Cassius  
- even Mirabeau - or St. Just.

L.J. Vol III p.218

Byron's admiration is stirred by the idea of the 'first man' not as a wielder of power but a bringer of truth - though even the first man in Byron is already fallen into secondary manoeuvres.

The fallen Doge does not even associate himself with such first men. Instead he feels microcosmically 'tainted' and knows that the 'pestilence' without, getting inside him, cannot be punished by good, but must be purged by stirring up more wrong. 'What/ Are a few drops of human blood?' he asks, referring to the patricians he intends to murder:

'tis false,  
The blood of tyrants is not human; they,  
Like to incarnate Molochs, feed on ours,  
Until 'tis time to give them to the tombs  
Which they have made so populous. - Oh world!  
Oh men! what are ye, and our best designs,  
That we must work by crime to punish crime?

Marino IV,ii,161-168

The Doge justifies his part in the conspiracy by his belief that he fights tyranny. But that belief does not settle the issue for the Doge. It is with real horror that he perceives the sickening disorder of a world which must 'work by crime to punish crime'. Echoingly, Manfred says 'Must crimes be punish'd but by other crimes,/ And greater criminals?' (III,iv,123-124). Justice should punish crime, but in the world of Byron's dramas justice is not an easily discernible absolute, but chaotically twisted into secondary complexities in the search to find

itself again. As in the world of Caleb Williams, moral hierarchies are inverted into near-senselessness so that the 'best designs' must be wrought through the worst methods. It is the metaphysical paradox at the heart of any political revolution: that the fighter of tyranny only has tyrannous methods by which to effect justice. For the Doge that paradox has this sickening extra twist:

the very means I am forced  
 By these fell tyrants to adopt is such,  
 That I abhor them doubly for the deeds  
 Which I must do to pay them back for theirs.  
 Marino III,ii,105-117

This is not like the life-syntax of Manfred's chamois-hunter. The lines twist and turn, yet link. Not only does the Doge hate the deeds of the tyrant senators, he hates them again for the deeds he must commit in order to revenge theirs. Horror accumulates upon horror.

The sense of order having gone so wrong that only further wrong may create the right implies something far more disturbing in Byron's work than that human beings are essentially cruel and corrupt and hence unable to implement order into their institutions. For there is, beneath or within the corrupt political world of Venice, a deeply pervasive sense of a Christian world that has gone sickeningly and careeringly wrong too. The Doge in Marino Faliero refers to 'the mere instinct of the first-born Cain,/ Which ever lurks somewhere in our human hearts' (IV,ii,56-57), as if the viciousness of the human being is not social, but essentially religious. The voice of a spirit refers to Manfred's 'brotherhood of Cain' in

reminder of his fallen state (I,i,249). But Byron does not use the Christian myth so straightforwardly that it provides reasons for the faultiness of human existence. 'It is all a mystery' says Byron in his diary, referring to the greatest horrors of the greatest plagues when 'men were more cruel and profligate than ever' (L.J. Vol VIII p.37). Rather, the presence of a fallen Christian world containing elements of doomed predestination throws open baffling metaphysical questions without any attempt to solve them.

Jacopo Foscari, in Byron's drama The Two Foscari says, in answer to his wife's question 'What hast thou done?':

Nothing. I cannot charge  
 My memory with much save sorrow: but  
 I have been so beyond the common lot  
 Chasten'd and visited, I needs must think  
 That I was wicked. If it be so, may  
 What I have undergone here keep me from  
 A like hereafter!<sup>36</sup>

Jacopo cannot rail at the socio-political machinery of Venice which has caused him to be exiled from his beloved country, and tortured on his return. Jacopo's suffering suggests much bigger questions than that of social justice in relation to social crime, for his suffering exceeds such reasoning. It is as though that is what the extra-ordinariness of Byron's protagonists finally signifies - not egotism merely but a measure of the journey into metaphysics. In order for Jacopo's

36. Byron, Poetical Works, ed. F. Page (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), The Two Foscari, IV,i,165-169, hereafter referred to as 'Foscari'.

suffering to make sense, he thinks of sin, not crime. He bewilderedly imagines himself 'wicked'; yet Jacopo cannot say 'I am wicked'. Jacopo has no memory of sins deserving of the punishment his whole life seems. Instead he says 'I was wicked', as if, like his father the Doge, he thinks himself in a living hell as punishment for some unknown sin committed in a now dead world. The Doge, his father, says:

our whole being [rests] on  
 Something which is not us! - So we are slaves,  
 The greatest as the meanest - nothing rests  
 Upon our will; the will itself no less  
 Depends upon a straw than on a storm;  
 And when we think we lead, we are most led,  
 And still towards death, a thing which comes as much  
 Without our act or choice as birth, so that  
 Methinks we must have sinn'd in some old world,  
 And this is hell: the best is, that it is  
   not Eternal.

Foscari II,i,355-365

The Doge expresses this terrifying view to Marina, the wife of his son Jacopo Foscari - even while Jacopo is being tortured in prison by the order of the senate whom the Doge serves. The Doge is torn apart by his human feelings for his son and his loyalty, as a mighty citizen, towards his country. But the significance of the Doge's words reaches out of his own immediate context. He expresses, with bewildered horror, the impossible way in which we must, as human beings, confront the world: as secondary beings who, when they think they lead, they are most led. Worse, we do not even know what the primary 'something' is which leads us. But life feels like enslavement in a kind of hell as punishment for a fall -



a fall forgotten save as an unspecific and implicit memory-trace in the human mind.

This sense of the world as no prelude to hell or heaven, but as the second incomprehensible and horrifying aftermath of some lost world pervades Byron's dramas. The fallen second world is the chaotic copy of the lost primal one. In Plato's cosmology The Timaeus the idea that the visible world is but a likeness of an eternal original underpins Plato's entire cosmology. 'Our world must necessarily be a likeness of something,' Timaeus explains to Socrates:

Concerning a likeness, then, and its model we must make this distinction: an account is of the same order as the things which it sets forth - an account of that which is abiding and stable and discoverable by the aid of reason will itself be abiding and unchangeable (so far as it is possible and it lies in the nature of an account to be incontrovertible and irrefutable, there must be no falling short of that); while an account of what is made in the image of that other, but is only a likeness, will itself be but likely, standing to accounts of the former kind in a proportion: as reality is to becoming, so is truth to belief.<sup>37</sup>

Plato's view is that the world is not 'the thing itself' but a copy of a model. As such it resembles that model only by having a likeness to it. Timaeus' account of the world is thus twice removed from the real thing, so to speak, firstly by the world being but a copy and secondly by his account being a product of the merely human. But for Plato the idea of the world as the imperfect copy of

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37. Plato's Cosmology trans. with a running commentary by F.M. Cornford (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p.23, hereafter referred to as 'The Timaeus'.

an ideal model does not have the pejorative connotations that it has for Byron.

