

SPIRITUAL BLIGHT: RELIGION IN
THE WRITINGS OF ROBERTSON DAVIES
THE EARLY PERIOD: 1940-1960

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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LORETTA FAITH BALISCH



SPIRITUAL BLIGHT:
RELIGION IN THE WRITINGS OF ROBERTSON DAVIES
THE EARLY PERIOD: 1940-1960

by



Loretta Faith Balisch, B.A., B.Ed.

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Department of English Language and Literature
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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ABSTRACT

Following the publication of the Deptford Trilogy in the 1970's Robertson Davies' concern over the nature of religion drew much critical attention, as did his use of various aspects of the psychology of C.G. Jung. There has not, however, been much critical attention given to the problem of religion in his earlier writings. It is the contention of this thesis that the problem of religion is no less significant to Davies' writings in the early period--from 1940 to 1960--than it has been acknowledged to be in his later ones. Moreover, this concern with religion in the early writings is not, as has been accepted, confined primarily to the social aspects of religion.

From his earliest writings, Davies has shown his concern over the way in which man's concepts of religion have affected his outlook on his own human nature as well as how these concepts affected the ethical and moral considerations on which his society was based. Davies' concern about the problem of religion has thus been two-fold. First, he has been concerned with the detrimental effects of those forms of religion which appear to cut man off from an understanding of his own nature--from his physical, emotional and spiritual needs. These religions in many ways were seen to have diminished rather than augmented the quality of the human spirit. They had, in their emphasis on the societal

and mundane reality, eroded man's concept of the transcendental to such an extent that for many religion has ceased to be a meaningful experience. Davies' second concern has been with the difficulty of reconciling any belief in the necessity of the transcendental with the prevailing rationalistic, empiricist outlook which decries the values of the spirit.

In pursuing these two concerns, Davies' approach to religion has been oblique rather than straightforward. He has tended to view religious questions from a psychological rather than a traditionally theological point of view. His first concern thus led him to explore the theories of the depth psychologists such as Freud and Jung in his effort to discover the identity of the human being, not merely in physical and mundane terms but in terms of the needs of the human spirit. His second concern led him, through his acceptance of certain psychological theories of the nature of man, to a confrontation with accepted concepts of good and evil, and ultimately to the nature of religion itself.

As his later writings embody this confrontation with the nature of religion, and ultimately, of God, the theme of religion in his writing is obvious. However, Davies' exploration of religion in these works rests on the prior determination of the value and necessity of the transcendental to the spiritual health of man, and this task has been completed in his writings prior to 1960.

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I would also like to thank Mrs. Elizabeth Carew for her work in preparing the first typed draft from what was near indecipherable handwriting, and Mrs. Dallas Strange for her prompt and patient transposition of mutilated draft pages into the form in which the thesis now appears.

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

All publication information for the works of Robertson Davies will be given at first mention. All subsequent references for a particular text will follow the abbreviations established in the initial footnote, and will be incorporated in parentheses in the text. In discussing the individual works, page references refer to the edition given.

Example: R. Davies, The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1947), p. 4. All subsequent references to this text will be abbreviated DSM and incorporated in parentheses in the text.

References to the individual plays will follow the same format as that established for the longer works. The initial reference to each play will give full publication information. Subsequent references to a particular play will follow the abbreviation established in the initial footnote, and will be incorporated in parentheses in the text.

Example: R. Davies, Eros at Breakfast in Four Favourite Plays (1949; rpt. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1968), p. 5. All subsequent references to this play will follow the abbreviation EB and will be incorporated in parentheses in the text.

The first reference to the works of Sigmund Freud will give the full publication information for his works as illustrated below:

Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. James Strachey with Anna Freud et al. (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis).

Subsequent references to individual works will on first mention contain the title of the individual work followed by the abbreviation SE (Standard Edition), the volume number in Roman numerals, and the page number.

Example: Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, SE XXXI:89.

Subsequent references to the same work will follow the format SE followed by the volume and page numbers and will be incorporated into the text in parentheses.

Subsequently (SE XXI:90)

References to the works of Carl Gustav Jung will follow a format similar to that established for the works of Freud. The first reference to the works of C.G. Jung will give the full publication for the published works.

Example: C.G. Jung, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, ed. Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler. Trans. (except vol. 2) R.F.C. Hull. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Subsequent references to individual works will contain the title of the individual work followed by the title of the volume (if different), followed by the abbreviation CW (Collected Works), the volume number, the paragraph number and the page number. Subsequent references to the same work, will be abbreviated CW followed by volume number, paragraph number and page number, and incorporated in parentheses in the text.

Example: C.G. Jung, The Shadow in Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self, CW 9ii:15:8.

Subsequently (CW 9ii:16:9)

INTRODUCTION

This thesis was undertaken as the result of a literary "Retroactive Existence of Mr. Juggins,"¹ arising out of this writer's curiosity about the relationship between Robertson Davies' use of Jungian psychology and his concepts of God. It appeared to the writer, especially after reading World of Wonders and The Rebel Angels, that while Davies had apparently been satisfied with the Jungian paradigm of The Self as a suitable mechanism for explaining the 'wholeness' of a human being, he was not prepared to accept it as the Imago Dei.² Moreover, although in these writings, the quest for self-knowledge appeared to be extremely important to those characters who did not already possess it, it always appeared to be primarily important in enabling a character to gain a perception of the transcendental--that is, to formulate for himself some Imago Dei. When had this Imago Dei become important in the writing of Robertson Davies if, as this writer believed, it was the end toward which the characters involved in the quest for self-knowledge in both the Deptford Trilogy and The Rebel Angels were striving?

¹Stephen Leacock, "The Retroactive Existence of Mr. Juggins," Behind the Beyond and Other Contributions to Human Knowledge (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1914), pp. 161-68.

²Imago Dei--the face of God.

A survey of the critical analyses of Robertson Davies' writings did not solve this problem. No thorough analysis of The Rebel Angels has as yet appeared. There have been at least two published collections³ of criticism on the Deptford Trilogy. These collections have included articles analyzing most aspects of Davies' literary techniques and creative abilities. There are articles on Davies' satire, his sentence structure, his writing style and the structure of his novels, not to mention his uses of specific characters, the lawyer, the magician, the saint, etc. However there is little emphasis, if any, on the problem of religion as a major theme in Davies' writing. While most critics acknowledge the 'religious element' in the Deptford Trilogy most have not been particularly concerned with whence it arose, or what purpose it serves in Davies' writings as a whole.

The most detailed study which has been published of Davies' writings is Patricia Monk's The Smaller Infinity.⁴ In this volume, which had its genesis in Ms. Monk's Ph.D.

³Journal of Canadian Studies, 12, No. 1 (1977), "Robertson Davies: A Special Issue" and Robert G. Lawrence and Samuel R. Macey, Eds., Studies in Robertson Davies' Deptford Trilogy. ELS Monograph Series 20, English Literary Studies (University of Victoria, 1980).

⁴Patricia Monk, The Smaller Infinity: The Jungian Self in the Novels of Robertson Davies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

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dissertation, she set out to analyze the Jungian element in the writings of Robertson Davies. She proceeded on the hypothesis that

within the whole sweep of Jung's ideas and theories, Davies' interest is quite specific. He concentrates on 'the mystery of human personality' and is fascinated by what, ultimately, we mean by the term, 'human'.⁵

This concentration relegated the problem of religion to a peripheral position in Ms. Monk's analysis of Davies' writings. Ms. Monk did not examine Davies' plays in any detail but she did mention with reference to these earlier works

that Freud's view of religion as essentially an illusion . . . never fully satisfied Davies who admits having even then (1958) the curiosity about the nature of religion which has steadily become more and more apparent as a theme in his novels.⁶

A quick reading of Robertson Davies' earlier writings beginning in the 1940's and including his plays revealed a surprising number of references to religion, and revealed that most of the characters whom the critics had pronounced central characters, or characters in quest of self-knowledge, had also been given rather extensive religious backgrounds-- a practice which Davies maintained even in the novels of the Deptford Trilogy. Moreover, his plays from the 1940's

⁵ Monk, p. 4.

⁶ Monk, p. 9.

to the 1970's each appeared to contain the germ of an idea about the relationship that existed between the prevailing religious outlook and the degree to which a person experienced self-knowledge, which was later incorporated in a more detailed fashion in his longer works.

A survey of the critical literature of this earlier period was undertaken, but again did not provide answers to the problem of religion.

On the whole, there is not a large body of criticism extant for these earlier works. Aside from the reviews which appeared as Davies' various writings were published, there are few studies of his plays and of the novels of the Salterton Trilogy. The Salterton Trilogy has come to be regarded by such contemporary critics as F.L. Radford primarily as "preliminary exercises in the development of certain themes and motifs that are brought to mature expression in the later works."⁷ While there is some justification for this point of view, it would be wrong to assume that these themes are underdeveloped in the earlier works. As will be shown, Davies has approached this major theme, the problem of religion, in stages, and the Salterton Trilogy brings to a close the first stage of his approach to the problem.

⁷F.L. Radford, "The Apprentice Sorcerer: Davies' Salterton Trilogy," in Studies in Robertson Davies' Deftford Trilogy, p. 13.

Hindsight is a 'marvellous teacher, and he who now undertakes to investigate Davies' approach to the problem of religion has the benefit of both his later novels, in which the concern with religion is more obvious than in the earlier ones, as well as several recently published collections of Davies' own critical works. The two collections of his book reviews and articles edited by Judith Skelton Grant⁸ make readily available material that had hitherto been reached only with much effort on the part of the investigator. In 1977, Davies himself published a collection of his speeches,⁹ which in turn provide insight into various trains of thought he considered valuable enough to incorporate into speeches. This collection also includes "The Masks of Satan," a series of four lectures Davies delivered as the Larkin Stuart Lectures at the University of Toronto in 1976. These four lectures provide the critic with Davies' analysis of the problem of evil in literature. Moreover, the original Samuel Marchbanks' columns and book

⁸ Judith Skelton Grant, Ed., The Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), p. 320. This is a collection of Davies' book reviews and articles on a wide variety of subjects and books from 1940-1978; and -----, Ed., Robertson Davies, The Well-Tempered Critic: One Man's View of the Theatre and Letters in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), p. 285. This is a collection of Davies' writings relating primarily to Canadian drama and literature (1940-1979).

⁹ Robertson Davies, One Half of Robertson Davies (1977; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978).

review articles are now available as The Peterborough Examiner has been microfilmed, as has Saturday Night magazine. A consideration of the ideas presented in the Marchbanks columns and the book reviews elucidates many of the ideas presented in the plays and novels.

With this in mind, one cannot be overly critical of the limitations of those studies of Davies' plays and novels which had been undertaken in the 1960's and early 1970's and for which many of these materials, as well as the later novels were not accessible. The most extensive of these studies were undertaken by students such as myself, and exist in the form of unpublished M.A. theses. Of these theses, a number attempted to analyze the Davies' delineation of the need for self-knowledge, while others were more concerned with his stature as a comic writer, or a satirist with an anti-Puritan bent. The following is a short review of the most relevant of these theses.

In 1965, Elspeth Fisher proposed that Davies "hopes to liberate the Canadian imagination from such forms as Puritanism, philistinism and provincialism." Once this is done, she believes "the individual is free to benefit from the releasing experiences that only art can provide."¹⁰ In her thesis, the religious element was only one of the restraining forces present in Davies' depiction of Canadian

¹⁰Elspeth Fisher, "Robertson Davies: Canadian Moral-ist," M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1965, Abstract.

society--not the single most powerful force.

In 1968, Sharon Murphy undertook an examination of the quest for self-identity in Davies' novels. Her proposal was that "Davies' Salterton Trilogy presents the full existential progression from lack to self-knowledge to Eros figure."¹¹ This thesis also included an analysis of the plays and A Voice From the Attic. She tended to consider the religious content of Davies' works as illustrative of the barriers that needed to be overcome in the existentialist progression. The highest value, according to this thesis, is to be found in the final existentialist act, which "includes responsibility to fellow men because the individual has considered the world of the not-self and to ourselves because an act only has merit if freely chosen in the light of honest self-appraisals."¹²

In 1969, Ted Wing¹³ traced the evolution of the various religious values portrayed in Davies' novels to developments in Christianity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England and North America. His main emphasis was to establish the connections between these developments and

¹¹ Sharon Murphy, "Self-Discovery: The Search for Values in the Novels of Robertson Davies," M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1968, p. 7.

¹² Murphy, p. 19.

¹³ Ted Wing, "Puritan Ethic and Social Response in the Novels of Sinclair Ross, Robertson Davies and Hugh MacLennan," M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1969.

the extent to which the resulting values had become assimilated into the culture in the guise of social taboo, small-town morality, narrow mindedness and bigotry. This is a valuable examination of the origins of Puritan attitudes, but included little analysis of the effects of such attitudes on the internal make-up of individual characters. Moreover, Davies was only one of three Canadian novelists examined in this thesis.

Neither the thesis by Pierre Cloutier¹⁴ (1971) nor the one by Allan Wallenbridge¹⁵ (1976) considered in any detail the religious implications of Davies' use of artists as redeemer figures or of his theory of humour. Cloutier confined his analysis to Tempest-Tost and A Mixture of Frailties and was primarily concerned with the techniques Davies used to portray the artist, rather than the significance of these artists in the larger context. Wallenbridge attempted to analyze Davies' proficiency as a comic novelist, based on his assumption that the early Davies was "a caricaturist who mocks the foibles and manners of Canadian society . . . [whereas the later Davies of the Deptford novels] turns inward to look at our spiritual selves."¹⁶

¹⁴Pierre Cloutier, "The Function of the Artist in Five Canadian Novels," M.A. thesis, University of Montreal, 1971.

¹⁵Allan Wallenbridge, "The Climateric of the Comic Novelist: A Study of the Novels of Robertson Davies," M.A. thesis, University of Windsor, 1976.

¹⁶Wallenbridge, p. 1.

Once more, the analysis of religion in the lives of the characters was superficial, when it was present at all.

Gail Bowen's 1976 thesis provided the first detailed analysis of the Jungian element in Davies' writings. In the Abstract to her thesis she referred to Davies as "an anachronism, a didactic writer in an age in which didacticism is suspect."¹⁷ This thesis attempted to evaluate Davies' didacticism on the assumption that "his novels are in the best sense of the word 'how-to' books and structured accordingly."¹⁸ She approached both the Salterton and the Deptford trilogies from this base, and used selected Jungian concepts to illustrate how Davies used various redeemer figures to lead other characters to the goal of self-knowledge as an example of what the reader of the novel should recognize and undertake in his own life.

The plays were not as well served in terms of critical analyses as the novels, either in the various theses or in published articles. However, there was one comprehensive analysis of Davies as dramatist published by Patricia Morley in which she states,

As he told Peter Synnowich in 1971, some ideas demand to be treated as drama; others, as fiction. The vision behind both is the same and that vision is basically religious. Davies sees man

¹⁷Gail Bowen, "The Unexamined Life in Robertson Davies' Fiction," M.A. thesis, University of Waterloo, 1976.

¹⁸Bowen, p. 9.

as a creature both noble and ridiculous.
His idealism is contained by a tremendous
sense of humour.¹⁹

As there had, until this study, been little analysis of the plays, Morley's analysis was primarily concentrated on the methods Davies used to promulgate his ideas, rather than an examination of the evolution of specific ideas. This study, together with her article, "The Comedy Company of the Psyche"²⁰ in which she made some very astute observations on the Jungian influences visible in the plays of the 1950's, has proven very useful to this writer.

William Solly did not analyze satire of religion specifically in his article on comedy in Canadian drama, although he did single out Davies as exemplifying the "stern didactic tone underlying serious satire and comedy in Canada."²¹ M.W. Steinberg's analysis of Davies' drama unfortunately was more concerned with examining Davies' portrayals of the hostility of the Canadian environment to the arts.²² No consideration was given to why the country

¹⁹ Patricia Morley, Robertson Davies, Profiles in Canadian Drama, gen. ed. Geraldine C. Anthony (Gage Educational Publishing Ltd., 1977).

²⁰ Patricia Morley, "The Comedy Company of the Psyche," Canadian Drama, 2, Spring, 1976, pp. 9-19.

²¹ William Solly, "Nothing Sacred. Humour in Canadian Drama in English," Canadian Literature, 11 (Winter, 1962), p. 24.

²² M.W. Steinberg, "Don Quixote and the Puppets: Theme and Structure in Robertson Davies' Drama," Canadian Literature, 7 (Winter, 1961).

was such an inhospitable one for the arts. In contrast to Mr. Steinberg, Ms. Stone-Blackburn stated that "one of Davies' greatest strengths in writing both novels and plays lies in his talent for characterization."²³ Her interest, however, lay with the difficulties he experienced in adapting his novel, Leaven of Malice, for stage presentation, and while the article was helpful in elucidating the changes that Davies made in adapting the novel, it added little to a discussion of the problems of religion.

Although articles began to appear on Davies' Salterton Trilogy as early as 1958, the thrust of these articles has been on Davies' competency as a novelist, or a satirist. The articles on the Salterton Trilogy, which this writer has reviewed, were less perceptive of the extent to which religion was an important element in Davies' writings than had been expected.

David Dooley said only "the theme of the inhibiting effects of Calvinism also runs through the novels of Robertson Davies, especially his second trilogy."²⁴ As a Canadian writer concerned over the problem of religion in society, Dooley rated Davies behind Hugh MacLennan. Peter

²³Susan Stone-Blackburn, "The Novelist as Dramatist: Davies' Adaptation of 'Leaven of Malice'," Canadian Literature, 86 (Autumn, 1980), p. 76.

²⁴David J. Dooley, "Simulating the Stars: Canadian Literature and the Legacy of Nietzsche," Journal of Canadian Studies, 12, No. 2 (1977), p. 86.

Baltensperger's "Battles with Trolls" article was chiefly concerned with "the theme of psychological growth toward wholeness which is based on the existential struggle carried on in the interior spaces of the mind."²⁵ However, although the result was, for Baltensperger, an appreciation of the transcendental, the obvious Christian references in Davies' novels were apparently not considered significant.

Ivon Owen²⁶ and Hallvard Dahlie²⁷ analyzed the novels primarily in terms of Davies as a satirist of Canadian manners and mores. The psychological and religious aspects attending the characters' quests for identity, were not as relevant to these critics as their evaluation of Davies as a satirist. Clara Thomas analyzed A Mixture of Frailties — as a preliminary exercise in themes which would be developed to a greater extent in his later writings. Her focus on Monica Gall led her to the problem of guilt and responsibility, which she said were the respective representatives of the Thanatos party (guilt) and the Eros party (responsibility). However, she said, "As a novel within a frame, Monica's story is complete and convincing. The

²⁵Peter Baltensperger, "Battles with Trolls," Canadian Literature, 71 (Winter, 1976), p. 59.

²⁶Ivon Owen, "The Salterton Novels," Tamarack Review, 9 (Autumn, 1958), pp. 56-63.

²⁷Hallvard Dahlie, "Self-conscious Canadians," Canadian Literature, 62 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 6-16.

Salterton frame-story is not entirely compatible to it . . . and this is a question of a split between Davies' narrative views."²⁸

Nancy Bjerring's article only mentioned the Salterton Trilogy, but she is one of the critics who considered Davies an anti-Canadian writer who "does not probe the Canadian psyche with any depth or clarity of vision; he contents himself with exposing Canadian gaucherie with a decided tone of derision."²⁹

F.L. Radford analyzed the Salterton Trilogy as the apprentice pieces from which Davies would emerge a more accomplished novelist. His comments about religion in the novels are confined to comments about A Mixture of Frailties:

Like Ramsey, Monica goes on from Canada to polish her manners and find her sexual initiation in England, and to discover a new and more personal religious consciousness in Europe, but her abrupt and truncated revelation at the tomb of St. Genevieve is a rather unconvincing preview of Ramsey's vision on the battlefield. By giving the numinous image of the Virgin the face of Mary Dempster, Davies is able to integrate Ramsey's religious experience. . . . In Mixture, he does not yet seem entirely at ease with the religious subjects that he wishes to deal with. Monica's religious experience seems to be superimposed upon

²⁸ Clara Thomas, "The Two Voices of A Mixture of Frailties," Journal of Canadian Studies, 12, No. 1 (1977), p. 90.

²⁹ Nancy Bjerring, "Deep in the Old Man's Puzzle," Canadian Literature, 62 (Autumn, 1974), p. 49.

the novel, as in the case with the heavily underlined lectures by the fatherly Sir Benedict Domdaniel.³⁰

Radford was not the first critic, nor the last, to assume that religion in Davies' writings meant "church" religion. Moreover, he was not alone in his assumption that the main religious experience for Monica was the one at the tomb of St. Geneviève. There was, however, no consideration given to the religious outlook of the characters as opposed to their religious "experience", and to the relationship between that outlook and the further development of the individual characters. If the only approach to religion one is prepared to find is a conventional one, then Davies apparently only uses religion as the object of his satire. If, however, one is prepared to look beyond the rituals, dogmas and other trappings of church religion, then a very different analysis of religion as a major theme, if not the major theme of Davies' writings, appears. However, one must constantly bear in mind that Davies' approach to the problem of religion is not a conventional approach.

The problem of religion has been present in Davies' writings almost from the moment he began his career as a writer. Moreover, Davies' approach to the problem of religion as it was revealed in his earlier works made possible the investigations into such problems as the

³⁰Radford, pp. 16-17.

nature of faith and religion and even the nature of God which are such prominent concerns in his later writings. Prior to the Deptford Trilogy, Davies had been primarily concerned with determining the validity of religion itself as a positive force in the formation of the human character.

In an effort to elucidate the varied approaches Davies took in handling this concern with religion between 1940, when he returned to Canada from England, and 1960, the date of his last major publication prior to the Deptford Trilogy, this thesis will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will establish the extent to which the problem of religion is relevant to Davies' writings as a whole with emphasis given to the early writings. The remaining four chapters will each examine a different stage in Davies' approach to this problem of religion. The book reviews, plays, Marchbanks' materials, articles and novels are considered as various means of Davies' articulating the range of his ideas. Therefore, although the format of the thesis is chronological, the chapter divisions arise out of discernible differences in the approaches Davies has taken to this problem of religion rather than through the various modes he used.

The first chapter, Time Jesum Transeuntem (Dread the passing of Jesus) examines the relevance of religion as it is practiced in modern society. This chapter will establish that virtually from the beginning of his career, Davies had viewed certain aspects of Puritanism as a

negative force in human society--and the formation of the human personality. He viewed various developments in Puritan-Protestantism as having much to do with the spiritual apathy observable in modern society. However, this chapter will also establish that from this period through to the latest of his writings, Davies did not regard the religion as practiced by the various churches as the epitome of religion itself. Granted this separation, Davies' concern with the problem of religion can be shown to have proceeded through four separate stages by the time he completed the final volume of the Salterton Trilogy in 1958. Each of the following chapters will examine in detail the various aspects of these four stages.

The second chapter, Spiritual Blight, will include a detailed examination of Davies' delineation of the problem of religion as it affects the outlook of society. In this stage, he viewed the religion of the churches as repressive and hostile to the humanities and the full development of the human being. From his first publication, Shakespeare's Boy Actors (1939), through the Marchbanks materials of the early 1940's, to the plays, Overlaid (1947) and Hope Deferred (1948), Davies revealed and attacked the debilitating effects of this repressive religiosity on the people and their society. However, at this stage, religion has permeated all aspects of society, and controls not only the basic outlooks of society, but also the inner developments of the individuals. Against this blindness to the inner

self, the revelations of psychoanalysis appear as a potent weapon. Moreover, this chapter will reveal that the characterizations of Samuel Marchbanks and Pop (Overlaid, 1947) are Davies' first revelations of Davies' idea of the hero--the man who fights the inner struggle.

The third chapter, The Poor in Spirit, includes an examination of ideas of religion in the six plays written between 1948 and 1950. In these plays, there was a noticeable change in the relationship between society and religion. In the earlier outlook, those who most strongly embraced various 'Puritan' ethical and moral standpoints were shown to exert power over those who, like Pop, would resist these outlooks. In these plays, the power of these Puritan-Protestants is shown to be decreasing, and with this decrease in power, there is a tentative vision of revised concepts of religion and the nature of evil. Much of this revised outlook drew support from Davies' interest in the depth psychologies of Freud, Adler and Jung. Initially, Freudian psychology appeared to have afforded him an acceptable explanation of the complicated nature of the human psyche and the debilitating effects of repressiveness on the mental well-being of individuals. However, unlike Freud, Davies was not prepared to consider religion as unnecessary to the spiritual well-being of man. He maintained that religion could and should be an ameliorating experience in the life of man. At the same time he insisted that the humanities--theatre, music, literature--

were not inimical to religion but could, in fact, even generate religious feeling. In this period, the focus of his attack was on the simplistic systemization of beliefs about 'worldly' concerns which church religion promoted, and which led to ignorance and intellectual weaknesses of all kinds.

The societies depicted in Davies' writings prior to 1950 had been primarily societies in which religion or what passed for religion directly influenced the lives of the people. In the 1950's, the societies he depicted were primarily irreligious because organized religion appeared to have little relevance in the lives of most of the characters.

The fourth chapter, The Slums of the Spirit, examines the irreligious world depicted in Tempest-Tost and Leaven of Malice, the first two novels of the Salterton Trilogy, and in The Masque of Aesop. This world is one in which major characters appear to have accepted Freud's proposition that religion is an illusion. In this Freudian world the ameliorating qualities of religion have been replaced by various palliative measures which in the course of the works are proven to be themselves illusions. As in the plays and the Marchbanks' materials of the 1940's, Davies' approach appears more diagnostic than corrective. However, in each of the works examined the cause of the problems is shown to be connected to a repressive and restrictive religious outlook in which the value of the individual is

subservient to the values of the group. In each of these works, there is to be discerned a plea for a revised valuation of the individual, based on the revelations of psychoanalysis and the humanistic tradition. This new form of self-recognition and self-acceptance might make possible a new religious outlook--one which is not subject to the ethical and moral dicta of Puritan-Protestantism.

The fifth chapter, The Spiritual Hired Hands, depicts the shift in Davies' delineation of the problem of religion from that of diagnosis to that of remediation. Remediation involved an acceptance of human nature denied by the perfectionism inherent in Puritan-based concepts of religion. Just as in the 1940's Davies had found Freudian psychology helpful in diagnosing the extent of the problem, in the 1950's he turned increasingly to Jungian psychology, because of its concepts of human wholeness and the greatness of the human spirit. The three plays of the mid-1950's are valuable as indicative of this switch from Freudian to Jungian psychology. In them, Davies experimented with certain Jungian ideas relating to the nature of the human psyche, which would henceforth be basic to his ideas of human identity and religion. In the final volume of the Salterton Trilogy, A Mixture of Frailties (1958), Davies was able to show that a revised outlook on the nature of the human being could lead to a new form of self-acceptance which in turn made possible a new perception of God. By 1958, it would appear that Davies had determined that the

ultimate purpose of man is to recognize his relationship with God. This also includes a recognition of the roles of good and evil in his life, and an attempt to distinguish between the two. This acceptance of the fallibility and ambivalence of his psychic make-up is a preliminary but necessary step toward fulfilling man's need for a relationship with the transcendent.

This thesis concludes that by 1960, Davies had determined that man must recognize both good and evil in his life in order to achieve the kind of balance necessary to assess the realities of his nature and to recognize the value of the transcendent in his life. Moreover, having determined in the 1940's and 1950's that man's search for meaning involves forming a relationship with God, Davies was free in his later novels to explore both the nature of this relationship, which is to say, the nature of religion, and the nature of God.

CHAPTER ONE

TIME JESUM TRANSEUNTUM¹

As an additional enticement, to convince the Master of Massey College that he would make a fine ghost writer, because he could "grind out a three volume romance about an unfortunate young man . . .," the Ghost in Robertson Davies' 1978 short story "The Xerox in the Lost Room," proved his knowledge of Davies' writing style by adding quickly, "I promise to put lots of theology in."² Undoubtedly, Davies was enjoying a bit of humour at his own expense, but there can be no doubt that throughout his writing career Robertson Davies has shown himself sensitive to the precarious relationship that exists between a society and its religious outlook. The religious outlook which dominates a society not only influences the social and moral attitudes of its people, but also determines their spiritual strength as well.

For forty years or more, Robertson Davies has been contesting what he has called "the 'Thunder Without Rain',

¹ Time Jesum Transeuntum--Dread the passing of Jesus. Quoted by Robertson Davies in "The Deadliest of Sins," One Half of Robertson Davies, p. 68.

² R. Davies, "The Xerox in the Lost Room," High Spirits (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 173.

the threat from the heavens without any blessing to soften its severity."³ He has been concerned with the consequences of two trends in modern society. The first of these trends came into being as a result of various reform movements in Christianity which had insisted on the need for men to lead lives free from sin in order to be acceptable to God.

This drive to perfection and its concomitant "neglect and ill-use of the human being who lurks in all of us . . . for not being saintly or notorious or untiring,"⁴ has in this century been translated into what Davies described as "Acedie . . . intellectual and spiritual torpor, indifference and lethargy."⁵ The second trend arose as a result of the "Freudian Revolution which banished for many people the belief that a transcendent authority exists to which mankind is accountable for its actions."⁶

As Davies interpreted it, the results of both these trends has been the death of religion as a transcendent, ameliorating experience for modern man. Following this loss, what has remained for many people has been an

³R. Davies, "Thunder Without Rain," One Half of Robertson Davies, p. 248.

⁴R. Davies, "Preaching Selfishness," One Half of Robertson Davies, p. 73.

⁵R. Davies, "The Deadliest of Sins," One Half of Robertson Davies, p. 65.

⁶R. Davies, "Gleams and Gloom," One Half of Robertson Davies, p. 244.

irrational fear of what they do not really know:

[the people] who have . . . grown up as religious illiterates--a very common class today--have lost their sense of the beneficent part religion plays in life, but they have not shaken off their primitive fears. They dimly guess at an area of being which is not readily approached, and which is certainly not good: this is the haunt of Evil, the Devil's kingdom.⁷

The loss of religion may have been observable in Canadian society in the latter half of this century, but such was not the case with the Canada of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through Dunstable Ramsay, Davies described this earlier Canadian society as one in which

. . . every Canadian had to adhere, nominally, to some church; the officials of the Census utterly refused to accept such terms as 'agnostic' or 'none' in the column marked 'Religion' and flattering statistics were compiled on the basis of the Census reports that gave a false idea of the forces all the principal faiths could command.⁸

Although this attitude has changed and it is now legally possible for Canadians to declare their atheism or agnosticism, according to Davies, this country has persisted in regarding itself as peculiarly Christian.

Davies explained this Canadian outlook in a lecture delivered in April, 1977, at a symposium promoted by the

⁷ Davies, "Gleams and Gloom," p. 227.

⁸ R. Davies, Fifth Business (1970; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 128. All subsequent references to this novel will be abbreviated FB and incorporated in parentheses in the text.

Association for Canadian Studies in the United States. At this time, he defined myth as "the sort of attitude which most people take for granted, the belief that nobody questions because nobody troubles to put it in concrete terms."⁹ Having established this and the fact that it was his belief that "one of the tasks of the Canadian writer is to show Canada to itself,"¹⁰ he discussed what he believed to be one of the major myths of the Canadian identity. This myth was what he called our

Myth of Innocence or Moral Superiority: deep in our hearts we Canadians cherish a notion . . . that we are a simple folk, nourished on the simpler truths of Christianity, in whom certain rough and untutored instincts of nobility assert themselves.¹¹

There can be no doubt that this myth rested in Canadian notions of Christianity, but as Davies made quite clear later in this lecture,

we must rid ourselves of the Myth of Innocence . . . for it is a potent source of mischief and a breeding ground for many dangerous sorts of stupidity. Innocence preserved too long sours into ignorance.¹²

Within the past twenty years or so, there have been many attempts by Canadian writers to articulate the primal

⁹R. Davies, "The Canada of Myth and Reality," in One Half of Robertson Davies, p. 272.

¹⁰Davies, "The Canada of Myth and Reality," p. 281.

¹¹Davies, "The Canada of Myth and Reality," p. 275.

¹²Davies, "The Canada of Myth and Reality," p. 278.

myth of Canadian identity, especially Canadian literary identity. Their answers have been many and varied¹³ ranging from Northrop Frye's early discernment of what he called the "garrison mentality" to Margaret Atwood's depiction of the myth of "survival." While these and other critics all noted the Canadian predilection for a sort of gloomy Calvinism, they did not focus on religion or religiosity as a primary formative myth in the Canadian identity. Robertson Davies did.

From his earliest book reviews and Marchbanks' materials, Davies attacked Canadian society for its religiosity--its Myth of Innocence. Through the satiric thrusts of the rapier wit of Samuel Marchbanks, he confronted Canadians with the results of "Innocence preserved too long"--ignorance, provincialism, hypocrisy, anti-intellectualism, and downright stupidity.

Davies used satire to show Canadians to themselves, and in Davies' theory of literature there was a connection between satire and religion. He articulated this connection in 1954, when he said, "Satire is a potent weapon against Puritanism and Jansenism," and added, "good satire

¹³An interesting collection of the views of Canadian critics and writers is that assembled by David Staines. The Canadian Imagination, Dimensions of A Literary Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977). This volume includes selections by Frye, Marshall McLuhan, George Woodcock and other illustrious Canadian writers--wherein there is a lack of focus on religion or religiosity as a major formative myth of the Canadian imagination.

can only be written by men who care deeply about the abuse they attack."¹⁴

The main abuse Davies attacked from the earliest period of his writing to his latest was the abuse of the spirit of man made by Puritanism in religion. This does not indicate that Davies is or was a libertine or anti-Christian, but he appears to have held in derision the peculiar blend of Puritanism and nineteenth century materialism which formed such a large part of religion in Canada. As far as he was concerned, this peculiar religious outlook had not only ruined the development of the arts in Canada, but had also produced a people who were simplistic and ignorant in outlook and understanding. From the early 1940's on, he had interpreted the peculiar gloomy and sluggish priggishness of Canadians primarily in terms of their repressive religious and materialistic outlook. In 1942, he had stated:

Canada as a country and nation had a difficult birth in the nineteenth century, and was forced to begin life in an era of almost unchecked materialism, without the background of a pastoral age to serve as a brake on the dizzy speed of "progress." As a result our country has advanced most satisfactorily in the realm of commerce without any corresponding development in the realm of thought or the arts.¹⁵

¹⁴R. Davies, "Canadian Satire," Saturday Night, 3 July 1954, p. 15.

¹⁵R. Davies, "New Anthology of Poetry by Canadians," Peterborough Examiner, 6 June 1942, p. 4.

Many years later, in 1969, he reaffirmed his belief that "Our attitude toward all the arts has until very recently been poisoned by a mean puritanism--the puritanism of Stiggins and Podsnap rather than that of Milton. . . ."16 Davies did not portray how specific beliefs about man and sin had become powerful in the various Christian sects, but rather attempted to reveal, through the attitudes and attributes of the characters he created, how the combination of these developments had affected the lives of people. In 1975 he re-emphasized his concern that "In the midst of our heaped up abundance of things made of metal and wires and plastic, we starve for the bread of the spirit."¹⁷

The one common element in all the variations of Christianity which existed after the Protestant Reformation has been the belief in salvation. Since the prerequisites for salvation influenced the way in which believers lived their lives in this mundane world, this has been the aspect of religion which has been of major significance for Davies. His emphasis has continuously been on the consideration of how a man's religious beliefs, or lack thereof, have affected not only his outward and social life but also his inner or spiritual life, as he attempted to fulfill

¹⁶R. Davies. Excerpt from "Letters in Canada," University of Toronto Quarterly, 38 (1969), rpt. "A Stage in Our Past: 1969," in The Well Tempered Critic, p. 122.

¹⁷Davies, "Thunder Without Rain," p. 249.

whatever his religion dictated he must do in order to be acceptable before God. Following the Reformation, the Puritans had said that man must perfect himself in this mundane world--even though doing so meant denying in himself his most basic instincts and needs.

In the earliest of his publications, Shakespeare's Boy Actors (1939), Davies had contrasted the predominantly medieval Catholic Christian audience's attitude to the theatre in the Elizabethan era with that of the Puritan Protestant one which predominated following the Restoration, and concluded that the attitude of the earlier audience had been "infinitely preferable."¹⁸

In book reviews published in both the Peterborough Examiner and Saturday Night magazine in the 1940's, following his return to Canada, he repeatedly showed his awareness of what he considered to be a spiritual problem in modern society, and hinted that the solution might lie in a revised religious outlook. Shortly after he assumed his position as literary editor of Saturday Night magazine, his review of F. Werfel's Embezzled Heaven indicated that he regarded the present age as one in which the spiritual life of man was being neglected:

¹⁸ R. Davies, Shakespeare's Boy Actors (Dent, 1939; rpt. London: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 179. Davies had been granted a B. Litt. at Oxford in 1938, with this dissertation under Nevill Coghill. The dissertation was published the following year. Subsequent references to this work will be abbreviated SBA and incorporated in parentheses in the text.

The author [Franz Werfel] has convinced us that a great part of the world's ills are as a result of modern man's denial of the spiritual domain. But where do we go from here? Certainly not backward to a kind of warmed over medieval religious feeling as Mr. Werfel tacitly suggests. We must go forward trusting to find something in the future which will be better than what we have lost. . . . What we must not do is regard our troubled place in time as an excuse for spiritual nullity.¹⁹

It is clear from this early review that Davies' view of man had been influenced by the Christian concept of man as a creation with both physical and spiritual domains, of which the spiritual domain must be a major concern. A number of the statements in this review intimate questions which became increasingly significant in Davies' later writings. Why does man no longer value the spiritual domain? What has happened that religion can no longer satisfy these needs when by implication, medieval religion did? What has been lost that has caused the spiritual nullity of modern man? How can he overcome this problem of spiritual nullity?

A few months later, in April 1941, in a review of Scholem Asch's What I Believe, he wrote, somewhat in the same vein,

Scholem Asch thinks that man can only be saved by a humble return to God--an opinion few would care to dispute. But to what God?-- . . . many others will say

¹⁹R. Davies, "Salvation Is Not Free," Saturday Night, 14 December, 1940, p. 20a.

why must we always return to God and never move forward to Him. And to which of the many aspects of the Hebrew God as revealed in the Old Testament are we to make the return. Scholem Asch's replies to these questions are, to put it mildly, unsatisfactory.²⁰

Again, Davies had reiterated man's need for religion or spiritual life and decried any attempt to retreat from our modern world into ancient modes of religion. But in this review he emphasized the validity of some belief in God in enriching the life of man. The problem appeared to lie in man's concepts of the nature of God--a problem which, while peripheral to other more obvious concerns in Davies' earlier writings, gained increasing prominence in his later ones.

The nature of one of Davies' early possible solutions to these problems was implied in his review of Haydon's Biography of the Gods (1941), in which he brought together what would later be acknowledged as two of his major pre-occupations: religion and the nature of man. He said:

No attempt is made in this book to explain why the Gods were brought into existence by man. The author leaves that matter strictly to the psychoanalysts, and it is significant that the name of Freud is never brought into the book.²¹

²⁰ R. Davies, "Easter Meditation on Scholem Asch," Saturday Night, 12 April 1941, p. 19.

²¹ R. Davies, "New Gods For Old," Saturday Night, 25 April 1941, p. 20.

Freud had shown that the inner, unconscious life of man is not only very real and influential, but also extremely important in determining the balance of the whole person. He had also, in The Future of an Illusion and Civilization and Its Discontents indicated some of the reasons mankind may have had for believing in God or gods, and although he was attempting to prove that modern man had no further need of religion, he, paradoxically, gave some indication of how important religion could be to the psychic health of man. It was Freud who had established the close connection between religion and civilization:

Religious ideas have arisen from the same need as have all other achievements of civilization; from the necessity of defending oneself against the crushingly superior force of nature. To this a second motive was added--the urge to rectify the shortcomings of civilization which made themselves perfectly felt.²²

Moreover, he had been able to show that, unlike many other aspects of civilization, religion was of prime importance to the psyche of most of mankind. "[Religious ideas] are

²²Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. James Strachey with Anna Freud et al. (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis), XXX:21.

Subsequent references to the individual works will, on first reference, mention the title of the work followed by the abbreviation SE (Standard Edition . . .), the volume number, and page number. Subsequent references to the same work will follow the format SE: volume number: page number, and will be incorporated in parentheses in the text.

not precipitates of experiences or end results of thinking: they are illusions, fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind" (SE XXI:30).

In January, 1941, Davies had defended Freud as
 one who has undertaken the bitter task
 to introduce mankind to certain facts
 about itself which had formerly been
 guessed at only by a few sages and poets
 . . . [and who] . . . was abused as an
 enemy of religion which he was not. . . . 23

What enabled Davies to defend this man who had declared that religion was "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity", (SE XXI:43) was his own conviction that something had gone radically wrong with modern society, particularly modern Canadian society because, "for many years we have combined an extraordinary high standard of living with a standard of intellectual and cultural development which is, to speak kindly, mediocre."²⁴ Moreover, his concern for the problems of society had led him to conclude: "The ills of modern society have been diagnosed by economists, political theorists, and witch doctors of all kinds, but no group has made such steady and satisfactory progress as the psycho-analytical one."²⁵ In this review he had referred

²³R. Davies, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice Speaks," Saturday Night, 11 January 1941, p. 14.

²⁴R. Davies, "New Year's Resolutions," Saturday Night, 4 January 1941, p. 14.

²⁵R. Davies, "A Broader Concept of Masochism," Saturday Night, 29 November 1941, p. 24.

to Freud as "perhaps the greatest of all social critics,"²⁶ because in his disclosure of the complicated psychic structure of man, Freud had delineated the unconscious origin of many of the mechanisms by which man disciplined himself to become a civilized being.

It is clear from Davies' plays and the Marchbanks materials of the 1940's, that Freudian psychology offered him a partial explanation of the cause of spiritual nullity he observed around him. The majority of Davies' characters are shown to have been overpowered by a religiosity which denied the validity of the basic instincts and perverted the enervating drives of what Freud called "Eros, the preserver of all things."²⁷ They were ensnared by manifestations of what Freud called the "death instinct" (SE XVIII:44). Their religious convictions, based on Manichean distrust of the world and all its snares combined with their striving for perfection in moulding their lives to be free from sin had led them to a distorted outlook on both themselves and the nature of Evil.²⁸ They are the true descendants of the Reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who had developed the doctrine that the best defence for unwary individuals against the power

²⁶ Davies, "A Broader Concept of Masochism," p. 24.

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, SE XVIII:52.

²⁸ Crane Brinton, The Shaping of Modern Thought (1950; rpt. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963), pp. 121-122.

of evil was to "glorify God by their work in a world given over to the powers of darkness."²⁹

Freud had derived many of his observations about the effects of religion from his experiences with the Roman Catholicism which dominated the Vienna of his day.³⁰ Davies was almost exclusively concerned with the Puritan Protestantism dominating modern Canadian society. Nevertheless, in the 1940's, he appeared to have accepted Freud's analysis of the repressive effects of religion as the basis for his anti-Puritan stance. The plays and the Marchbanks materials of this period revealed the closed-mindedness of individuals who were dominated by a religiosity which inculcated the supremacy of "a system which is characterized by sanctity, rigidity, and intolerance . . . [as well as] . . . prohibition of thought" (SE XXI:51). In this early period, Davies delineated with biting satire what Dunstable Ramsay later referred to as "the stricken lifeless unreal quality of religion" (FB, p. 152). However, as his comments in various of his book reviews had indicated, Davies' contention was that the problem lay not with God but with the misconception of God which passed for religion.

²⁹ R.H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (1926; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 200.

³⁰ Reuben M. Rayney, Freud As Student of Religion: Perspectives on the Background and Development of his Thought, Dissertation Series 7 (American Academy of Religion, 1975), p. 139.

As Pop in the 1947 play Overlaid complained: "They try to make God in their own little image and they can't do it same as you can't catch Niagara Falls in a teacup."³¹

In his Oxford dissertation, Shakespeare's Boy Actors, Davies had lamented the changed attitude toward the frank sex and obscenity in Shakespeare's plays following the Restoration (SBA, p. 177). This change came about as a result of changes in "the social and moral outlook of the theatre audience" (SBA, p. 179). The peculiar mix of Calvinism and Puritanism which gained prominence in England in the seventeenth century had compelled not only a change in the outward manners and morals, but also a change in the inner man. It did this, Tawney suggested, "by a process of subtraction."³² The result was an overemphasis on rationality and work. Work became,

a kind of ascetic discipline . . . imposed by the will of God, and to be undergone . . . in the punctual discharge of secular duties. [Work formed the basis of] the holy life--a system in which every element is grouped around a central idea, the service of God, from which all disturbing irrelevancies have been pruned, and to which all minor interests are subordinated.³³

³¹R. Davies, Overlaid, in At My Heart's Core and overlaid (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1966), p. 99. Subsequent references to this play will be enclosed in parentheses in the text.

³²Tawney, p. 227.

³³Tawney, p. 241.

These disturbing irrelevancies included all forms of leisure activities, the arts, music (other than hymns), human emotions and intellectual curiosity. As evidence of the influence of such a Puritan-Protestant outlook in Canada, Davies remarked in an address delivered in 1979 that,

... Canadians of long descent, among whom I am proud to number my mother's family, were in the main aesthetic innocents. The Bible and Pilgrim's Progress served them for literature; music, if it figured at all in their reckonings, meant church music of no very distinguished kind.³⁴

It was the shortcomings of a society which had been governed by this Puritan-Protestant attitude against which Davies had first reacted.

The short comments and analysis made by Davies as Samuel Marchbanks in the 1940's formed a witty and provocative attack on most of the social myths which Canadians, aided and abetted by their various Christian churches, believed to be essential to the well being of both the individual and his society. The plays written in the same period as the Samuel Marchbanks materials were less genial in their satire. However, one cannot emphasize too often that from the very beginning, Davies had not considered religion as practised by the churches the sum total of religious experience. In 1944, before he wrote any of his novels or plays, he had criticized Laski's Faith, Reason

³⁴ R. Davies, "Touring Fare in Canada 1920-1935: 1979," in The Well-Tempered Critic, pp. 124-25.

and Civilization for assuming that the actions and pronouncements of the Christian churches were "the sum of what Christianity means in the world."³⁵

From this comment and others, it is clear that even then, Davies had rejected the impersonal societal religion of the churches in favour of a concept of religion which appeared to be similar to that of the young Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead had said:

A religion, on its doctrinal side can . . . be defined as a system of general truths which have the effect of transforming character when they are sincerely held and vividly apprehended.

In the long run, your character and your conduct of life depend upon your intimate convictions. Life is an internal fact for its own sake, before it is an external fact relating to others. The conduct of external life is conditioned by environment, but it receives its final quality, on which its worth depends, from the internal life which is the self-realization of existence. Religion is the art and theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on the man himself and on what is permanent in the nature of things.³⁶

While there is no evidence to connect Robertson Davies' ideas of religion directly with those of Whitehead, the thrust of his writings indicates that his concept of religion was, like that of Whitehead, "the direct negation of

³⁵R. Davies, "Laski's New Religion," Peterborough Examiner, 11 October 1944, p. 4.

³⁶Alfred North Whitehead, Religion in the Making (1926) in Alfred North Whitehead, An Anthology, eds. F.S.C. Northrop and Mason W. Gross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 472.

the theory that religion is primarily a social fact."³⁷

In making a distinction between the religion of the churches which appeared to be primarily a social fact and religion as an individual meaningful relationship with the transcendent, Davies was able to maintain his belief in the ultimate value of religion, especially the Christian religion. In doing so, he placed himself outside the mainstream of twentieth century writers who appeared to have accepted Nietzsche's indictment of Christianity. According to Dooley, Nietzsche had declared that

Christianity systematically devalued the knowably real, including, of course, the bodily passions and instincts, and also aesthetic values. The death of God and the rejection of Christianity therefore provided outlets for instincts previously suppressed, and in fact made possible the development of all aspects of human nature.³⁸

Davies appeared to be quite in agreement with this indictment of Nietzsche--as long as it was applied to the practices of the various Christian churches rather than to the concepts of Christianity, especially as revealed through the New Testament. It was never the concept of religion per se that Davies was attacking, but the man-made shackles imposed upon religion. His especial targets were the shackles associated with Puritan-Protestantism. In Samuel

³⁷Whitehead, p. 472.

³⁸Dooley, p. 83.

Marchbanks' Almanack, he commented:

A map said to me today that what ailed the modern world was that it had forgotten about the Seven Deadly Sins. Not to be outdone, . . . I said that I considered it far worse that we had forgotten the Four Cardinal Virtues. He goggled, and had plainly never heard of them so I named them--Prudence, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude. He was himself an exemplar of what ails the world, with his yelping about sin and his neglect of virtue. I suppose the poor fools thought that mere abstention from sin was virtue enough--a common, comical and somewhat criminal error.³⁹

The worst of the man-made shackles of religion were associated, for Davies, with man's concept of sin and evil. The avoidance of all forms of sin as it was encoded by the strict morality enforced under Protestant Puritanism had been as far as Davies was concerned the cause of much of what was wrong in modern society. Evil had become associated only with human social and emotional conduct, and had lost its spiritual dimension. The result had been the death of the Devil in the modern world: "to speak of the Devil in our time is to invite mockery; he is not in fashion."⁴⁰

³⁹R. Davies, Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack. New Canadian Library No. 61 (1967; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, n.d.), p. 136. Subsequent references to this work will be abbreviated SMA and included in parentheses in the text.

⁴⁰R. Davies, A Voice From the Attic. New Canadian Library No. 83 (1960; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. 72. Subsequent references to this text will be abbreviated VA and incorporated in parentheses into the text.

Following the Protestant Reformation, the growing empiricism and rational utilitarianism, especially of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, combined with the asceticism of Puritan morality, led to a lessening of man's comprehension of his spiritual needs. Just as the Devil had been banished to the realm of superstition, there had also evolved "an intensely materialistic concept of religion which is common in our day. Whereas it was once assumed that happiness and salvation were to be sought, not in our environment, but in our attitude to environment, it is now assumed that the environment is of primary importance" (VA, p. 73).

This is the attitude Davies had rejected utterly by the 1950's. With reference to modern writers, he said:

The true realist is he who believes in both God and the Devil and is prepared to attempt with humility to sort out some corner of the extraordinary tangle of their works which is our world.
(VA, p. 345)

This is, however, a point of view which Davies felt was no longer acceptable to many in the modern world. Between the philosophy of Nietzsche and Freud's The Future of An Illusion, modern man had pretty well lost his sense of the reality of God's role in his life--so much so that the point of view of such critics as Edmund Fuller,

of Man as a being with freedom of choice, responsible to the God who created him . . . is by-passed [by modern novelists] in favor of a notion (concept is too definite a word) of

man as a derelict and irresponsible creature existing in a world where no moral values apply. (VA, p. 345)

Having no responsibility to God and having lost his sense of the devil as a spiritual foe, modern man had created for himself the conditions which promoted the ultimate loss of God as a spiritual reality. Davies had taken note of this relationship in a discussion of the nineteenth century novelist, George Eliot, of whom Davies said:

. . . she is a good deal weaker on the Devil than on God. This makes her curiously modern, and of late years her reputation has soared immensely . . . let me say crudely that I do not believe very much in a God of somebody who doesn't have a first class Devil as well. We have all seen in the past fifty years what happens to God when you try to pretend there is no Devil; God develops rheumatoid arthritis and senile dementia and rumors of his death are heard everywhere, including some of the very advanced groups. Justice is vitiated by compassion and compassion melts into a sticky sentimentality.⁴¹

Dooley had commented that, "the decay in the belief in God opens the way for the full development of man's creative energies."⁴² Davies would not agree totally. He would agree that the decay in the power of the organized religion of the churches to exercise certain repressiveness over the minds of men would have the benefit of setting free creative energies, provided that the loss of the

⁴¹R. Davies, "Phantasmagoria and Dream Grotto," One Half of Robertson Davies, p. 208.

⁴²Dooley, p. 83.

formal religion did not result in the substitution of either formlessness or illusion.

Form had always appeared to have some importance for Davies. For example, in 1944 he had commented in the Peterborough Examiner that, "Keeping a diary imposes a form upon our lives and anything which has form is more interesting than that which is formless."⁴³ Earlier that year he had suggested, in one of his book review columns, that "religion might be a personal matter--an inner struggle in which man strives to reconcile the conflicting elements of his character by relating himself to a greater power."⁴⁴ It is through this relationship with a greater power that man is able to determine the form of his inner life and the meaning of his existence. Although the affairs of the mundane world may appear to offer him such form, ultimately they are all illusions. Davies had once commented that

it is a plain fact that no man has a fixed immutable character; he exists as his wife sees him, and as his children see him and as everyone he knows sees him, but all the images are different; he also exists as he sees himself, which differs markedly from any other image of him and doubtless God sees him as he really is, in a synthesis of all the images, which must

⁴³ R. Davies, "Reflections on Keeping a Diary," Peterborough Examiner, 27 December 1944, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Davies, "Laski's New Religion," p. 4.

give God many a laugh and many a twinge of pain. But most of what man thinks of as his character, is a sham and shell.⁴⁵

Religion had offered man a sense of his place in the cosmos, a sense of meaningfulness. However, it had also foisted upon him, especially following the Reformation, a peculiar notion that he was either good or bad--in either the camp of the Devil, or of God. This was a point of view Davies rejected, and which was proven unsound by the psychological theories of Freud and Jung. These depth psychologists had suggested that there is a vast area within the psyche of man--the unconscious--in which dispositions to action, instincts, etc. simply exist--in which there is neither good nor evil but only the ambivalence of forces pulling in opposing directions.

What Freud, and later, Jung, offered Davies was a re-definition of evil--which once more became a spiritual rather than purely social fact. By the mid-1970's, he told Tom Harpur,

The devil seems to me to be not the commonplace symbol of evil but the symbol of unconsciousness, of unknowing, of acting without knowledge of what you're intending to do. It's from that that I think the great evils spring. The devil is the unexamined side of life. . . .⁴⁶

⁴⁵R. Davies, "Diary of Christmas Preparation," Peterborough Examiner, 25 November 1944, p. 4.

⁴⁶Tom Harpur, "Author Says Messiah Could be a Woman," Toronto Daily Star, 16 February 1974. rpt. "A Talk with Tom Harpur," Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies, p. 317.

The man who was most able to combat the forces of the devil, and evil, in his own life, was the man who was unafraid of the duality of his own nature.

This meant for Davies a recognition that the simplistic answers of Puritan-Protestantism and Freudian empiricism had been wrong in their concepts of God. In 1962 he had protested that,

As religion becomes more and more a thing of the past, I find that people who are not concerned with it believe some stronger and foolish things about it. They attribute to religious people beliefs which are absurd--beliefs which nobody of strong intelligence could ever have accepted. Among students, I find many--possibly a majority--who regard religion as a sort of feeble-mindedness which mankind has almost outgrown. . . . But religion has engaged the lifelong attention of men and women of the highest intellectual quality . . . who found in it a pattern for life, a form into which they could put life, an order which was not imposed upon life, but arose from it. 47

The religious men and women mentioned above would have been people who were at least aware of the realities of their own human nature--people who were not afraid or ashamed of the half-animal, half-angel creations that they were. The Puritan-Protestant emphasis on perfection of the human being through living a sinless life, had imposed upon human beings many harsh and cruel moralities. This, too, has become one of the problems of the modern world,

⁴⁶R. Davies, "Preaching Selfishness," One Half of Robertson Davies, p. 72.

for, according to Davies, "We are in revolt against so many false and cruel moralities that great numbers of people rashly assume there is no true morality" (VA, p. 104).

The depth psychologists revealed the nature of many of these false and cruel moralities. The psychology of Jung became increasingly valuable to Davies in the 1950's and later because, unlike Freud, Jung openly acknowledged both the value of religion and the spiritual nature of good and evil, and the necessity of both of these forces for the inner or spiritual health of man. The Jungian concept of wholeness provided Davies with a paradigm for the complicated nature of the human being. This Jungian concept of wholeness involved the union of opposites, the

merging of apparent opposites to produce a new and stronger spirit in man because it is in the heart or soul or mind of man--in all three we may presume--that the struggle [between good and evil] is carried on, and the eventual new element appears in the form of a wider sensibility, greater wisdom and enlarged charity.⁴⁸

With a man, aware of the complexity and ambivalence of life, would recognize that things may not always be what they appear. Just as the Devil can sometimes subvert God's purposes, so too, can God subvert the Devil's intentions. Man must make his decisions with a full recognition of the powers of both these forces--but he cannot do so unless he is prepared to deal openly and realistically with the

⁴⁸ Davies, "Thunder Without Rain," p. 264.

power of evil.

Just as Davies had rejected the Puritan-Protestant concept of man as either all good or all bad, he also rejected their concepts of a God who was, for many believers, virtually unrelated to the God revealed by Jesus in the New Testament. Davies described the Puritan-Protestant concept of God in an article on Thomas Carlyle, who, he said,

was an atheist only toward the Son, the Father remained with him as a mean spirited, capricious, bad tempered, war god of the Old Testament; The Holy Ghost, he saw as the German Imperial eagle. Carlyle was regarded in his day as a sage, a mystic, and a prophet; he was prophet of a faith which had cast out love.⁴⁹

Both God and man it would appear had been overlaid by Puritan Protestant demands for homogeneity and perfection. Ronald Sutherland, writing about Fifth Business said,

What Mary [Dempster] saves Dunstan from is the dull, prodding, guilt-ridden, self-effacing role of the typical Calvinist-Jansenist conditioned character in Canadian fiction. Through her, indirectly, he discovers the mystery and magic of life and starts on the path of the new type of Canadian hero. . . .⁵⁰

⁴⁹ R. Davies, "Can Carlyle be Resurrected," Saturday Night, 31 October 1993, p. 17.

⁵⁰ Ronald Sutherland, "The Relevahce of Robertson Davies," Journal of Canadian Studies, 12, No. 1 (1977), p. 77.

What many critics have not appeared to realize is that with few exceptions, none of Davies' heroes are of the character-type described above by Sutherland. They are all, even in the early novels and plays, new-style heroes, in that they are all in the process of becoming aware of the realities of the complexity of their inner natures, and of the various masks and pretences about themselves that they present to the world.

Behind their masks and pretences quite often lay emotions, fears, superstitions, perversions of all kinds. As long as religion imprisoned men in the belief that God might look favourably upon them only if they were not subject to these inner drives but presented a rational, controlled face to the world, then men would live as the guilt-ridden characters Sutherland described. But from Samuel Marchbanks through to Simon Darcourt (Rebel Angels, 1981), Davies' characters had been creeping out from under the Calvinist-Jansenist burden--which also meant they were involved in a search for God as well as themselves. Samuel Marchbanks had described Canadian society as "one which demands an unconscious amount of holding in. . . . Holding in creates horrid poisons that wear us out before our time."⁵¹ The first step in the exorcism of these "horrid

⁵¹R. Davies, The Table Talk of Samuel Marchbanks (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1949), p. 159. Subsequent references to this text will be abbreviated TSM and incorporated into the text.

poisons" for most people lay in a reassessment of themselves as human beings--and this meant admitting that most of the emotions and instincts which Puritan-Protestantism had repressed, had a right to exist.

Like Nietzsche before him, Freud had believed that men must eventually dispense with religion. In the Future of an Illusion he had stated that "the greater the number of men to whom the treasures of knowledge become available, the more widespread the falling away from religious belief" (SE XXI:38). Unfortunately, as Davies realized, this prediction had proven true in this century. But, Davies was concerned that owing to the Freudian empiricist methodology, the result of this falling away from religion would not lead man, as Nietzsche proposed, to greater creativity, but to a scientific rationalism which was just as hostile to the emotions and values of the inner world of man as modern religion had proved for many to be.

Davies' perception of the humanities as a means of bringing a person into contact with the "distilled essence of life,"⁵² brought into prominence one of the areas of his incompatibility with Freudian psychology. Bound as he was by his empiricist methodology, Freud, "failing to work out the connections among artist, spectator and work of art, has little to say about the key areas of perception and

⁵²R. Davies, "Three Worlds, Three Summers--But Not the Summer Just Past," Mayfair, September, 1949, rpt. Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies, p. 229.

emotion in art."⁵³ Freud's main interest had been in the personality and psychology of the artist himself. He regarded art as beneficial to mankind, but only for its palliative qualities. For Freud, the "fantasy of the artist leads the spectator to the satisfaction also through fantasy, of the same unconscious, wishful impulses."⁵⁴

Thus while Davies used the revelations of Freudian psychology as a weapon to reveal the nature of the work to be done, it was the humanities--art, music, drama, literature--to which he turned for his first weapons for "piercing through the intellect to the things that lie deep and secure in the human heart."⁵⁵ In Fortune My Foe (1948), for example, he likened the emotion generated in the presence of the little marionette stage as the creators anticipated the first performance to a "religious feeling."⁵⁶ A means of release of emotion was, for Davies, a first step in the direction of psychic health, and the quality of the emotion generated in Chilly and Nicholas served as "a reminder that the first theatres were temples, and that the

⁵³ Jack J. Spector, The Aesthetics of Freud. A Study in Psychoanalysis and Art (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 123.

⁵⁴ Spector, p. 104.

⁵⁵ R. Davies in Twice have the Trumpets Sounded: A Record of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival in Canada, 1954 by Tyrone Guthrie, Robertson Davies and Grant MacDonald (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1954), p. 31.

⁵⁶ R. Davies, Fortune My Foe in Four Favourite Plays (1949; rpt. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1968), p. 137.

theatre at its highest is still a temple sacred to the gods of Pity, Terror, Tenderness, and Mirth."⁵⁷

Initially, Davies had believed in the interrelatedness of psychoanalysis and the humanities:

For psychoanalysis, after all, is an attempt to control and assist, by means which are as scientific as possible, those insights into the depths of the human mind that great artists and gifted critics have always achieved in the supreme moments of their enlightenment.⁵⁸

He had also believed in the possible interrelatedness of psychoanalysis and religion:

Religion is perhaps the greatest solace for the wounded soul known to mankind. Psychiatry has, within the past century wrought miracles of healing. Is there anything wrong with a combination of the two?⁵⁹

By the mid-1950's, it was clear to Davies that the two could be combined--provided that the psychiatry was not Freudian-based. Whitehead had suggested that religion was primarily what "the individual does with his own solitariness,"⁶⁰ and, he said, "if you are never solitary you are never religious."

⁵⁷R. Davies in Renown at Stratford: A Record of the Shakespeare Festival in Canada, 1953, by Tyrone Guthrie, Robertson Davies and Grant MacDonald (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1953), p. 120.

⁵⁸Davies, Twice Have the Trumpets Sounded, p. 115.

⁵⁹R. Davies, "From the Critics' Notebook," Peterborough Examiner, 26 April 1950, p. 8.

⁶⁰Whitehead, p. 484.

Collective enthusiasms, revivals, institutions, churches, rituals, bibles, codes of behaviour, are the trappings of religion in its passing forms."⁶¹ This was substantially what Davies was attempting to communicate in his addresses "Preaching Selfishness" (1966) and "What Every Girl Should Know" (1973).

In his exploration of the problem of religion, Davies had proceeded along a number of different avenues. Convinced of the influence of religion in determining the state of the inner life of man, he had proceeded to examine this relationship using Freudian and Jungian psychology to reveal the state of the inner life. On another level, he had satirized the actions and pronouncements of the churches as detrimental to that inner health. Moreover, although he recognized that for many people the religions of the churches had become little more than adherence to meaningless sets of external rituals, dogma and rules of conduct, he also realized that for many church religion was a real and stabilizing influence in their lives.

His interest in the inner nature of man led him to consider two aspects of religion--the ways in which religion affected the inner lives of even those who rejected it, and the quest for a meaningful religion for those outside the religions of the churches. Although by the 1950's he had accepted Jungian psychology's concepts of the psychic

⁶¹ Whitehead, p. 472.

nature of man, he had not accepted "Jung's suspension of judgement whether or not God existed except as the content of psychic imagery."⁶² Lest there be any misunderstanding, in 1975 he reiterated his belief that:

whether we are or are not the end toward which all evolution has been striving is open to doubt. Any assertion we may make that the forces we call for brevity and convenience, God and the Devil, are forces contained in ourselves and without external being is open to even greater doubt.⁶³

By the late 1950's, he had concluded that even with all its man-made flaws, religion as a means of relating oneself to the transcendental was necessary to the well being of most individuals. He had also determined that this pursuit of the transcendental was not without its dangers, especially for those who had attempted to form such a relationship without any convictions about the ultimate nature of this transcendental. In the 1950's, religion had become increasingly visible in Davies' writings. The three novels of the Salterton Trilogy had, for example, all concluded with the focal characters internally defining their actions in conventional religious terms.

In Tempest-Tost, Hector Mackilwraith undertook to commit suicide as "an atonement, (my italics) a sacrifice

⁶²James W. Heisig, Imago Dei. A Study of C.G. Jung's Psychology of Religion (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1979), p. 134.

⁶³Davies, "Thunder Without Rain," p. 264.

that another might be cleansed. . . ."⁶⁴ At the conclusion of Leaven of Malice, Gloster Ridley had "savored the poignant sweetness of renunciation [my italics] . . . a man released from bondage."⁶⁵ In A Mixture of Frailties, Monica Gall considered that in "working for a worthy perpetuation of his [Giles Revelstoke's] work there might be atonement [my italics]. And after atonement, a recognition of what she had felt in that instant of naked truth."⁶⁶ Moreover, in A Mixture of Frailties, Solly Bridgetower, who throughout the trilogy had been openly sceptical about religion, "Against the strict prohibition of his faith . . . prayed [my italics] for his mother's soul" (AMF, p. 373).

That each of these three novels ended in allusions to major concepts of Christianity was not fortuitous; can easily be understood if the critic has been aware of the extent to which religion permeated Davies' works up to and including this period. Davies himself, however, was aware that this aspect of his work had not really been

⁶⁴ R. Davies, Tempest-Tost (1951; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 210. All subsequent references to this novel will be abbreviated TT and incorporated in parentheses into the text.

⁶⁵ R. Davies, Leaven of Malice (1954; rpt. Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1964), p. 275. All subsequent references to this novel will be abbreviated LM and incorporated in parentheses into the text.

⁶⁶ R. Davies, A Mixture of Frailties, Laurentian Library 7 (1958; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), p. 376. All subsequent references to this novel will be abbreviated AMF and incorporated in parentheses into the text.

fully understood.

In 1973, he pointed out that the religious theme that emerged so strongly in Fifth Business was to be seen in the Salterton novels,

. . . not entirely in social terms. For in Leaven of Malice the Dean makes it pretty clear what his view is about what has been going on, and put his ten cents worth in in a way I hoped was significant. Only a very few people have ever commented on the Dean's Sermon at the very end of A Mixture of Frailties, which is going on contrapuntally to what Monica is thinking.

. . . The Dean is preaching a sermon on the revelation of God to Man in three forms: a revolution of nature for the shepherd, a penetration by wisdom by the wise men and a sort of natural grace to Simeon. I think most people look at the italics and say "Oh yes, this is the sermon," and hop to where it gets to be Roman type next, to see whether the girl's going to marry the old man or not. But it's there, and it's vital to the book.⁶⁷

As fourteen years separated this novel from Davies' next series of novels, it appears reasonable to assume that A Mixture of Frailties completed one phase of Davies' writing career. Since Davies himself indicated that the Dean's sermon at the conclusion of this novel was "vital to the book," the logical question arising from this comment would be "Why is the Dean's sermon vital to A Mixture of Frailties?" In order to answer this question one must

⁶⁷ Donald Cameron, "Robertson Davies, The Bizarre and Passionate Life of the Canadian People," Conversations with Canadian Novelists (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 39-40.

recognize that religion had been an important element in all of Davies' writings up to and including the novels of the Salterton Trilogy. With this realization, it then becomes obvious that the Dean's sermon is indeed critical not only to the book, A Mixture of Frailties, but to an understanding of the conclusions Davies had drawn about the relationship between Man and God. The Dean's sermon was Davies' final statement of his initial approach to the problem of religion--it was Davies' answer to Jung, to Freud, and to the "social" religion of the churches which had been so much a target of attack in his earlier writings. The Dean's sermon was Davies' affirmation that the ultimate purpose of man's quest for identity is to lead him to a recognition of the presence of God.

At the conclusion of A Mixture of Frailties, through the Dean's sermon, Davies had brought to the forefront the birth of Jesus, and the need for apprehension of the meaning of his revelation. Solly Bridgetower's son had also been born out of the struggle with evil early that morning, and his arrival had delivered Solly and Pearl from the bondage of Mrs. Bridgetower's hatred. His birth was Davies' ironic metaphor for the birth of the Saviour, and his answers to the acceptance of the ambiguity and ambivalence of good and evil--for in Salterton, as in Bethlehem, the birth signified a victory over evil.

In the period from 1940-1960, Davies had shown that Western man must learn to "fear the passing of

Jesus"⁶⁸ as the title of this chapter indicated, for once He has gone, the qualities of love and of wholeness as meaningful paradigms for man's relationship with God which His birth and life signified are lost as well. This was the loss which Davies had detected as the major cause for the spiritual afflictions of modern man--the loss of Jesus was the loss of the joy of being human.

Since their publication the Salterton novels have been analyzed by a variety of critics most of whom have been in substantial agreement with F.L. Radford who discussed them as "preliminary exercises in the development of certain themes and motifs that are brought to mature expression in the later works."⁶⁹ There can be no doubt that this is an accurate assessment of the relationship that exists between his early and his later works in many areas. The exception to this lies in the area of religion. In this early period Davies established the connections between repressive religious attitudes and spiritual nullity so securely that in the remainder of his writings he was able to use this as an a priori assumption. He had also established the fact that his reality would include both God and the Devil as real potent spiritual forces in the lives of man. Following these novels, with their conclusion that God as a transcendental fact is necessary for the spiritual

⁶⁸Davies, "The Deadliest of Sins," p. 68.

⁶⁹Radford, p. 13.

health of man, Davies was free to continue his search into the nature of the relationship that needs to be established between man and the transcendental.

CHAPTER TWO

SPIRITUAL NULLITY¹

Following the publication of Robertson Davies' *Deptford Trilogy* in the 1970's, much critical attention was focused on "the ideas of God and the Devil which dominate the . . . trilogy."² His earlier writings had gained him the reputation of being "a witty and acidulous commentator"³ and of being a writer whose "highest talent lies in being funny."⁴ In the 1960's and 1970's, there had been several graduate theses written analyzing some of the more serious aspects of his writing, and a number of these writers had made some effort to analyze his anti-Puritanical stance, but the focus of these theses was, for the most part, more directed to examining Davies' delineation of the development of the individual to self-knowledge.⁵ Aside from acknowledging his anti-Puritanism, few critics appear to have made a

¹ Davies, "Salvation is Not Free," p. 20a.

² Judith Skelton Grant, *Introd., The Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies*, p. 12.

³ Claude T. Bissell, rev. of *Tempest-Tost*, University of Toronto Quarterly, 21 (1952), p. 265.

⁴ Owen, p. 63.

⁵ See unpublished M.A. theses by the following: Elspeth Fisher, Sharon Murphy, Ted M. Wing and Gail Bowen listed in the Bibliography.

serious examination of the role of religion in the early (i.e., pre-Deptford Trilogy) writings of this author who admitted in the early 1970's that "One reason I was drawn to Freud and Jung was my religious interest, because I very quickly found that for my taste, investigation of religion by orthodox theological means was unrewarding."⁶

A careful examination of his writings has revealed that Davies had been preoccupied with the relationship between man and his religious beliefs since he began his writing career in the 1940's. The depth and seriousness of this concern may well have been overlooked because of his oblique approach to the problem. His criticisms of the prevailing religious outlooks and dogmas were concealed in the highly amusing avalanche of satire on the state of cultural and intellectual malnutrition he found in this country, and his theological convictions have been in many ways overwhelmed by his psychological approach to the spiritual apathy of modern man.