To Byron the pervasive sense that this world contains distortions of a previous model implies the fearful sense that this is a fallen world. Manfred's power seems itself some relic of a fallen world. His 'tyrant-spell' he claims:

had its birth-place in a star condemn'd,  
The burning wreck of a demolish'd world,  
A wandering hell in the eternal space;

Manfred I, i, 44-46

Byron's is not a Godless universe. It is worse, for the human being seems cast out by God and abandoned, to be a ruin in the unexplained ruin of a fallen world. 'I sometimes think' Byron wrote in 'Detached Thoughts':

that Man may be the relic of some higher  
material being, wrecked in a former world,  
and degenerated in the hardships and struggle  
through Chaos into Conformity - or something  
like it; as we see Laplanders, Esquimaux, etc.,  
inferior in the present state, as the Elements  
become more inexorable.

L.J. Vol IX p.46

Byron's characters are like the surviving traces of some better race, living in the wreckage of a fallen world. In Cain: A Mystery Lucifer predicts to Cain:

Thy present state of sin, and thou art evil-  
Of sorrow, and thou sufferest - are both Eden  
In all its innocence compared to what  
Thou shortly may'st be; and that state again  
In its redoubled wretchedness, a Paradise  
To what thy sons' sons' sons, accumulating  
In generations like to dust (which they  
In fact but add to), shall endure and do.

Cain II, ii, 219-227

Cain is not just the first man born into a state of damnation without himself having sinned; he is the beginning of an 'accumulating' damnation. Byron's characters do seem the 'sons' sons' sons': the genetic inheritors of the fall and steeped in damnation, but so far distant from it that its meaning is but the endurance of suffering. Yet they do not lapse into mere 'Conformity' - they remain 'half-deity' in their remarkable endurance and refusal to collapse into nihilistic loss of self (Manfred I,ii,40). Though there are no intimations of a heaven to come - only suggestions that life is a kind of hell on earth for the Foscari - they remain resisters not yielding conformers. Thus Marina with all her indignant fury dares call the senators who have ordered the torture of her husband 'Demons' (II,i,117):

The old human fiends,  
 With one foot in the grave, with dim eyes, strange  
 To tears save drops of dotage, with long white  
 And scanty hairs, and shaking hands, and heads  
 As palsied as their hearts are hard, they counsel,  
 Cabal, and put men's lives out, as if life  
 Were no more than the feelings long extinguish'd  
 In their accursed bosoms.

Foscari II,i,109-114

Marina describes the senators as if they are on earth horrific fiends from hell, not elderly Titanic humans whose feelings are like ours, for 'With dim eyes, strange/ To tears' emphasizes both the imperviousness to human compassion and their strangeness. They seem almost alien beings whose cruelty is suggested in the phrase 'put men's lives out': as with the same sadistic ease

with which Cornwall and Goneril can pluck out Gloucester's eyes in King Lear.

Hell, in Byron's dramas, is not some dreaded, unknown existence beyond life, but seems a human state experienced by his characters as a living agony of chaos, undoing personal order. In Manfred, Manfred carries his own hell around within himself. A spirit chants to Manfred:

I call upon thee! and compel  
Thyself to be thy proper Hell!  
Manfred I, i, 250-251

Hell for Manfred is not, as it is for the Foscari, manifest in the inhumanity of those around them. This is why despair does not live in Manfred but Manfred lives in it, inside him. Manfred, more like Satan than either Adam or Cain, is his own hell. In fact the spirit's words echo Satan's declaration in Paradise Lost:

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.<sup>38</sup>

There are, then, two crucial moves in Byron's metaphysical experiments. The first move is to turn guilt into willed defiance, to turn primary responses into damned secondary ones, to turn cosmology wilfully into one fallen individualistic personality, self-condemned. The need to contain a whole cosmology within the one person is the reverse of Plato's need to turn individuals into aspects of a whole cosmology governed by order. The

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38. Milton, Paradise Lost (1674; London: Macmillan, 1951), Book I, 254-255.

visible universe is, for Plato, a living creature, having soul in body and reason in soul. Timaeus, explaining the creator's motive for the existence of such an ordered world, says:

Taking thought, therefore, he found that, among things that are by nature visible, no work that is without intelligence will ever be better than one that has intelligence, when each is taken as a whole, and moreover that intelligence cannot be present in anything apart from soul. In virtue of this reasoning, when he framed the universe, he fashioned reason within soul and soul within body, to the end that the work he accomplished might be by nature as excellent and perfect as possible. This, then, is how we must say, according to the likely account, that this world came to be, by the god's providence, in very truth a living creature with soul and reason.

The Timaeus, pp.33-34

The cosmos is presented here as revealing the operation of Reason creating order out of disorder. The human being is, in imitation of the universe, composed of reason, soul, and body. Only the divine reason in the human being is imperishable. As a result there is a contrast between macrocosm and microcosm, since the human being is not precisely of the same make-up as the universe; but there is also an analogy, for both macrocosm and microcosm are essentially governed by reason.

However, in Byron there is no simple analogy between the human being and its universe. Neither is the world just a set of external stuff - rather it is as if a whole world can get trapped in a man. The primariness of the order in the external universe means that Plato

minimalizes the personal, whereas Byron maximizes the personal. Byron, in a letter to Hodgson declares that 'the hero of tragedy and (I add meo periculo) a tragic poem must be guilty':

Who is the hero of Paradise Lost? Why  
Satan, - and Macbeth, and Richard, and  
Othello, Pierre, and Lothario, and Zanga?  
L.J. Vol VIII p.115

It is unsurprising that Byron should imply such admiring sympathy for Satan as the first in this list of sinners, for to suffer, for Byron, is primarily to suffer guilt:

Old man! there is no power in holy men,  
Nor charm in prayer - nor purifying form  
Of penitence - nor outward look - nor fast -  
Nor agony - nor, greater than all these,  
The innate tortures of that deep despair,  
Which is remorse without the fear of hell,  
But all in all sufficient to itself  
Would make a hell of heaven - can exorcise  
From out the unbounded spirit, the quick sense  
Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge  
Upon itself; there is no future pang  
Can deal that justice on the self-condemned  
He deals on his own soul.

Manfred III,1,66-78

Manfred's refusal to give up his guilt by suing for forgiveness is not simply the secondary stubborn petulance of a social non-conformist. For the second and final Byronic move is to take that individualistic self-dissolution and - having made the whole world intensely personal - make the individual still see itself as more led than leading, more the whole world even in just itself. 'Hell!' declares Manfred:

I feel;  
What I have done is done; I bear within  
A torture which could nothing gain from thine:

The mind which is immortal makes itself  
 Requitall for its good or evil thoughts -  
 Is its own origin of ill and end -  
 And its own place and time - its innate sense,  
 When stripp'd of this mortality, derives  
 No colour from the fleeting things without,  
 But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,  
 Born from the knowledge of its own desert.  
 I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey -  
 But was my own destroyer, and will be  
 My own hereafter. - Back, ye baffled fiends!  
 The hand of death is on me - but not yours!