Robertson Davies gained his early reputation in Canada as the writer of witty and provocative book reviews for Saturday Night magazine and for his family's newspapers, The Peterborough Examiner and The Kingston Whig Standard. Shortly after he began writing the newspaper columns, the pseudonym, Samuel Marchbanks, made an appearance. In 1943, a new column "The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks" began to make

⁶Cameron, Conversations, p. 40.

regular weekly appearances. In the Introduction to Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack, Gordon Roper suggested that "Davies developed the 'Diary' partly to entertain his Examiner readers and partly to blow off steam . . . some of the pieties of a provincial Ontario town were galling."⁷ The diarist, Samuel Marchbanks, was born of tension, and Davies later explained that this tension is part of the disposition of mind which promotes the quality of humour in a writer. The occurring of the idea from which humour arises

seems to be a matter of a tension in the mind that calls for discharge, and if we are to believe Sigmund Freud's theory, set forth in Wit and Its Relation to The Unconscious, this tension had its origin in a sense of the intolerability of things as they appear and a desire to present them in another light. The light the humorist seeks to shed is nothing less than the light of truth.⁸

Samuel Marchbanks must have been for Davies a means of alleviating such internal tensions for, from the first "Diary" entries, he ridiculed and satirized the moral and ethical considerations cementing Peterborough and Canadian society. In 1941, Davies had expressed admiration for "The Supertramp," the poet, W.H. Davis, and had defended him as one who had "refused to join in the grabbing and snatching,

⁷ Gordon Roper, Introd., Robertson Davies, Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. xi. All subsequent references to this publication will use the abbreviation SMA, included in the text followed by the page reference.

⁸ R. Davies, Introd., R. Davies, ed. Feast of Stephen (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), pp. 40-41.

the fretting and fuming which make most of us live lives of spiritual bankruptcy. . . . His attitude to life was one of continual wonder."⁹ In many ways, Samuel Marchbanks was a suburban 'supertramp', for the most engrossing characteristics of Samuel Marchbanks were his exuberance and his irreverence toward the fretting and fuming of society. He was not only the "Doppelgänger Delusion"¹⁰ of Robertson Davies, but the antithesis of all that made Canada "a nation without any clear national character except that we are gloomy without being melancholy and urban without being urbane."¹¹

From his earliest appearances, Marchbanks was popular with the readers--possibly because he offered Canadians the opportunity for "recognition." "Recognition" was what Davies defined as "what happens when a work of art awakens what lies deep and unexplored in ourselves and gives it splendid voice."¹² Marchbanks was in his garrulous way the hero who lurked in all Canadians, the man who would not

⁹ R. Davies, "Poems of the Supertramp," Saturday Night, 5 March 1941, p. 24.

¹⁰ R. Davies Samuel Marchbanks, "The Double Life of Robertson Davies," Liberty, April, 1954, 18-19, 53-58, rpt. in Canadian Anthology, ed. Carl F. Klinck and R.E. Watters, rev. ed. (Toronto: Gage, 1966), p. 400. All subsequent references are to Canadian Anthology.

¹¹ R. Davies, "Hormones for the Muse," Saturday Night, 21 December 1940, p. 18.

¹² R. Davies, "Shakespeare Over The Port," Stratford Papers on Shakespeare (Toronto: Gage, 1961), p. 105.

lose heart in the face of overwhelming power (even as that possessed by his furnace--Demon), the man who would not be overpowered by society's systems--church, social, political--a man superbly in command of his own life.

In The New Hero, Ronald Sutherland has recently pointed out that although Canada and the United States were strongly influenced by Puritanism, the Puritan ethos developed quite differently in each country:

While the American Puritanism underlined self-reliance and the responsibility of the individual Canadians . . . had the security of reliance upon a church establishment, detailed codes of behaviour, a controlling system, and until very recently Canadians have tended to depend upon and trust systems which control their lives, whether religious, governmental, social, educational, or, of late, labour union.¹³

Many years before Sutherland's analysis of the Canadian propensity for systems, Davies had created in Samuel Marchbanks, the quintessential Canadian hero, the man who refused to take systems seriously. It did not matter what the system embraced, Marchbanks viewed it with skepticism:

I came across a chart in Life magazine yesterday which was designed to help me decide whether I am a Highbrow, or a Lowbrow, an Upper Middlebrow or a Lower Middlebrow. After some pondering, I think I must be a Concertina Brow, for I like such Lowbrow things as beer and parlour sculpture, and I also like such apparently Highbrow things as red

¹³ Ronald Sutherland, The New Hero. Essays in Comparative Quebec/Canadian Literature (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977), p. 2.

wine, ballet and pre-Bach music. But then I am a great fellow for the theatre, which is rated as only Upper Middlebrow. . . . I am inclined to think it must be very dull to have one's brow stuck at a particular point; I am glad my brow is able to expand and contract. (TSM, p. 28)

Most Canadians, however, were not willing to disturb the surface placidity of their lives, or to raise their voices in protest against the more obvious hypocrisies of their society. But not so Samuel Marchbanks. Davies contrasted the personality of Marchbanks with his own in such a way as to indicate the "normalcy" or ordinariness to which the Marchbanks personality was a foil:

He is married; I am a bachelor. He is fawningly courteous; I am forthright. He is mangled by self-doubt and self-criticism; I am untouched by these ridiculous ailments. He has a conscience as big as a piano; I have no more sense of obligation than a tomcat. He makes excuses for everybody and tries to be charitable; I know a boob or a phony when I see one and I see a great many. He is inclined to be modest in pretty hear everything; I regard moderation as a sign of physical and intellectual weakness. He is just about everything which I detest; I am everything which he seeks to avoid.¹⁴

Samuel Marchbanks, it would appear, had escaped the repressions and rationalism which had been foisted upon the people as a result of their Puritan-Protestantism. Sutherland had pointed out that in Canada, unlike in the United States,

¹⁴ Davies, "The Double Life of Robertson Davies," p. 400.

"in addition to the Puritan ethos, the Calvinistic doctrine had also prevailed, both among Protestants--Scottish Presbyterianism being especially strong--and among Roman Catholics, Jansenism."¹⁵ Samuel Marchbanks was definitely what Hilda Kirkwood called, "a sort of displaced person from a less suppressed age."¹⁶

Samuel Marchbanks was not the only creation of Davies in the 1940's through which he reacted to this Protestant/Puritan/Calvinistic/Jansenist¹⁷ stranglehold on Canadian society. Between 1940 and 1950, he had written a number of plays in which the problems caused by religion must be considered the underlying theme. Through the persona of Samuel Marchbanks, he had made quick thrusts and parries at the solemnity of Canadians; in the plays, he deepened the thrusts. Each of the plays examined a particular problem which was becoming visible in the religious beliefs of man. Most of the plays were directly presented as

¹⁵ Sutherland, The New Hero, p. 216.

¹⁶ Hilda Kirkwood, "Robertson Davies," Canadian Forum, 30 (1950), p. 59.

¹⁷ The Protestant Reformation had begun as a result of attempts to correct certain excesses of the Roman Catholic Church. Over the course of the next few centuries, various other forms of protest had attempted to cleanse Christianity of all extraneous influences, leading Christians to pursue the perfect life in this world as a way of consolidating their relationship with God. The names of these movements varied, but an overriding emphasis on the necessity to live a life free from sin was common to all of them. For purposes of this thesis, no further attempt will be made to distinguish specific formulations of this cleansing propensity; all such influences will be referred to as Puritan-Protestant.

satires of Canadian provincial society. In them Davies scrutinized the effect of religion on the emotional life (Overlaid and Eros at Breakfast), the intellectual life (The Voice of the People), the spiritual life (At the Gates of the Righteous), and the aesthetic life (in the past, At My Heart's Core and Hope Deferred; in the present, Fortune My Foe). The general problem of the role of religion in an increasingly empiricist society was examined in King Phoenix. It is interesting to note that in the contemporary reviews of these plays, the religious element was virtually un-noticed. The review of King Phoenix, for example, stated:

The story involves plots and counter-plots at the court of Old King Cole in ancient Albion; it culminates in his sacrificial death and triumphant spiritual victory. The significance of all this is unfortunately very slightly and hazily developed and the occasional moments of amusing conversation cannot make up for that.¹⁸

Davies has not said precisely when he became interested in the problem of religion but his Oxford dissertation, Shakespeare's Boy Actors (1939), included a number of references to the changes taking place in Elizabethan society because of religious developments. Davies had remarked upon the changes in attitude to the theatre which had been noticeable first from the attacks on the theatre by the Puritans in the late sixteenth century, and second,

¹⁸Vincent Tovell, rev. King Phoenix, University of Toronto Quarterly, 20 (1951), p. 275.

from the rise to power of the Puritans following the Restoration. In both cases he found the attitude of the Puritans detrimental to the autonomy of the dramatist to depict the full range of human actions and emotions. The Elizabethan audience had not looked to drama for moral instruction:

Before the Restoration the audience at the playhouse consisted of chiefly two elements: the first of these was the groundlings who were pleased accordingly as the play gratified their simple desire for violent action, broad comedy, flaming words, or patriotic drumbeating; the second was the gentlefolk, who judged the play by classical standards, or by fashionable standards if they were wits. Neither of these elements was concerned about morals; the first wanted excitement, the second a more refined aesthetic gratification; the first despite the Reformation was Catholic in its attitude to right and wrong; the second, with its Renaissance ideal of the free individual strove to recognize no barrier between right and wrong. Together they did not form an ideal audience for a poet, but they were infinitely preferable to that which was to be his lot when the Puritans began to be theatre goers. (SBA, p. 179)

One of the main changes in the attitude toward the drama following the Restoration had been the prevalence of what Davies called the "Hebraic" attitude toward art (SBA, p. 180). This was an attitude which the Puritans had gleaned from the prohibition against the making of images in the Old Testament. In Elizabethan times, they had condemned plays as "quite contrary to the word of grace and sucked out of the devil's teats to nourish us in idolatry, heathenry and sin" (SBA, p. 10).

In 1940's Canada, Samuel Marchbanks had insisted that the old conflict between Hebraism and Hellenism was visibly present in the differences in attitude to youth and pleasure between Montreal and Toronto. In Toronto:

They seem to say, "I am a plain blunt fellow, and I scorn subterfuge; the flesh may be weak but the spirit is of brass. In Montreal on the contrary, fanciful wigs are worn by old men, and cruel stays are endured by them, as a tribute to the charm of youth and beauty. (TISM, p. 218)

Needless to say, Samuel Marchbanks had no difficulty in deciding which attitude he preferred, ". . . upon the whole I plump for Hellenism even when it means wigs and circling-les [sic]" (TISM, p. 218).

Although in Elizabethan times, attacks on the theatre had come from what Davies had called a "comparatively small band of fanatics" (SBA, p. 179), following the Restoration and the rise to power of these Puritans, there had been a tremendous change in the character and aesthetic outlook of the audience. The new theatre-going class was primarily the shopkeeping and merchant class which was,

distinctively Protestant with all the Protestant concern for the moral superiority of the individual, and the Protestant brand of introspection, and the Protestant as opposed to the Catholic brand of hypocrisy. (SBA, p. 179)

The Elizabethan Puritans had been convinced that the "play-house was a hot bed of vice" (SBA, p. 12), and their descendants who had become influential after the Restoration were scarcely less suspicious:

They were a class ignorant of aesthetics, and suspicious of passion, and as its power grew it evolved its own aesthetic standards and its own notions of the permissible aspects of passion and imposed them on the theatre. (SBA, p. 180)

The new aesthetic standards were firmly based on the religious convictions of the new Puritanism which had its "own standards of social conduct derived partly from the obvious interests of the commercial classes, partly from its conception of the nature of God and the destiny of man."¹⁹

According to Tawney, there were two main beliefs of the Puritan theology which had a significant effect on the formation of a new social outlook. The first was strictly theological:

While the revelation of God to the individual soul is the centre of all religion, the essence of Puritan theology was that it made it, not only the centre, but the whole circumference and substance, dismissing as dross and vanity all but this secret and solitary communion. Grace alone can save, and this grace is the direct gift of God, unmediated by any earthly institution. The elect cannot by any act of their own evoke it, but they can prepare their hearts to receive it and cherish it when received. They will prepare them best if they empty them of all that may disturb the intentness of the lonely vigil.²⁰

¹⁹ Tawney, p. 230.

²⁰ Tawney, p. 227.

The second belief arose out of the first, and involved a virtual contradiction of previous Christian ethics,

Convinced that character is all and circumstances nothing, he [the Puritan-Protestant] sees in the poverty of those who fall by the way, not a misfortune to be pitied and relieved but a moral failing to be condemned, and in riches, not an object of suspicion--though like other gifts they may be abused--but the blessing which rewards the triumph of energy and will.²¹

These Puritans were suspicious of most aspects of human life which weakened the rigid self-discipline which they had imposed upon themselves. The grace of God would not descend into a vessel that was not fit to receive it. Fitness meant keeping that vessel free from the sins and temptations of the world, primarily through a never-ending, regimen of work.

In the late 1930's, Davies considered that the attitudes toward art which Puritanism fostered were still influential in English and North American society, because,

a large part of almost every audience in England or America today has a Protestant Puritan background however much it may be grimed over, and the League of Decency organized by the Roman Catholic Church is in many aspects borrowed from Protestantism. (SBA, p. 180)

His conviction that this attitude was still causing the arts problems was articulated in the 1940's again when Samuel Marchbanks, that robust anti-Puritan observed, after listening to a broadcast of Shakespeare's Richard III done

²¹Tawney, pp. 229-30.

by the Old Vic Company that:

Shakespeare would never be able to get a job writing for the CBC because he insists on dealing with controversial topics and uses language which would bring a flood of complaining letters from the Holy Name Society of St. Jean de Crabtree Mills (P.Q.) and the Ladies Art, Culture and Poker-work and China-painting Club of Pelvis (Sask.).²²

In remarks such as this from Samuel Marchbanks, Davies not only delineated the censorious attitude toward the arts which existed in Canada, but he also revealed the tension arising when the two value systems clash. This tension arose from the dichotomy of the outwardly placid and conformist appearance Canadians presented to the world and their inner dreams, doubts and beliefs. In an interview with Peter C. Newman, he articulated his vision of this problem:

A lot of people complain that my novels aren't about Canada. I think they are because I see Canada as a country torn between a very northern mystical spirit (rather extraordinary) which it fears and its desire to present itself to the world as a Scotch banker.²³

In Hope Deferred (1948) he satirically denounced the Puritanism which had become influential in the seventeenth century as a demonic force which had, in its insistence

²²R. Davies, The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1947), p. 98. Subsequent references to this publication will use the abbreviation DSM included in the text followed by the page reference.

²³R. Davies, "The Table Talk of Robertson Davies," in The Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies, p. 314.

on simplistic piety and capitalistic enterprise as the highest values of human life, forced the native spirit of the country into involuntary exile. A few years before he wrote this play, Davies had told Canadians:

There are many reasons why Canadians should revere Quebec, but the best two in my opinion are that the first play to be seen in Canada--Le Cid by Corneille was performed here in 1646, and the first licensed premises were opened there in 1648. Obviously the citizens of Quebec had a clearer idea of what is necessary to the life of a man three hundred years ago than some of our Canadian cities have today.²⁴

According to Hope Deferred, this clarity of vision about the necessities of life was not long-lived, owing to the intervention of the Jansenist (Puritan) influence in the Roman Catholic Church.

In Shakespeare's Boy Actors, Davies had noted that "It is a Protestant Puritan notion that the good artist must also be a good man" (SBA, p. 181), and that "the chief Puritan objection to a play merely as a play was that it was an untruth, and so harmful to the public morality" (SBA, p. 10). In Hope Deferred, a play set in Quebec in 1693, less than fifty years after the establishment of theatre, Davies portrayed the demise of that theatre--the victim of Jansenism.

In the play Count Frontenac and his protégé, Chimène, were celebrating Chimène's return to Canada and discussing

²⁴ R. Davies, "Gallimaufry," Saturday Night, 19 July 1941, p. 23.

his plans for the production of Molière's play Tartuffe when they were interrupted by the arrival of the Bishop, Monseigneur de Laval, and the Bishop-Coadjutor, Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier. Shortly thereafter, the purpose of their visit was made clear; Saint-Vallier had determined that in the best interests of the people, the production of Tartuffe would have to be terminated.

The three clergymen mentioned in the play appear symbolic of the three reactions of Puritanism in its rise to power in both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. The clergyman whom the audience never sees, the Abbé Glandelet, was representative of early Puritanism. Just as the early Puritans in Shakespeare's day had been a minority whose anti-theatrical opinions could be dismissed with ridicule, in Hope Deferred, Abbé Glandelet was ineffective. However, like the Elizabethan Puritans, he insisted "No one can attend a play without incurring mortal sin."²⁵ The Abbé Glandelet had become as zealous as any Elizabethan English Puritan in his attitude toward the theatre. Moreover, as had happened with them, his attitude to sin had changed. The old mortal sins of the spirit, the Seven Deadly Sins of the Medieval Church (Anger, Avarice, Envy, Gluttony, Lust, Pride and Sloth) had been overshadowed in his concept of religion by a concern for the sins of the mundane world. Frontenac had

²⁵R. Davies, Hope Deferred, in Eros At Breakfast and Other Plays (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1949), p. 65. Subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated HD, and included in the text with page references.

been able to dismiss Abbé Glandelet's Puritanism with ridicule, "Glandelet is an old woman" (HD, p. 68), using essentially the same weapon against Glandelet as Elizabethan supporters of the theatre had used against the early Puritans.

However, the Puritanical convictions of the second clergyman, Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier could not so easily be dismissed. Although he was more worldly than the Abbé Glandelet, he, too, was distrustful of the theatre. His attitudes were symbolic of those of the Puritanism which had become firmly established by the English Restoration. Like this Puritanism, he presented a danger to the theatre in particular, the arts in general. Saint-Vallier, who considered himself a "man of the world" (HD, p. 65) was willing to admit that plays could be attended, provided that "a distinction . . . be made between plays which are innocent in their nature . . . and those plays which are irremediably bad and criminal in themselves" (HD, p. 66). Saint-Vallier's attitude embodied that of the element of the Puritan movement which had developed what Davies in Shakespeare's Boy Actors termed the "Hebraic" attitude toward art (SBA, p. 180). Molière's play could not be performed because it was evil (HD, p. 67) because its author Molière was evil, "he had been buried in unconsecrated ground" (HD, p. 68) and because it presented "piety in an unfavourable light" (HD, p. 67). Saint-Vallier, like the Post-Restoration Puritans, had externalized his notions of piety and of goodness in such

a way that the ideal Christian society was one from which all evil had been banned: "When I first came here, it appeared to me to be an Arcadia of thriving farmers, honest tradesmen, a small but active and sympathetic nobility, and simple children of nature eager for the Truth and the Light: But I was mistaken" (HD, p. 70).

Saint-Vallier had in this argument, set forth a major belief of the rational Christianity which had emerged in the seventeenth century that, "The best ally of theology was natural philosophy. God could be seen in and through his creation."²⁶ However, as society grew and the wilderness receded, he feared that "a dangerous latitude of thought, a thoroughgoing modernism" (HD, p. 71) had set in and he felt there was only one way to combat it, "with more missionaries, more strictness and a shining example of piety" (HD, p. 71). In order to make Canada good and great, the arts, such as the plays of Molière, must not be allowed to undermine the simplistic ideas of the citizenry. Moreover, "the people who came here to make a new country do not long for it [drama] and often do not know it exists" (HD, p. 73).

In the Canada of the 1940's, Davies had detected the influence of just such Puritanical attitudes to the theatre in the attitudes of those whom he called the 'do-gooders'. In his submission to The Royal Commission on National

²⁶ Paul Johnson, A History of Christianity (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1976), p. 333.

Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, he had argued for the establishment of a national theatre for Canada which would, among other things, be free from the influence of these do-gooders:

Never forget those well-meaning enemies of art. They are the people who will not allow the theatre to be its own justification. The theatre is educational; and recreative. But it is not primarily so. It is first of all an art, and it is as a form of art that it stands or falls. Let people get their hands on it who regard it as means of spreading some sort of education dear to themselves, or who think that it is a social medicine, and you will kill it dead as a doornail.²⁷

The third clergyman, Monseigneur de Laval, the Bishop, had not engaged in the debate, preferring to devote himself to his chief aim "which is to know and adore my Saviour" (HD, p. 74). It was quite clear from Monseigneur de Laval's conversation with Frontenac after Saint-Vallier had left, that he had, like Pop in Overlaid been overlaid by Saint-Vallier's belief in his own rightness, and had no strength left to fight it: "Do not despair, Mademoiselle; these things you love so much may come--after a time. . . . After 70 years in this world I find it harder to give comfort than I did when I was 30" (HD, p. 75).

²⁷ R. Davies, "A Selection of Essays Prepared for the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences," Ottawa, 1951, rpt. "A Dialogue on the State of Theatre in Canada: 1951," in The Well-Tempered Critic, pp. 56-57.

Frontenac and Chimène, representing respectively the force to establish the arts in the new country and the hopes and dreams of the new country, were soundly defeated. Chimène, who pleaded for a continuance of theatre because "goodness without the arts demands a simplicity bordering on the idiotic" (HD, p. 74), found her perception gave her no choice but exile from her native land. Frontenac, who understood clearly what had been happening, revealed the relationship which had developed between the values of capitalism and the spirit of the new religion:

You saw how it was. Trade makes its demand and morality backs it up . . . they are so sure they are right that they bend us to their will when our health and minds tell us they are wrong. There is no tyranny like the tyranny of organized virtue. (HD, p. 76)

The emerging Canadian spirit which had been symbolized by the open-mindedness of both the new Canadian, Champlain, and the native, Chimène, had retreated in the face of this organized virtue, and as Davies' later works indicated had been subjected to serious malnutrition.

As early as 1941, in a review of Emily Carr's Klee Wyck, he had indicated his dualistic view of the Canadian spirit:

Miss Carr has the greatness of outlook which any artist must have, who hopes to understand a primitive people. The totem poles are to her revelations of age-old ways of thought and strong compelling beliefs. . . .

She knew the totems as an artist and not an anthropologist and it is an artistic insight which illumines the pages of Klee

Myck making it a great revelation of that secret Canada which is hidden from us poor sojourners in a strangeland.²⁸

In Hope Deferred he had embodied this spirit of secret Canada in Chimène and shown it to have been made inaccessible to the majority of Canadians.

However, 'hope deferred' is not hope lost, and Chimène did not die, she merely went into exile. Davies' major thrust of the 1940's was to promote the desire in Canadians to bring that spirit back from its voluntary exile even though the "tyranny of organized virtue" (HD, p. 76) appeared firmly entrenched. With each play he wrote, Davies' prescription for the psychic ills of the country became a little clearer.²⁹

As Davies had established in Shakespeare's Boy Actors, the Puritan movement in England had been no less suspicious than Saint-Vallier of the "frivolity, license and asking dangerous questions" (HD, p. 73) of the great dramas of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. R.H. Tawney had established in Religion and the Rise of Capitalism that

²⁸ R. Davies, "The Revelations of Emily Carr," Saturday Night, 8 November 1941, p. 18.

²⁹ This analysis of Davies' interpretation of the Canadian psyche completely contradicts a statement made by Nancy Bjerring in her article "Deep in the Old Man's Puzzle." She says that "At no time does Davies probe the Canadian psyche with any depth or clarity of vision; he contents himself with exposing Canadian gaucherie with a decided tone of derision." It would appear that Ms. Bjerring has herself not probed beyond the surface of what Davies was saying. N. Bjerring, "Deep in the Old Man's Puzzle," Canadian Literature, 62 (1974), p. 49.

what is required of the Puritan is not individual meritorious acts but a holy life--a system in which every element is grouped around a central idea, the service of God, from which all disturbing irrelevancies have been pruned, and to which all minor interests are subordinated. . . . In order to deepen his spiritual life, the Christian must be prepared to narrow it. . . . Luxury, unrestrained pleasure, personal extravagance can have no place in a Christian's conduct. (pp. 241-42)

In a review of John Steinbeck's The Forgotten Village, Davies had pointed out that such a refined society was not necessarily a more delightful one. Steinbeck, he said, had written about

life in a Mexican community, untouched by what we wrongly call civilization, and preserving a way of life which is a mixture of Seventeenth Century Catholic Spain and the old customs of the Aztecs. Life there is dirty, cruel and unreasoning, but the inhabitants seem to get a great deal of fun out of it.³⁰

As Samuel Marchbanks, who tried hard to get some fun out of his life, he had pointed out that "man in the natural state is a vainglorious creature, it is only when he puts on the shackles of civilization that he becomes shamed and slinking" (DSM, p. 71). Many of these "shackles of civilization" had arisen as a result of the Puritan work ethic:

In their emphasis on the moral duty of untiring activity, of work as an end in itself, on the evils of luxury and extravagance, on foresight and thrift, on moderation and self-discipline and

³⁰ R. Davies, "Picture Books for Adults," Saturday Night, 12 July 1941, p. 17.

moral asceticism, they [the Puritan moralists] had created an ideal for Christian conduct which canonized as an ethical principle the efficiency which economic theorists were preaching as a specific for social disorders.³¹

Samuel Marchbanks, who was depicted as having emphatically rejected this Puritan work ethic, declared with some pride:

I hate work, regarding it as the curse of Adam, and am fully in sympathy with the medieval view that work is an ignoble way of passing the time, beneath the dignity of anyone of fine feelings and intelligence. (DSM, p. 59)

As Samuel Marchbanks, Davies also had openly and loudly repudiated both the Puritan distrust of emotions and its "calculating commercialism which tries all human relations by pecuniary standards."³² His weapons--both offensive and defensive--were humour and satire:

I had a letter this morning from some association which is agitating for the repeal of the Sales Tax, which is, its pamphlet assured me, a straight violation of the laws of God. This is fascinating. Not long ago, one of the larger Canadian churches notified me of its intention to prepare a statement of God's will concerning marriage. How lucky we are to live in a country where God's will and His Laws are so thoroughly understood and so zealously publicized. (TSM, pp. 83-84)

Samuel Marchbanks lived in society but refused to be governed by its stern Christian ethics,

³¹Tawney, p. 246.

³²Tawney, p. 247.

for there is nothing I like better than contradicting people and shouting them down. I am rude on principle for there are too many books in the world who like to trade on the politeness of others in order to air their own ineptitude. I like to go among people and mock and jeer. I am anti-social but I like society.³³

Samuel Marchbanks was apparently no more an eccentric in his world than Robertson Davies himself appeared to be to some of the early reviewers of his work: "His [Davies'] carefully cultivated bizarre appearance, utterly at variance with his apparent temperament, can only be interpreted as a deliberate challenge to the anti-esthetic [sic] prejudices of the Philistines on whom he wars."³⁴ In contrast to most of the people around him, whose conviction of the rightness of their outlook was unshakable, Marchbanks refused to be one-sided. Even in matters of religion, he would keep an open mind:

Somebody sent me a clipping which attempts to prove that the drinking of mead was given its death blow by the Reformation. The implication is that the Reformation was therefore a Bad Thing. It may be so, I never can decide the matter to my own satisfaction. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays I am a rollicking Chestertonian medievalist, shrieking against the Reformation, exulting in any manifestation of unreason, and shoving wads of my shirt-tail into delicate machines to harm them, and show their inferiority; on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, I am a fiery-eyed

³³ Davies, "The Double Life of Robertson Davies," p. 398.

³⁴ Simon Payntor, Rev. of The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks, Canadian Forum, 27 (1948), p. 284.

Puritan, attempting to reconcile modern progress with the blackest Old Testament morality, and yelling for a church which is both completely secular and all-powerful. On Sundays, I rest from these theological exercises and read Voltaire. (TSM, p. 218)

What did reading Voltaire have to offer Marchbanks?

Voltaire (1694-1778) had

made the greater part of his work the vehicle for his philosophy. While affirming the existence of the deity, he condemned all dogmatic religions . . . attributing to these an ignorance and superstition which he regarded as the worst scourges of humanity. The dominant trait of his writings on political as well as religious subjects is lack of respect for existing institutions and contempt for authority.³⁵

That Voltaire was able to provide Marchbanks with respite from theological considerations was symbolic of an attitude to religion which would become more and more characteristic of Davies--the attempt to find a new balance between apparent contradictions. The Puritanism Canada had inherited had not been the idealistic Puritanism of the seventeenth century but the Puritanism which had been transformed by the eighteenth century empiricists to a kind of rational Christianity. The educated upper classes in England had been influential in effecting this change, and leading the revolution in religious outlook had been John Locke. The compromise system he devised was applied primarily by the

³⁵ Sir Paul Harvey, comp. The Oxford Companion to English Literature, 4th ed. rev. by Dorothy Eagle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 864.

Church of England, but was influential in other churches as well. Locke's system of belief

went a long way to satisfying the needs of the commercial middle class of the towns, and it did so without driving a wedge between science and learning on the one hand and institutional religion on the other. . . . But . . . in its anxiety to dispel dangerous "enthusiasm", and avoid any kind of fanaticism, it presented a Christianity which was part cerebral, part ceremonial and wholly purged of emotion.³⁶

Somewhere in this transformation, the transcendental relationship between God and individual man was lost. For many Christians who accepted this rationalistic Christianity, the result was an approach to life which Davies called "lop-sided." The result of such a lop-sided life, he said, in 1962, was 'Acedie'--the deadliest of the sins.

To be guilty of Acedie is not necessarily to be physically sluggish at all. You can be busy as a bee. You can fill your days with activity, bustling from meeting to meeting, sitting on committees, running from one party to another in a perfect whirlwind of movement. But if, meanwhile, your feelings and sensibilities are withering, if your relationships with people near you are becoming more and more superficial, if you are losing touch even with yourself, it is Acedie which has claimed you for its own.³⁷

Throughout all the years of his existence, Samuel Marchbanks was a self-declared enemy of Acedie. He had been the first of what Davies would later call "the life-enhancing

³⁶ Johnson, p. 365.

³⁷ Davies, "The Deadliest of Sins," p. 65.

people,"³⁸ a wizard, "a man with unusual knowledge of the human heart and the power of insight into the future."³⁹

He had refused to be browbeaten by an attitude which could see nothing but the concrete, and value nothing but the practical:

I was talking to a man today who complained that there were no towers on Marchbanks Towers and that the name, therefore, was a cheat. I explained to him that, although no towers of brick and mortar were to be seen, it possessed several spiritual and incorporeal towers--soaring pinnacles of aspiration and romance, vast fingers of fantasy reaching into the sky. He looked unconvinced and asked me if the house was insulated. (TTSM, p. 14)

In his first play published, Overlaid (1947), the battle which was waged between the two main characters, Pop and his daughter, Ethel, was a battle against the sin of Acedie. Pop had just found out that he would receive a substantial cheque from a life insurance policy he had paid into and forgotten about, and, as he speculated on the possibilities for pleasure the money held out to him, his value system was revealed. Pop, who was a literary cousin of Samuel Marchbanks, was a nonconformist to the rules and regulations of his rural society. "I'm happy and that's more than most of them can say around here. I'm the bohemian

³⁸R. Davies, Epilogue, At My Heart's Core and Overlaid, p. 92.

³⁹Gordon Roper, Introd., Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack, p. xiii.

set of Smith township, all in one man."⁴⁰ He had nothing but derision for Ethel's values.

His daughter Ethel, by contrast, had tried to live the good life according to the expectations of her church and society:

Why do you think I live the way I do?
Because it's right, first of all. And
there are rewards on earth, too, when I
walk into church or a meeting I know what
people say: they say: "There's Ethel
Cochran; she stands on her own two feet,
and never asks anything from anybody; she
has a hard enough row to hoe, too, but you
never hear a peep out of her. (Overlaid, p. 104)

Ethel had been strongly influenced by the Puritan ethic of self-reliance and self-discipline, and the rationalist Christian's sense of safety in emotionless dogmatism and ritual. Satisfying these two outlooks meant there was no compromise possible, and Ethel lived a severely restricted emotional life.

Pop was what Davies, in the Epilogue to the play, called "one of the life-enhancing people and Ethel is one of the life-diminishing people. Society is the battleground where these two armies fight continually for supremacy" (Overlaid, p. 116).

In Freudian terminology, the tension between Pop and Ethel was the microcosmic representation of the opposition between Eros, the life instinct, and the death instinct

⁴⁰ R. Davies, Overlaid, in At My Heart's Core and Overlaid, p. 92. Subsequent references to this play will be incorporated in the text in parentheses.

which takes place in every individual.⁴¹ In Pop, Eros had prevailed; in Ethel, the death instinct.

Davies had said that the play was

about intellectual deprivation. Pop has need of something that the circumstances of his life have provided in stingy quantity and poor quality. The larger world of imagination, romance and transporting emotions exists for him only as a Saturday afternoon radio programme. The people with whom he lives, and his neighbours, cannot understand what it means to him. (Overlaid, p. 115)

Why could they not understand Pop's need? What had happened to cause such aridness? In 1950, Hilda Kirkwood had partially answered these questions when she referred to Davies' having stirred in this play "the decadent Puritanism which has kept Canada a wasteland of indifference to the arts, and to the art of living. . . ."⁴²

As one of the life-enhancing people, Pop had refused to capitulate to what he called the "emotional under-stimulat[ion]" (Overlaid, p. 92) which affected Ethel and those whose lives were governed by the prevailing social and religious ethics. Pop had gone to great lengths to preserve that part of himself which was more valuable to him than the good opinion of the community, or the satisfaction of standing on his own two feet. What Pop valued and kept alive

⁴¹ See Freud's discussion on these opposing forces in Civilization and Its Discontents, SE XXI.

⁴² Kirkwood, Robertson Davies, p. 59

through his active involvement with the Saturday-afternoon opera broadcasts was something inside him which craved "what's warm--and kind of mysterious; somethin' to make you laugh and talk big and--" (Overlaid, p. 103).

Ethel's religion was a religion which like that of her mother was based on strict adherence to a moral code, self-discipline, and hard work:

'She worked like a nigger on this farm: we both did. When she wasn't workin' she was up to some religious didoes at the church. Then come forty-five or fifty she broke down and had to have a spell in the bug house. . . . More and more religion: more and more hell-raisin' at home. Folks say I drove her crazy. It's a lie. Emotional undernourishment is what done it, and it'll do the same for you. You and your sick headaches! (Overlaid, p. 92)

Ethel, following in her mother's footsteps, had denied both her emotional needs, "I won't have that kind of talk. . . . Emotion and that . . ." (Overlaid, p. 92), and her sexual needs, she refused to call Jim, her husband, 'Lover', "To a grown person it ain't--isn't decent" (Overlaid, p. 93). She was fearful of the idea of possessing a soul like Pop's which might need nourishment other than that provided by renunciation and good works: "You talk about your soul in a way that makes me blush" (Overlaid, p. 102).

Like Ethel, George Bailey, the insurance agent regarded Pop's desire for aesthetic and physical pleasures as the manifestations of an "unsound mind" (Overlaid, p. 100). Ethel's idea of beauty was "a granite headstone--gray . . . smooth finished on the faces but rough on the sides and top,

and the name on the base, cut deep. Dignified! Quiet! But the best quality--the finest in the cemetery" (Overlaid, p. 106). Ethel wanted to be rewarded for her sacrifices in this life, and just as her life had been lived entirely in the mundane world, her only idea of reward was equally of the mundane:

I've tried to follow where she [Mother] went. She deserves something and so do I. Missions, Temperance, the W.A.-- we've done our share and more. And when we're gone we deserve something that'll last. (Overlaid, p. 106)

Ethel's religious outlook appeared to have been based on the Puritan-Protestant principle of the necessity to regulate manners and morals "because it is through the minutiae of conduct that the enemy of mankind finds his way to the soul."⁴² However, Ethel's religion did not appear to encompass the spiritual or the transcendental. While her reputation in her community was of major concern, talk of a soul embarrassed her, and the peace of death seemed to promise the perfection that life in a mundane world lacked.

For Pop the concept of his immortal soul was an important one. Throughout his life he had fought in various ways against what he considered the starving and tormenting of the souls that the churches demanded of their people.

They're against God an' don't know it
they try to make God in their
own little image an' they can't do it

⁴² Tawney, p. 124.

same as you can't catch Niagara Falls
in a teacup. God likes music and naked
women and I'm happy to follow his
example. (Overlaid, p. 99)

Pop regarded aesthetic and sensual pleasure as food for his soul. Pop's concept of God as a happy fellow who not only enjoyed pleasure but would want his human creatures to do as well was just as simplistic, though in an opposite way, as Ethel's had been. Another difference lay in their opposing concepts of sin--for Ethel sin was anything which disturbed the social equilibrium, for Pop, the demands of society were sinful.

In 1966, Davies said that "It would be possible to re-write this play in high style calling the two characters Eros and Thanatos" (Overlaid, p. 116). The point he was trying to make was that Eros and Thanatos are names given to the manifestations of opposing irrational forces--the life instinct and the death instinct--that govern the life of this nation (macrocosm) as much as they do each individual (microcosm). Neither is in itself totally desirable--and in Freudian psychology the quality of ambivalence results from the opposition of these two forces. However, in this nation the latter, Thanatos, appears to prevail. This was much the same problem that Marchbanks had attacked in his satiric thrusts at the myths of our Canadian society. While his satire often used the element of hyperbole, he fought against the evidence that the death instinct (Thanatos) had 'overlaid' the life instinct (Eros) in Canadian society.

Ethel, for example, had obviously a personal "Thanatos" myth about the qualities of a lady, which was not far removed from Marchbanks' satiric definition of a lady in Canada:

A lady in Canada, is a dowdy and unappetizing mammal, who is much given to Culture and Good Works, but derives no sinful satisfaction from either; a Lady is without discernible sex, but can reproduce its kind by a system resembling radar; a Lady does not have to be attractive, because it is sufficient in this wicked world to be Good. There is nothing a Lady hates as much as a Woman, and women are occasionally sleek, ravishing and sexy. (TSM, p. 15)

Pop, on the other hand, was just as opposed as Marchbanks to the 'North American Way of Life'.

Devotion to routine and elaboration of routine are both characteristic of our North American way of life. Our approach to the business of living is not 'How can I make this as adventurous as possible', but 'How can I make this as stereotyped as possible'.⁴³

The individual with his intelligence, imagination, emotions and zest for life had become an anathema to a society which embraced "blackest Old Testament morality" (DSM, p. 218), which decreed that the emotion and passion aroused by art, or anything else for that matter, detracted from one's duty to God.

Davies, through his alter ego Samuel Marchbanks, had facetiously described the evolution of this outlook as

⁴³R. Davies, "Diary of a Work Despiser," Peterborough Examiner, 12 August 1944, p. 4.

derived from the inability to accept disappointment or failure in defense of an unrealistic wish for perfection.

I was eating a peach today when a pink worm about a half an inch long with an evil black head, crawled out of the stone and began to explore. I hastily disgorged everything that I had in my mouth, and watched the worm with a beady and hostile eye, like a bird. It is this quality in nature--worms in peaches, faithless hearts in pretty girls, and headaches in delicious drinks--which gives rise to Calvinism in religion and skepticism in philosophy. After a few pasty setbacks a man is likely to get the idea that there is a disappointment in every pleasure and a blackamoor in every woodpile. From this conclusion, it is a simple step to the belief that everything which seems fair and delightful is evil and should be forbidden. The easiest way to spare yourself disappointment is to go through life expecting the worst. But with praise-worthy courage I refused to fall into this intellectual trap, and chose another peach which was wormless and delicious. (TSM, p. 190)

Implicit in this attitude to the world was the propensity to equate the evil with the object, which had a concomitant belief that to eschew the object is to eschew evil. Evil, no longer the spiritual force which had once been objectified in the devil, had in twentieth century Canada been invested in peculiar things:

. . . after the last war it was rolled stockings which were nibbling at the foundations of the universe. What fascinated me at the time was that the evil power lay in the female patella itself, not in any beauty it might exhibit. Men's knees were not harmful. . . . But any female knee, however like a cabbage or the skull of a goat it might be in appearance, was charged with vice,

and the male who beheld it was in danger of being turned to stone, as if he beheld the face of the Gorgon. (TSM, p. 75)

This was an attitude to evil which Davies would later describe as Manichaeism.

Although complex in nature it (Manichaeism) may be briefly summarized thus:

the followers of Manichee, believing that Satan is co-eternal with God, believed also that certain material things were the special instruments of Satan and were therefore incapable of any good use.⁴⁴

In Overlaid, Davies had begun the process of trying to understand the significance of religion in a man's life by coming to an understanding of the constitution of a man's psyche. The opposed personifications of the death instincts (Ethel) and the life instincts (Pop), were manifestations of concepts basic to Freudian psychology. The aetiology of the 'headaches' from which Ethel suffered, and of her mother's 'spell in the bughouse' (Overlaid, p. 92), can be found in Freud's concept of the relationship between repression and neurosis.⁴⁵

The mother's loss of reality, as reported by Pop, "she used to think the Baptist preacher was chasin' her to cut the buttons off her boots, but that was as far as she

⁴⁴ R. Davies, "Anglicans and Manichee," Peterborough Examiner, 27 May 1950, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Freud, "Five Lectures in Psychoanalysis," SE XI:27.

got" (Overlaid, p. 99), was also based on Freudian theory.⁴⁶ The connection between Freudian psychology and this play serves to underscore the complexity of the play, for, as Freudian analysis makes clear, it was not only Pop who had been 'overlaid' but Ethel and her mother as well. Their religious outlook had 'overlaid' their instincts for survival so devastatingly that the mother had rejected reality, and the daughter could see no beauty, except in the peace of death.

Overlaid and Hope Deferred, which has been discussed earlier, are the most pessimistic of Davies' plays, for in them the characters, who represented the opposition to the subtractive emphasis of Puritan-Protestantism had been defeated by the strength of conviction of those who truly believed they were right. The remainder of his plays do not permit such a complete victory--in fact, their emphasis lies either on those characters who refused to be 'overlaid' any longer or with the revelation of the inner poverty and blindness of those who, like Ethel, have been 'overlaid'. In these latter plays, the moral victory, if such a description is permissible, is inevitably a victory over social bigotry resulting from Puritan-Protestantism in its various manifestations. As the forces of Thanatos prevailed in Hope Deferred and Overlaid, they continue to prevail in the

⁴⁶Freud, "The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis," SE XIX:183-87.

remainder of the plays of the 1940's, but their victory is becoming an uneasy one--as Davies increasingly depicts a new determination to reassert the values of the humanist.

In the early 1940's, Samuel Marchbanks had been a lone voice crying out against the follies and foibles of a society blinded by "the tyranny of organized virtue" (HD, p. 76). By the late 1940's, he was no longer alone. In the plays of the late 1940's and even the Marchbanks columns themselves, which had become "The Marchbanks Correspondence" in 1949,⁴⁷ characters who like Samuel Marchbanks exposed or rejected the immobilizing effects of this self-righteous moral superiority began to appear more frequently and to fight back--even if their victories were small ones.

⁴⁷ On September 3, 1949, the Samuel Marchbanks columns appeared headed "The Marchbanks Correspondence" and continued in this format until the end of 1950. Most of the correspondence in these columns was published by Davies in 1967 as the correspondence in Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack. The letters cover a wide variety of topics and the correspondents are representative of a wide range of society.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POOR IN SPIRIT¹

The remainder of Davies' plays written between 1948 and 1950 depicted a society in which the majority had been 'overlaid' by a religious outlook which "still [clung] to its sombre Puritan Past. [and] . . . subconsciously believ[ed] that everything gay, lively, colourful or enjoyable is somehow sinful."² In Hope Deferred and Overlaid Davies depicted some aspects of religion as promulgating repressive forces on the lives of individuals. Although Pop in Overlaid had stridently refused to accept society's notion of God, he had not really offered an acceptable alternative. The defeat of Pop and Frontenac and Chimène did not signify that Davies condemned religion--such an impression would be erroneous in the extreme. He did, however, criticize that modern religious outlook which had been overlaid by its own institutional distortions, and which in turn had overlaid the Canadian spirit. As usual, Samuel Marchbanks had pertinent comments on this problem:

¹Davies, The Table Talk of Samuel Marchbanks, p. 176.

²Pierre Burton, The Comfortable Pew. A Critical Look at Christianity and the Religious Establishment in the New Age (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), p. 106.

Everybody I meet these days seems to be suffering from one or more of the Four Doldrums which are guaranteed by our Canadian Way of Life--Doldrum from Want, Doldrum from Fear, Doldrum from Religion, and Doldrum of Speech. . . . My dullness is so complete and all-embracing that it constitutes a new kind of mystical experience--the merging of the Null with the Void. Shall I found a new religion? A Cult of Blaa? So much of modern religion is imbued with a busy dullness that the world might welcome a nice, passively dull faith, specifically designed for the poor in spirit. (TSM, pp. 175-76)

As an exercise in perfectionism, Christianity cannot and should not succeed--the sacrifices such a lop-sided perfectionism demand are too great.

One of Davies' initial challenges was to the religiosity of the "uninstructed majority . . . [who] never look below the surface."³ The jeers and hyperbole of Samuel Marchbanks had exposed the shallowness of many of society's "obstacles to the flowering of the human spirit,"⁴ but Marchbanks, like Pop, had functioned primarily as a foil to challenge the moral certainties of his society.

What was needed now was a means of forcing people to look beyond the surface--to explore these aspects of themselves that their drive to perfection had forced them to deny. In Eros at Breakfast (1948), King Phoenix (1948), and Fortune My Foe (1948), Davies employed his knowledge of

³R. Davies, Fortune My Foe in Four Favourite Plays (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1968), p. 119.

⁴Simon Payntor, rev. of The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks, Canadian Forum, 27 (1948), p. 284.

psychology and his belief in the humanities and humanism to depict alternatives to the prevailing outlooks of both the individual and his society. In the process, his depiction of the relationship between a revised religious outlook and the psychic health of the individual emerged as a realizable alternative. As most readers are not as cognizant of Davies' plays as they are of his Marchbanks' books and his novels, the plays of this period will be examined in some detail.

Eros at Breakfast was, Davies explained in the Preface to Four Favourite Plays, "rooted in the idea that intellectual disturbances can bring about painful physical consequences, and that is, after all, one of Sigmund Freud's most basic pronouncements."⁵ The intellectual disturbance of this play had occurred as a result of the arousal of Mr. P.S.'s (Psyche and Soma) repressed sexual instincts. The battleground was in the soul of the individual; the armies, the forces of the Rational Intelligence (Aristophontes), and the Irrational Instinct (Parmeno). Mediating the battle was Chremes, the "permanent head of . . . the departmental bureau of Mr. P.S.'s soul into which you are now looking . . . called the Solar Plexus."⁶

As the play opened, Mr. P.S. appeared to be a young man whose soul or inner self had been emaciated by the asceticism

⁵ Davies, Pref., Four Favourite Plays, p. v.

⁶ R. Davies, Eros at Breakfast, in Four Favourite Plays, p. 5. Subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated EB and included in parentheses in the text.

and morality imposed upon it by his Protestant Christianity. He had just met a lovely young girl, and had fallen in love. His sexual instinct had been aroused, and with it, in the theory of Freudian psychology, the whole creative aspect of his personality. This arousal apparently had disrupted the life plan outlined for Mr. P.S. by Aristophontes--his intelligence--a life plan which would have ensured worldly success with the minimum of internal disturbances. Mr. P.S. had until now been a young man with "no doubts about religion, no doubts about politics . . . no tiresome intellectual curiosity of any sort; a thoroughly solid young Canadian . . ." (EB, p. 8) whose 'baser instincts' had been restrained. When Hepatica the liver, which Freud had equated with the seat of passion,⁷ sang a naughty song with sexual connotations, Aristophontes reacted strongly: "Stop it! Stop it at once. It makes me shiver to hear you. Are you aware that Mr. P.S. is a member of a Continuing Presbyterian family?" (EB, p. 18). According to Aristophontes, it was his duty, as the Intelligence of a Canadian, to "be a curb on his baser instincts" (EB, p. 21).

All the physical and emotional elements in P.S., the Heart (Parmeno) and Liver (Hepatica), respectively, his emotional needs of love and beauty, and his physical sexuality, allied themselves with Chremes (the Solar Plexus) against Aristophontes (the Intelligence) to allow the

⁷Freud, "Group Psychology," SE XVIII:141-42.

student to have his love affair. In the course of the play they convinced Aristophontes that, if he refused to allow Mr. P.S.'s natural needs, both physical and emotional, to have some sway, the result could well be a form of mental incapacity which would overwhelm the rational intelligence. Chremes explained the effects of repression of this kind in Freudian terms:

Do you want us to destroy you, Aristophontes? That often happens, you know, when the intelligence becomes too overbearing toward the other departments. Sometimes it means disease, and sometimes madness, but it always means destruction. (EB, p. 22)

In her 1976 article, "The Comedy Company of the Psyche," Patricia Morley had suggested that

the fact that young Mr. P.S. is composed of four departments, and the dramatizing of the different parts of Mr. P.S. through different actors suggests that the play is an earlier form of the Jungian theories which matured in General Confession.⁸

Although she had detected a relationship between two of these elements and the Jungian archetypes of the Magus and the Anima, the relationship appears forced. Freudian psychology, which connects physical health and intellectual well-being with a balancing of the opposing instincts, would appear more appropriate in the context of the play.

Moreover, the opinions and reactions of Aristophontes were a close approximation to what Freud had said about the demands society makes on the individual:

⁸Patricia Morley, "The Comedy Company of the Psyche," p. 15.

Society . . . has set up a high ideal of morality--morality being restriction of the instincts--and insists that all its members shall fulfil that ideal without troubling itself with the possibility that obedience may weigh heavily on the individual.⁹

Aristophontes' comment that "A Canadian's Intelligence is not an instrument of fun . . . it is a curb upon his baser instincts" (EB, p. 21) would make the Intelligence the instrument of social morality.

The Puritan revolution not only brought about changes in man's view of himself, but it had also encouraged a new attitude toward science and technology. As a result, the new rationalistic, empiricist philosophy in which the perception of God as a transcendent personal God who sometimes intervened in man's world had undergone a profound change. The old transcendent God became associated with the supernatural, superstitions and myths, while the new Science rapidly promoted a demythologized, depersonalized God who was "Prime Mover of the Universe."¹⁰

In King Phoenix (1948), Davies examined just such aspects of a clash between opposing belief systems, not in terms of the Enlightenment and nineteenth century Christianity, but through the depiction of a battle of wills which

⁹Freud, "Resistance to Psychoanalysis," SE XIX:219.

¹⁰See Johnson, The History of Christianity, especially Part six, "Faith, Reason and Unreason," pp. 331-98, for the development of this rational Christianity especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

took place between Cadno, the high priest of the Druids, and his sovereign, King Cole, that "Merry Old Soul" of English nursery-rhyme fame. As the play opened, Cadno was disgruntled because his attempts to have King Cole murdered had failed. Cadno wanted to dispose of King Cole because he stood in the way of what Cadno believed was necessary progress. The demise of Cole would, in Cadno's view, have brought about

An awakening, a New Dawn! Our skill in building, in astrology and in artifice of every sort is the grosser manifestation of a new spirit in the men of Albion. . . . The time is now ripe for great changes in the lives and hearts of the people of this kingdom. Very broadly it might be called a change from the domination of Nature to the domination of Artifice.¹¹

If everything had proceeded as Cadno planned, Nature would have been disciplined, trained and made to work for man. Cadno would have become the high priest of a new religion dedicated to science and technology but based on illusion/

because the people will be unaware of what has happened. They will not understand its real import. They will accept it as religion rather than science. For ordinary men that is best. Religions can be swallowed whole and credulity can be made a virtue. (KP, p. 117)

In this new glorification of science becoming the 'illusion' of religion for the masses, Cadno's attitude to

¹¹R. Davies, King Phoenix, in Hunting Stuart and Other Plays, New Drama 3 (Toronto: New Press, 1972), p. 116. Subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated KP and incorporated in parentheses in the text.

religion bore a remarkable resemblance to the attitude acknowledged by Sigmund Freud in The Future of an Illusion:

We believe that it is possible for scientific work to gain some knowledge about the reality of the world, by means of which we can arrange our life. (SE XXI:55)

Cadno's disregard for the transcendental nature of religion may be seen as symbolic of those changes in attitude toward religion which had taken place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Having lost any confidence in a transcendental God, Cadno appeared to have become his own God, or, in Freudian terms, to have a God complex.¹²

Not only do the three main characters in this play, Cole, Cadno and Leolin, symbolize three different attitudes to religion, but their personalities symbolize three interpretations of the nature of God. Is God like Cadno, the manipulator of a clockwork universe which he created? Or is he like Leolin, the embodiment of selfless love which puts no regard on human love? Or is he like Cole, the benevolent father who cares for his people, but in his tremendous benevolence toward them leaves them overly dependent upon him for sustenance? Or is God, like Gogmagog, dead?

This play, comic in action, deadly serious in theme, has been dismissed by at least one critic as,

Much less satisfying than At My Heart's Core. The story involves plots and

¹²See Davies' interpretation of this 'God' complex in his analysis of the Duke in Measure for Measure, published in Twice Wave the Trumpets Sounded, pp. 68-78.

counterplots at the court of Old King Cole in ancient Albion; it culminates in his sacrificial death and spiritual victory. The significance of all this is unfortunately very slightly and hazily developed, and the occasional moments of amusing conversation cannot make up for this.¹³

This writer can only assume that Mr. Tovell, who preferred to consider Mr. Davies as "funny", has no grasp of the dimension of Mumour which "is a way of looking at life which possesses a man and which has a dark side as well as a light."¹⁴ Many years later, in "Thunder Without Rain," Davies criticized the attitude which blind critics to the religious element in the works of a comic writer. He pointed out that:

Serious or tragic novelists are . . . often expected to write under the influence of some sort of religion, whereas comic novelists are not thought to have any such requirement. Such an attitude springs from the old fallacious idea that joy and merriment are not religious feelings, whereas a miserable fate or a tragic life must carry with it some paraphernalia of the displeasure of the gods.¹⁵

At King Cole's Court were Cadno, the Archdruid who wanted progress; and, blocking his rise to even greater power, King Cole, whose mirth and acceptance of all aspects

¹³ Vincent Tovell, rev. King Phoenix, p. 275.

¹⁴ R. Davies, A Voice from the Attic. New Canadian Library No. 83 (1960; rpt. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972), p. 202.

¹⁵ Davies, "Thunder Without Rain," p. 256.

of life made him representative of the greatness and timelessness of the human spirit, his daughter Helen, who was his feminine counterpart, and Leolin, his future son-in-law whose ideas of religion and life were completely altruistic. "He is a man of the greatest good will; he loves all mankind" (KP, p. 125), but in the process Leolin had forgotten to love himself; he was unwilling to narrow down his unusual benevolence to protect himself or love his princess.

Cadno worshiped Science and the power over nature Science would bring. He was prepared to use the honest faith of the people to satisfy his desire for power. With his fearless scientific rationalism, he had killed the old God, Gogmagog, who was the Druidic equivalent of Christianity's devil, just as surely as Locke's scientific rationalism of Christianity had banished Satan from the hearts and minds of Christians.

Leolin, like the Puritan moralists, was characterized by a combination of idealism and self-discipline which produced a noble and self-sacrificing religious credulity that was easy prey for the worldly rationalism of Cadno.

But Cole was neither easy to fool nor to manipulate. Cole was a serious threat to Cadno because of his spirit:

A man of great spirit, complete in himself as you have been, is a well at which lesser people fill their buckets. He makes change appear to be needless. . . . You make Cadno's aspirations seem trifling, and that is not to be tolerated. He is a man of action, and you are a man of repose (KP, p. 166)

Cole's God demanded sacrifice, sheep, "the pick of the flock" (KP, p. 178) each year, but Cole's religion was robust and full of life. The sacrifices came from men, but were not self-sacrifices. In addition, Cole's religion involved living mirthfully:

Mine has always been the laughter of the heart. It is more often silent than aloud, it may not bring a smile, it is a glory in the breast, a divine drunkenness, an o'ertopping of the gravity of tight-lipped men. (KP, p. 168).

Leolin had not incorporated this mundane joy and mirth into his concept of religion. For him, religion was a mystical experience which required the suspension of his rationality in matters of faith, and for which he would willingly have sacrificed everything which would have made his life meaningful and complete. Leolin's concept of religion involved the quest for perfection, the fulfillment of which necessitated both renunciation and sacrifice:

I believe in the mysteries, and I have promised to withhold nothing from them. It does not matter whether Cadno has demanded my life. As a priest or a murderer, I am pledged to the faith he professes, not to Cadno as a man. . . . I am a prince . . . it means I must live honourably, and if I forget what honour demands, I can never expect untarnished honour in anyone else. (KP, pp. 172-73)

In contrast to Cole and Leolin, to each of whom religion was spiritually very important, was Cadno, the man who was rapidly becoming his own God. Cadno wished to use religion as an illusion with which to mould a new civilization, and to increase his own power. Personally, he recognized no god

greater than could be discovered through science, although he was prepared to maintain the rituals. Cadno's religion thus would have demanded renunciation and sacrifice for what essentially would have been empty dogma and ritual. Through his rationalism, Cadno had already succeeded in reducing Gogmagog, the mythical evil giant, to an Ignorant Superstition: "The mighty realities of yesterday are the Ignorant Superstitions of today" (KP, p. 148).

The concept of God would be the next to lose its beneficial quality were Cadno's rationalist outlook to prevail, for as Davies said, "We have all seen what happens to God when you try to pretend there is no Devil; God develops rheumatoid arthritis and senile dementia and rumours of his death are heard everywhere. . . ." ¹⁶

Much of the difficulty in deciphering the meaning of this play also vanishes with a knowledge of Freud's two books on religion, The Future of an Illusion and Civilization and its Discontents. Freud's analysis of the variety of ways in which religion had provided meaning in the lives of men was incorporated as part of the background to the play. However, Freud's conclusions about the illusory nature of religion were not acceptable to Davies. Had they been, Cadno's philosophy would have embodied the reality; Cole's, the illusion. In King Phoenix, Davies denied the validity of Freud's theory of religion symbolically in the defeat of

¹⁶ Davies, "Phantasmagoria and Dream Grotto," p. 208.

Cadno's scheme to gain power as well as in depicting his poor state of health. Davies, in this instance, used Freud's established theory of the relationship between the physical and mental state of the individual to indicate that Cadno had overemphasized his rationality to the detriment of his physical needs, "Deny the belly and starve the heart, and a great sore will devour you" (KP, p. 182). In contrast, he offered, through Cole, a concept of religion as more necessary to the joyous spirit of man than to the maintenance of a social code. Cole, who believed in the 'old superstitions', had none of Cadno's problems: "Cole's belly and heart are in mighty trim" (KP, p. 182). Why then did Cole sacrifice himself?

Cole died because all that had sustained him had died. Davies had pointed out in an early book review that Christians desiring to gain a deepened awareness of the reality of God "cannot go back to a kind of warmed-over medieval Christianity."¹⁷ In his agonizing experience in the oak grove (which compares to Christ's agony in the Garden), Cole had realized that the old religion, in which Gogmagog had personified all that was evil, was dead and could not be revived. This had forced him to a crisis of faith, the thought that "when a man knows with all his body and all his soul that he is mortal, he is already dead" (KP, p. 165).

¹⁷Davies, "Salvation is Not Free," p. 20a.

However, Cole's soul searching had led him to the realization that the death of the body is not the death of the spirit, and that Cadno's victory would mean victory over the spirit. He explained this in terms of busyness: "There is no reform save that which each man makes in his own heart--all else is mere busyness" (KP, p. 186). Cadno's victory would have involved the sacrifice of Leolin to meaningless gods. After Leolin had formed a love relationship with Helena, his mystic spirituality had been balanced by the awakening of his sexual or erotic instincts. His death would have robbed the community of the possibility of religious reform from within, and Cole would have become more and more the servant of a god who was incapable of fulfilling the spiritual functions he had performed.

Therefore, Cole determined to give the new religion embodied in the revised outlook of the newly humanized Leolin an opportunity to provide real spiritual sustenance for his people. To this end, Leolin must live. Therefore, Cole substituted himself for Leolin and sacrificed himself not to preserve the old ways but to give birth to the new. Cole's death was indeed a spiritual victory over Cadno. The phoenix which rose from the 'flames' of the sacrifice was religion reborn, but symbolically, it was not Leolin but Helena, Cole's daughter, who appeared in Cole's guise before the people. The reborn religion would retain the legacy of Cole's greatness of spirit, but it would also include Helena, the Eros principle, symbolizing those aspects of

the human being which Cadno's and Leolin's religions would have denied.

In Fortune My Foe, also written in 1948, Davies had continued this phase of his examination of the problem of religion in society. In both King Phoenix and Fortune My Foe, he had rejected the necessity of accepting either the 'modern' religious outlook or the 'ancient' one. He offered instead the possibilities of a new religious outlook which would encompass within it those realities of the human spirit that the harsh Puritan discipline had denied, and which the earlier religion had projected on such creations as the Devil or Gogmagog. The situation Cole had overcome by his sacrifice was one described very succinctly by Jung:

If our critical reasoning tells us that in certain respects we are irrational and infantile, or that all our religious beliefs are illusions, what are we to do with our irrationality? What are we to put in place of our exploded illusions? Our naive childishness has within it some of the seeds of creativity, and illusion is a natural component of life, and neither of them can ever be suppressed or replaced by the rationalities and practicalities of convention.¹⁸

Unlike King Phoenix, Fortune My Foe was set in modern Canada, and the conflict was a modern conflict between the socially and morally acceptable and the socially and morally reprehensible. Like Hope Deferred (1948), this play was concerned with the state of drama and the arts in Canada;

¹⁸C.G. Jung, "In Memory of Sigmund Freud," The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, ed. Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler. Trans. R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), Vol. 15:69:47. Subsequent references will use the name of the individual work followed by CW:volume number:paragraph number:page number.

in fact, Hope Deferred provides the historical aetiology of the attitudes presented in Fortune My Foe. Moreover, both plays were linked through the depiction of this conflict to Davies' descriptions of the Puritan attitude to the theatres in Shakespeare's Boy Actors, and the changes in audience reaction to drama subsequent to their ascension to positions of power after the Restoration.

Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier, in the historical play Hope Deferred, had embodied this changed attitude and changed aesthetic value:

What you would doubtless call art is chiefly frivolity, licence and asking dangerous questions. The innocent native arts of basketry and beadwork are given reasonable encouragement . . . those pursuits are innocent enough; even the most abandoned spirit is incapable of expressing contumacity or salaciousness in beads and quills.
(HD, p. 73)

The result of his attitude had been the death of theatre in New France, and the establishment of a country in which "art can go to the devil" (HD, p. 76). Frontenac, who had tried to establish a meaningful theatre, sadly commented that,

These good men exert a dreadful pressure, Chimène: they are so sure they are right that they bend us to their will when our hearts and minds tell us they are wrong. There is no tyranny like the tyranny of organized virtue. (HD, p. 76)

In the Canada of approximately 250 years later, the results of the 'tyranny of organized virtue' were immediately apparent. Like Pop in Overlaid and Frontenac and Chimène in

Hope Deferred, the main characters of Fortune My Foe were individuals to whom the arts--theatre, music literature--had qualities which they valued as necessary for their spiritual well-being. They were, as a result, oddities who had not been 'overlaid' by the goodness of the moral majority. They were also men who were 'misfits' in Canadian society because of this.

The main characters in this play, Chilly, Rowlands and Nicholas, had discovered in their midst a true artist, the immigrant Szabo, who, before he came to Canada, had been renowned as a marionette master and who had dedicated his life to the pursuit of excellence as an artist. In Canada Szabo was a Displaced Person, not only because of his illegal immigration status, but also because he was an artist in a society which is incapable of understanding or appreciating art. Hope Deferred had ended with "Espérance be our watch-word" (HD, p. 77); in Fortune My Foe, Szabo's pronouncement "For me there is only hope--or despair. I must hope"¹⁹ became the rallying cry for Nicholas, who had been about to leave Canada, to stay and continue the fight for freedom of the arts in Canada--to counterattack the simplistic outlook which had characterized Canadians since 1693.

Perhaps the willingness of these men to become involved with Szabo was related to the fact that they were to some

¹⁹R. Davies, Fortune My Foe, in Four Favourite Plays, p. 104. Subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated FMF and incorporated in parentheses in the text.

extent already at odds with the establishment. Simply by being regulars at Chilly's, they were violating the local proscription of drinking establishments. In the process of helping Szabo they became emotionally involved with him on two levels. First, they undertook to care about and save a specific individual whose foreignness and poverty would have made him suspect in society, which is not the same as the organized 'good works' of which the community would have approved. Secondly, they actively participated in the creation of the little marionette stage and in learning to animate the marionettes. By the time the evening of the performance had arrived, they were both pleased by their efforts and excited by the possibilities that lay ahead. They were all struck by the peculiar quality of that feeling, which first Chilly and then Nicholas described as "a religious feeling" (FMF, p. 137). It was Chilly who attempted to articulate this:

You know how religion is, you've always suspected that something existed, and you've wished and prayed that it did exist, and in your dreams you've seen little bits of it, but to save your life you couldn't describe it or put a name on it. Then all of a sudden, there it is, and you feel grateful, and humble, and wonder how you ever distrusted it. (FMF, p. 137)

What Chilly described was not the religion of the masses, or self-discipline of the elect, but the emotional contact of the individual with something beyond the mundane reality. Nicholas, more cognizant than Chilly of the asceticism of

modern Protestantism, reacted with an awareness of what was evoking the response:

Why not call the feeling religious?
Look at it: [the little puppet stage]
brilliant colour, warmth and gaiety--
qualities men once sought in the
churches and seek in vain now. Even
our theatres are too self-conscious
for guilt and crimson; yet many of us
crave these things deep in our
hearts. (FMP, p. 137)

In King Phoenix, King Cole had realized that Cadno's cold, scientific rationalism had killed the magic and wonder of the old religion; Fortune My Foe, Nicholas and Chilly had discovered that awe and wonder, qualities found in strong emotions of delight and fear, could generate religious feeling.

For a short while in Chilly's establishment, there had been a realization of the relatedness of art and religion. However, in the larger society this connection was denied. The "Moral Elements" who had been invited to view the performance and, it was hoped, to afterwards promote community acceptance of Shabo's artistry, were totally blind to this relationship. True descendents of the Puritan Revolution, for them the creative imagination was something they both misunderstood and feared. Their concept of art was not unlike that of Saint-Vallier, who had substituted basketwork and beadwork (HD, p. 73) for the dramas of Frontenac. Art either served the person as a form of busyness or served society as a means of educating public morality. Thus, while Mattie could not envision the marionettes, which she

called "puppets", as having anything of value to offer the adult population, she thought they might "be practical in the schools, you see . . . possibly to be of some use in the social instructional field" (FMF, p. 128). Vanessa, whose 'religion' was Communism,²⁰ displayed a similar attitude to art. She valued Szabo's marionettes only as a way of educating the public consciousness: "The principal thing is to have something to say, don't you agree? Your message is what makes your play. Get your message first then clothe it in some little fable, the simpler the better" (FMF, p. 120). She agreed that the marionettes could amuse adults, but with an overriding purpose--as she tried to convince Szabo that he had "a splendid opportunity to do some work for the enlightenment of the Canadian people. This is a politically backward country, you know" (FMF, p. 120).

Szabo and his friends were thus caught between two religious outlooks, neither of which would accept his art as autonomous. The one-sided views of Tapscott and Mattie were representative of the views of Canadian Puritan-Protestantism. They were horrified at the play 'Don Quixote' because it did and said things of which they disapproved. Mattie was shocked because she had no capacity to understand the irony of the play. "We can't show a play to children

²⁰Freud compared Communism to a religion in Civilization and its Discontents (p. 113); Jung made extensive comparisons between the two in The Unconscious Self and elsewhere in his writings.

which has a maladjusted person as the chief character" (FMF, p. 150) and Tapscott was alarmed that some of Sancho's remarks were "against the high ideal of motherhood" (FMF, p. 147). These modern Puritans would stage Don Quixote only if it were "changed a lot and cleaned up a lot or as far as I'm concerned it will never get in a public library" (FMF, p. 152). Both views of art are representative of the destructive capacities of what Davies had called 'do-gooders'.

In his review of the play, John De War said "the play's main theme concerns the loss of talented young artists to the United States."²¹ This is an element of the play to be sure, but the heart of the play lies in its examination of the value systems which govern the lives of the main characters. Canada was losing talented young artists, not only because of the anti-aestheticism of the country, but also because the artists themselves had an imperfect conception of the demands and perceptions of art. They, too, viewed their talent as artists as primarily commodities to be sold in the marketplace, and the United States was the better market. The new concepts of the spirit of man and the autonomy of art which were revealed through Chilly and Szabo effected changes in the outlooks of Nicholas and Rowlands. Chilly, whom Nicholas called "a gifted natural theologian" (FMF, p. 123), had a concept of the human soul

²¹ John De War, rev. of Fortune My Foë, Canadian Forum, 29 (1949), p. 214.

which was very different from what he called "my External man":

You've seen those Chinese boxes, that fit inside one another. . . . The soul is like that, made by the Supreme Chinaman of creation--boxes that diminish until, in the last box of all is the tiny seed that makes me a living thing. Open the boxes and lay 'em aside until personality has gone, and even the disguise that makes me a man instead of a woman is gone, and there will still be a hundred boxes to open. (FME, p. 123)

Chilly's rejection of the visible personality of a man as the least important aspect of his being may be seen as indicative of a movement on the part of Davies toward the Jungian concept of the complexity of the human psyche, particularly the Jungian concept of the "Persona" in relation to the Unconscious.²² Szabo, the artist, did not articulate his perceptions of this complexity of the human spirit in terms of actual people, but in terms of his experience and training as an artist, as he objected strenuously to the oversimplified ideas of art which had been thrust upon him by Tapscott and Mattie, not to mention Vanessa. None, it appeared, had any concept of the recreative ability of art, and mistook its function for that of Busy-ness:

²²C.G. Jung, "The Persona as a Segment of the Collective Psyche," in Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, CW 7.244-45:155. The persona, "as its name shows is only a mask for the collective psyche, a mask that feigns individuality and tries to make others and oneself believe that one is an individual, whereas one is simply playing a part in which the collective psyche speaks" (CW 7.245:155).

But [said Szabo] I have had longer experience of puppets. I have my own, and my father's and my grandfather's, back to the time of Shakespeare. I did not learn what I know in six weeks from some ignoramus. A puppet is a little jointed figure, and I am a puppet master. Yes? But the puppet is a man, and I am the god who gives him life and a soul-- a part of my own soul. . . . And when I know him and make him walk and move his arms and dance I concentrate so hard on him that he is more truly alive than I am myself. He is myself. (FME, p. 131)

Szabo had articulated Davies' view of the integrity of the artist which is "not unquestioning obedience to an external line of belief or conduct; it is, rather, submissive attention to the voice of his own talent."²³ The marionettes of Szabo which were more alive than himself when he was animating them, as he placed his whole personality at their disposal, may be considered an oblique representation of the Jungian concepts of the Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious as Jung conceived of them. Szabo had in his limited way been educating Rowlands and Nicholas, Chilly and Weir to a new understanding of the nature of the creative process:

This is the secret of great art, and its effect upon us. The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape the artist translates it into the language of the present,

²³ Davies, "Sincerity and Canadians," in The Well Tempered Critic, p. 195.

and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life.²⁴

The building of the little marionette theatre and learning to animate the marionettes had immersed the men in just such a creative experience. Rowlands' reaction of utter rage as he screamed "Anathema! Anathema!! Anathema!!!" (FMF, p. 152), and his destruction of the little theatre rather than see it dishonoured by being forced to compromise with the restrictions of Mattie and Tapscott, were indicative of the profundity of the experience he had undergone. In fact, Rowlands himself said that he had not acted irrationally, but "I was a judge. I judged them and I found them wanting. I drove them forth because they were unworthy, and I destroyed the temple because I could not bear to see it profaned" (FMF, p. 153).

A few years later, with reference to the theatre at Stratford, Davies pointed out that a theatre is "in the old sense, 'a place for viewing' and a place where things happen. It is a reminder also that the first theatres were temples. . . ."²⁵ By destroying the theatre, Rowlands had broken the reign of power of the 'do-gooders' as surely as Cole had defeated Cadno in King Phoenix. Unlike Hope Deferred, which ended with the defeat of art by the power of

²⁴C.G. Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," CW 15:130:82.

²⁵Davies, Renown at Stratford, p. 120.

religion, Fortune My Foe ended with a determination on the part of Nicholas and Rowlands to fight for the autonomy of art in Canada. Possibly this fight would also mean the resurrection of religious feeling as well.