Manfred III, iv, 127-141

Manfred refuses to die by any will but his own. Just as his own self-condemnation is greater than any pain that external blame could inflict upon him, so there is nothing outside him with a power greater than his own to effect forgiveness - and Manfred cannot forgive himself. Besides, to ask forgiveness would be a kind of stooping from his own relentless self-condemnation: damnation, for Manfred, is preferable to the humility of redemption. It is as if Manfred does what Byron's Lucifer advises Cain to do: 'Think and endure, - and form an inner world/ In your own bosom - where the outward fails' (II, ii, 463-463). Manfred bears his own guilt and he deals his own justice on himself as if he has fallen further than either hell or heaven could judge and punish or forgive. Though religion is a powerful presence in this drama, its weakness in relation to Manfred's own strength drives Manfred into a deeper damnation. For to be the worst of sinners is better than to be nothing at all. 'For every one can be a good man who wills it,' says Kierkegaard 'but it always requires talent to be bad' (Either/Or Vol II p.191).

Manfred speaks with utter contempt for any morality but his own. But, strangely, despite his apparently irreligious position Manfred is, as his own scapegoat, a religious figure. Byron seems to need moral failure in order to arouse the feeling of religion. For by a further species of inversion Manfred, as a secondary figure takes all the false secondariness with him into death, leaving the primary behind. Likewise the Doge, Marino Faliero, willingly sacrifices himself to the glory of Venice. Of his ancestors in their vaults he announces:

Their mighty name dishonour'd all in me,  
 Not by me, but by the ungrateful nobles  
 We fought to make our equals, not our lords [...]  
 Spirits! smile down upon me; for my cause  
 Is yours, in all life now can be of yours,-  
 Your fame, your name, all mingled up in mine,  
 And in the future fortunes of our race!  
 Let me but prosper, and I make this city  
 Free and immortal, and our house's name  
 Worthier of what you were, now and hereafter!

Marino III,1, 32-47

Should the Doge succeed in his usurpation of the state, his defiance of their tyranny would triumph. He does not succeed: he becomes instead the scapegoat. Manfred and Cain are also almost deliberately scapegoats. But what is strange about the scapegoat is that it is so close to sainthood. That is not to say that a Byronic figure such as Manfred, by committing suicide, resembles the near-martyring of Clarissa in her willed dying. Manfred is closer to Lovelace. If Lovelace had not petered out as the pitiful remnant of his previous magnificence, he would have been a great figure. He would have fulfilled



his awful - but marvellously defiant - words when he declares that he will take Clarissa's papers:

And as no one can do her memory justice equal to myself, and I will not spare myself, who can better show the world what she was, and what a villain he that could use her ill? And the world shall also see what implacable and unworthy parents she had. All shall be set forth in words at length. No mincing of the matter. Names undisguised as well as facts. For as I shall make the worst figure in it myself, and have a right to treat myself as nobody else shall, who will control me? Who dare call me to account?

Cl. p.1385, L.497

Of course Lovelace's words are laced with ironies - how, for instance, can he who treated her with such injustice do justice to her memory? Yet, despite the ironies, Lovelace shows here the same kind of potential as Manfred to heap damnation on his own head, to live within his own self-defined hell, to be the strongest force in his own life - rather than bear the smaller punishment imposed from without. He refuses here, as a self, to be called to account by another. Despite his proud words Lovelace disappoints his self-potential to have been something great, however terrible that greater self may have been. Instead Lovelace dies an ignominious death by the hand of Clarissa's unimpressive avenger.

Manfred, on the other hand, by his insistence upon the hugeness of his guilt, his self's ability to carry that guilt - to transform it by his death into a kind of religious suffering - emerges as a super-Lovelace. The whole world trapped inside Manfred until he dies is

released at his death, released from his microcosmic distortions of it. His death is indeed like that of an inverse saint dying for a cause and leaving behind all his greatness. 'They never fail who die/ In a great cause' says Bertuccio in Marino Faliero:

the block may soak their gore;  
 Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs  
 Be strung to city gates and castle walls -  
 But still their spirit walks abroad

Marino, II,ii,93-97

Manfred does not die for an external great cause, such as the political sacrifice to which Bertuccio refers. But by his death Manfred is himself magnified into greatness. He is no half-willing victim in his own defeat, as are Hazlitt and Caleb. Hazlitt as H. and Godwin's character Caleb are utterly obliterated by the deliberate stirring-up of chaos. Byron, by insisting on defeat with such committed defiance of his world, forges out of self-defeat powerful self-definition.

Byron's use of chaos is not tamer by its self-consciousness; chaos in his protagonists turns round upon itself, achieving the big more-than-personal resonances of Shakespearian chaos even out of the destruction of the personal.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

#### A REVIEW: FROM PLATO TO CONRAD

In Byron's work the individual exists in a kind of antagonistic relation to the cosmos. But it is not a relation which diminishes the individual, for Byron makes the individual a force in the cosmos that provokes the cosmos itself in response (not a force under God as is Clarissa). Through his use of chaos Byron subverts the relation of the self to the universe, such as we have inherited it from Plato, into something more like disobedient anarchy, till that individualistic anarchy tears itself apart as a sort of scapegoat.

Plato's essay in cosmology, The Timaeus, is the great original work in prose whose concern it is to prove that the relation of the human being to the universe is one of order. But I turn to it now, in the conclusion of this thesis, instead of having used it as a starting-point. For by a species of anamnesis, it is only now that I am ready to re-call via Byron the meaning of that great text in its weighing of the relation of order and chaos

in the universe. It is against the background of that classic text that I can best try to conclude. For having established in this thesis the power of chaos by re-creating situations of personal catastrophe in what I have termed its most original forms, I shall conclude by testing the existential possibility of living - after Plato and at a personal level - with an awareness of both the forces in the universe in which we live: chaos and order. For as The Timaeus reminds us, both order and chaos are fundamental forces, and the need of the human being is to deal with both forces in their close relation to one another.

The Timaeus specifically attempts to demonstrate Plato's belief that human morality is not an arbitrary product of human development, but is a natural reflection in human form of the primary cosmic order existent in the universe. As such, it is unsurprising that The Timaeus became an authoritative text in the West in the Middle Ages. B.B. Price states in Medieval Thought:

Plato's principle in The Timaeus that everything which comes into being owes its being to a cause gave his twelfth-century readers a direct route to the concept of efficient causality. Platonic forms with existence in the realm of the Ideas provided the inspiration to formal causality. The classical four elements incorporated into the cosmology of The Timaeus offered material causality. Plato had described final causality or purpose as the desire of the maker of the universe that all things should be good like himself. Second, the Platonic teaching of The Timaeus made philosophically accessible the notion of creation and a hierarchy of being, whose story twelfth-century Christian scholars could easily reconcile with the biblical creation story of Genesis.<sup>1</sup>

What made it possible for Medieval scholars to translate the meanings of The Timaeus within their Christian ideology, despite the huge cultural differences between Greek society and western society during the Middle Ages, was the shared human need to believe in a universe governed by order, created by and under an intelligent being. That need over-rides the difficulties in the translation of meanings from one culture to another such as are recognized, as I have shown, by Alasdair MacIntyre. The Timaeus comes to express timeless values in creation: Einstein's famous retort to the claim of modern-day quantum physicists that the subatomic world is unpredictable - 'God does not play dice' (2) - evidences the abiding human desire that every event should have a specific cause. The Timaeus is a virtual treatise on the logic of 'efficient causality'.

The major difference between the beliefs of Medieval Christian scholars and Plato's belief as it is expressed through the story-teller, Timaeus, is that Plato did not intend the Demiurge as a real being in the way that the Christian God is real for Christians. The Demiurge is a mythical figure and the gods referred to in The Timaeus are but the instruments of the maker, the Demiurge. The Demiurge himself is a sort of master craftsman, a creator who did not create the material of the universe but did mould that material into an ordered cosmos. This all-good, but not all-powerful, creator constitutes heresy

1. B.B. Price, Medieval Thought: An Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p.78.

2. Paul Davies, God and the New Physics (London: Penguin, 1983), p.35.

for Christian understanding despite the Medieval regard for the narrative as a whole. For Plato's creator is unlike the Jehovah of Genesis who could create the universe out of nothing. He is more like an artist. Yet all the artists I have studied in this thesis - not just Byron - work in almost inverse ways to Plato's Demiurge: where formal order is created in any of the texts I have referred to, unruly content still dominates and the form makes the content seem all the more unruly as a result. But the Demiurge is used by Plato to illustrate how the world itself is like a work of art designed with an ordering and harmonizing purpose.

The intention of The Timaeus is to express the purpose of the cosmos by describing, through story, the process of its construction. The whole cosmos is, of itself, divine:

Let us, then, state for what reason becoming and this universe were framed by him who framed them. He was good; and in the good no jealousy in any matter can ever arise. So, being without jealousy, he desired that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself. That this is the supremely valid principle of becoming and of the order of the world, we shall most surely be right to accept from men of understanding. Desiring, then, that all things should be good and, so far as might be, nothing imperfect, the god took over all that is visible - not at rest, but in discordant and unordered motion - and brought it from disorder into order, since he judged that order was in every way the better.<sup>3</sup>

The identification of the realm of the intelligible with

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3. Plato's Cosmology, ed. and trans. with a running commentary by F.M. Cornford (London: Routledge Kegan Paul Ltd., 1966), p.33, hereafter referred to as 'Timaeus'.

the realm of the good offers a teleological analysis of the universe: the universe does have a unifying purpose. The divine purpose is precisely to do with bringing about the good, which is itself the true reason for the existence of an ordered world, as Iris Murdoch emphasizes in The Fire and the Sun:

The message of the *Timaeus*, as indeed of other dialogues including the *Republic*, is that we exist, and must seek such perfection as may be available to us, as parts of a whole.<sup>4</sup>

Even if it is only possible to attain a less than perfect state, the implication of the close juxtaposition of 'we exist' and 'must seek such perfection' is that the two are almost synonymous. But the wish of the Demiurge that human creatures achieve the best possible life has nothing to do with his expecting gratitude, obedience or worship, as is implied by the relation of the Christian God to his creatures. In Plato's cosmology the world is the manifestation of a kind of generous self-expression of the Demiurge who, being without envy, wants to re-create his own goodness outside himself just because he is all-good.

Even with our twentieth-century scepticism towards a concept such as the good, Plato's belief that order is 'in every way the better' could hardly be disputed. Indeed a universe without any order whatsoever is almost unimaginable since there must be, at least, a minimal

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4. Iris Murdoch, The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.50-51, hereafter referred to as 'Fire and Sun'.

order by which to experience chaos as such. Consider Bergson's view on disorder as the problematic content of a negative idea:

it is only order that is real [...] The idea of disorder [...] corresponds to the disappointment of a certain expectation, and it does not denote the absence of all order, but only the presence of that order which does not offer us actual interest.<sup>5</sup>

Bergson's claim is that chaos is nothing and that there is no idea of 'nothing' that can be real to us in the end.

But what I have termed a literature of chaos attests, on the contrary, that chaos is something and is not a different form of order, but a forcible tendency in the universe that exists irreconcilably. That is precisely not to say that the literature of chaos is a decadent aesthetic movement simply preferring chaos to order, celebrating nihilism, or merely destructively subversive of order. Subversion is, after all, a secondary reaction. The Romantics themselves self-consciously incite chaos as if to imply that human beings experience chaos in a more vital way than they experience order. A later decadent Romanticism might well go further in relishing its own reactive reductiveness in the way that Robert Harbison's Deliberate Regression describes (6). But the literature of chaos, as I see it,

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5. Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. A. Mitchell (London: Macmillan, 1914), p.289.

6. Robert Harbison, Deliberate Regression (London: Andre Deutsch, 1980), see pp.223-4 where Harbison refers to how disorder is prolonged indefinitely due to the conscious decadent tendencies developing out of Romanticism itself: 'the self-destructiveness prominent in Romanticism'.



is writing which recognizes chaos as a fundamental, primary yet almost unbelievable force, and part of that recognition involves re-creating an immediate sense of its existence in lieu of (impossible) belief in it. Shakespeare is an experimenter who tests order by inciting its explosive relation to chaos. Likewise Richardson's Clarissa, in its affirmation of a religious belief in order, can only achieve its transcendent order through a terrible recognition of the relation between that order and the chaos below it. Chaos is not an absence; it is a force whose effectiveness is evident even if only by the strength of order's resistance to it.

Even in The Timaeus, that original text which makes a claim for the primariness of order, Plato has to admit the presence of chaos as a significant force in the cosmos. For in fact The Timaeus is a paradoxical narrative. After establishing the cosmos as ordered, the narrative interrupts itself. Indeed Timaeus, the storyteller, announces a whole new start:

Reason overruled Necessity by persuading her to guide the greatest part of the things that become towards what is best; in that way and on that principle this universe was fashioned in the beginning by the victory of reasonable persuasion over Necessity. If, then, we are really to tell how it [the universe] came into being on this principle, we must bring in also the Errant cause - in what manner its nature is to cause motion. So we must return upon our steps thus, and taking, in its turn, a second principle concerned in the origin of these same things, start once more upon our present theme from the beginning, as we did upon the theme of our earlier discourse.