The two plays written in 1949, The Voice of the People and At the Gates of the Righteous followed the proven Marchbankean formula of hyperbole, mockery and farce to expose not only the "simplicity bordering on the idiotic" (HD, p. 74), but also the social outlooks which lay behind it. Both plays depend for their meaning on the realization that the people in them are victims who see themselves as victors.

The irony in The Voice of the People stems from its title. The phrase 'the voice of the people is the voice of God' was originally used by the monk Alcuin in his Letters to Charlemagne²⁶ in the eighth century. The voice of the people in this play is the voice of the Morton family as heard by their electrician, Sam. The occasion was the anger aroused in Shorty Morton by a letter to the editor of the local paper. The voice of the people as illustrated by the Morton family was the voice of ignorance. As Patricia Morley so succinctly stated, "Shorty Morton's ignorance is exceeded only by his self-confidence and his refusal to be

²⁶ John Bartlett, Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, 14 Ed. Rev. and enlarged, ed. by E.M. Beck (Toronto: Little Brown & Co., 1968), p. 152b.

confused by the facts."²⁷ Davies portrayed the Mortons as intellectually so vapid that Mrs. Morton actually believed that her fundamentalist pastor was able to summon the power of God during his sermons. The truth, Sam revealed, was that there was a concealed rheostat in the pulpit of Pastor Beamis, worked by him so that "when Pastor Beamis gets to the pinnacle of his exhortation, they [the spotlights that shone on the pulpit] seem to shine brighter than ever."²⁸ The impoverishment of the Mortons in most matters appears related to their extreme fundamentalist religion. Aggie believed that "God wrote the Bible" (VP, p. 40). She was most upset by an acknowledgement of her or her daughter's sexuality, "You're not going to have one [a bust] an' that's that!" (VP, p. 41). They also displayed total aesthetic and intellectual illiteracy: "The trouble with modern education is it ain't practical enough" (VP, p. 46). Shorty had as well an irrational belief in the moral superiority of the working man. However, they did not recognize any of these things about themselves--they sincerely believed that they were the true movers of society and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. If the voice of the people is the voice

²⁷ Morley, Robertson Davies, p. 21.

²⁸ R. Davies, The Voice of the People in Four Favourite Plays, p. 30. All subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated VP and incorporated in the text.

of God, then according to this play, God has nothing of value to say.

In At the Gates of the Righteous, Davies' attack on society was as devastating as it had been in The Voice of the People. In this play, set in nineteenth century Canada, Fingal, the son of a Presbyterian minister, appalled by the hypocrisy of the people around him, had run away to find Utopia with an outlaw band whom he thought of as modern Robin Hoods. He had lost all faith in his father's religion:

"I have exposed all that as hypocrisy and superstition, a heavy chain forged by priests to keep mankind upon its knees, a sordid imposture to keep the poor poor and the rich rich."²⁹ Although Fingal had rejected religion; he was as much a victim of the one-sided romanticism of the penny novels as the Mortons were of Pastor Beamis' heavenly rheostats. When young Fingal's idealistic expectations of perfection in his society were met in the daily lives of the most prominent members of the community, he decided that religion had no real meaning but was no more than "the lick-spittle servant of trade and the law, denying every instinct that Nature has given to man" (AGR, p. 64). Having lost any contact with the transcendent, Fingal had articulated the Freudian view of religion, especially as Freud stated it in Moses and Monotheism, but Fingal's prescription for the

²⁹ R. Davies, At The Gates of the Righteous in Four Favourite Plays, p. 60. All subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated AGR and incorporated into the text.

people was more Adlerian than Freudian: "There is only one good way of life and that is power in Action" (AGR, p. 71).

Fingal's criticism of religion was only one form of satire in this "most Shavian of Davies' plays."³⁰ The outlaw society to which Fingal ran to escape social hypocrisy was itself based on the same idealist cant as the society it preyed upon: "Boy, we may have our little quarrels with individuals, but society is as sound as a bell" (AGR, p. 122). The members of the gang had retained their childhood religious affiliations including various codes of conventional morality, and as a result were quite shocked at Fingal's wild talk. The outlaws were the souls of conventionality; Fingal's romantic illusions were shattered. Moreover, the respectable society of his home was hypocritical, and the reprehensible outlaw society was no different. Therein lay the irony of the title of the play which is a quotation from Proverbs 14:9:³¹

The evil bow down before the good, and
the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
(AGR, p. 71)

In this play it was difficult for Fingal to determine who were the righteous.

The final irony of the play occurred when the outlaws realized that they could integrate into society in such a

³⁰ Morley, Robertson Davies, p. 26.

³¹ Davies attributed this quotation to Proverbs XIV:9; Proverbs XIV:19 is correct (King James Authorized or American Standard).

way that they would not only gain its respect but they would also acquire power. Values in the capitalistic, empiricist society had become so perverted and materialistic that goodness seemed to be equated with worldly success rather than the inner qualities of the individual. Each social class saw the one above it as somehow morally superior. Based on this materialistic dogma, it would not be long before the outlaws were being bowed down to as the righteous. By the end of the play Fingal was left with a bitter pill to swallow--as he came to realize that "the only real revolt is in the mind."

Fingal's romantic illusions had led him to expect the outlaw society to contain the perfection his own so obviously lacked. It did not appear to be the 'evil' which appalled Fingal as much as the unwillingness of the society to acknowledge its imperfections. Freud had also commented on this aspect of society:

Society maintains a condition of cultural hypocrisy which is bound to be accompanied by a sense of insecurity and a necessity for guarding what is undeniably a precarious situation by forbidding criticism and discussion.³²

Fingal's suffering had arisen because his religion would not countenance as acceptable anything less than perfection of the life of the individual, i.e., the sinless life. But the sins were sins of the flesh not sins of the spirit.

³²Freud, Moses and Monotheism, SE XXIII:219.

The play At My Heart's Core (1950) was also concerned with the effects the myth of perfection had on the individual and society. This play satirized the vulnerability of people who had accepted, along with the Puritan beliefs mentioned earlier, what Crane Brinton described as the Enlightenment idea of evil:

Evil they considered to be an historical growth embodied in customs, laws, institutions,--that is to say, the environment, especially the social environment, in what man had made. . . . Man is born good; he is made bad by society. The way to make him good again is to protect this natural goodness from the corruption society brings with it.³³

Three nineteenth century Canadian ladies, Mrs. Moodie, Mrs. Traill and Mrs. Stewart, all of whom future Canadians would hold in some esteem, had at the beginning of the play combined households while their husbands were involved in putting down a rebellion. All three women felt totally safe in their wilderness environment, because the backwoods offer a complete lack of "temptations of the sort to which a lady of gentle breeding and good education might conceivably fall prey."³⁴

In his earlier plays Davies had attacked what he considered evil effects of the Puritan outlook on the spirits

³³ Brinton, p. 121.

³⁴ R. Davies, At My Heart's Core in At My Heart's Core and Overlaid, p. 34. Subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated AMHC and incorporated in the text in parentheses.

of people who tried to live by its basic tenets. In At My Heart's Core, he began that probing into the nature of evil not defined in social terms which he would continue in his later writings. In this play, he contrasted the three ladies' concept of evil with that of Phelim, a disreputable artist of the Roman Catholic faith. In the process, he exposed both the smugness and self-righteousness of the "establishment" outlook as well as the inability of its people to cope with an intrusive value system.

The religion of Mrs. Moodie, her sister Mrs. Thrall and Mrs. Stewart had become the strict adherence to a set of social manners and customs. Their church was the Church of England which in the nineteenth century

was orthodox without being theological. Doctrinal problems were little thought of. Religion, as taught in the Church of England meant moral obedience to the will of God. The speculative part of it was accepted because it was assumed to be true. . . . About the power of the keys, the real presence or the metaphysics of doctrine, no one was anxious, for no one thought about them. It was not worthwhile to waste time over questions which had no bearing on conduct, and could be satisfactorily disposed of only by sensible indifference.³⁵

Theirs was a religion which advanced material and social considerations over spiritual ones resulting in a distorted view of society, and the dismissal of evil as a spiritual problem. These views were so much a part of the fabric of

³⁵ Alex R. Vidler, The Church in an Age of Revolution: 1789 to the Present Day, Rev. Ed. (1971; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 35.

their society that these well educated, intelligent ladies never questioned its rightness.

The only evil that the ladies recognized was associated with Phelim, about whom they could find no redeeming features. He was a social disgrace in every aspect of his life, from his drunkenness to his near incestuous relationship with his adopted daughter, now the mother of his child. The three ladies were prepared to use the authority vested in them by virtue of their higher social positions to reform Phelim's life: "One can only deal with people like that by telling them what is good, and seeing that they behave themselves accordingly" (AMHC, p. 30).

In contrast to his 'benefactors', Phelim was quite aware of the spiritual dangers of evil. He was aware of the evil in himself, and of the kinds of evil that exist independently of the social classes of individuals. A Roman Catholic who had probably confessed to guilt in the Seven Deadly Sins, Phelim was able to detect the malice in the heart of Mr. Cantwell. Phelim's religious outlook appeared to contain a great deal of superstition and myth, mixed with a rather sophisticated knowledge of human nature. Of all the characters in the play, he is the most amusing and the one who is least taken seriously. Phelim is a Davies Cassandra character, doomed to speak the truth to people who will not hear. He had already perceived that his art as a bard had little or no value in this new country. When Mr. Cantwell offered to protect the ladies from him, he began

calling Mr. Cantwell the Devil. "Beware, women beware!" (AHMC, p. 32). By the last act of the play, his shouts of "He's the Devil, I'm telling 'yez. Why haven't yez got the sense to hear what I'm saying" (AHMC, p. 79) had become so irritating that Mr. Stewart felt it necessary to explain to Mr. Cantwell, "I wish Phelim would stop shouting that you are the Devil. We don't have the Devil in the nineteenth century and we certainly don't have him in this country" (AHMC, p. 79).

In another context, Davies as Samuel Marchbanks had re-invented our missing devil as he projected the characteristics of the Devil onto his most detested enemy--his furnace. Marchbanks had argued on behalf of his personification, "I know that a furnace is a Devil with a deep knowledge of the human spirit and a malignant desire to push that spirit to the furthest reaches of endurance."³⁶ This was the quality of the Devil which was most dangerous to the individual, and against which the ladies had little or no protection, although in all other respects they were strong, capable women. On the other hand, Phelim whose poems were "rooted deep in a mighty past" (AMHC, p. 24) and who relished what he called "the impartiality of the artist" (AMHC, p. 40) had sufficient knowledge of the truths and ambiguities of the human spirit, that he would never have

³⁶R. Davies, "Diary of an Early Winter," Peterborough Examiner, 9 December 1944, p. 4.

denied the existence of the Devil.

The great sin that made the ladies easy prey to the temptations Cantwell entrapped them with was their complete self-righteousness, and their conviction that evil, far from being a quality of spirit, was a social flaw--"Here in the backwoods, temptation seems very far away" (AMHC, p. 33).

The only evil they could recognize was the evil of civil disobedience. However, even this was viewed from a context that stemmed from a religious belief:

The old idea that unity of religion is a requisite for the moral health and social cohesion of a nation retained its hold on many Anglicans: nonconformity was an evil that might be tolerated if need be, but it remained an evil that should not be countenanced any more than was necessary. ³⁷

Mrs. Moodie's attitude to the nature and cause of the rebellion was typical of this ultra-conservative Anglicanism: "It is Methodism which is at the root of it. Religious disunity is the trouble" (AMHC, p. 67). Two of the ladies, Mrs. Moodie and her sister Mrs. Traill were, like Ethel in Overlaid and Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier in Hope Deferred, possessed of "that special kind of power that comes from the belief that you're right" (Overlaid, p. 108). They had become blind to any outlook except their own. This made them both strong and vulnerable at the same time. Mr. Cantwell's temptations in the wilderness were the micro-cosmic reflection of the rebellion in the larger society.

³⁷Vidler, p. 136.

He felt that he, like the rebels, had been driven to it by the "snug, tight, unapproachable little society you have here in Upper Canada" (AMHC, -p. 79). Mr. Cantwell had a great success in implanting the seeds of discontent into the hearts and minds of both these ladies. Mrs. Moodie would feel sadness at not developing as a writer of more than quick sketches; her sister was afflicted with regret that she would not progress as a naturalist. They, ultimately, were left prisoners of their own concepts of appropriate conduct as soldiers' wives, and of the difficulties of life in a new and harsh country.

Mr. Davies did not attempt to make these ladies despicable, but he did try to show something of the weakness of their apparent strength. The Stewarts emerged the real heroic figures in this play. They represented the potential for spiritual growth that had always been present in the country, but which had so often been 'overlaid'. Both of these characters had begun to question the rightness of their social beliefs. Mrs. Stewart had been shown able to grasp the illusionary nature of the myth that Indians were solemn: "Everything is a laughing matter to you. How your people acquired their reputation for impassiveness, I'll never know" (AMHC, p. 5).

Upon his return from the rebellion, Mr. Stewart had clearly been concerned about the enforcement of a rigid class structure and social idealism in the new country, "a grave suspicion assails me that what we have at York is

order without law; and that is tyranny" (AMHC, p. 67). Because of their open-mindedness and their honesty with each other, both were able to cope with the recognition of imperfection. He said, "I am not complacent, I have never taken you for granted, Frances . . ." (AMHC, p. 85). She was able to tell him the nature of her temptation and in doing so robbed it of its power over her. "He created, only for a few moments, something that had never been. What he aroused in me was not regret, but discontent disguised as regret" (AMHC; p. 85).

In "Don Quixote and the Puppets," M.W. Steinberg analyzed the structure of the play as "echo[ing] in its outline the story of Satan's triple temptation of Jesus in the wilderness"³⁸ and pointed to the redeemer qualities in Mr. and Mrs. Stewart. However, Steinberg said,

the malignancy [of Cantwell's desire for revenge] is entirely disproportionate to the occasion and not fully credible. One feels that Cantwell, clever and sincere, merely rationalizes the reason for his conduct which actually is an expression of an unmotivated evil.³⁹

These two statements appear contradictory. If Cantwell is sufficiently evil to tempt the three women without cause, why would he bother to "rationalize" what he had done? However, if Mr. Cantwell's motive was one of malice, then the whole episode gains new meaning. Malice, as the Dean

³⁸Steinberg, p. 49.

³⁹Steinberg, p. 48.

in Davies' 1954 novel Leaven of Malice pointed out, "works like a leaven, it stirs and swells and changes all that surrounds it" (LM, p. 266). Malice is both a social sin in that it involves active ill-will, an unjust charge on the part of one party toward another. It is also a spiritual sin, for it involves as a rule the sin of Pride. Malice had hurt Mrs. Cantwell; perhaps the smug self-righteous snub Mr. Cantwell had received himself early in the play had provoked additional malice in him. What is really significant in this play is that in it one notices the beginning of what will later emerge as a major religious concern in Robertson Davies' writing. This is the problem concerning the union of opposites, the notion that "things tend to run into one another, that what looks like good can be pushed to the point where it looks like evil, and that evil very frequently bears what can only be regarded as good fruit."⁴⁰ If, as Steinberg suggested, the play echoes Christ's temptations, perhaps some consideration should be given to the recognition that this conflict between Good and Evil was an important aspect of Christ's personal affirmation of Who He was.

By the end of the 1940's, Davies had become increasingly interested in the relationship between goodness and evil, between man's instinct toward death and his instinct toward life and how his religious beliefs affected the

⁴⁰ Cameron, Conversations, p. 41.

ambivalence of these instincts. He was also keenly interested in the relationship between what Marchbanks called "the reeking cesspool of the unconscious" (TSM, p. 45) and the spiritual health of man. If he had come to any conclusion by the end of the 1940's, it was that what passes for religion in society appeared to do more spiritual harm than good. Samuel Marchbanks had said, "Every man and woman is like those Chinese puzzles which consist of one box inside the other, so that ten or twelve boxes have to be opened before the final solution is found" (DSM, p. 27). The problem with organized religion seemed, among other things, to be related to its over-simplification. Things were Good or Bad, there were no half-way measures, no shades of grey, no belief in either the Devil or the soul. The concerns of this earth appeared to have become the concerns of religion and as a result,

for a belief in the soul and the deity of which the soul is a reflection, they [people] substitute belief in such chimeras as progress, General Education, Single tax, cold baths, colonic irrigation, free love, women's rights, the century of the common man, the infallibility of radio commentators and their laughable convenors and equivalents. As a result their souls become anaemic and debilitated and their faces have the look of unlit houses. (DSM, p. 180)

In the 1940's Davies had noted the predominance in society of the unlit houses for whom religion had extinguished the lights. In the next decade he would investigate the various internal systems which governed the lives of these anaemic and debilitated spirits--the inhabitants of the slums of the spirit.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SLUMS OF THE SPIRIT¹

During the 1950's, the fictional world of Robertson Davies was primarily an irreligious world. In his major work of that period, the *Salterton Trilogy*, which consists of three novels, *Tempest-Tost* (1951), *Leaven of Malice* (1954) and *A Mixture of Frailties* (1958), Christianity was visibly present in the physical surroundings and through the presence of a variety of clergymen. Salterton was initially described in terms of its religious affiliations:

Salterton is the seat of two bishoprics, one Anglican and one Roman Catholic. As one approaches it from the water, the two cathedrals, which are in appearance so strongly characteristic of the faiths they embody, seem to admonish the city. The Catholic Cathedral points a vehement and ornate Gothic finger toward Heaven: the Anglican Cathedral has a dome which, with offhand Anglican suavity, does the same thing. St. Michael's cries "Look aloft and pray!", St. Nicholas says "If I may trouble you, it might be as well to lift your eyes in this direction."
(TT, p. 10)

Although each of these cathedrals loomed large over the physical surroundings of the city of Salterton, their commands appeared to have little relevance in the lives of the characters in the first novels of Robertson Davies. While they were not as a rule atheists or totally irreligious,

¹R. Davies, *A Mixture of Frailties*, p. 42.

they can probably be best described as Davies later described the characters in Trollope's novels: "religion [was] not the first concern of their personal lives; personal ambition, or learning, or politics or society [were] the affairs to which we see them giving their best efforts."² Their highest sanctions came not from God but from society. Salterton was a city in which the people in their never-ending busyness had lost contact with the transcendent in their lives. At the same time, the old beliefs had not lost their power to affect them: "They don't believe and they haven't the strength of mind to disbelieve. They won't get rid of religion, and they won't go after a religion that means anything. They just mess with religion". (TT, p. 281).

The main way in which these people 'messed' with religion was that following the loss of the ameliorating effects of Christianity, they had come to accept an Old Testament severity which had little or nothing in it of Christ's Gospel of Love. Solly Bridgetower had attempted to explain the nature of this peculiarly Canadian religious outlook to Valentine Rich during the dress rehearsal of The Tempest:

We all believe that if we fret and abuse ourselves sufficiently, Providence will take pity and smile upon anything we attempt. A light heart, or a consciousness of desert attracts ill-luck . . . we are devil-worshippers, we Canadians, half in love with easeful Death. We flog ourselves endlessly, as a kind of spiritual purification. (TT, p. 250)

²Davies, "Phantasmagoria and Dream Grotto," p. 207.

The concept of God, as "The Mean Old Man in the Sky" (TT, p. 250) was but one manifestation of that peculiar Puritanical religious outlook which Davies had demonstrated governed Canadian society. This Protestant-Puritanism also embraced a peculiar materialistic ethical system:

The shrewd, calculating commercialism which tries all human relations by pecuniary standards, the acquisitiveness which cannot rest while there are competitors to be conquered or profits to be won, and love of social power, and hunger for economic gain--these irrepressible appetites had evoked from time immemorial the warnings and denunciations of saints and sages. Plunged in the cleansing waters of later Puritanism, the qualities which less enlightened ages had denounced as social vices, emerged as economic virtues. They emerged as moral virtues as well. For the world exists not to be enjoyed but to be conquered.³

The people of Salterton were essentially the bigoted, anti-intellectual, materialistic, but, on the whole, better educated provincials who had inhabited the plays and the Marchbanks materials of the 1940's. However, there had been a subtle change in the prevailing religious outlook. Not perceiving God as a giver of spiritual sustenance, they derived no sustenance from Him. They found themselves, instead, building their faith on a variety of what Freud called "palliative measures."

In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud had pointed out that the harshness and pain of life make it impossible

³Tawney, p. 247.

for the majority of people to exist without some palliative measures. He said that there are

three such measures: powerful deflections, which cause us to make light of our misery; substantive satisfactions which diminish it, and intoxicating substances which make us insensitive to it. Something of the kind is indispensable. Voltaire has deflections in mind when he ends Candide with the advice to cultivate one's garden, and scientific activity is a deflection of this kind too. The substantive satisfactions as offered by art are illusions in contrast with reality, but they are none the less physically effective thanks to the role which phantasy has assumed in our mental life. The intoxicating substances influence our body and alter its chemistry. (SE XXI:75)

For most of the Saltertonians, their palliative measures directed their lives outwards--to the visible things of this world such as social prestige and material success. For example, the production of The Tempest was a palliative measure of the powerful deflection type for the members of the Salterton Little Theatre, undertaken to arouse the envy and jealousy of "Little Theatre groups everywhere within a hundred miles" (TT, p. 29). Individual members of the Little Theatre had evolved a whole range of palliative measures to turn their attention away from realities they preferred not to face. More than anything else, the reality they could not accept was the reality of their own imperfect human nature. Reviewing Dr. Philip Polatin's book, The Well Adjusted Personality in 1954, Davies had suggested that Dr. Polatin's message might be beneficial to Canadians:

We must show a little tender regard for our shortcomings or we shall come to grief. As many people sacrifice their happiness to impossible yearnings for perfection as destroy their lives by self-indulgence. This, [added Davies] is a lesson of great value in a country like ours where the self-floggings of Puritanical conscience cause untold misery.⁴

In the Salterton novels, Davies explored several avenues by which people can be made aware of their human identity and led to show "a little tender regard" for their own imperfections. One of these avenues was provided by the depth psychologists, Freud, Adler and Jung, with whose works Davies had shown himself familiar in the 1940's.⁵ Another such avenue of exploration was made available through a renewed humanism, particularly through the creative arts: drama, literature and music. In 1954, Davies clearly stated his belief that,

... poetic truth is a different thing from factual truth; the latter speaks to the surface of the mind, and the former to those depths of the mind in which our emotions and our most

⁴R. Davies, "Of the Human Predicament," Saturday Night, 17 March 1954, p. 22.

⁵In a review of Virginia Case's book, Your Personality, Introvert or Extrovert, published in Saturday Night, October 4, 1941, Davies had said:

It is difficult to swallow Jung's psychology whole but to anyone who knows anything about the quarrels of the various psychoanalytical schools, Miss Case's criticism of Freud as too extrovert and Adler as too introvert is highly amusing.

There are numerous other instances where one or the other, especially Freud, is mentioned by name in his writings.

cherished beliefs have their roots;
poetic genius gains acceptance in those
regions of the mind where itself came
to birth.⁶

It was this belief in the ability of great creative minds
to penetrate to the core of the human spirit that had pro-
vided the foundation for Davies' concept of humanism.

Unfortunately, as he pointed out, humanism,

has been obscured by our cheap
materialistic "useful" education and
our own tendency to confuse technical
advance with real progress. But the
great truths of the past are still
available to us, if we have the resolu-
tion to re-discover them for ourselves.⁷

The kind of humanism that Davies advocated was the kind of
humanism which had come to Western civilization with the
Renaissance,

which meant above all a turning of man's
mind upon himself. . . . He grew more
conscious of his own mental process, how
motives intertwine in his actions, how
ignorance and inadvertance modify the
quality of them, how thoughts can pass
through his mind unbidden, and about his
mind against his will.⁸

Various scientific and philosophical movements in the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had established

⁶ Davies, Twice Have the Trumpets Sounded, p. 84.

⁷ R. Davies, "From the Critics Notebook," Peterborough Examiner, 17 May 1950, p. 4. (A review of Humanity & Happiness by Georg Brockman).

⁸ R.A. Knox, Enthusiasms: A chapter in the History of Religion with special reference to the XVII and XVIII centuries (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 214.

Christianity as a system of belief which was wholly purged of emotion. Moreover, under the influence of the seventeenth century Enthusiastic movements, "The appeal of art and music, hitherto conceived as a ladder which carried human thought upwards, [had become] . . . frowned upon as a barrier which interferes with the simplicity of true heart worship."⁹

In 1974, Davies commented that when Freud concluded in The Future of an Illusion, that religion was an illusion, possibly Freud was right, that "perhaps God as the nineteenth century knew him was an illusion or nine-tenths an illusion."¹⁰ However, this nineteenth century God was the one which was the official Canadian God, as Solly had testified.

In the 1950's it became apparent, even as early as Tempest-Tost (1951), the first volume of the Salterton Trilogy, that for Davies one of the first steps to regaining that inner freedom which modern man appeared to lack was self-knowledge--which meant to learn something of the true identity of the human being. However, finding out the nature of man was not enough. Were it so, perhaps the Freudian depth psychology with its scientific reductionism would have sufficed. But Davies' humanism would not allow him to wholly accept a philosophy which did not give full credit to the arts as purveyors of profound truths, and

⁹ Knox, p. 2.

¹⁰ Davies, "Gleams and Glooms," p. 243.

"Freud never regarded the artist's insights as comparable to the rationalistic understanding of the psychoanalyst."¹¹ On the other hand, in the final volume of the Trilogy, A Mixture of Frailties (1958), he showed through the personalities of Giles Revelstoke and Monica Gall that the arts without the conceptual realization of ideal forms--of limits and values, were no more than the substantive satisfactions which Freud had labelled them. If the choice available to man was between a world in which good and evil co-existed in an uneven struggle and one in which ambivalence reigned, then without God, man would find only ambivalence.

In those early novels, in order to lead man into a discovery of the truths of his own nature Davies incorporated the findings of the depth psychology of Freud and later Jung to provide the 'scientific basis' from which man's inner nature was revealed. It was Davies' hypothesis that such self-knowledge would lead to a greater spiritual development.¹²

In each of the three novels of the Salterton Trilogy, and in the masques and plays of the 1950's, the various palliative measures that men had adopted to relieve the pains of existence were ruthlessly exposed as inadequate illusions. These palliative measures had always involved

¹¹Spector, p. 78.

¹²Cameron, Conversations, p. 41.

the acquisition of power as a defence against helplessness, and in the case of certain characters, had been related to their ideas of religion.

In the Salferton Trilogy, the level of the inner or spiritual development of a character was indicated by his response to drama and music. The degree of response was proportionate to the lack of influence Puritan-Protestantism had in the character's inner life. Using this as a guideline for analysis, three groups of characters emerged. The first group were those for whom the arts, as they understand them, had no meaning except as educational tools, "luxuries" or as romantic or sentimental manifestations. The second group were those whose lives had been lived without the benefit of a humanistic outlook or whose lives had been overpowered by guilt, and who, as a result, upon recognition of the full range of possibilities open to them, began the process of spiritual awakening. The third group were those characters whose lives centred upon music and drama, and who were humanists in their outlook. They had a perception of both the good and the evil qualities inherent in the process of living in this world. The focal characters in both the 'frame' story of the Trilogy and the individual 'stories' of each novel belonged to the second group of characters. The characters in the first and third groups were not as a rule developing characters.

The search for the truth of the human spirit was undertaken on two levels in this Trilogy. In each novel, there

were two societies of characters, those whose lives were centred in Salterton and those whose lives were centred elsewhere. The former society provided the characters for the frame story; the latter changed with each novel. The precipitating incident in each novel involved the intermingling of the lives of the characters from the two societies. Through this contact, profound changes occurred in the inner lives of the major characters in each society. In each novel the major "frame" characters were Solly Bridgetower and his mother, Pearl Vambrace and her family and Cobbler, the organist of the Anglican Cathedral. In the latter two novels, Jevon Knapp, D  an of St. Nicholas' Anglican Cathedral, emerged as a major character.

In each separate novel, the focal characters were those whose inner lives through contact with an artist and his artistic creation were disrupted to the extent that they were forced to a spiritual reawakening. Thus, Hector Mackilwraith, in Tempest-Tost under the influence of the great Shakespearean play, The Tempest, and his association with the artists, Valentine Rich and Cobbler, found the very ground of his existence threatened. In Leaven of Malice, Gloster Ridley's illusions were shattered when the force of real evil in the form of malice gained ascendancy in his life through the machinations of the pseudo-artist Bevil Higgin. In the third novel, A Mixture of Frailties, Monica Gall was trained to become an artist--and was caught between the life-enhancing artistic discipline of Domdaniel and the

life-denying romantic and narcissistic artistry of Giles Revelstoke. She had to learn to resolve the ambience of her life for she loved both men and both men were beneficial to her. This novel was Davies' first exploration of the problem, not of evil in men's lives, for that was already present in Leaven of Malice, but of the power of evil when the concept of God is not present. If Monica Gall was to develop both as an artist and as a person, this was a problem she must solve.

In these novels, Davies rejected the possibility that the peculiar Christian religion, particularly as it was understood and practiced in Canada, could help any of the characters overcome their spiritual apathy. If anything, he implied that much of what was troubling them had its roots in their religious backgrounds. Although religious affiliations were given for a surprising number of characters in the Trilogy,¹³ religious backgrounds were given in detail

1. The religious affiliations of many of the main characters in the Trilogy are given. In Tempest-Tost, for example, Hector Mackilwraith, his father, the Rev. John Mackilwraith, Hector's mother and the Rev. James MacKinnon were Presbyterian. Mrs. Vambrace was Roman Catholic. Prof. Vambrace, the son of a minister (LM 45), was an atheist, as was his daughter Pearl. The Bridgetowers, the Websters and their gardener Tom Gwalchmai, Humphrey Cobbler and his family, and Miss Pottinger are Anglican. In Leaven of Malice, Dean Jevon Knapp of the Anglican Cathedral, and Mrs. Knapp, Mr. Snelgrove, the Shillito's, were identifiably Anglican, Ronnie Fitzalan was Roman Catholic. In A Mixture of Frailties Monica Gall and her family, and Pastor Sidney Beamis and his family, were 'Thirteeners'. Aunt Ellen Gall was a Baptist; Chuck and Alice Proby 'turned United', Giles Revelstoke and his family were Anglican and Sir Benedict Bonndaniel was a Jew turned Anglican. It is noteworthy that

for only two of the focal characters, Hector Mackilwraith and Monica Gall. In depicting their backgrounds, Davies appeared to be in substantial agreement with Freud, who said:

Religion restricts this play of choice and adaptation since it imposes equally on everyone its own path to the acquisition of happiness and protection from suffering. Its technique consists in depressing the value of life and distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner which presupposes an intimidation of intelligence. (SE XXI:85)

The religious background of each of these focal characters had produced in them a lop-sided view of life. Hector had rejected religion because he did not want to be as powerless as his father; Monica had to develop the intellectual capacity to overcome the "simplicity" which had formed the basis of her Thirteener's faith.

Hector Mackilwraith, the focal character of Tempest-Tost (1951) had grown up under the influence of two Presbyterian clergymen: his father, James Mackilwraith and James MacKinnon, his father's successor. Both men's relationships with their God were submissive, dependent, and sincere. John Mackilwraith had been so imbued with a sense of his insufficiency, that he was incapable of undertaking even the most basic action on his own behalf:

such characters as Cobbler, the Dean, and Sir Benedict Domdaniel, all of whom were helpful in leading the focal characters to a new awareness of their human nature, were Anglican, whereas those who preached and instilled a stern morality which produced lop-sidedness were Calvinist or Fundamentalist.

The reason for his insufficiency . . . probably lay in his health. Professional attention to his diet, injections of a few elements missing in his physical makeup, a surgical operation, or a few hours conversation with a psychiatrist, might have made a different man of him. But none of these solutions ever occurred to him. Instead, he sent up long, miserable prayers to God, with no expectation that anything would come of them. He had grown accustomed to neglect in all quarters. (TT, p. 74)

Young Hector had grown up in an atmosphere of perpetual gloom and hopelessness. Hector's mother, "a farm girl" (TT, p. 75), had not been "able to dominate the women in the churches where her husband ministered, and because she could not dominate them she became their drudge" (TT, p. 76). The severity and gloom of his father's religion was, however, not the main cause of Hector's rebellion. Davies had pointed out, in a review of Emily Carr's The Book of Small, "It is surprising how much that is hard and unyielding children can survive; what invariably ruins them is weakness and lack of direction."¹⁴ In Hector's childhood home, there had been gloom, but "no deep devotion, no consciousness of hidden sources of strength, not even a rigid Puritanism . . ." (TT, p. 74). Hector's father had died, from a neglected cold, when Hector was fourteen. Hector's early years had been spent in a home made gloomy by his parents' helplessness.

¹⁴ R. Davies, "Children on Vancouver Island," Peterborough Examiner, 10 November 1942, p. 4.

The Rev. John Mackilwraith's successor, James MacKinnon had been a young man "only ten years older than Hector [who] although he could keep up his ministerial dignity under most circumstances, . . . still, at times suffered from a mortifying sense of insufficiency" (TT, p. 74). His view of his own life was that,

The sacrifices demanded by the ministry are numberless. But its glories, too, are numberless. To be counted among the ministers of God is to be used for the highest purpose God has designed for man. . . . I would not retrace my steps now. Nor will you wish to do so when once you have submitted yourself to the Will of God. (TT, p. 85)

Like Mackilwraith before him, his interpretation of accepting and fulfilling the Will of God meant over-ruling any tendency to independence and self-sufficiency MacKinnon might have developed. By the time he was forty, he "had grown much older in appearance" (TT, p. 82) and "lived as a lodger in his own house, a victim of other people's thoughtfulness and generosity" (TT, p. 92). Both the Rev. Mackilwraith and the Rev. MacKinnon had entered into the kind of relationship with God that Freud described in The Future of an Illusion as an infantile dependency for protection upon the strength of the adult--the feared but needed father (SE XXI:24). It was in reaction to the perceived weakness of his father that Hector rejected not only his father's profession but also his father's God. Freud had said that "each one of us behaves in one respect like a paranoic, corrects some aspect of the world which is

unbearable by the construction of a wish and introduces the wish into reality" (SE XXI:81). Hector had accepted all his life the "way of the world that a minister's son should be better than other boys" (TT, p. 77), which meant that his conduct would be exemplary; he would have resisted all the temptations of evil. With only one fall from grace, Hector had been successful in controlling his youthful passions. Following his father's death he began the process of bringing his life fully under his control--there would be no external all-powerful God for him: "Planning and common sense became his Gods of this world. But, he was too much the minister's son to be without a God in some other world and he was lucky enough to find the god which suited him in mathematics" (TT, p. 87).

In A Mixture of Frailties (1958), Monica Gall, a young artist in training, had grown up as a member of The Thirteenth Apostle Tabernacle, the spiritual home of a peculiar Christian sect otherwise known as "The Thirteeners" (AMF, p. 88). The clergyman of this sect had been Pastor Sidney Beamis, whose conception of God was the reverse of that of the Rev. John Mackilwraith. Pastor Beamis' relationship with God had nothing of infantile dependency about it. It was rather that of a trusted lieutenant who was made privy to specialized information, and given the authority to enforce the obedience to his instructions for the achievement of salvation. The founder of the sect, Myron Coffey, an advertising salesman (TT, p. 42), had had no formal

education or theological training when he received a "revelation that he was the Thirteenth Apostle, destined to spread the good news to mankind. And that the New Jerusalem was right here if only the poor souls could make contact, God was here: Christ was now" (AMF, p. 42). Unlike the Presbyterians, who "expected their Pastors to demonstrate a high standard of scholarship" (TT, p. 73), the Thirteeners demanded nothing more than what their Pastors enforce Coffey's interpretation of the good life: "unstinting service to others, simple piety, mistrust of pleasure, and no truck with thought or education beyond what was necessary to read the Good Book" (AMF, p. 41). The Morton family in The Voice of the People (1949), whose Pastor Beamis had had his pulpit fitted out with rheostats, were characterized by the same self-satisfied underdeveloped intellectual outlook as the Thirteeners. The evolution of this peculiar Christian sect had followed what Ronald Knox described as the usual pattern of such Enthusiast movements:

The insistence that the saved members of his society, saved members of a perishing world, should live a life of angelic purity, of apostolic sympathy: worldly movements, the artifices of a polite society are not for them. Poor human nature. Every lapse that follows . . . creates a scandal within . . . the emphasis lies on direct personal access to the Author of our salvation with

little of intellectual background or liturgical expression.¹⁵

The Rev. Jevon Knapp had disapproved of the Thirteeners because he had "an eighteenth century distrust for Enthusiasm in religion, which he was prepared to defend on moral and philosophical grounds" (AMF, p. 42). Miss Pottinger disapproved of them for social reasons--to her the Thirteenth Apostle Tabernacle obviously belonged in the "slums of the spirit" (AMF, p. 42).

The Thirteeners, like practitioners of other revealed forms of Christianity, were suspicious of art and music, except when these arts were explicitly directed to spreading the influence of the sect or enforcing its morality. Like Tapscott and Mattie in Fortune My Foe, Pastor Beamis valued art, in this case, music, only as a tool, to be used in his case in promulgating his simplistic dogmas. He was prepared to encourage Monica to train as a singer because he had no concept about the true nature of art:

He talked a great deal about the opportunities a singer enjoyed to do the Lord's work, by uplifting people and turning their minds to the finer things of life; in his own work he had been able to obscure the splendid harvest of souls which could be reopened through the Ministry of Music. He pleased . . . with the Galls not to deny their daughter a chance . . . to be a force for good in the world. (AMF, p. 46)

¹⁵ Knox, p. 2. Davies had referred to this book as "a book for which I have felt the strongest admiration and sympathy during the past nine years and I recommend it seriously to anyone who is concerned with the history of Christian thought." R. Davies, "Father Knox," Toronto Daily Star, 20 February 1960, rpt. in The Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies, p. 81.

Both Monica and Hector had grown up under the influence of religions in which the "goodness" of the individual had been directly proportional to his willingness to renounce his instincts and his will as a means of serving God. Although Hector had rejected that God while still a boy, he had not overcome the "self-floggings of Puritan conscience"¹⁶ which denied him the right to be imperfect. Hector had rejected Presbyterianism only to devise another "religion" which if anything, was more severe than the one he had rejected. Monica had to overcome not only the mental and moral constraints of the Thirteeners, but also all the romantic nonsense about music and artists which had been part of her early musical training. She had, for example, been taught that "A great artist is always a lovely person" (TT, p. 71).

The first step in liberation for both Hector and Monica was the liberation of the "Eros" instinct. In order to achieve this, they each had to undermine the power of their super-egos, or conscience, or sense of guilt. The religious upbringing had been such that quite early in life they had developed powerful super-egos and as Freud explained "when the super ego is established, considerable amounts of the aggressive instinct are fixated in the interior of the ego and operate there self-destructively."¹⁷

¹⁶R. Davies, "Of the Human Predicament," Saturday Night, 17 March 1954, p. 22.

¹⁷Freud, An Outline of Psychoanalysis, SE XXIII:150.

Although no religious background was given for Gloster Ridley in Leaven of Malice, early in the novel it was made clear that he too, was suffering from an overdeveloped super-ego. "From his seventeenth year until quite recently, anxiety had ridden him with whip and spur, and only when well past forty had he gained any hope of unseating her" (LM, p. 4). While the cause of Gloster's anxiety at age seventeen was never made clear, one can at this stage quite safely assume it would have had the kind of sexual origin Freud ascribed to anxiety formation in New Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis (1932). However, the anxiety he was experiencing as an adult appeared to have derived its neurotic character from the strength of his overdeveloped super-ego. In Civilization and its Discontents, Freud had established two origins for the sense of guilt: one arising from a fear of an authority, and the other, later on, arising from fear of the super-ego (SE XXI:127), and had later in the same essay, identified the harshness of the super-ego with the severity of conscience (SE XXI:136). The manifestations of the super-ego in both Hector and Gloster Ridley had become allied with what Freud described as the "death instincts" (SE XXI:122) and as a result, both men lived very constrained inner lives.

In these first two novels Hector Mackilwraith and Gloster Ridley found themselves in situations in which they were forced to face up to their neuroses. Hector became the victim of his un-lived emotions, and Gloster was faced

with the loss of social position he felt he needed to keep his anxiety at bay. In each case, a resolution of the problem came about when external factors forced on the character an awareness of the limitations of the defenses he had erected against the world. However, until this point, regardless of their neuroses, both characters had achieved apparent success in their community.

Hector, for example, had impressed Roger Tasset:

[There was] an air of quiet sincerity about [Hector Mackilwraith] . . . it was not the professional sincerity of the professional good fellow; it was the integrity of a man who has every aspect of his life which is important to him, under his perfect control. (TT, p. 181)

But there was one aspect of Hector's life which he had not brought under control because he had not thought it important to him--this was his desire to have fun (TT, p. 99). In Freudian terms, Hector had denied in himself the "pleasure principle" (SE XVIII:42) and in doing so had repressed virtually his whole Eros instinct. He did not even allow himself the oral gratification of good eating, or the anal one of acquisitiveness. Hector had confined his creative spirit to scientific inquiry of the most severely limited kind--to proving or disproving the truth of particular mathematical functions.

Having made the decision to have fun by acting in the Salterton Little Theatre's production of The Tempest, Hector had given in to this urge for fun for perhaps the first time in his life. More importantly, he had become involved with

Humphrey Cobbler and Valentine Rich, both of whom were true artists with the artist's 'disregard for the surfaces of things' and he had become involved in the imaginative recreation of the most magical of Shakespeare's plays.

Initial contact with the great poetic truths of The Tempest shattered Hector's complacency:

Poetry, even such poetry as Shakespeare had given Gonzalo is like wine; it is not for unseasoned heads. The rhythm and the unaccustomed richness of the words worked powerfully on Hector's sensibilities, which until that time had been teetotallers in the matter of poetry. (TT, p. 115)

Hector slowly began to awaken to a new reality, to face long repressed truths of his own nature. He noticed young people in a sexual embrace, and recognized through them his own sexuality. "Romance had been a scarce ingredient in his own life" (TT, p. 116). But he was old, beyond all that surely--not necessarily. "Why should he not have his chance again?" (TT, p. 117). Before he was able to repress this new desire, "it was as though another voice, a clear insistent voice spoke to him. Why not? Why not?" (TT, p. 117).

Hector had taken the first step to self-knowledge--he had become "physical" man, and had heard the voice of his unconscious. Basically this is about as far as Hector proceeded in the process of self-discovery. Admittedly, he 'fell in love' with Griselda, who became for him his "ideal Woman" and he discovered that it was possible for someone to be more important to him than himself" (TT, p. 153).

But, with this discovery came also his loss of faith in his religion: "His whole concept of 'life' as something that could be governed by schemes in pocket books appeared to him suddenly to be trivial and contemptible" (TT, p. 153).

No longer able to maintain complete faith in his new religion, Hector's old religious upbringing reasserted itself. The poetry of Shakespeare's play may have awakened in him the awareness of his own humanity, but on the conscious level, he remained locked in what Cobbler called the "granite fortress of your obtuse self-righteousness" (TT, p. 181). Hector, having demanded "perfection" from himself all his life, could not cope with a Griselda who was less than perfect. Misunderstanding her relationship with Roger Tasset, he concluded that "she was frail, that she was no better than those hired girls, taken in sin, whom it had been the Rev. John Mackilwraith's duty to scold, exhort and pray over in the parlour in the days of his childhood" (TT, p. 268).

As a demonstration of the greatness of his love, he would save Griselda by appeasing "That Mean Old Man in the Sky" (TT, p. 250). He wanted Griselda to be preserved from her own weakness--his religion recognized only one way: "every good thing must spring from sacrifice and atonement" (TT, p. 269). The death instinct, or super-ego which had been so much a part of Hector's religion invaded his consciousness and Hector prepared to sacrifice his life.

Only after the attempt failed, was Hector offered a glimpse into that other life-enhancing aspect of man's existence which had for so long been denied him: "the warm, cherishing, unquestioning feminine sympathy which he had not known (and then how meagerly, since his childhood), . . . Valentine gave him, but it drew him back gently from Death and the longing for Death" (TT, p. 273). By the end of the novel the possibility existed that Hector might someday learn to accept the advice Pere Blazon was to give to Dunstan Ramsay in Fifth Business, "Forgive yourself for being a human creature" (FB, p. 178).

In the second volume of the Salterton Trilogy, Leaven of Malice, the frame story of Solly Bridgetower and his need for liberation from his mother, provided the primary focus, the developments in the life of Gloster Ridley occupying a secondary place. The title of the novel Leaven of Malice was to be found, Davies informed us through Dean Knapp, in a phrase in the Collect for the First Sunday after Easter in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England (LM, p. 266 and prefatory material). This Collect is read at a time when practicing Christians have just reaffirmed the central belief of their faith, that Jesus was resurrected on the Third/Day. The phrase in the Collect comes from I Corinthians V:8,

Let us therefore celebrate the feast not with old leaven, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
(New American Standard Bible)

St. Paul was taxing the Corinthians with the sin into which they had fallen after they became too convinced of the rightness of their own actions. He had said:

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. / Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump. . . . (I Corinthians V:6,7)

The "old leaven" in Leaven of Malice which, like the leaven in St. Paul's Epistle, must be cleaned out was the belief in the validity of social power and moral superiority which sustained Saltertonians such as Gloster Ridley, Professor Vambrace and Matthew Snelgrove in lieu of religion. The leaven of malice which had set this process in motion was the injured vanity of Bevil Higgin whose vainglorious estimation of his own worth as an artist and purveyor of culture had been momentarily demolished by Solly Bridgetower and Gloster Ridley, both of whom were educated men with humanistic tendencies. Higgin deliberately created a situation which he thought would impose social embarrassment on those individuals who had damaged his self-esteem. In doing so, he unleashed real evil, the demonic will to power which was made visible in the vindictive reactions of certain other characters: Professor Vambrace, Mr. Snelgrove, Mrs. Bridgetower and Mrs. Roger Warboys. Following the fake engagement announcement, they were no longer satisfied with the exercise of power primarily to preserve the status quo: their will to power had become active and malignant, a drive

to humiliate and control all that which in any way threatened their beliefs about themselves and their position in their world. For these characters the unleashed malice wreaked havoc, and they were left at the end of the novel with little of their former self-esteem. It was probably for this reason that one early reviewer of the novel remarked, "There should be something left when the outer layers are peeled away. This is missing in Leaven of Malice."¹⁸

The malice, however, worked two ways: It increased and unleashed the demonic power of those who already possessed power, but, by exposing that power for the malignancy it was, it also freed others from thralldom. The lives of both Gloster Ridley and Solly Bridgetower were linked through this malice, for both were the victims of the hoax, and both were forced into a re-evaluation of the innermost beliefs that governed their lives.

Gloster Ridley, as editor of The Bellman, had for many years exercised a degree of power over the contents of the paper and its employees. Socially, he had not regarded himself as subject to the restrictions of Salterton beliefs, and, consequently, he had been regarded as an outsider and an eccentric by the townspeople. Ridley's inner satisfaction with his job was derived partly from his conviction

¹⁸Arnold Edinborough, "Two Private Visions of a Crazy World," rev. Leaven of Malice, Saturday Night, 23 October 1954, p. 18.

that it seemed to him an honest job, and partly because it was still not fully "respectable"--it gave him the feeling that he was living dangerously:

Banking and insurance have managed to raise themselves almost to the level of religions, medicine, law and priesthoods, against which no whisper must be heard; teachers insist that they do jobs for the good of mankind, without any thought of getting a living. And all this self-praise, all this dense fog of respectability which has been created around ordinary, necessary work is choking out honesty about ourselves. It is the dash of old time roguery which is still found in journalism--the slightly raffish de classé air of it which is its fascination. We haven't bullied and public relations agented the public to the point where they think we are gods walking the earth, and beyond all criticism. We are among the last people who are not completely, utterly and damnably respectable. There is a little of the "Old Adam" even in the dullest of us and it keeps us young.
(LM, p. 140)

Unlike many others in Salterton, Ridley did not deny or shy away from the existence of wickedness, but his awareness was limited to a recognition of social wickedness "the wickedness of the USA, the wickedness of the nation in spending several times as much on liquor as it gave to charity" (LM, p. 16). As long as the wickedness was external, Ridley could both recognize it and cope with it. But, his Puritanical self-flogging conscience, or Freudian super-ego if you wish, would not allow him to accept wickedness or imperfection in himself. Gloster Ridley, whose life was apparently well under control and who had achieved no small success in the external world, possessed a secret which

haunted him and kept him in thrall to anxiety. Gloster Ridley knew that inside he was imperfect; he was wicked, and he was unable to forgive himself for that imperfection.

He understood his need for palliative measures, "I'm not a very self-assured man. I need things to bolster me up" (LM, p. 230). He was eagerly looking forward to receiving an honorary degree from Waverley University, not only for its social prestige, but also because he sincerely believed it would help in "making myself into a person who couldn't possibly have created that accident, who couldn't possibly have done that murder" (LM, p. 233).

Although he had not murdered anyone, he carried the guilt of having wished for someone to die, and having that wish fulfilled. "When I was twenty-one, I married a girl who seemed to me to be the most beautiful and desirable creature that I could conceive of. I wanted to devote my life to her" (LM, p. 232). However, as reality reasserted itself, he discovered that "she was stupid, and she was a wretched housekeeper" (LM, p. 232), and the marriage became something which he could not bear. "I wished her dead or myself dead time and time again" (LM, p. 233). Then there was an accident which led ultimately to her madness (LM, p. 233).

Over the years, he had kept his marriage a secret, and his guilt had increased for a number of reasons. First, he has had difficulty accepting the selfish imperfection of his toleration: "I should have borne it better, shown more

restraint, more kindness" (LM, p. 233) and secondly, he felt guilty for having made the terrible wish. Most importantly, he felt guilty and insecure because her madness was a relief to him; he no longer had to cope with the bad marriage, but he still lived in the fear that "she might recover, might be well enough to return home" (LM, p. 231).

Ridley had become sufficiently deluded by his quest for security that he believed possession of an honorary degree would be a symbol of security and success, which would in some way signify that he had succeeded in "making myself into a person who couldn't possibly have done that murder" (LM, p. 233). Without it, Ridley could not possibly love or forgive the "very inferior creature" (LM, p. 233) that he was.

This belief was undoubtedly the legacy of those early Puritan beliefs that "success in business is in itself almost a sign of spiritual grace, for it is a proof that a man has laboured faithfully in his vocation and that God has blessed his trade."¹⁹ Freud would have called it an "obsessional neurosis."²⁰ That Ridley was a nonaggressive person had been indicated in various ways throughout the novel, as for example, his unwillingness to force Mr. Shillito to retire and his discomfort with his housekeeper. Freud said that "It is remarkable that the more a man checks

¹⁹Tawney, pt 244.

²⁰Freud, The Ego and the Id, SE XIX:53.

his aggressiveness toward the exterior, the more severe, that is, aggressive he becomes in his ego-ideal". [earlier identified as a major component of the super-ego] (SE XIX: 54).

The effect of the malice running rampant in Salterton as a result of Bevil Higgin's need for vengeance was one of release for Gloster Ridley. Faced with the threat of losing his honorary degree, Gloster was forced to come to some accommodation with his ego. He finally recognized the illusory nature of his obsession about the honorary degree, but only after the pain of his anxiety had become too severe for him to handle alone, and he turned for comfort to his friend Elspeth Fielding. For the first time in his life, he articulated the inner conflict which had kept him in thrall. Both Freud and Jung had noted the therapeutic effects of "confession" of a secret too terrible to be told. The Jungian explanation appears to elucidate what had happened to Gloster Ridley:

Nothing makes people more lonely and more cut off from the fellowship of others than the possession of an anxiously hidden and jealously guarded personal secret. Very often it is "sinful" thoughts and deeds that keep them apart and estrange them from one another. Here confession sometimes has a truly redeeming effect. The tremendous feeling of relief which usually follows a confession can be ascribed to the re-admission of the lost sheep into the human community. His moral isolation and seclusion which were so difficult to bear, cease.²¹

²¹C.G. Jung, "The Theory of Psychoanalysis," Freud and Psychoanalysis, CW. 4:432:192.

Following his confession, "open and disarmed by the love and womanly tenderness of Elspeth Fielding, Ridley felt cleansed at last. He was not set free of his bugbear forever. . . . But his burden was . . . lightened . . ." (LM, p. 234).

The same malice which had ultimately freed Gloster Ridley from enslavement to his conscience also worked to free Solly Bridgetower and Pearl Vambrace from thralldom to their respective parents. Although three years had passed since they had participated in the production of The Tempest, Solly and Pearl had each continued to live in a constant endeavour to please parents who made selfish egocentric demands on them. Their worlds were by normal standards quite unbearable. Solly had found "palliative measures" in "rye whiskey in tap water" (TT, p. 46) and in creating a fantasy world for himself, one in which he imaginatively cast himself in a variety of roles "before that dim invisible but rapt audience which since his childhood had watched his every move" (TT, p. 169). Having cast himself as a hero in his fantasy life, he was able to avoid the unpleasant task of overcoming the thralldom which [his mother] had imposed upon him since his thirteenth year (TT, p. 126). Solly's relationship with his mother was as devastating for his inner development as John Mackilwraith's concept of obedience to the Will of God had been for his. Solly was a grown man leading a Peter Pan existence and to a certain extent allowing his irrational concept of filial duty to shield

him from the unpleasant prospect of real independence. Solly did not allow himself freedom of choice, although in his conscious mind he considered himself a humanist: "In the great shrines of humanism we don't need arbitrary rules to keep our manners in order" (TT, p. 175). Outwardly, Solly appeared to care nothing for the opinion of society; he appeared free of the restrictiveness of the Salterton outlook, but he lived internally and in reality, "in impotence and fear of his mother" (TT, p. 76).

Pearl Vambrace's father was the equivalent in her life of Solly's mother in his. He "made constant demands on her and was harshly displeased if these demands were not met" (TT, p. 121). However, unlike Solly, Pearl had a dream which gave her some spiritual resources. "She was conscious that she had a destiny apart from these unhappy creatures and she waited patiently for the day of her deliverance" (TT, p. 122).

There was, however, one individual to whom Pearl could turn. This was Norman Yarrow, PhD.--the twentieth century scientific version of the concerned and understanding clergyman. He had recently been appointed assistant to the University Chaplain (LM, p. 117). Norman Yarrow was not a theologian, but a psychologist, although he did not appear to belong to any special school of psychology: "[he] frankly admitted that he relied upon his common sense rather than theory, to guide him in dealing with people who seemed to need psychological assistance" (LM, p. 117).

Norman Yarrow, with "his faith in what he called The Personal Influence in Guidance" (LM, p. 117) was not substantially different from Myron Coffey, the founder of the Thirteeners, in his attitude to Salvation. For Norman, Salvation was "a normal attitude" (LM, p. 117), of which he himself was the living embodiment. His wife, Dutchy was, like Norman, a proponent of the view that individuality was an aberration which needed to be assimilated. A true daughter of the Puritans, "she was convinced that any sort of inactivity was evil . . ." (LM, p. 118) and in her profession of Recreation Director "made things go." Most of Dutchy's recreational ideas involved rather mindless busyness.

Norman was a pleasant young man, easy to approach, and he soon began to fulfill his priestly function. He managed "in six weeks to become the confessor of a surprising number of people . . ." (LM, p. 119). Norman and Dutchy were as convinced of the rightness of their convictions as had ever been any hard-nosed Puritan divine, and the emptiness of their spiritual guidance can be read as a bitter attack on the anti-intellectualism and anti-spiritual nature of the twentieth century mass-mindedness which had produced in millions of people a "hunger for heart which clamours for reassurance and wisdom but which shrinks from religion and philosophy either of which might, in different ways feed their need and soothe their sorrow" (VA, p. 54). Dutchy and Norm were for many people the living personifications of the

"self-help" books of which Davies was so critical in A Voice from the Attic, and which he said promoted a "shocking" idea of religious faith as a kind of investment (VA, p. 58).

Norm and Dutchy were the products of a university system which promulgated knowledge without the depth or understanding which led to wisdom. Norman's faith in himself was shaken, ever so slightly, when he met Prof. Vambrace:

The chapter on Freudian psychology had not, after all, equipped him to deal with a tiresomely literal professor of classics who knew Oedipus at first hand. . . . Norm had received his training chiefly through general courses and some interesting work which proved fairly conclusively that rats were unable to distinguish between squares, circles and triangles. (LM, p. 210)

Norman and Dutchy Yarrow were the hollow high priests of the Kingdom of this World, serving their great God Science with "a sincere but modern and scientific faith" (LM, p. 135). Following a party at their home in which various "games" most of which involved mild sexual teasing, Norm announced Solly and Pearl's engagement in a speech which was an ironic version of an evangelist sermon announcing the saving of another soul. "Pearly has found herself" (LM, p. 136).

When Norman Yarrow attempted to guide Prof. Vambrace, via his pseudo-Freudian explanation of the Oedipus Complex, to a realization of the incestuous abnormality of his love for Pearl, his complacency was momentarily shaken. In this passage, Davies satirically delineated a reversal of roles

and the atheist who was also a genuine scholar and lover of great literature was shown to be possessed of depths of understanding far exceeding those of the pseudo-scientist Yarrow. Thus, while Yarrow was, in his ignorance, prepared to dismiss "mental incest" as "nothing serious", Vambrace roared with the ferocity of a medieval confessor, "Do you imply that the sins of the mind are trivial and the sins of the flesh important?" (LM, p. 209). However, there was some truth in what Yarrow had had to say, as Vambrace was intelligent enough to recognize. Yarrow, however, was not educated. Blinded by the rightness of his concept of normal, "The more he reflected on the interview, the more he was convinced that he understood it all thoroughly" (LM, p. 211).

Pearl and Solly had been publicly proclaimed as an engaged couple by The Bellman, and by the Yarrow's, and neither Pearl nor Solly had denied the proclamations, because neither quite knew how to. Their association with one another, and their unwillingness to deny their relationship, became their mutual strength. Pearl had some compensations in this life, the chief of which was her indulgence in donuts and the forbidden music her instructor, Mr. Kelso, called "horrible examples" (LM, p. 100)--music in which she found solace. Valse Triste, for example, "was unbearably beautiful and yet it somehow made life much more bearable" (LM, p. 101).

Unlike Solly, who had been brought up Anglican and had rejected any belief in "The Mean Old Man in the Sky" (TT,

p. 250), Pearl had been brought up atheist. Any notions she may have had of God, were of the "Mean Old Man in the Sky" variety. She had "at the back of her mind a notion of God as a vindictive old party who was determined to keep her humble and uncertain. God and Father were not mocked" (LM, p. 127). Moreover as Freud would have pointed out, God and Father were much the same in Pearl's mind--the latter being but a human version of the former. The power of father was something Pearl, in her infantile subjection to him, feared, so she dared not rebel for disaster was certain to follow.

The fake announcement of their engagement had not only aroused historic enmity between Solly and Pearl's respective mother and father, but had awakened them to the possibility of losing some of the power they exercised over their children. When his mother threatened to take Prof. Vambrace to court, Solly escaped his illusions about her and realized that his mother "was not acting in his best interest" (LM, p. 66)--but only for a moment. This heresy was soon suppressed.

The public display of the full malignancy of her father's need to exert power over her (LM, p. 147) had liberated Pearl from any need to obey the rules which had hitherto governed her life (p. 205). Moreover, Pearl's humiliation by her father evoked in Solly the conscious realization that he should "have done something" (LM, p. 148). He could have been the hero in Pearl's life. Each

was drawn to the other in compensation for his/her own perceived weaknesses. Solly admired Pearl's spirit (LM, p. 216); Pearl was "dazzled by Solly's grasp of the fundamentals of her problem" (LM, p. 217). Each offered the other the opportunity for a new freedom, but it was Solly whose battle was less successful as the power of Mrs. Bridge-tower's yearning to keep Solly imprisoned in his Peter Pan state warred with his own instincts of self-preservation. Strengthened by Pearl's honest respect for him, Solly was able to begin the process of becoming independent. Solly had spoken the truth when he told Cobbler "I have a strong sense of being ill used. . . . I'm in seven kinds of a mess" (LM, p. 192).

Solly did not achieve the liberation, of self-knowledge in Leaven of Malice. He did, however, discover that he was not the centre of the universe, as he reached out, at first in pity, toward Pearl, now Veronica. He had, however, emerged from his fantasy egocentric existence long enough to make two important decisions about his future. The first was that he would henceforth be a "creator of Amcan, not one of its embalmers" (LM, p. 272) and the second was to marry Pearl/Veronica (p. 277).

The result of the first decision was that Solly would attempt to impose some form of reason on the daydreaming which had hitherto been his only creative outlet. While Davies does not depict the emergence of Solly-as-artist, he acknowledged in this decision, the Freudian concept that

"art has the function of self-mastery."²² The decision to marry Veronica meant for Solly the release from repression of his sexual instinct, which in Freudian terms, is a "major component of the assertion of the life-instinct--Eros" (SE XVIII, pp. 60-61). Thus, Solly's situation at the end of Leaven of Malice was not unlike that of either Hector at the end of Tempest-Tost or Gloster Ridley in Leaven of Malice. None of the three had advanced very far in the process of gaining real self-knowledge, but all were prepared to make some drastic changes in the internal structure which had hitherto governed their lives.

Up to this point in his writings, Davies had not attempted to clarify exactly what self-knowledge would mean to the individual beyond the recognition of the causes of certain neuroses and the debilitating effects of some types of illusions. In the late 1940's he had indicated his dissatisfaction with the Freudian analysis of religion as an illusion--by 1954, he had apparently decided that Freudian reductionism of neurotic symptoms may have been adequate to help one understand the existence and power of the unconscious to govern the lives of individuals, but, it was not proving to be satisfactory in determining the structure and relationship of the various aspects of the unconscious itself.

²² Philip Rieff, Freud, The Mind of the Moralist (New York: Viking, 1959), p. 346.

The disenchantment with Freudian psychology that Davies was experiencing increasingly in the 1950's can clearly be seen in the masque and three plays which Davies wrote between the volumes of the Salterton Trilogy. These are particularly helpful in the investigation of his depiction of the problem of religion. In addition to the shift in Davies' interest from Freudian to Jungian psychology, his changing views on evil and the nature of sin become apparent in these shorter works. Therefore, the masque and the plays will be examined before proceeding to the analysis of A Mixture of Frailties (1958), the final volume of the Salterton Trilogy. It is hoped that in this analysis, the relative roles assigned to Freudian and Jungian psychology in this problem of religion and the identity of the individual will become readily apparent. Davies did not suddenly cease to use his knowledge of Freudian psychology--but he used it for a different purpose than he used his knowledge of Jungian psychology.

The characters in most of Davies' plays and novels had until now either been characters who were full of Puritan-Protestant repression and were spiritually healthy if somewhat eccentric, or else they had been victims who either realized that they were victims or who insisted that they were in the right. However, in the first two novels of the Salterton Trilogy, Davies became more and more interested in the process of regaining spiritual health--and for this process, a greater understanding of the depths of the

unconscious appeared to be necessary. Through the 1950's especially, the psychology of Jung increasingly provided Davies with various paradigms for the process of revitalization of the human spirit.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SPIRITUAL HIRED HANDS

In the full-length plays of the late 1940's, Robertson Davies had shown the beginnings of his affinity with Jungian psychology primarily in three ways. He had depicted the ability of the creative artist to reach the depths of the human psyche in Fortune My Foe; he had seriously challenged the empiricist-rationalist attitude which would have relegated religion to illusion in King Phoenix, and he had shown the dangerous shallowness of the institutional Christianity which recognized the reality of evil only in relation to the right conduct of social institutions in At My Heart's Core, forcing upon Christians a lop-sided outlook on the conduct of their lives.

By the early 1950's, he was clearly moving toward a deeper understanding of what Jung considered important components of the human psyche. Years later he admitted that among other reasons, he had found Jungian psychology more agreeable to him than the Freudian because "it was more aesthetic and humanistic and not so Procrustean."² Moreover, having rejected Freud's analysis of religion as an illusion, he was drawn by the fact that: "For Jung, God was a fact for

¹ Davies, Leaven of Malice, p. 60.

² Davies, "The Conscience of the Writer," p. 126.

which evidence existed in the mind of man--which is not to say that God is nothing more than that: for Freud, God was an imposture on the mind of man."³

There was another problem with Freudian psychology and that was what Davies called its reductiveness. He had, he said, become disenchanted with Freud because "the cast of his mind is strongly reductive, and whatever came under the inspection of that remarkable mind emerged notably smaller and less impressive than what it had been before."⁴ Freudian psychology, however, was still very helpful for reducing a problem to its minutest constituents, or instincts.

Freud, it is true, had discovered the "unconscious" and its power to affect the life of the individual. However, it was Jung who explored that vast unconscious, and found it "teeming with life."⁵ Jung had discovered that below the threshold of the personal consciousness,

The unconscious is the receptacle of all lost memories, of all contents that are too weak to become conscious. These contents are products of an unconscious associative activity which also gives rise to dreams. Besides these we must include all more or less intentional repressions of painful thoughts and feelings. I call the sum of all these contents the "personal unconscious". But over and above that we also find in the unconscious

³ Davies, "Gleams and Gloom," p. 244.

⁴ Davies, "Gleams and Gloom," p. 242.

⁵ C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffé. Trans. Richard and Clara Winston (London: Collins and Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 172.

qualities that are not individually acquired but are inherited, e.g., instincts as impulses to carry out actions from necessity, without conscious motivation. In this deeper layer we find the a priori, inborn forms of "intuition", namely the archetypes of perception, which are the necessary a priori determinants of all psychic processes. Just as his instincts compel man to a specifically human mode of existence, so the archetypes force his ways of perception and apprehension into specifically human patterns. The instincts and the archetypes together form the "collective unconscious."⁶

By the final novel of the Salterton Trilogy, Davies had embraced the Jungian concepts of the complexity of the psyche and of the role of the archetypes in the formation of the personality. As a result, growth to self-knowledge in the lives of the characters in this novel, as well as in the lives of the characters of the frame story, can best be understood in the terms of Jungian psychology. The masque and the three plays which he wrote prior to the completion of the Salterton Trilogy all contain indications of the ways in which Davies perceived Jungian psychology as helpful in grasping the problem of religion for those who dwelled in the slums of the spirit, and who wish to escape this realm.

In the Masque of Aesop (1952), he continued the examination of the effects of repressive utilitarianism which he had begun in characterizing Hector Mackilwraith in Tempest-Tost. One of the first things to lose its life-sustaining powers under such a regime was shown to be the concept of

⁶C.G. Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, CW 8:270:133.

God as a beneficent, independent arbiter of the actions of men. In this short masque, Apollo had been summoned with his aunts, the Three Fates, to carry out the will of the people. Metaphorically, the arts and artistic inspiration were being subjected to the materialistic, empiricist moral values of a people who no longer recognized anything greater than the mundane realities. Apollo was told to execute Aesop for "having the insufferable impudence to think thoughts other than those which we recognize as sane, safe and sanitary."⁷ The fables which Aesop told to illustrate why he was considered a threat to society were all fables which showed the value of the nonmaterial things of the spirit, things such as the need for brotherhood, for peace of mind, for art and beauty--all concepts which the citizens view as threatening to their materialistic rationalistic culture.

They had become so immersed in the preservation of the status quo that anything which threatened it, even if its only purpose was to educate them about serious social problems, was regarded as evil. In their opinions, since their way of thinking was the only good, then this must also be the way the God thought. "The voice of the people is the voice of God. We are the people and we have spoken. Therefore, Apollo, you have heard yourself pronounce sentence on this

⁷R. Davies, A Masque of Aesop (Toronto: Clarke Irwin Co., 1952), p. 12. Subsequent references to this masque will be abbreviated AMA and included in the text.

evil man" (AMA, p. 14). Once more, as he had in his earlier play The Voice of the People (1949) and in his Marchbanks columns, Davies had satirized the God of 'the voice of the people' as a distorted, reversed image of himself.

However, in this masque the real God Apollo asserted his independence of the people's concept of Him as the originator and enforcer of their social beliefs. He would not blindly accept their judgement as equivalent to his. First, he asked Aesop to relate some of his fables and, secondly, he refused to bow to their commands. Only after he had heard the fables would he render judgement, and that judgement would be his own:

I am not a God who delights in death
but a God of life . . . concerns of
self and petty advantage have so
blinded your eyes and stopped your
ears that when a great teacher arises
among you he seems to be deformed and
his words seem Blasphemy. Yet they
are no Blasphemy against the truth,
but only against your false beliefs.
(AMA, p. 46)

In this short masque, Davies reiterated his conviction that it was not God who had become the "Mean Old Man in the Sky" (TT, p. 250) but the people's concept of Him. The citizens' ideas of God had become warped and perverted in accordance with their disregard for the value of the non-material elements of their lives.

They were afraid of Aesop, who did not subscribe to their "collective persona."⁸ Aesop's fables exemplified the valuative role of the artist in society. Through "the unconscious activation of an archetypal image" (CW 15:130:82) which occurs in the creative process, Aesop had "reach[ed] back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequateness and one-sidedness of the present" (CW 15:130:83). His fable of the Cock, for example, had revealed the inadequateness and one-sidedness of the materialistic scientific attitude which valued only the usefulness of things. Rather than face "evil", which was the shadow of their collective persona which Aesop revealed, the citizens wanted the creator of that evil disposed of. Apollo disagreed. On the other hand, Apollo felt that Aesop needed some discipline because of his arrogance, "you have dared to scorn men" (AMA, p. 47), which was a sin which Apollo could not ignore. It was, however, a natural sin, which would pass if Aesop continued to grow spiritually for "the greatest teacher is he who has passed through scorn of mankind to love of mankind" (AMA, p. 47).

In this masque Davies revealed the foundation for a revised concept of sin and evil. What appeared evil to the

⁸ J. Jacobi, *Masks of the Soul*, trans. Ean Begg (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Erdmans, 1976), p. 48. Jacobi pointed out that "the collective commands and prohibitions of the parents [etc.] . . . help to form the persona attitude." Deviation from such norms leads to guilt feelings. The collective persona becomes visible whenever a majority subscribes to it.

people was not evil to the God Apollo, just as what was "good" by their standards was evil by his. However, there was for Apollo another level of 'sin', which the people in their blindness had not perceived at all, the sin of scorning mankind.

The first of the plays published in the 1950's was A Jig for the Gypsy which Davies said, "was clear in my head in 1938 [but] I did not write the first version of it until 1945."⁹ The published version is the one which he "wrote and tinkered with" between 1945 and 1954, and as such must be considered of major importance in any analysis of the development of his ideas in this period. In this play, set in nineteenth century Wales, Benoni, the gypsy, was persuaded to foretell the outcome of a local election by using her ability to read tea cups. When her prediction satisfied the particular political party which had requested it, it became part of the election campaign because belief in Benoni's magic was still an important part of the beliefs of the local people (AJG, p. 8). This play focused on the clash of belief systems--the clash between the superstitions, which in a peculiar religious fashion provided the people with real sustenance for their inner lives, and the official religions, which were preoccupied with the mundane affairs of society and the outward conduct of people's lives.

⁹ R. Davies, Preface, A Jig for the Gypsy (Toronto: Clarke Irwin & Co., 1954), p. vi. Subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated AJG and included in parentheses in the text.

Thematically, A Jig for the Gypsy is an expansion of Leaven of Malice, with which it was contemporary, "for in this play Davies' primary concern was with the exercise of power in the hearts of men.

One of the major problems shown in the religions of this play was their inability to understand and hence disarm anything they considered evil--and there were many such things. Benoni's role as a fortune teller and the superstitious attitudes of the people, which enabled them to believe her predictions, were ignored until such time as they interfered with the "correct" course society should have taken. Then they became evil, and as such need to be summarily dealt with. Benoni, as the root of this evil would have to retract or be cast out of society. For Fewtrell, Price, Creighton-Evans, and Thomas, the practicing Christians in the play, moral virtue and the code of conduct are indistinguishable--something that governs the externalities of existence. For Edward Vaughan, who was unable to subjugate himself to the Will of God and become a Presbyterian Minister, the gospel of Ruskin had replaced the gospel of Christ and politics had become synonymous with salvation, the establishment of the New Jerusalem: "Politics is something that will set all men free, and make their lives beautiful. That's what Mr. Ruskin thinks, and Mr. Vaughan builds his whole faith on Mr. Ruskin" (AJG, p. 25).