Timaeus p.160

This fresh start is really more than an interruption; it is itself a shocking rupture of the harmony the narrative has been at pains to create by its insistence on the primariness of order. It introduces irrational factors within what has hitherto seemed a thoroughly rational universe. The Demiurge, as Iris Murdoch points out:

works as well as he can, gazing at a perfect model (the Forms), to create a changing sensible copy of an unchanging intelligible original. He cannot, however, create perfectly because he is using pre-existent material which contains irrational elements, the 'wandering causes', which represent irreducible qualities tending toward some minimal non-rational order of their own.

Fire and Sun p.50

Though the Demiurge has a perfect model from which to copy, and though he yearns to create a version 'as well as he can', he cannot fully control his materials themselves since they contain 'wandering causes'. Plato refers to the activity of the 'wandering causes' as Necessity where Necessity is thus associated, not with order and intelligibility, but with disorder and random chance. Necessity is productive of all those disruptive factors that I have claimed as chaotic forces: the indeterminate, the inconstant, the anomalous, the betrayingly unreliable, that which can be neither understood nor predicted.

What is even more strange than this sudden introduction of irrational forces within a rational cosmos is Plato's explanation of how Reason combats Necessity. Reason, aiming at the best, uses persuasion to

win over Necessity, inducing her 'to guide the greatest part (but not all) of the things that become towards what is best'. In other words, Reason must make some sort of cosmic deal with Necessity in order for Reason to hold its sway. In order to explain the abiding presence of Necessity Plato has to describe a primal chaos. This is his description of that chaos:

Now the nurse of Becoming [i.e. the Receptacle, or place in which the qualities of intelligent life are created], being made watery and fiery and receiving the characters of earth and air, and qualified by all the other affections that go with these, had every sort of diverse appearance to the sight; but because it was filled with powers that were neither alike nor evenly balanced, there was no equipoise in any region of it; but it was everywhere swayed unevenly and shaken by these things, and by its motion shook them in turn. And they, being thus moved, were perpetually being separated and carried in different directions; just as when things are shaken and winnowed by means of winnowing-baskets and other instruments for cleaning corn, the dense and heavy things go one way, while the rare and light are carried to another place and settle there.

Timaeus p.198

Plato was convinced that there were geometrical truths which existed in relation to moral truths. He believed spherical movement to be the most perfect by its having a clearly assignable direction of causation. In contrast, the movement of Plato's chaos functions as a huge winnowing-basket. But whereas a winnowing-basket is primarily shaken from outside while the wind thins its contents, chaos shakes itself in a double, self-reciprocating motion so that the contents - 'powers that were neither alike nor evenly balanced' - agitate the

basket and the motions of the basket agitate the contents. This is chaos as inverse order, its very ordering ironically disrupting order as we would prefer it. Plato's chaos is an unbalancing complement to a nearly-clockwork Cosmos (7). For Chaos presents a picture of unordered motion without direction or purpose; it is the antithesis of the image of purposive order which has been constructed in the preceding narrative. So prevalent is the force of chaos, even under the accommodation of Reason, that Plato's account constitutes a recognition that there is an imperfectly subdued factor of blind necessity always at work in Nature, and that 'the World-Soul is not completely rational' (p.210).

This recognition has disturbing implications for Plato's chief purpose in The Timaeus of affirming the linkage between man, the microcosm, and the cosmic macrocosm. Cornford explained that linkage earlier:

the chief purpose of the cosmological introduction is to link the morality externalized in the ideal society to the whole organization of the world. The Republic had dwelt on the structural analogy between the state and the individual soul. Now Plato intends to base his conception of human life, both for the individual and for society, on the inexpugnable foundation of the order of the universe. The parallel of macrocosm and microcosm runs through the whole discourse.

Timaeus p.6

That man, the microcosm, is a reflection of the cosmos, the macrocosm, is the governing thought behind Plato's

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7. I am indebted for some of my analysis of Plato's Chaos to a conversation with Nick Davis.

cosmology. But Plato's back-dated admission of chaos throws open the possibility of disharmony between, as well as in, the macrocosmic and the microcosmic levels.

This thesis originated in how disturbing was such a thought for Hardy; for Byron the disturbance itself has a positive fall-out since it produces the impetus for massively energetic self-assertion. But for Hardy the presence of such a disharmony is only evidence of a consistently senseless universe, especially as the evolutionary process of the macrocosm seems the very thing which ironically produces the separation between it and the precipitated microcosm called man. The knowledge of such fundamental disharmony itself defeats the point of the self's resistance to it in Hardy's view. In his Romanes lecture, Evolution and Ethics, T.H. Huxley writes about just such an evolved separation between the macrocosm and the microcosm. 'Brought before the tribunal of ethics,' the cosmos, he claims:

might well seem to stand condemned. The conscience of man revolted against the moral indifference of nature, and the microcosmic atom should have found the illimitable macrocosm guilty.<sup>8</sup>

But despite the fact that Huxley, like Hardy, perceives a major split between human development and the cosmic process, Huxley's view is actually antithetical to Hardy's pessimistic view, for Huxley does not see that separation as a tragedy. Instead, for Huxley the very

8. T.H. Huxley and J. Huxley, Evolution and Ethics 1893-1943 (London: The Pilot Press, 1947), p.68, hereafter referred to as 'Evolution and Ethics'.

split provides an opportunity and a licence for the human being to alter the evolutionary process itself:

Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best.

Evolution and Ethics p.81

This is a remarkable claim. Huxley is saying that the human being is a protagonist who by social constructions of co-operation can impose substitute moral principles upon the impersonal cosmic process by the superimposition of man-made ethics. This assertion, which makes our own deliberate moral intervention a way of superseding evolution itself, implies profound belief in the capability of the human race. Huxley believes that the human race can, and should, fill the gap left by a negligent (or non-existent) principle of creation. Huxley's faith in the human race as a social whole makes his view quite unlike Byron's emphasis upon the power of the isolated individual to be a significant force in the universe, unbonded to the rest of the species by some shared morality. In fact, Huxley repudiates what he refers to as 'fanatical individualism' (p.82), though he does not, by this term, mean merely the Romantic interest in the self: he is referring specifically to the individualism which attempts to apply the analogy of cosmic nature to society - the individualism of Spencer or Carnegie - in turning the survival of the fittest into

a support for competitive capitalism. 'The practice of that which is ethically best' is, Huxley claims, on the contrary:

opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down, all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. It repudiates the gladiatorial theory of existence.

Evolution and Ethics pp. 81-82

Huxley's vision, as his shift from 'survival of the fittest' to 'the fitting of as many as possible to survive' implies, is co-operative, not competitive. His collective vision, in which human beings as a species might overcome the 'gladiatorial' evolutionary process, makes Hardy's pessimism look like the refusal of a challenge. 'Pessimism' said Hardy:

(or rather what is called such) is, in brief playing the sure game. You cannot lose at it; you may gain. It is the only view of life in which you can never be disappointed. Having reckoned what to do in the worst possible circumstances, when better arise, as they may, life becomes child's play.<sup>9</sup>

To perceive the disharmony between the human being and the cosmos and yet have opportunistic faith still in evolutionary advance by the moral efforts of the human race, is a second effort at order which tries to accommodate chaos on a scale almost as huge as that

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9. F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928 (1928-1930; London: Macmillan, 1962), p.311.

implied by Plato's notion of Reason accommodating Necessity.

Yet this thesis has focused, not upon massive and would-be objective overviews of the philosophic relation between chaos and order, but upon a personal experience of chaos. The reason for this focus, at the microcosmic level, is precisely because the human sense of chaos begins with the felt experience of separation from a universal order which the individual could previously take for granted. In the deepest works I have been considering, collapse of the personal life from order into chaos implies not just that a personal life has lost its order of meanings, but that the just order of the entire universe is lost too. For the personal is deeply implicated in the cosmic, as Byron so magnificently shows.

The literature of chaos, by its focus upon personal experience of chaos, illustrates the impossibility - or unusual good fortune - of living entirely upon order. 'My balance comes from instability' says Herzog (10), as if, finally, he embraces the final paradox to which I must now turn: that somehow or other both order and chaos must be lived with since they are terrifyingly related. Herzog's awareness of the paradox constitutes a kind of knowledge about the condition of the human being, implying the possibility of using that knowledge to achieve a kind of wary balance. Those figures of primary order: Coriolanus, Othello, Clarissa, do not seek a

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10. Saul Bellow, Herzog (London: Penguin, 1964) p.330.



balance since they do not really know of chaos beforehand and take steps to avoid it. Through those primary figures the experience of chaos can be recalled in its original shockingness; but they cannot provide, for the self who has knowledge of chaos, a model for how to live with such knowledge. The Romantic writers to whom I have referred are not interested in finding balance. On the contrary, they use chaos as if it is, however unknowable in itself, the only path worth pursuing: 'The road of excess' said William Blake, 'leads to the Palace of Wisdom' (11).

The only figures to whom I have referred who have knowledge of chaos existing alongside the need for order are John Stuart Mill, Dowell and Montaigne. These figures fail to achieve a viable balance. Dowell cannot make his knowledge of chaos useful for he is overwhelmed by chaos, with all belief in order destroyed. Moreover, by his unresponsive emptiness, Dowell may avoid further terrible life-disappointments, but as a self he is so irrevocably defeated by disappointment that his existence seems a pointless continuance of dull pain. Compromise, such as that accepted by John Stuart Mill for the sake of his sanity, is a false form of order since it excludes and evades the presence of chaos, rather than honestly recognizing chaos as a force (12). Mill's way of

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11. William Blake, Selected Poetry, ed. David Erdman (New York: Signet Classics, 1976), from 'Proverbs of Hell', p.69.

12. It is not insignificant that during his nervous breakdown Mill found no consolation in the writings of Byron. Mill writes: 'In the worst period of my depression I had read through the whole of Byron (then new to me) to try whether a poet, whose peculiar department was supposed to be that of the intenser feelings, could rouse any feeling in me. As might be expected, I got no

surviving his experience of chaos diminishes him as a self, even if he is not thoroughly cancelled-out like Dowell. Montaigne is a nobler version of John Stuart Mill's compromise as sheer basic sanity and survival. But though Montaigne's sense of order does not involve losing his sense of self or his brave honesty, his orderliness tames and dampens the positive aspect of chaos which Romanticism was to celebrate as the ever new upsurge of the forces of life.

The problem is thus twofold: firstly, though order is desirable, since we seem to need the emotional reassurance, it is not absolutely desirable; existence also depends upon agitation, as Adam Ferguson argues. Great loss of control of order, effected by the upsurge of a chaotic force, may test or even destroy beliefs but in the irrevocable drive towards discovery the mess creates or defines, even in the midst of destruction, what truly matters. For what matters is not simply the capacity to maintain a defensive sense of order when order itself can only ever be one force in a universe which seems to consist of two: order and chaos.

Secondly, knowledge of chaos implies that any sense

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good from this reading, but the reverse. The poet's state of mind was too like my own. His was the lament of a man who had worn out all pleasures, and who seemed to think that life, to all who possess the good things in it, must necessarily be the vapid uninteresting thing which I found it. His Harold and Manfred had the same burthen on them which I had; and I was not in a frame of mind to derive any comfort from the vehement sensual passion of his Giaours, or the sullenness of his Laras.' see John Stuart Mill, Collected Works: Autobiography and Literary Essays, ed. J.M. Robson and Jack Stillinger, 33 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), i, 'Autobiography' (1826), pp.151, 153.

of order may be, at worst, a contrivance to combat the fear of chaos, and at best, may still be nothing more than an alert trust in a kind of contingency plan, always having to work against the possibility of its own collapse. Yet despite the paradoxical problem that any kind of order is fraught by its very knowledge of chaos, I do believe that there is something dignifying to a human being such as Clarissa in retaining belief in the validity of an order, despite terrible life-experiences. This conclusion represents an attempt to locate the right kind of balance by which the self may live with the knowledge of chaos, even despite the sense that any kind of balance may be self-defeating, since it is really a belief in what is a deeply unsecuring unbelief.

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Joseph Conrad is precisely the writer who believes in the need for some sense of order alongside the knowledge of chaos, but is also aware of how the desire to live in a wary balance of the two is indeed the paradoxical 'belief' I have defined. The narrative voice in Conrad's Typhoon implies by its treatment of Captain MacWhirr that, however terrible or dangerous, chaos provides the only fundamental test of the self, where the self is itself representing something fundamental. 'MacWhirr' says Conrad:

had never been given a glimpse of immeasurable strength and of immoderate wrath, the wrath that passes exhausted but never appeased - the wrath and fury of the passionate sea. He knew it existed, as we know that crime and abominations exist; he had heard of it as a peaceable citizen in a town hears of battles, famines, and floods, and yet knows nothing of what these things mean - though, indeed, he may have been mixed up in a street row, have gone without his dinner once, or been soaked to the skin in a shower. Captain MacWhirr had sailed over the surface of the oceans as some men go skimming over the years of existence to sink gently into a placid grave, ignorant of life to the last, without ever having been made to see all it may contain of perfidy, of violence, and of terror. There are on sea and land such men thus fortunate - or thus disdained by destiny or by the sea.<sup>13</sup>

Captain MacWhirr is a figure of routine order who, until the typhoon comes, is oblivious to the sea's fullest potentialities. It is possible, the narrator claims, to live a whole life of placid order such as is enjoyed by MacWhirr. And to do so would be lucky. But, as the shift from 'fortunate' to 'disdained by destiny or by the sea' so ironically implies, it is also to live without having really experienced life at all, without having ever known the strength - or weakness - of the self.