Benoni's prophecy, which foretold a victory for the Liberal party, was most disconcerting to the Tories, who "had

been in power for seventy years" (AJG, p. 14). First to attempt to undermine the power of her prophecy was the Church of England, which sent the Rev. Arthur Creighton-Evans to Benoni. He had been instructed by his Archbishop to have Benoni "sign a retraction of all you said about the election" (AJG, p. 42). It was not Benoni's magic which the church feared: "Ladies will be ladies. . . . and no one wishes to rob them of their diversions" (AJG, p. 40) because the church did not take them seriously. Benoni behaved wrongly "because you exercised a powerful influence on a large group of people in a way of which the church disapproves" (AJG, p. 41)--that is, she prophesied that the Liberal party would win, and in doing so indicated for many people the direction in which to cast their votes. The Rev. Creighton-Evans, who stated the quandary of the Anglican Church, which had become enmeshed in the need to preserve the social order and in scientific Rationalism, seemingly regretted the passing of its power to deal with the magic it no longer believed in:

You have done this by a form of botanomancy, I believe, which many people profess to think innocent. But a century ago you would have been called a witch, a sorceress, a great harm might have come to you. We live in an enlightened age, of course, and nothing of that nature is likely to occur but, as you know, the Bible tells us to rid ourselves of 'witches' and witchcraft. (AJG, p. 40).

In its gentlemanly fashion the Established Church could utter a veiled threat, but it would not deal with the

problem directly. Personally, however, Creighton-Evans personified the quest for greater mysticism through his "High-Church" leanings--he wore a Roman collar and genuflected (AJG, p.41)--which indicated he felt the allure of the Roman Catholic rituals against which the Protestant Puritan movement had strenuously reacted. Benoni recognized this and pointed out to him that his nickname was the "Pope O' Rome" (Act. 11, p. 41) and threatened him in turn with exposure to the Archbishop for his Catholic leanings. After all, she said, in retaining these old customs, "you seem to want greater power" (AJG, p. 42) than was proper for an Anglican clergyman. His observances of ritual were to Benoni evidence of his need for magic and she quite reasonably pointed out that if the people's belief in her magic were to die, "Don't think they'll have it from you, but if they swallow mine, yours is safe enough" (AJG, p. 42).

Creighton-Evans' religion was in one sense, religion at the crossroads. Through him, it allied itself not only to the current political situation, but to the whole spiritual history of man and religion--of man's needs for magic as "the attempt of man to control the forces of nature"¹⁰ and of the early relationship between magic and religion. Moreover, Creighton-Evans made it clear to Benoni that his Church view of her fortune telling through

¹⁰ R. Davies, "Persistent Belief in Magic," Peterborough Examiner, 1 April 1950, p. 4.

tea-cups was not a kind of Manichaeism. The evil does not repose in the tea or the tea-cup, but "evil springing from a cup of tea, or a cup of tea put to evil use--that is quite a different thing" (AJG, p. 37).

Davy-John Thomas, the Mayor of Caerhowell, and a Calvinist-Methodist, was less restrained and less capable of understanding the nature of what he condemned, in his response to Benoni's action. Davy-John Thomas established quickly that what Benoni had done was "a sin", and that "it is essentially a religious point" (AJG, p. 64). Thomas and his followers were prepared to undertake what the more aristocratic-leaning Anglican Church would not. They would force Benoni to retract, or make her pay for her sin. In their eyes, especially those of Davy-John Thomas, "She sinned and thus she began a train of evil events that have now led back to her own hearth" (AJG, p. 68). They did not believe in magic, "You cannot peep into the future, but you pretend you can. This is deceit. People who are not as good Christians as they might be are taken in by your old nonsense" (AJG, p. 64) so there was no talk of witchcraft or witches from them.

Thomas, Fewtrell, and Price were men whose concerns were purely of the things of this world. Sin must be punished visibly on this earth, just as virtue was to be rewarded, and to ensure this, they were prepared to enact God's justice even if in doing it their crime was greater than Benoni's. Power must continue to reside with them,

that was the essence of their morality. Whatever threatened their power was sin, whatever preserved it was virtue. They saw no immorality in stealing Benoni's house away from her (AJG, p. 67) or setting another magician against her (AJG, p. 69) or condoning a public riot (AJG, p. 72), so convinced were they of their own righteousness. Fewtrell was a mockery of the "aristocracy" (AJG, p. 64). Price was a "turncoat Baptist who became Anglican as a shrewd business measure" (p. 65) and Thomas believed "The Calvinist Methodists are the only people who thoroughly understand sin" (AJG, p. 64). Each of them had in his craving for power become the demonic version of what he believed he was, but only Benoni, who was a gypsy living by her gypsy standards, was able to recognize what had happened to them. To Benoni, the whole system of middle class values was perverted: "You belong to the class where everything in life that's important either seems coarse to you or is beyond your understanding" (AJG, p. 26). When she asked Price and Jones "Why should I curse either of you when God has cursed you so bitterly already?" (AJG, p. 79) she was basically referring to their enthrallment in the middle-class value system which had become demonic in the way in which it not only ran their lives but actually blinded them to the concept of Love. Thomas had said, "I'm a Calvinist Methodist and I wear the full armour of God, day and night. I don't believe in curses except, of course, those which the righteous put on the unrighteous" (AJG, p. 79).

Thomas described himself using a phrase from Ephesians, but he did not go about with "loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; / and . . . feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; / above all, taking the shield of faith . . . / And tak[ing] the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit" (Ephesians 6, 14-17). What Thomas considered to be the "full armour of God", Benoni recognized for its demonic parody: "The tight boots of vanity, the strangling stiff-bosomed shirt of envy and the crotch binding old-trousers of other people's opinions are the most common wear" (AJG, p. 97). These were the 'armour' of the middle class morality which masqueraded as religion. Benoni, and later Conjuror Jones, rejected this entirely and their freedom from it allowed them to feel the truth of Christ's commandment to "Love thy neighbour, as thyself." It was as Benoni said, "when I have the rain on my cheek on a night like this, I feel a love for the whole world that's blood relation to the love I had for the youth who opened my heart years ago. The world has hung light and loose upon me since then . . ." (AJG, p. 97).

In this play, Robertson Davies had included one character who was not quite an outcast from society but who was in the process of awakening from the life-denying trap of Puritan-Protestant morality. That character was Roberts, who had rejected both Church and Chapel and called himself a "deist" (AJG, p. 65).

Roberts was the local Liberal party worker who recognized the power Benoni's predictions had in the minds and hearts of the people. It was Roberts who had arranged the fortune telling incident and who had cause to regret his "interference" before the end of the play. He was an embryonic Dunstable Ramsay--a fifth business whose actions had begun certain processes in the lives of the other characters, but who had not reckoned with the ambivalence of his action. In helping the party, he had hurt Benoni; he had also become disillusioned about any hope for real reform regardless of the political party in power. By the end of A Jig for the Gypsy, Roberts had come to realize, as had young Fingal in At the Gates of the Righteous and Nicholas in Fortune My Foe, that the only real revolutions were those which occurred in the minds and hearts of men--and he could see that electing the Liberals had not effected such a revolution. From the experience he had just had, however, Roberts was able to advance the concept a bit further along. Roberts had perceived the necessity of restating the value of the individual over the mass:

... I'll remind you, there's one important thing in particular to remember about Socrates: he died slowly from the feet up and not slowly from the head down as many people do. We're too much concerned now-a-days with helping other people; we don't do enough to help ourselves. If a man wants to be of the greatest possible value to his fellow creatures let him begin the long, solitary task of perfecting himself. (AJG, p. 84)

The two plays which followed, Hunting Stuart (1955) and General Confession (1956), both focused on a character who was in the process of discovering what he must do to begin this task. In Hunting Stuart it was Henry Benedict Stuart who was "content to play second fiddle to everyone"¹¹ especially his class-conscious, social-climbing wife and his future son-in-law, Fred Lewis, a psychologist and scientific observer of mankind. Through the revelations of two scientists, Ben Stuart learned that he was the "oldest living direct male descendant of the Royal House of Stuart" (HS, p. 38). Moreover, by the end of the play, he could if he chose, live out the remainder of his life retrogressed in time so that his personality was no longer that of Ben Stuart but Charles Stuart, or he could claim his rights to the Throne of Scotland, or he could continue in his present life style.

Two particular outlooks were examined in this play. The first was based on the proposition "Psychology seems to be the Quakerism of our day: speak the truth, spare none, and respect none" (HS, p. 28). The psychology referred to was the Americanized version of Freudian psychology which for many people such as Fred and Carol had replaced religion as a system of belief which gave meaning to their lives. This was a psychology in which "Environment is important

¹¹ R. Davies, Hunting Stuart in Hunting Stuart and Other Plays, p. 17. Subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated HS and incorporated into the text.

... but heredity doesn't mean a thing" (HS, p. 29). It was in many ways reminiscent of the psychology of Norman Yarrow in Leaven of Malice.

Opposed to this outlook were Dr. Shrubsole and his colleague Dr. Sobeiska of the Coffin Foundation of New York, who were "deeply concerned with the problems of heredity ... in the world of mankind" (HS, p. 36). Their principal theory, as they explained it to Carol, was "you are not just yourself, you are a twig on a tree, and the life of the whole tree, from its root, is your life" (HS, p. 44). It became clear as Shrubsole explained the "theory of a collective racial memory" (HS, p. 44) that he and Dr. Sobeiska belonged to the school of psychoanalytical thought founded by Carl Jung. They were opposed by Fred, who dismissed their theory with "that's pretty much discredited, all that mystical stuff" (HS, p. 44) in much the same way that various critics had discredited Jung's theories in this century.

Once the grand experiment began, Fred was regressed one hundred years and shown to be a phrenologist, whom he referred to as an exponent of "psychological science as it has been perfected in our Day" (HS, p. 52), but who had in the twentieth century been totally discredited. Like the twentieth century Freudian psychology embraced by the modern Fred, in the nineteenth century phrenology had been "helpful as a means of liberating our sexual knowledge from ignorance and prejudice on a scale now hard to imagine" (VA, p. 82).

The real revelation, however, came when Ben was regressed several hundred years and emerged as "Bonnie Prince Charlie" himself. During this experience, all the roles in the modern world were reversed, and the humble Ben became the arrogant free-living, God-King. His haughty wife was cast as "his mistress"--she who "seem[ed] to own him body and soul" (HS, p. 74)--while he, who had never asserted himself learned that "Kingship is of the spirit" (HS, p. 96). Moreover, his spirit, untrammelled by Puritanism or twentieth century rationalism was very strong; strong enough for Ben, as Charles Stuart to call upon his faith in his God and successfully perform an act of faith healing. What then was the illusion--Ben's life in the twentieth century or his regression? Following his return to his own personality, Ben recognized a profound truth: it means a lot to be free and that the power to choose the spirit with which he would live his life lay in his control. Which was more important--heredity or environment? In the battle of psychologies, the Jungian-based emphasis on the continuity of the greatness of the human spirit had more to offer than the more empiricist psychologies, in which environment is considered the major determinant of a man's character.

However, General Confession (1956) is the play in which it had most clearly been shown that Davies had abandoned his Freudian leanings and embraced the psychology of Carl Gustav Jung.¹² In this play, written about the Chevalier de

¹² Morley, Robertson Davies, p. 50.

Seigault more widely known as Giovanni Giacomo Casanova,¹³ Davies confronted the religious emphasis on the need to exact moral judgement with the Jungian concept of wholeness. The central question of the play was "when is a man truly himself and ready to stand judgement?" (GC, p. 268). In answering this question, Davies used the Jungian concepts of the personal unconscious, of the archetypes of the collective unconscious, and of psychic wholeness.¹⁴ These archetypes were personified as the spirits of the three cabinets hidden in the deepest recesses of the library. Casanova, the keeper of the cabinets, magically called forth each spirit: Voltaire (wisdom), the Ideal Beloved (feminine inspiration), and Cagliostro (magic).

Had Freud's theories that psychic illness is primarily the result of unconscious repression of sexuality, been fully sufficient, Casanova, one of history's most famous lovers, who was in addition "a man of intellect, wit and philosophy and on the whole very good natured" (GC, p. 197) should have appeared at peace with himself and God. He was instead, puzzling over what Padre Blazon in Fifth Business referred to as the need for "something that takes account

¹³R. Davies, General Confession in Hunting Stuart and Other Plays New Drama 3 (Toronto: New Press, 1972), p. 204. Subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated GC and incorporated in the text.

¹⁴C.G. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, CW 9(i). All these concepts are discussed in this volume.

of the accretion of experience, the sense of paradox and ambiguity that come with years" (FB, p. 177). Haunted by this need and desirous of alleviating his uncertainty about the meaning and value of his life, Casanova was writing his autobiography, as a "way of trying to live [my life] again, to impose some order on it" (GC, p. 207). This was a process not unlike the task Dunstan Ramsay set himself in Fifth Business, as he was "driven to explain [him]self to you, Headmaster" (FB, p. 15).

Was Casanova, the great lover, an evil man? Those whose ideas of morality were formed in accordance with the prevailing social and ethical codes would have had to condemn him as "not fit company" (GC, p. 204), but Davies, influenced by Jung, was prepared to challenge these notions of morality by revealing the complexity of what the identity of a man really consists.

In meeting Casanova, Amalie and Hugo had ventured into hitherto forbidden territory, deep into the hidden recesses of her father's library, where in three cabinets books which "must not fall into all hands" (GC, p. 209) were stored. This journey into the library was a metaphorical journey into a man's unconscious, and the contents of the cabinets, books containing the thoughts of "the cynical un-Christian philosophers," and the discoveries of "the magicians, alchemists, men who sinned against the light" and "erotic books" (GC, p. 210), became the symbolic representations of contents which, unknown to Casanova and Amalie and Hugo,

were present and influential in the unconscious of every individual.

In the second act of the play, Casanova recreated certain episodes of his life with the help of the spirits, Voltaire (wisdom), the Ideal Beloved (erotic inspiration), whom he magically called forth from the cabinets, and Cagliostro (bad luck or magic), who appeared unbidden. Each incident showed Casanova not only as a lover but also as one who had through his interactions with these three in their various guises gradually come to a recognition that all his life had been lived either in escape from or pursuit of the three. However, he perceived them as forces outside himself as he professed his humanistic creed:

I knew myself as few men do. . . . I have nothing to do with your phantoms. I knew myself to be the chief cause of whatever good or evil has been in my life. I have been my own pupil and I am not ashamed to say that most of the time I have loved and honoured my teacher. I stand alone. . . . (GC, p. 246)

Casanova's humanism was not, at this point, essentially different from the humanism Solly Bridgetower professed in Tempest-Tost, when he condemned Hector Mackilwraith as a "vulgarian" (TT, p. 279): "The only people who make any sense in the world are those who know that whatever happens to them has its roots in what they are" (TT, p. 280).

Casanova, like Solly, appeared ready to assume responsibility for his life, but, although he thought he knew what his life had consisted of, he had not realized

that, the phantoms were not things external to himself but that they were "those without whom there could be no Casanova" (GC, p. 245). Finally, when Wenzel came to the realization that, "everybody has a set-of-of-" (GC, p. 248), their true relevance as archetypal structures was revealed. Moreover, the phantoms were "not all, . . . but a quorum of the principal shareholders" (GC, p. 249) of the components of the human psyche who function behind the Ego, the man as he is seen by himself. Casanova found out that he was, much to his surprise, the hero to these archetypes of his unconscious (GC, p. 249).

In Act II, the first two episodes from the life of Casanova were recalled from his conscious memory, but the third episode, in which he was stripped of his illusion of sexual prowess was forced upon him by Cagliostro. This episode was, in Jungian terms, a revelation of the personal unconscious, "that layer in the unconscious that contains lost memories, painful ideas that are repressed, i.e., forgotten on purpose. . . ."¹⁵

The 'phantoms' however, as Act III made clear, were not only products of the personal unconscious of Casanova, but projections of the 'collective unconscious' which is possessed by all human beings (CW 7:150-155:91-95). The first half of Casanova's question, "When is a man truly himself?", had been partially answered: a man begins to be truly

¹⁵ C.G. Jung, The Psychology of the Unconscious, CW 7:103:65.

himself when he realizes that his image of himself is not the "whole of that complicated creature yourself" (GC, p. 248).

In Act III, the second half of the question, "when is a man ready to stand judgement?" (GC, p. 264) was answered by the verdict of a mock trial in which Casanova was prosecuted by Cagliostro for "the seven sins, which, born a Catholic and trained as a priest, he well knows, to be as cardinal" (GC, p. 256). Cagliostro, it turned out, was the equivalent for Casanova of the Freudian super-ego or conscience or sense of guilt and sin. He was also metaphorically representative of the accusing voice that is part of every Protestant who has realized he has not totally been able to perfect his life. Casanova was quite willing to admit that being guilty of the Seven Deadly Sins, he had sinned against God (GC, p. 257). What he was not willing to admit was that he ever, in his life deceived himself: "False to the world perhaps, but true to myself" (GC, p. 262). Casanova as a Catholic, with the full protection of the church available to help him, could freely throw himself on the mercy of God for:

It is the measure of God's mercy that he forgives man, when man can no longer forgive himself. God will know that in all the makeshifts of my life I have loved some things truly, held some things sacred and that I have striven to give some pattern to the muddle of experience which the many years have brought me. (GC, p. 268)

However, Casanova was not as honest with himself as he thought until he accepted not only that the 'phantoms' were parts of himself, but that even those parts of himself were imperfect. Moreover, the most difficult and important revelation he had to come to terms with was that he had to recognize that Cagliostro, who was "all that I hate and all that has hated me" (GC, p. 269), was "as truly as the 'ideal beloved', himself" (GC, p. 270).

Having faced and accepted his 'shadow' Cagliostro, his inferior self, Casanova appeared "buoyant and exalted", and to his surprise, he found that what he thought of as judgement was no longer relevant. The most he had been guilty of was being a human being--and those aspects of himself that he was unable to measure up to, once consciously understood, no longer threatened to destroy or judge him because they were him.

In its religious connotations, this play explained how the judgemental, self-righteous qualities that Davies had satirized so frequently in his portrayals of Protestantism in his plays and novels had damaged man's self-concept and with it his religion. The aspect of ourselves which Jung called the 'shadow' (Cagliostro in General Confession) and Freud called the super-ego, has, since the Protestant Reformation, been equated with the judgement of God--and it sounds like a merciless God at that. As long as this 'shadow' appears to sit in judgement and to be the voice of God, then man will continue to commit offences against God, for as Casanova learned, "The offenses named are part

of the common condition of man, and everyone here is at least as guilty as he" (GC, p. 257).

Casanova had been a Roman Catholic, with all the Roman Catholic's belief in the ability of the church and the Holy Saints to intervene on behalf of a man. He was for this reason, also, able to admit to his guilt in committing the Seven Deadly Sins. He could admit the power of Voltaire, the Ideal Beloved and Cagliostro to influence his life even before he recognized them as parts of himself, because he had been able to project these unconscious aspects of himself onto external recipients. However, the Protestant Reformation with its distrust of everything outside the 'Good Book' and its shunning of 'evil' in every conceivable form had erected a barrier between a man and his relationship with his unconscious, even in the forms Casanova recognized. The avoidance of "even the appearance of evil" (AJG, p. 37) and the 'enthusiast' convictions, demonstrated in A Jig for the Gypsy through Thomas's attitude that "The Calvinistic Methodists are the only people who thoroughly understand sin" (AJG, p. 64), had become thoroughly a part of Protestantism. The severity of this outlook made even the humanism Casanova professed before his trial appear sinful. Man as individual was not valued intrinsically but only in relation to his contribution to his society.

What would happen if a Puritan-Protestant Canadian were forced through a change in the circumstances of his life to abrogate the repressive religious code on which his

self-concept rested? If the religious illusion, as Freud called it, collapsed because it became discredited, would "his world collapse? Would there be nothing left . . . but despair of everything, of civilization and the future of civilization" (SE XXI:54), or would this experience, what Ibsen called "the battle with trolls"¹⁶ open the way for a person to discover that religion could assume a more relevant role in the meaning of his life? Questions such as these, which seem to arise almost unbidden from a thorough acquaintance with Jungian psychology, appeared to have intrigued Davies when in the late 1950's he wrote A Mixture of Frailties.

In his depiction of the events in the life of Monica Gall following her selection as the protégé of the "Louisa Hansen Bridgetower Trust" (AMF, p. 35), Davies posited just such a situation as the one implied in the preceding questions. Following her departure from Salterton to begin musical training in England, Monica was faced with having to unlearn everything she had ever known about music and with having to overcome the simplistic outlook as well as the moralistic prejudices her religious background had inculcated. In his initial report on her suitability as a recipient of the Trust, Sir Benedict Domdaniel had observed to Cobbler:

¹⁶ Heinrich Ibsen, quoted by Davies in The Manticore (1972; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 208.

When I mentioned Bach she looked prim, and I gather there is some queer religion behind her for which the classics of the church spell Popery and Pride. I think this is a clue to the girl; a real natural talent has been overlaid by a stultifying home atmosphere and cultural malnutrition. (AMF, p. 54)

Initially, Monica was as overlaid by the repressions of her society and her religion as Ethel had been in Davies' first play Overlaid (1947). However, unlike the play, in A Mixture of Frailties, Davies explored the metamorphosis of Monica Gall, Thirteener and Secretary at the Glue Works, into Monica Gall, singer of international acclaim. In depicting this process, he turned to the psychology of Jung, whose theory of the unconscious he had found more comprehensive than Freud's. Moreover, one of Jung's intriguing propositions about the unconscious was that "here was the only available source of religious experience . . . the medium from which religious experience seems to flow."¹⁷

Initially Monica Gall and Solly and Veronica Bridgetower appeared to be diametrically opposite to one another with regard to their religious outlooks. Solly was a humanist (TT, p. 175) who refused to subscribe to a belief in "The Mean Old Man in the Sky" (TT, p. 250), and Veronica had been brought up a "free thinker by her father" (AMF, p. 10). In contrast, Monica was a devout member of the

¹⁷C.G. Jung, The Undiscovered Self, in Civilization in Transition, CW 10:365:293.

Thirteeners sect, a sect which among other things, was founded on Coffey's revelation that "the whole world of the senses was an illusion, obviously created by the Devil" (AMF, p. 42). However, this dissimilarity was an illusion, as neither the Bridgetowers nor Monica had any concept of religion as a transcendent experience. Their religions were basically religions of the mundane.

Monica was first introduced into the novel as a non-existent person. Only her voice was heard, incorporeal "pure, sweet and clear, calm silvery and somewhat hollow and echoing under the dome" (AMF, p. 4). The beautiful voice promised hope for Monica as an artist; the hollowness indicated the lack of inner or spiritual development (AMF, p. 39) not only in Monica but extended to include the Anglicanism of the cathedral as well.

Like Solly and Veronica, Monica had indulged in the palliative measure of a fantasy existence. In her great dream of life, she dreamed of escape.

She felt and despised herself for feeling critical of her father and mother, of her older sister Alice, of Pastor and Mrs. Beamis and their son, Wesley, and of the whole Thirteeners connection for everything about them ran contrary to her great dream of life. While it had remained a dream, impossible of realization, she had been able to keep that criticism in its place. She had prayed for strength against it, and now and then her prayers seemed to be answered. But this Bridgetower Trust had upset her whole life. It had suddenly brought the dream out of the realm of the utterly impossible into the realm of the remotely possible. (AMF, p. 63)

Jung has said that "The general function of dreams is to try to restore our psychic balance by producing dream material that re-establishes in a subtle way the total psychic equilibrium."¹⁸

Monica's mother also experienced dreams, particularly during her illness. In these dreams, the sexual aspects of her nature asserted themselves and she "accused herself vaguely and suffered in the tormented images of her morphia dreams" (AMF, p. 281). The common element in both Monica's dream and those of her mother was the presence in them of repressed thoughts and instincts, for Mrs. Gall was concerned that she had sinned unforgivably and that her

sins were sexual in nature . . . during her lifetime the only morality which she had ever given a moment of serious thought, or to which she had ever paid solemn tribute, was a morality of sexual prohibition; and she felt now that he had not been true to it. . . . (AMF, p. 281)

The dream contents were Freudian, the interpretation--Jungian.

Monica's growth as an artist was, on the surface at least, paralleled by her growth as a person. To begin with, she had been a singer of the type who, Cobbler said, "would sing because God made them singers . . . no taste at all, [who] . . . will sing anything so long as they can open their mouths and give" (AMF, p. 88). Cobbler's observation

¹⁸ C.G. Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," in Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung, M.L. von Franz et al. (1969; rpt. London: Aldus Books-Jupiter Books, 1979), p. 50.

clarified the fact that Monica's singing ability was not governed by her rational personality, but arose from the unconscious. Rationally, however, she had been led to believe that her singing enabled her to "do the Lord's work, by uplifting people and turning their minds to the finer things of life" (AMF, p. 46). What little rational comprehension of artistic ability she had was lop-sided. Her religion offered her a redeemer role; her Aunt Ellen had taught her "sweetly pretty drawing room music" (AMF, p. 64), and a view of life which was both sentimental and romantic: "A great artist is always a lovely person, remember that. The really great ones were always simple and fine, and loved everything that was sweet in life" (AMF, p. 71).

George Medwell articulated the clearest perception of the nature of Monica Gall before she left Salterton for England when he said to her, "You're what's called a romantic. You see everything in full technicolour all the time. Feelings before facts, that's you. But it's time somebody knocked some sense into your head" (AMF, p. 59). Knocking some sense into her head was precisely what Sir Benedict Domdaniel realized he had to do when Monica became his pupil. First she had had to dispense with her sentimentally romantic notion of her role as a singer. To do this he tried to make her understand the deadliness of her sentimental romanticism. He offered her descriptions of two possible ways to dedicate her life to singing. In the one, she could become what he called "a sexual singer, who

when she sings is merely the broomstick on which she flies" (AMF, p. 106), or she could become a bardic singer "who reveals the life that lies in great music and poetry" (AMF, p. 106). In either case, she would learn that the end is the same: "You use your voice to give delight. That's what music used to be for, you know--to capture the beauty and delight that people found in life" (AMF, p. 107).

The bardic singer appealed to Monica's romantic outlook, but Domdaniel discouraged her from pursuing this on the grounds that becoming a "sexual singer" would indicate more "gumption and vitality in you" (AMF, p. 107). Domdaniel also at this point tried to help Monica to understand something of the state she was in, by explaining to her his Eros and Thanatos theory. This theory, based on the Freudian concepts of the two warring instincts of life and death (Eros and Thanatos) suggested that just as all people are possessors of both instincts, in some Eros, in others Thanatos, had gained ascendancy. This theory was the one on which much of Davies' writing in the 1940's had been based--the sharp antithesis between Pop and Ethel, Frontenac and Saint-Vallier, Nicholas and Tapscott, and Samuel Marchbanks and his society, all being manifestations of the struggle of Eros personalities against Thanatos ones.

Domdaniel, however, warned Monica the dividing line between the two was not always clear, that at times Thanatos could appear disguised as Eros, and as in Monica's own case, an Eros personality could be lurking behind all the

Thanatos-type nonsense she currently embraced. Domdaniel's opinion of crypto-Thanatos people was that you could sometimes spot them because "they blather[ed] about the purpose of art being to lift people out of the mire, to refine them and to make them use lace-hankies--to castrate them, in fact" (AMF, p. 108).

For the next fifteen months, Monica, under the guidance of the various teachers appointed by Domdaniel, carefully cultivated a new personality. From the time she had landed in England,

she [had been] determined that in most things she would be transformed. The simple clerk at the Glue Works . . . would, after experiences which would deepen and ripen her emotional nature, change into the internationally known diva. She would never forget her family, and she would certainly never be a loose-liver . . . but she would no longer be bound by the chains of the Thirteeners or the social habits of Salterton. (AMF, p. 89)

This determination had enabled her to succeed consciously. By the time she began practicing for the St. Matthew Passion she had, she thought, successfully liberated herself from most of her previous 'delusions'. She had apparently through Murtagh Molloy, learned to command emotion. When she began her studies with Molloy, "it became apparent to Monica that her range of emotion was small and her ability to manifest it in sound, infinitesimal. This was dismaying . . ." (AMF, p. 114). However, Monica had previously only her Canadian experience to base her concepts

of emotion on, and as Davies elsewhere states,

it is a bad habit of our time (and our country as much as any) to want to experience only what is highest and most respectable in the world of feeling: but when we insist only on the highest, we may be sure we will never soar beyond the middle of the emotional range.¹⁹

However, Murtagh taught her to project the illusion of emotion of all kinds from lusty passion to towering rage, to be able to "summon it at will" (AMF, p. 119).

Before she met the McCorkills, Monica "was not accustomed to thinking anything which was contrary to any other person with whom she was speaking, but it was the McCorkills who made the adult luxury possible" (AMF, p. 127). Through them she learned "the delights of social hypocrisy" (AMF, p. 128) and not to judge others on the face they presented to the world--she was free both to like them and to disagree with their opinion.

She had tried, through visits to the theatre, and to Paris to "gain experience" (AMF, pp. 137-39). She had tried to absorb the culture and worldly wisdom of Amy Neilson (AMF, p. 138). Her first sexual experience with Giles Revelstoke had liberated her sexually--"at this moment, when she should have stood in awe of her mother and Pastor Beamis, she felt on the contrary both above and beyond them as though re-united with something which they sought to deny her" (AMF,

¹⁹R. Davies, "Not For Mrs. Jones The Gas," Saturday Night, 26 June 1954, p. 22.

p. 182]. Prior to his sexual relationship with Monica, Revelstoke's teaching had "persuaded Monica to give up her determination to learn like a parrot . . . and brought her to a point where she could feel a little, and understand, respect and cherish her own feelings" (AMF, p. 158).

One of her major self-discoveries had been that "music is a part of my way of feeling things. I only realized that a few months ago, and do you know, that when I finally discovered that my mind worked that way it set me free from going mad" (AMF, p. 173). She had also discovered, during the Christmas in Wales that "behind every symbol there is a reality" (AMF, p. 174).

By the time Domdaniel asked her to sing in Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Monica had indeed been transformed:

She had moved far from the Thirteener faith; the altered conditions of her life shoved it into the background, and when she thought of it at all, it was the crudities of its doctrines, the sweaty strenuousities of Pastor Beamis and the trashiness of its music which recurred to her. . . . The Thirteener faith was like a shoddy and unbecoming dress which she had ceased to wear, but had not yet thrown out. (AMF, p. 233).

With the help of all her teachers and friends, Monica had painstakingly assembled what Jung called "a persona" or conscious personality which

consists of psychic facts which are felt to be personal. A consciousness that is purely personal stresses its proprietary and original right to its contents with a certain anxiety and in this way seeks to create a whole. But all those contents

which refuse to fit into this whole are either overlooked and forgotten or repressed and denied. This is one way of educating oneself, but it is too arbitrary and too much of a violation. For too much of our common humanity has to be sacrificed in the interests of the ideal image into which one tries to mould oneself. Hence these purely personal people are always very sensitive for something may easily happen that will bring into consciousness an unwelcome portion of their real (individual) character.²⁰

This conscious persona had made Monica sensitive, and a number of times the new persona was in danger of collapse, as for example, the near collapse that occurred following the dinner party at which she failed to impress Giles and his family with her Canadian lineage and nationalistic spirit (AMF, p. 193). John Ripon had rescued her then by reassuring her that "It was just putting your best foot forward. Nothing to be ashamed of. These people invite it, you know" (AMF, p. 195), thus allowing her to project the "evil" back on to Giles and his family. There were several other such episodes, but each time Monica was able to preserve her new persona.

However, as Jung pointed out, the persona is only a "mask for the collective psyche, a mask that feigns individuality, and tries to make others and oneself believe that one is an individual whereas one is simply playing a part

²⁰C.G. Jung, "The Persona as a Segment of the Collective Psyche," CW 7:244:155.

in which the collective psyche speaks" (CW 245:156). Monica, however, had not consciously or otherwise been able to discard her romanticism. Her love affair with Giles Revelstoke was a manifestation from the unconscious or irrational. However, her romantic emotional outlook insisted that "some day he must recognize the burdens she had incurred on his account, and love her for it" (AMF, p. 232).

As she studied the great music of the St. Matthew Passion, however, "the effect on Monica was quite unsettling. As the great music took possession of her, it became a monumental rebuke to the life she was living" (AMF, p. 233). The relationship between Monica and the St. Matthew Passion was the first manifestation of the assertion of the true nature of Monica Gall. Monk had said that "Monica's function-type was 'feeling',²¹ but then Monk went on to say that "Monica is not in the usual sense of the words an emotional person,"²² basing her argument on Monica's need for instruction from Murtagh Molloy (AMF, p. 144), from Giles (AMF, p. 158), and from Domdaniel (AMF, p. 214).

²¹Monk, p. 63. Jung had determined that "the individual adapts and orients himself chiefly by means of his most differentiated function" (CW 6:556:330). There were four main function types: two rational--thinking and feeling--both of which are influenced by judging and feeling (CW 6: 601:359), and two irrational--sensation and intuitive, in which what they do or do not do is based not on rational judgement but on the sheer intensity of perception (CW 6: 616:370).

²²Monk, p. 63.

Somehow, this analysis does not appear to take sufficient cognizance of the essentially 'romantic' nature of Monica, whose perceptions were hazed over by the Victorian romanticism which had been stressed by Davies in his depictions of her one-sided sentimental vision of music, of artists, of Giles and of most other aspects of her life. She 'emoted'-- but always sentimentally, refusing to allow negative emotions a place in her life. Until she took part in the St. Matthew Passion, Monica had been deceiving herself in mistaking her emotions for feeling. Jung had said that "emotion is not an activity of the individual but something that happens to him. Affects occur usually where adaptation is the weakest, and at the same time, they reveal the reason for its weakness. . . ."²³

The St. Matthew Passion had two effects on Monica. First it had "awakened in her a degree of religious sensibility of which she had never previously been conscious . . . in the presence of this majestic faith she was overwhelmed, frightened and repentant" (AMF, p. 234). In this way the music led Monica toward a confrontation with the first archetype of her collective unconscious--the shadow. For Monica, "the shadow [was] a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effect" (CW 9ii:14:8).

²³C.G. Jung, "The Shadow," in Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self, CW 9ii:15:8.

As Monica listened to the "mighty, ordered grandeur" (AMF, p. 236), "she was conscious as never before of the power of music to impose order and form upon the vastest and most intractable elements in human experience" (AMF, p. 236). From this it would appear that Monica is more likely one of the irrational types. At the end of the performance Monica had not sorted herself out beyond the fact the music had evoked in her the realization of what it meant to feel. According to Jung, "feeling was not to be equated with emotion but with the psychological process that takes place between the ego and a given content, a process, moreover that imparts in the content a definite value in the sense of acceptance or rejection."²⁴ Following the St. Matthew Passion, Monica had perceived that "The music--I'm afraid that I'm living a wrong sort of life--and the music makes me feel despicable" (AMF, p. 242). During the rehearsals for the Passion, much of the "Christian myth and morality that were a fabric of her being" (AMF, p. 233) had been activated in Monica, and her sense of the imminence of Christ "returned to her . . ." (AMF, p. 235).

Monk proposed that "By taking part in the music, Monica moves beyond it into a state of transcendent being in which she not only recognizes the ordering power of the music but also is enabled to apply that ordering power to her own

²⁴C.G. Jung, "Definitions," Psychological Types, CW 6:724:434.

life."²⁵ On closer examination, it would appear that the music had not helped Monica to order her life as Monk suggested so much as to recognize how 'sinful' her life had become. During the performance of the St. Matthew Passion the music filled her with a sense of her own guilt and shame: "She was unworthy and what might be forgiven in others could never be forgiven in her . . ." (AMF, p. 240).

For the first time in her life, Monica experienced religion as an 'inner' struggle--not purely conscious and not rational. She found herself caught in a terrifying conflict between the values of her life as a developing--but immoral--artist and her prior convictions. Following the St. Matthew Passion, Domdaniel sent Monica to Paris to "clarify your thinking about your situation and act as good sense dictates . . ." (AMF, p. 242). But neither Domdaniel nor Amy Neilson to whom he sent her recognized the extent to which Monica had become subject to the forces of her own unconscious.