It is MacWhirr's blunt mediocrity which makes him unable to perceive the unimaginable force of chaos. In his 'factional' biography of John Sassall, John Berger points out that the sea is a kind of metaphor for the unimaginable in Conrad's fiction. Berger tells of the influence of Conrad on Sassall, as a boy:

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13. Joseph Conrad, The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' / Typhoon and Other Stories (1903; Middlesex: Penguin Modern Classics, 1963), p.163, hereafter referred to as 'Typhoon'.

Against the boredom and complacency of middle-class life ashore in England, Conrad offered the 'unimaginable' whose instrument was the sea. Yet in this offered poetry there was nothing unmanly or effete: on the contrary, the only men who could face the unimaginable were tough, controlled, taciturn and outwardly ordinary. The quality which Conrad constantly warns against is at the same time the very quality to which he appeals: the quality of imagination. It is almost as though the sea is the symbol of this contradiction. It is to the imagination that the sea appeals: but to face the sea in its unimaginable fury, to meet its own challenge, imagination must be abandoned, for it leads to self-isolation and fear.<sup>14</sup>

Conrad's fiction provided Sassall with models of an older morality; Sassall himself became a kind of 'outdated nineteenth-century romantic with his ideal of single personal responsibility' (Fortunate Man, p.47). It is easy to see why young Sassall should be stirred by the moral example of one of the captains in Conrad's fiction, for there is something heroic about a figure like MacWhirr, however ordinary he may seem. He calms Jukes' panic when the typhoon is about to rack the ship:

'Don't you be put out by anything', the Captain continued, mumbling rather fast. 'Keep her facing it. They may say what they like, but the heaviest seas run with the wind. Facing it - always facing it - that's the way to get through. You are a young sailor. Face it. That's enough for any man.  
Typhoon p.217

It is impossible not to admire MacWhirr here. Whereas the terrors of the typhoon weaken Jukes' 'faith in himself' MacWhirr is undaunted, unshaken out of some

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14. John Berger, A Fortunate Man (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1967), p.52, hereafter referred to as 'Fortunate Man.

strong, albeit unrealized, faith (p.181). Yet his courage is ironized: he trusted steam power; he need not have sailed into the storm by facing it in the first place; and his taciturnity is in almost comic disproportion to the power of the typhoon:

The hurricane, with its power to madden the seas, to sink ships, to uproot trees, to overturn strong walls and dash the very birds of the air to the ground, had found this taciturn man in its path, and, doing its utmost, had managed to wring out a few words. Before the renewed wrath of winds stooped on his ship, Captain MacWhirr was moved to declare, in a tone of vexation, as it were: 'I wouldn't like to lose her.'

Typhoon p.218

The irony allows the reader to perceive MacWhirr's 'vexation' as still relatively calm and fortunately unimaginative compared to what he might feel before the 'renewed wrath' of the weather. For however right and good is MacWhirr's response of relying upon the strength of his self, a self built upon habits of order, Conrad's fiction cannot unreservedly uphold such a stance. For tenacious belief in such a stance would imply that there is simply a right state in which the self might face the world. Conrad's vision is more subtle, more conscious of the compelling relation between non-human chaos and human imagination than belief in a stolidly sure stance could imply.

Thus, in The End of the Tether old Captain Whalley, a different version of the ageing Captain committed to good habits, is wrongly observed by young Van Wyk. Van Wyk, like the narrator of Typhoon, is more astute than

either Captain Whalley or Captain MacWhirr. Of the 'fastidious, clever, slightly sceptical' young man (15) the narrator comments:

Mr. Van Wyk (a few years before he had had occasion to imagine himself treated more badly than anybody alive had ever been by a woman) felt for Captain Whalley's optimistic views the disdain of a man who had once been credulous himself. His disgust with the world (the woman for a time had filled it for him completely) had taken the form of activity in retirement, because, though capable of great depth of feeling, he was energetic and essentially practical.

End of the Tether p.290

It is important that Van Wyk once had trust, and had that trust broken. For the word 'credulous' implies how Van Wyk thinks of trust now - as a kind of naivety, as if experience of life teaches far other lessons than one's early expectations of life would have liked life to teach. In his near-cynicism Van Wyk is like the young grown-up who has learned, perhaps prematurely, that life is a matter of practicality and that the self is not the centre of the universe, but a smaller thing whose responsibilities are defined by external realities not inner beliefs. He represents the opposite pole in Conrad himself to the noble stoicism of the trusting Captain Whalley. Yet the irony is that the fate of Whalley destroys not so much Whalley himself as Van Wyk, even though he had predicted it. That is to say, as much as Conrad values order - and, after all, in Typhoon Captain

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15. Joseph Conrad, Youth: A Narrative, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether (1902; London: Everyman's Library, 1967), p.280, hereafter referred to as 'End of the Tether'.

MacWhirr's orderly habits do ultimately save the ship - there is a sceptical part of Conrad closer to Van Wyk than to the worthy sea-captains admired by Sassall. And yet Conrad himself, almost by definition could not trust or believe in that sceptical and untrusting self. Like Decoud in Nostromo, Van Wyk himself is destroyed by the truth of his own sceptical prediction. Bertrand Russell wrote of Conrad's vision:

He thought of civilized and morally tolerable life as a dangerous walk on a thin crust of barely cooled lava which at any moment might break and let the unwary sink into fiery depths.<sup>16</sup>

The terrifying underlying stillness of the 'barely cooled lava' temporarily suppresses the treacherous burst of some chaotic force, which nonetheless at any unbidden moment might break through, destroying life's surface order. All that the self can do is be wary, compelled still to walk on untrustworthy ground, as if having to trust in the kind of frail order whilst almost constantly knowing (if that is possible) that it may be violated. The wariness consciously does not constitute protection from the chaos which may come. Conrad, in short, addresses us to the dangers of arousing imagination of the barely imaginable even as he believes the dangers should be faced. For he could not believe in order as absolute but knew too that to believe in chaos instead was a self-defeating possibility.

John Sassall is the pseudonym for Berger of a

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16. Bertrand Russell, Portraits from Memory and Other Essays (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956), p.82.



Conradian man in real life. Sassall attempts to live with the recognition of chaos as a real force in the real world, as if he wants to use the imagination of the almost unimaginable in his chosen vocation as doctor in a small, poor rural community of apparently ordinary souls and bodies. By dint of his commitment to human curing, Sassall's need is to translate literature into real life and, as this thesis might propose, learn how to use, (if it is possible), the lessons of chaos in ordinary life.

As a young surgeon, Sassall conceived of himself as a kind of dramatic intervener in people's illnesses, analogous to one of Conrad's captains who face the sheerly external force of the sea. Seeking a position 'comparable to that of a master of a schooner' (p.110), Sassall wanted to master illness and to understand it, as if by facing it illness might be conquered, like the sea. In this way, by conquering it, he might somehow actively put right some of the wrongness in the world. Sassall cast himself in the practical role of a sort of hero-doctor:

He dealt only with crises in which he was the central character: or, to put it another way, in which the patient was simplified by the degree of his physical dependence on the doctor. He was also simplified himself, because the chosen pace of his life made it impossible and unnecessary for him to examine his own motives.

Fortunate Man p.55

But however heroic was the effort to combat crisis by himself being the force of order facing it, it was nevertheless inadequate in the more undramatic phases of

real life for him still to try to be like one of Conrad's simple captains. Sassall 'began to realize that':

the way Conrad's Master Mariners came to terms with their imagination - denying it any expression but projecting it all on to the sea which they then faced as though it were simultaneously their personal justification and their personal enemy - was not suitable for a doctor in his position. He had done just that - using illness and medical dangers as they used the sea.

Fortunate Man p.56

What Sassall came to realize was that this practical simplification of life in terms of external healing did not answer the subtler complications of his own real life and the lives of his real patients.

When it was no longer sufficient to try to treat of illness as a thing to fight against outside himself, Sassall went a stage further. He incorporated the lives of his patients into his imagination, becoming not the central character but an imaginer of them as central characters in their own inner world. It is an easy assumption that doctors deal with the job, a job which involves suffering and death, by maintaining a kind of distance from patients. Sassall could not be that kind of doctor: he moved from externals inwards, towards an imaginative, psychological view, risking something ever closer to chaos. 'He does not believe,' says Berger:

in maintaining his imaginative distance:  
he must come close enough to recognize  
the patient fully.

Fortunate Man p.113

This attitude to his patients made Sassall analogous now with a writer, with John Berger.

Sassall had to re-create his self into a sort of universal man, since he was not just doctor now, not just a captain, but a novelist manqué, an imaginer of everyone, translating even the patients' lives into his own imagination. 'When Sassall emerged' says Berger:

he was still an extremist. He had exchanged an obvious and youthful form of extremism for a more complex and mature one: the life-and-death emergency for the intimation that the patient should be treated as a total personality, that illness is frequently a form of expression rather than a surrender to natural hazards.

Fortunate Man p.62

In this second stage Sassall imagined the chaos of a patient's life with the aim of embodying it and thereby even curing it. 'It is of course an impossible aim' says Berger; but it was Sassall's achievement that he could innerly contain the suffering of his patients whilst simultaneously reassuring them from outside. For it is as though Sassall now sought to cope with chaos both inside and outside his self. In Middlemarch George Eliot wrote:

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary life it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.<sup>17</sup>

Sassall tried to live with that roar. It could be said that Sassall was trying to achieve, in his own person,

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17. George Eliot, Middlemarch (1871-72; Middlesex: Penguin, 1974), p.226.

something like the mighty Huxley aim of correcting the discrepancy between the microcosm and the macrocosm by striving to be the universal man hidden within the personal one.

Yet the real-life version of John Sassall committed suicide some years after A Fortunate Man was published. The book already had such fears as to the possible outcome of his almost impossible ambition. For it is as though human beings cannot bear to create and live in continuous superhuman experience of chaos. It is as though, too, order cannot truly accommodate chaos since any attempt to accommodate chaos actually misinterprets the fundamental nature of chaos. Consider what Dan Jacobson says in answer to the question 'But what if the circumstances we know suddenly undergo a wholesale transformation?':

If the world proves itself to be quite other than the place we had previously imagined it to be? If fate or our own choice or some unfathomable mixture of both plunges us suddenly into a wholly different context, into a war, a natural catastrophe, a prison? Or into a hospital? -

What is so disconcerting is not so much this other reality in itself, as the mere possibility of its being so near that you only have to make one step to cross over into a new existence just as self-contained and valid as the previous one; and thus find the thought of a plurality of worlds confirmed with a terrifying suddenness.<sup>18</sup>

Chaos would not be identifiable without some capacity for order, just as chaos if truly accommodated by order would

18. Dan Jacobson, Adult Pleasures: Essays on Writers and Readers (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1988), pp.83-84.

cease to be chaos. Yet what Dan Jacobson says here expresses how strange it is that though chaos and order can only be known through one another, they are still utterly separate states of being. That is to say, it is possible to think about the state of chaos when life is going on in an ordered way, but it is not possible to retain the real experience of what chaos is like merely through thinking. Perhaps that is a mercy which the Salsals of the world do not recognize as such. Consciousness seems only able to take in the present, even if often notionally aware of an elsewhere. In a state of depression we cannot remember what it is to feel happiness; conversely, when happy we cannot remember the state of depression, even though we have past experience of both states. Thus, John Stuart Mill can say, 'to know that a feeling would make me happy if I had it, did not give me the feeling' (19). Feelings are inaccessible through thinking. So it is with chaos in relation to order. When Edgar, in King Lear, says 'The worst is not/ So long as we can say 'This is the worst' (IV,1,27-28) he means precisely that: we cannot think of chaos, since any form of thinking banishes chaos even in the act of thinking of it.

There is only literature that can really think the unthinkable. The value of the literature of chaos is in its re-creation of an experience which is otherwise largely inaccessible to steady consciousness. Otherwise,

19. John Stuart Mill, Collected Works: Autobiography and Literary Essays, ed. J.M. Robson and Jack Stillinger, 33 vols (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1981), i, 'Autobiography' (1826), p.143.

there is only the cautionary memory that Jacobson describes us as half-forgetting. That is how chaos remains true to its name for us as a real thing which we cannot fully remember or anticipate and yet at some level can know at least as that which we cannot fully bear. That half-knowledge is still the important thing, for though it does not constitute protection from, or invulnerability to, the shock and unpredictability of chaos, it does lie deep in the self, like a truth. It is literature alone, as a form as close as humans dare get to full knowing, that keeps the experience of chaos alive in a realm of being which is neither tame nor fatal.

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I list under 'Primary Sources I' all major fictional works and those philosophical works which have been important for defining my method or supporting the framing argument of this thesis. 'Primary Sources II' lists a selection of fictional works which were considered as literature of chaos, but finally rejected once my definition became clear to me in practice. All critical, biographical and supplementary philosophical material are listed under 'Secondary Sources'.

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