Monica felt completely alone in a universe in which she was condemned by God. Not even Domdaniel could grasp the irrationalities of the situation:

Must one live always by balancing fact upon fact? Had the irrational side of life no right to be lived? The answer did not have to be formed; the irrational things rose overwhelmingly from their deeps when even she was not bending her mind to some matter of immediate concern. (AMF, p. 245)

²⁵ Monk, p. 65.

Thinking or intellectual exercise, never Monica's strong point, did not appear to help: "The more she puzzled, the less clear everything became" (AMF, p. 246). In Paris, the Panthéon had no meaning for Monica: "everywhere the bleak, naked horror of enthroned Reason was ghastly Palpable" (AMF, p. 247). The Church of St. Étienne du Mont, did not offer her the religious experience she emotionally wanted, "she saw no musical angels" (AMF, p. 247), but it offered her beauty.

Here was feeling and feeling was reality. If only life could be lived in terms of those windows, of that aspiring but not frightening screen. If only things and feelings existed, and thoughts and judgements did not have to trouble and torture. (AMF, p. 247)

If only she did not have to make decisions about the 'immorality' of her life. Once more, Monica's "sentimental romanticism" led her to look for escape from the problems of her life, rather than to look for a rational way of solving them. But, the archetypes of the collective unconscious had been activated and had had "a disturbing effect on the conscious mind and confusion [had] ensue[d]." ²⁶ Being unable to find relief from her emotional self-torment, she turned to a rather inconspicuous tomb, before which she noticed people, black and white praying (AMF, p. 248). This was the tomb of St. Geneviève whose body had been "formerly

²⁶C.G. Jung, "The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits," CW 8:595:315.

in the Panthéon . . . but it was taken from there and publicly burned when the church was re-dedicated to Reason: the ashes and relics were brought here . . ." (AMF, p. 248).

Here at last was something which might help her--a saint "who had found haven here after the persecutions of Reason" (AMF, p. 248).

Somehow the 'something of a saint' (AMF, p. 248), a woman, somebody who had been persecuted by Reason (which for Monica was, at this time, associated with her consciousness of her sins) might understand her problem. In the presence of the saint's relics, Monica experienced a sense of 'awe and wonder'. She reached out, not only toward the saint's tomb (AMF, p. 248) but also to experience the numinous of the transcendental reality for, as Rudolph Otto explained,

a numinous experience is one in which are involved feelings and beliefs that are qualitatively different from anything that natural sense perception is capable of giving us. They are interpretations and valuations, at first of perceptual data, and then at a higher level of posited objects and entities which themselves no longer belong to the perceptual world but are thought of as supplanting and transmitting.²⁷

Whatever St. Geneviève may have been historically, for Monica she appeared to offer refuge from the terrible conflict within her between Reason and Irrationality. Her invocation to the Saint, "I don't know what I want; Help me

²⁷ Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy. Trans. by John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958 (1923), p. 113.

to do what is right--No! Help me--Help me" (AMF, p. 248), was followed by her appearance later in what appeared to be "splendid spirits" (AMF, p. 248).

Monk said that this experience "serves to show how deeply Mônica's religious feeling is involved in this vision of transcendental reality."²⁸ But just before the experience, "the pain in her hand--the fullness and muddle" (AMF, p. 247), had been eased by her emotional reaction to the beauty of the church and her relaxation from thinking: "she hated thinking and was ashamed of hating it. But thought was like the Panthéon. Here was feeling and feeling was reality" (AMF, p. 247). What Monica was seeking was not autonomous consciousness or a vision of transcendent reality but relief from this. She had been made aware of the existence of a 'shadow' aspect of her life by her feelings of guilt and unworthiness during and following the St. Matthew Passion. But, her persona/ego was, as has been mentioned already, fragile. In the "numinous experience" in the darkness with the relics of St. Geneviève, Monica had experienced a meeting with an archetype (Friend) of the collective unconscious for, as Jung said,

The archetypes have when they appear, a distinctly numinous character which can only be described as spiritual, if magical is too strong a word. Consequently this phenomenon is of the utmost significance for the psychology of religion. In its

²⁸ Monk, p. 64.

efforts it is anything but unambiguous.
It can be healing or destructive, but
never indifferent. . . .²⁹

The effect in this case was that Monica was caught in the unconscious. She was not yet prepared to confront 'the shadow'; she was not yet liberated from her Canadian upbringing; she was not yet able to accept her new life-style as an artist. She had chosen instead to cast her sins upon a divine mediator--but without any degree of genuine repentance. Jung said that

the autonomy of the unconscious . . . begins where emotions are generated. Emotions are instinctive involuntary reactions which upset the rational order of consciousness by their elemental outbursts. Affects are not "made" or willfully produced, they simply happen. In a state of affect a trait of character sometimes appears which is strange even to the person concerned, or hidden contents may irrupt involuntarily. The more violent the affect, the closer it comes to the pathological, a condition in which the ego-consciousness is thrust aside by autonomous contents that were unconscious before.³⁰

Monica remained in this state until after she was asked to sing during the Louisa Hansen Bridgetower Memorial Service on St. Nicholas' Day in Salterton. Until then, her life led her deeper and deeper into the realm of the shadow. This state, which Jung called the "Mana personality" . . . is a

²⁹C.G. Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche," CW 8:405: 205.

³⁰C.G. Jung, "Conscious, Unconscious and Individuation," CW 9i:497:278-79.

dominant of the collective unconscious, the recognized archetype of the mighty man in the form of hero, saint, chief, magician, medicine man. . . .³¹

In this state she became utterly one-sided in defense of her art and her new-found sense of egotism. This was also a time in her life in which her valuing mechanism appeared to be temporarily in abeyance. Before she regained a new balance in her life, she became responsible for the deaths of two people with whom she had ambivalent relationships--her mother upon whom her 'shadow' was projected and Giles who was the recipient of her 'animus' projection. Both were individuals whom she loved and hated simultaneously. In the process she became aware of inner voices which seemed to make derogatory comments upon her most cherished romanticism:

What the inner voice whispers to us is usually something negative, if not actually evil. This must be so, first of all because we are usually not as unconscious of our virtues as our vices, and then because we suffer less from the good than the bad in us.³²

Davies' description of Monica's inner voices clearly indicates that they "speak evil." The inner voices were "cruel" (AMF, p. 285). Ma's voice was the first inner voice Monica heard. In its first appearance it made the kind of derogatory comment about Persis Kinwellmarche, who

³¹C.G. Jung, "The Mana Personality," CW 7:377-226.

³²C.G. Jung, The Development of Personality, CW 17: 319-184.

appeared at that point to Monica to be a "Bad Girl" that Monica herself would have suppressed (AMF, p. 147). "She's got an arse end like a bumble bee" said the voice of Ma Gall, very clearly, inside Monica's head" (AMF, p. 148). This voice was heard when Monica first beheld Giles' nude and was beginning to seriously question her Thirteener morality.

This equation of the inner voices with "evil" appears to provide sufficient evidence for the suggestion that Ma Gall is the shadow figure for Monica rather than her Sybil as Monk suggested.³³ This would, if there were sufficient space to completely analyze Davies' depiction of the process of the individuation of the self (CW 9i:490:275) allow Mrs. Amy Neilson to be given the more appropriate role of Sybil, which she fulfills very well, in Monica's life and would close in an obvious hiatus in Ms. Monk's analysis in which no significant shadow figure appears for Monica. Jung had repeatedly said that "the encounter with the shadow is the apprentice piece in the individual's development. . . ."³⁴ Monica, in her mana-personality state had not been able to integrate the aspects of her self projected on her mother and Giles into her personality--as long as these individuals were alive.

³³ Monk, p. 67.

³⁴ C.G. Jung, The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious, CW 9i:61:29.

However, as Ma approached death, Monica was able to identify some aspect of herself with Ma, "I've got quite an imagination, that's where you're like me Monny" (AMF, p. 282), but her reaction to her mother's death was "You are free, you did your best for her and now you are free!" (AMF, p. 289). She was even more of an accomplice in the death of Giles Revelstoke, whom she left to suffocate, than she was in allowing her mother to die by giving in to her mother's irrational fear of hospitals. In the matter of Giles' death, she had genuinely thought him dead before she left, but, even before her confession to Domdaniel, she had realized that "if she had thought more of him and less of herself he need not have died at all. By her selfishness and bitterness of spirit she had killed him" (AMF, p. 348). Her mother's death had left Monica relatively unaffected, but Giles' death had to be faced, "because" [as Domdaniel said],

After all, you did turn the gas back on nothing can change that. And it's vital that you clarify your thought on this matter. Whatever deception you may have to practice on other people, you must not under any circumstances deceive yourself. (AMF, p. 363)

Thus Domdaniel was able to lead her to the path of restoration, for against the mana-personality, "the only defence is full confession of one's weakness in the face of the powers of the unconscious" (CW 7:391:232). What Monica thought of as a religious experience in the church in Paris, had occurred as an irrational appeal for an escape from the

responsibilities of self-recognition and acceptance. Following her mother's death, she recognized that her experience at the tomb had been the equivalent of the Welsh Hiraeth "longing for what was perhaps unattainable in this world, a longing for a fulfillment which was of the spirit but not of the flesh, but which was not specifically religious in its yearning" (AMF, p. 311).

As she sat in St. Nicholas' Cathedral in Salterton, thinking her own thoughts and "not listening to the Dean's prayers or sermon" (AMF, p. 374), Monica was in a state of emotional turmoil not unlike the one she had experienced in the church of St. Étienne du Mont. She felt guilty for her part in the death of Giles, and was afraid of the life an acceptance of Domdaniel's proposal would mean. Thinking about the experiences of the last few months, she became aware of the nature of her evil:

But could she not admit now that when she found him seemingly dead on the floor beneath her revulsion from his blackened face, her stunning loss, her self accusation, there had been perceptible for an instant, and then banished as a blasphemy against her love--a pang of relief--of release. (AMF, p. 376)

As she came to this realization, Monica began her recovery from the grip of the Unconscious. She was able to pray, rationally, because she could finally admit that although her life was painful, she wanted no escape from it. She prayed to God, not to relieve her of the responsibility for her own sinfulness, but to help her to live her life to its

fullest. Her prayer "not to slip under the surface of all the heavy-hearted dullness that seems to claim so many people, even when they struggle and strive to keep their heads above the waves . . ." (AMF, p. 379) was a prayer against what Davies called Acedie, "[which] was called a deadly sin because it dimmed and discouraged the spirit and finally killed it."³⁵

As she prayed in Salterton's Cathedral, Monica had taken the first step in the process of individuation--the recognition of the shadow of the personal unconscious. She was able to accept the shadow in herself, and no longer felt that God could not love or forgive her. As she sang the hymn of the journey of the Wise Men to give thanks for the birth of Christ, she, too, like them, was involved in a process of recognition.

She had recognized and accepted her evil nature; she had also recognized that "Giles couldn't be wished away. And she would never be free of him . . ." (AMF, p. 378). Moreover as she sang, "all her perplexities vanished" (AMF, p. 379) as her rational 'feeling' began to function, to bring to her life that "order and form on the vastest and most intractable elements in human existence" (AMF, p. 236) that she had once perceived the music of Bach as doing.

Until her experience in Salterton Cathedral, Monica Gall's life had been what Davies later referred to as an

³⁵ Davies, "The Deadliest of Sins," p. 65. -

"Unlived life . . ." the life that has been put aside in order to serve the demands of a career or an idea of one's place in the world, or simply to serve one's comfort and egotism.³⁶ Whatever decision she may have come to with regard to marriage to Domdaniel, this is unlikely to be the case henceforth. She might "go on in the life that has somehow or another found me and claimed me" (AMF, p. 379), but it would be with a new consciousness not only of herself as a person, but also as an artist. She had realized that "the integrity of the artist is not unquestioning obedience to an external life of belief or conduct; it is rather submissive attention to the voice of his own talent."³⁷ Just as she had been forced to leave Canada in order to develop as an artist, she had to return to find her roots as a person.

Veronica and Solly Bridgetower had also been living through this period in what Davies called the "unlived life." As a couple they were held in thrall by the conditions of a Will dictated by the irrational hatred of Mrs. Bridgetower. On top of this Solly was the prisoner of his illusion of his love for his mother. Unlike Monica, Solly and Veronica were being forced to seek their deliverance in the mundane

³⁶ Davies, "Gleams and Gloom," p. 239.

³⁷ R. Davies, "Brethern in Sincerity," Saturday Night, November 21, 1953, p. 20, rpt. "Sincerity and Canadians: 1953," in The Well-Tempered Critic, p. 195.

world--by the creation of a new life--a son. Only after his birth would they finally be free of the "Dead Hand" (AME, p. 25) of Solly's mother. Her Will, which had initiated the process of liberation for Monica, had made Solly and Veronica prisoners of her Will-to-power as long as they remained childless. It would appear that she had hoped that the social embarrassment caused by the publicizing of the terms of her Will, the material poverty into which it threw the young couple, combined with its power to pervert their natural sexual relationship by making it serve her Will rather than their needs, would destroy the marriage which had deprived her of her demonic possession of her son.

Mrs. Bridgetower had, however, misjudged the ability of the despised Veronica and the reprehensible Cobbler to love Solly so unconditionally that they could enable him to stand up to the weight of the "Dead Hand." Cobbler, his wife and Veronica all recognized the demonic quality of the Will for what it was--a malignant desire to destroy Solly. As long as Solly refused to acknowledge either the evil in what his mother had done or was, or his own hatred of her, he would not be able to escape the thralldom to his own irrationality.

In 1942, a little tongue in cheek, Davies had said "the belief in a survival after death which is the chief article of the Christian faith, makes a belief in ghosts almost

obligatory."³⁸ More than twenty years later he had returned to the subject, and added "many people who reject God have a sneaking acceptance of the supernatural."³⁹ In this essay he had rejected Freud's consignment of ghosts along with God to the realm of illusion. However, his other psychological mentor, Carl Jung, had not denied the psychic reality of ghosts:

When a person says that he has seen ghosts or that he is bewitched, and it means more to him than just talk, then we are dealing with a fact of experience. . . . We can therefore be sure that even in these cases we are confronted with a definite complex of psychic facts which are as real as the light I see. I do not know how I would prove the existence of the ghost in empirical reality . . . but nonetheless I have to reckon with the fact that in all times and in all places the psyche has claimed to see to experience ghosts.⁴⁰

Veronica, who had been brought up a free-thinker was convinced that the spirit of Mrs. Bridgetower had been responsible for the death of her first son who "had been born with his navel-cord tight around his neck, strangling as he moved toward the light" (AMF, p. 272). It was her inner conviction that "Freed from the cumbrous ailing body, freed from any obligation to counterfeit the ordinary good will

³⁸ R. Davies, "Ghost Stories," Peterborough Examiner, 8 October 1942, p. 4, rpt. in The Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies, p. 116.

³⁹ Davies, "Gleams and Glooms," p. 246.

⁴⁰ C.G. Jung, "Spirit and Life," CW 8:625:328.

of mortal life, her spirit walked abroad, working out its ends and asserting its mastery through a love which was hate" (AMF, p. 273). In addition Veronica feared that Solly had become "Possessed by the spirit of his mother at least as much as by the nature which she so much loved" (AMF, p. 273).

Solly had married Veronica against the wishes of his mother, believing that she would eventually accept Veronica as his wife. His delusion about the nature of his mother's love for him was so entrenched that even the terms of her Will did not make him face reality. His repressed resentment at her treatment of him, which in Tempest-Tost and Leaven of Malice he referred to as "self-pity," had forced him to live under the compulsion of "filial piety" (LM, p. 225). Following her death, his repressed hatred of her for what she had done to them, affected both his personality and his sexual prowess. As long as he maintained his delusion of his mother's love, he felt compelled to father a son and fulfill the terms of her Will.

Interestingly enough, Solly's recovery from delusion began as a result of Monica's entrapment. In her manipulative personality, Monica was determined to finance the production of Giles' opera The Golden Ass. When Veronica appealed to her for help, Monica felt compelled to refuse because "I couldn't explain it to him [Giles]" (AMF, p. 309). Monica's refusal to lend them money, removed any hope Solly had of escaping his mother's trap. For Solly, "To lose all hope

[was] in a way to be free" (AMF, p. 310). Having lost all hope of rescue, Solly began to face the realities of his life. Solly's new consciousness resembled the philosophy of George Santayana, of whom Davies had said, "A dominant idea in his life and apparently in his philosophy was the idea of nonattachment. Though he had the ordinary human needs for friends and for comfort he was not dominated by the desire to be aggressively a man of the world or to be what the world calls a success."⁴¹ Solly explained his changed attitude to Monica as "I think one of the secrets of life is that one must give up caring too much about anything" (AMF, p. 367).

This philosophy, however, was the one he turned to before the premature birth of his son. In this absence of caring too much, Solly was just as much in danger from the un-lived life as he had been in his delusional state. A balance was necessary, and he found that balance as he sat in Salterton's cathedral lost on his own thoughts and paying no attention to the service. He could not help but be influenced by the atmosphere in the cathedral:

Here was splendor which glorified the dank December twilight and made the modest cathedral, for its duration [it referring to the combination of organ and choir singing Cobbler's "Top-notch Christmas rouser"], a true dwelling place of one of the many circumscribed, but not therefore ignoble concepts of God. (AMF, p. 373)

⁴¹R. Davies, "George Santayana, Saturday Night, 28 March 1953, rpt. in The Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies, p. 44.

Under this beneficent influence, Solly paid no attention to the religious ritual because in his own spirit he was in the process of recognition. He realized that,

If ever there were a time to make peace with his mother's troubled spirit, it was now--now when the son was born who would deliver him from the hard humiliating conditions of her will. Yet did that spirit desire a reconciliation? What had called Veronica from her sleep so early in the morning? With what had Veronica struggled in Mrs. Bridgetower's bedroom, so that he had found her unconscious amid overturned tables and chairs? He was neither mad nor fanciful: he had no doubt who or what had sought to prevent the live birth of his son. He knew what it was, also that it was defeated at last. (AMF, p. 373)

Solly had recognized two important things. One was that evil was a reality in this world, and secondly, that his cynicism could deny him real perception. If he could accept that his mother's soul had embodied this evil to try to destroy his unborn son, then that soul was a victim of its own malice. When Davies said "It was a time for forgiveness. Against the strict prohibition of his faith, Solly prayed for his Mother's Soul" (AMF, p. 373), he was not referring to Solly's Anglicanism, but his cynicism which had almost denied him perception of the full range of possibilities. By praying for his mother's soul, Solly had experienced the recognition not only of the personal unconscious as Monica was doing at this time as well, but he had faced the reality of Evil, The Shadow of the Collective Unconscious in its demonic Anima manifestation. If such powerful Evil could exist outside man, why not the reverse?

On this day his son had been born alive through Veronica's strength in recognizing and overpowering disembodied Evil. In many ways the birth of Solly's son paralleled that other Birth which brought to all mankind the opportunity for the recognition of the nature and love of God. For these reasons Solly prayed, but the God to whom he prayed was not "The Mean Old Man in the Sky" (TT, p. 250).

There were many thoughts in Salterton's cathedral that St. Nicholas' Day; ironically, none of them about the words and concepts pouring forth as the Dean preached his sermon about "education" (AMF, p. 374). The kind of education he was elucidating was the education of the spirit to the apprehension of the Transcendental in the mundane world. He illustrated these methods of apprehension with reference to the different ways in which the birth of Christ had been understood by men (AMF, p. 375). His exposition of the need of the shepherds for "an angel and a multitude of the heavenly host" (AMF, p. 375) to bring it to their attention could be extended to include people of the Jungian sensation personality type--people who apprehend things primarily through the senses (CW 6:604:362). The second method of learning about the Birth was the method of the Wise Men--through serious study of the great realities that are hidden in the myths and legends of mankind. The Wise Men came to the Birth, not only because they saw the star--that was visible to all who looked up. They saw the Child because they trusted the perceptions of their ancestors so that when

the star appeared, they understood its meaning. The third method was the direct apprehension of God--the method of Simeon in the temple. The Jungian intuitive type could be the type of person Simeon was (CW 6:661:401). More importantly, each group got smaller as the method of apprehension became further removed from the mundane reality. The Wise Men who "prepared themselves to know great mysteries" (AMF, p. 377) included both the Jungian thinking and feeling personality types, for these are the rational types (CW 6:601:359). The shepherds and Simeon were the opposites of the Wise Men. The least likely to meet with success were the shepherds who might have been in another time, modern empiricists such as Freud. The Simeons are few in this world, for they alone without external signs can "know the face of God" (AMF, p. 379). These are the people who possess and exercise the creative imagination. They are whole but they do not find God in themselves. They possess that special quality which Jung does not provide for in his theory of the reconciliation of opposites, a knowledge of the superordinate character of God's love. The Simeons have "active Grace" (AMF, p. 379) which appears to take them beyond the opposites into a direct apprehension of the quality of God's love. Just as malice in Leaven of Malice, At My Heart's Core, and A Mixture of Frailties, ultimately brought those whom it touched to a realization of the power of evil, and through this knowledge to a greater understanding of themselves, 'active grace' appears to lead to that

realm beyond the power of evil.

The people who realize this 'active grace' quality in themselves are the true artists. In A Voice From the Attic, Davies had said that "Art lies in the understanding of some part of the dark forces and bringing them under the direction of reason" (VA, p. 113). Art has a function not unlike that of Simeon. "Art reflects and foreshadows what is to be, it does not influence events directly or obviously" (VA, p. 347). Simeon's recognition of 'the face of God' was a private matter--unlike the public recognition of the shepherds and the Wise Men. But Simeon's recognition of the Child in the temple, was the recognition of one who was in contact with the transcendent and as such needed no prompting or confirmation from the mundane world.

Most human beings however, are not even as prepared to look at the sky as the shepherds were. Dean Knapp had emerged in the final two novels of the Trilogy as the one clergyman who had much to offer those who sought his spiritual guidance. He had explained the nature of malice in Leaven of Malice, and explained that evil may even be a necessity in this world (LM, pp. 266-267). In A Mixture of Frailties he had pointed out that knowledge of God is available to all who look--by whatever methods they choose as long as they focus on Christianity's central message: "For God so loved the world. . . ." Men do not have to be perfect nor does the world in order for God to love it. Davies' most devastating irony is that Dean Knapp alone, of all the

clergyman he had portrayed, in all of his writings since 1940, is the one man who was spiritually significant, and he was the one clergyman whose influence on his people was nonexistent. Davies' final observation at the close of the Salterton Trilogy was that most people did not even want to look for God, so sure are they that his presence is unimportant in their lives. However, for others a new realization had begun. Most of the characters who had begun to reach out towards God had been shepherds. The exception was Monica, but she had become lost in the slums of her spirit to such an extent that she had not yet realized her potential to become a wise man. At the recital following her mother's death, for example, she had shown that "she was developing a faculty for finding worth where others had missed it" (AMF, p. 306). Moreover, the other message that the Dean's Sermon brought was that the face of God, once seen, was not at all the face that shepherds or the Magi had been expecting. The Salterton Trilogy led essentially to the question of choice. Supposing a man recognizes his need of God in this universe. First: how does man get to see the face of God, and second, how will he know it is God's face he is seeing? What happens if he decides he needs no transcendent God? These were the questions Davies would continue to explore in his later writings of the 1960's-1980's.

CONCLUSION

IMAGO DEI¹

For fourteen years after the publication of A Mixture of Frailties, Robertson Davies produced no further novels. However, when Fifth Business was published in 1970, it became clear that the problem of religion had been taken out of the closet, ~~so~~ to speak, and revealed as a major concern of Davies' fiction.

From 1940-1960, Davies had condemned all forms of religion which put the concerns of society, and of the world, in a position of power over the needs of the individual. It was not that he disagreed with religion, per se, so much as he was sufficiently a humanist to believe that the human being was more valuable than any objective system.

When, in 1960, A Voice from the Attic, Davies "call[ed] to the clerisy to wake up and assert itself" (VA, p. 9), he appeared to have sorted out for himself a system of values, a way of dealing with "our nervously tense, intellectually flabby generation" (VA, p. 9). Robert Cockburn called A Voice from the Attic

the work of . . . an enthusiast, a man who wishes to share his discoveries with a reader whose curiosity is equal to his own, whose nature is kindled by the

¹Imago Dei--the Face of God.

variety of ideas, facts, characters and revelations to be found in the world of literature.²

The work is optimistic in tone, optimistic because Davies had rejected the widespread disillusion and fear about this age. It was his belief that part of the problem lay in the willingness of modern writers to "assume there is no true morality" (VA, p. 105) and this in turn had led to a chaotic view of life. There had, Davies decided, been two major reasons for the bleakness of the human image that is found in the literature of our time. The first has been the "a revolt against the false and cruel moralities" (VA, p. 104) which had passed for religion in the Puritan Protestant churches, and the second lay in a misunderstanding by artists of the depth psychologies of Freud and Jung:

Freud's writings, like psychoanalysis itself, tend to emphasize and confirm whatever a man truly is; but partly read and much misunderstood, they beget a barren pessimism which is not a true, philosophic pessimism, and which is good for nothing at all. It smears and effaces all moral values, whereas a fuller knowledge of psychoanalysis tends toward a deeper understanding and an enlargement of moral values. (VA, p. 70)

Both Freud and Jung had awakened Davies, and many more besides, to some of the underlying causes of what they considered the chief failure and disease of our civilization--the subjugation of the individual to the mass. Both men had agreed that the "principal phenomenon of group psychology--

²Robert Cockburn, Introd. to A Voice from the Attic, p. x.

the individual's lack of freedom in the group"³ was detrimental to the psychic health of men and of man, as this state "corresponded to a state of regression to a primitive mental activity, or just such as we should be inclined to ascribe to the primal horde" (SE XVIII:122).

Freud had posited the Church and the Army as the two major proponents of mass or "group" psychology in the world today. Jung had called it mass-mindedness, and had pointed to the Church and the State as its main proponents (Jung, CW 10:5-10-512:258-9).

By the end of the 1950's, Davies had determined that if individual man was to regain control of his psychic structure, he had to free himself from this mass-mindedness which kept him in a subjugated, semi-conscious state. This meant working for the achievement of self-recognition, which, as his writings of the 1950's in particular had indicated, meant a lot more than gaining knowledge of one's ego or conscious personality. This was, in fact, what Monica had mistaken for self-knowledge, as surely as had Gloster Ridley, Solly Bridgetower and Casanova. True self-knowledge, as Davies and Jung conceived of it, meant a reaching beyond the consciousness into that deep well of the collective unconscious. However, as Davies had also delineated in the experiences of Monica Gall and Solly Bridgetower, to do this the individual needs an "extra mundane principle capable of

³S. Freud, Group Psychology, SE XVIII:95.

relativizing the overpowering influence of external factors.

The individual who is not anchored in God can offer no resistance on his own resources to the physical and moral blandishments of the world" (CW 10:511:258).

Therefore, when at the conclusion of A Mixture of Frailties Davies brought Solly Bridgetower and Monica Gall together in St. Nicholas' Cathedral, each reviewing his own progress in achieving self-recognition contrapuntally to what the Dean was saying in his sermon, Davies had completed the foundation on which the remainder of his writing would rest.

The birth of Solly Bridgetower's son had been brought about as a result of the struggle between Good and Evil--and this time Good had won--primarily because by this time Veronica was so convinced of the reality of Evil that she was prepared to fight it. Solly and Monica were both ruminating on the recognition of Evil in their lives--and the Dean was preaching a sermon on the recognition of the Good. This, it would appear, had been what Davies had been working toward--the recognition of both factors in men's lives, and through that recognition, to hope that one can help the 'Good' to prevail, even though for most people, that knowledge of just what that 'Good' is may not be easily acquired.

Throughout his writing in the earliest period from 1940-1950, Davies had criticized very harshly many of the concepts involved in the religion of the Christian Churches

and the "religions" of those who denied God, but he had never denied the importance of some form of religion in helping a person to sort out his position in an otherwise inexplicable universe. The key to his position had been present since the beginning, articulated very clearly in his book review of Harold Laski's Faith, Reason and Civilization in 1944:

The champions of Christianity will no doubt wish to refute what Laski says about their faith; they will have their work cut out for them, if they wish to refute all he says. But the odd thing about Mr. Laski's argument is that he insists on relating Christianity to the churches, Catholic and Protestant, and he accepts their actions as the sum of what Christianity means in the world. He never once suggests that religion might be a deeply personal matter--an inner struggle in which man strives to reconcile the conflicting elements of his character by relating himself to a greater power.⁴

In 1973, following the publication of Fifth Business, looking back at his earlier convictions he had explained to Donald Cameron:

One reason I was drawn to the study of Freud and Jung was my religious interest, because I quickly found that for my taste, investigation of religion by orthodox theological means was unrewarding. You never got down to brass tacks, or at least nothing that I read ever did so. You started off by assuming that all kinds of splendid things were true, and you developed all kinds of splendid things on top of that. I wanted to see about the basic

⁴ Davies, "Laski's New Religion," p. 4.

things so I thought I would have a look at people who had a wrestle with these very basic things.⁵

As has been shown, in the 1940's, he looked mainly to Freud for these 'basic things', in the 1950's, increasingly to Jung. In the process he became more and more intrigued with the concept of ambivalence which was basic to the psychology of both men.

Both Freud and Jung recognized ambivalence as the struggle in the unconscious between opposing forces or instincts. Freud had decided that this ambivalence was the main civilizing force in mankind. In Civilization and Its Discontents, he said:

The sense of guilt [the super-ego] is an expression of an external struggle between Eros and the instinct of destruction or death. This conflict is set going as soon as men are faced with the task of living together. (SE XXI:132)

The result of the resolution of this tension would be either unleashed aggression or death. Jung, by contrast,

understood the tension of opposites [ambivalence] as the basic attribute of life, and that life pushes toward a resolution, toward an experience of wholeness . . . overcoming the split is a kind of death and rebirth experience.⁶

The single most important difference between the theories of Freud and those of Jung for Robertson Davies appeared to lie in the value each man apportioned to the Humanities.

⁵Cameron, Conversations, p. 40.

⁶W.B. Clift, Jung and Christianity: The Challenge of Reconciliation (New York: Crossroads, 1983), p. 73.

Both Freud and Jung had discovered the importance of ambivalence in the unconscious of mankind. This meant that both recognized that those aspects of life hitherto regarded as evil were as necessary to life as the 'good' things. Both men agreed that the main goal for man should be a mature, personal independence. Freud had theorized that this could be brought about by "rational operating of the intellect" (SE XXI:45); Jung theorized that it was brought about through what he called the process of "individuation" (CW 9i:490:275 and following).

Because Freud was primarily an empiricist scientist, he was inclined to regard the products of the human imagination as fantasies and illusions, because they were insubstantial in the physical world. Jung was less bound by scientific rationalism, and, accepting many of Freud's basic premises, moved further and further into the investigation of the psychic nature of man through the examination of the products of the creative imagination. As this investigation proceeded, Jung had found that the literature, art, religions, myths, fairytales, legends, and even primitive superstitions all contained paradigms of what he called the "collective unconscious." They also showed that for mankind the Imago Dei was a psychic fact.

The Dean's sermon at the close of the Salterton Trilogy indicated that Davies had accepted the idea of a transcendental God as a necessary component of spiritual health. The sermon indicated, however, that Davies' idea of the

nature of this God would be Christian, but not the "Mean Old Man in the Sky" of Tempest-Tost, nor the self-serving materialistic Gods of Salterton's people. The God Davies would have people find would be the new-born God of Christianity--but a new-born attitude would be necessary in order to find Him.

The Dean's sermon at the end of A Mixture of Frailties had suggested that there are at least three pathways available through which man may apprehend God--the infant God of Joy. The Magi found God through the study, not of empirical reality, but of the products of the creative minds of their mentors--portents and symbols. Could man still find God this way? The shepherds had needed angels--visible, audible angels--which they could both see and hear. Were physical signs of the presence of God still available? Could man find God through science? Simeon had found God because he knew intuitively that God would come to him. Can man still find God with the same sure intuitive knowing that characterized Simeon? Moreover, what are the conditions under which these revelations are made known? Is as Freud suggested "guilt" a prerequisite for preventing man from unleashing his instinctive aggression against others? Should one accept the Jungian hypothesis that the Christian symbol of the Imago Dei was inadequate? All these were questions that governed Davies' writing of the next twenty-two years.

In the third phase of his writing, Davies examined the nature of and genesis in individual men of belief in the Deity, the variety of ways through which man, especially

modern rationalistic man, may arrive at a perception of the Deity, and the relationship which the Deity may have with the lives of individual men. In the final novel of this period, The Rebel Angels, Davies moved even further into the realms of theology, as he examined some conceptions of the nature of The One God.

The Deptford Trilogy, which consisted of the three novels published in the 1970's, was written in the form of three autobiographies--each one the life story of a man whose childhood and future life had been strongly influenced by an insignificant boy's malice in the small Canadian town of Deptford. Percy Boyd Staunton had maliciously hidden a rock in the snowball he aimed at the head of Dunstable Ramsay. Young Ramsay ducked, the snowball hit the wife of the Baptist preacher, sending her into premature labour and impairing her mind. As a result of the incident Paul Dempster was born early, to a mother who was decidedly strange. That was the background. The novels were concerned with the way in which the life of each boy was subsequently governed by his feelings of guilt for his part in the incident.

Religion, specifically a virulent form of Puritan-Protestantism, had been the guilt-promoting agent in the early lives of Dunstable and Paul. In contrast, Boyd had repressed any memory of the incident and one must assume any guilt associated with it. Thus the novels presented a study in evil--two of the three youngsters were convinced that

they were evil, the third thought he was a good person. In the novels the Freudian concept of guilt and religion was paired with the Jungian concept of the "individuation" of the individual to examine how each boy, as a man, made sense of his place in the universe.

Each of the Deptford boys had to reject the Deptford of his youth. As this background included the Calvinistic Puritanism of their households, rejection of Deptford included a rejection of Deptford's God. As young men the boys then had to cope with making sense out of a universe which appeared meaningless. (I should qualify this-- Staunton did not experience this sense of alienation until near the end of his life--he was the foil to Dunstable and Paul.) The problem of David Staunton, son of Boy, which occupied the middle volume of the Trilogy, The Manticore (1972), was the problem of identity of a person who lived in a world which is antisceptic in all but the material realm. The path followed by the main character in each novel was one of the paths outlined in the Dean's sermon. Ramsay, the central character of Fifth Business, took the path of the Magi, rejecting the Protestant distrust of myth and legend and immersing himself in the study of hagiography. Paul Dempster became a Simeon, having found the presence of God deep inside himself and based his whole life's purpose on a knowledge of that reality. Boy lost any meaningful perception of God, but his son David took the way of the shepherds to find first his identity and later possibly God.

Throughout the Deptford Trilogy, Davies used the psychology of Jung to explain the nature of the psychic structure of man, and included in this was the Jungian concept of the union of opposites:

The union of opposites is the merging of apparent opposites to produce a new and stronger spirit in many because it is in the soul or heart or mind of man--in all three we may presume--that the struggle is carried on, and the eventual new element appears in the form of a wider sensibility,⁷ and greater wisdom, and an enlarged charity.

Jung's psychology certainly provided Davies with an acceptable means of gaining understanding of the nature of man. However, Davies was concerned that the Jungian interpretation of the symbol-producing faculty of the Self of the collective unconscious was too liable to misinterpretation on the grounds that the concept of God and therefore God is dependent on Man. The Jungian Self was not to become a paradigm of the Imago Dei for Davies:

I have been suggesting the existence of a power of good and a power of evil external to man and using him as an agency--A God in fact infinitely greater than man can conceive, and a Devil vastly more terrible than even the uttermost terrors of human evil. It is part of man's vanity to assume that all of Nature is merely a background against which he works out his destiny--the scenery for his dream. Religion has in some ways encouraged this vanity, but I suggest the idea is open to question.

.....
But whether we are the end to which all evolution has been striving is open to

⁷Davies, "Thunder Without Rain," p. 263.

doubt. Any assertion we may make that the forces we call for brevity and convenience God and the Devil are forces contained within ourselves and without external being is open to even greater doubt.⁸

This statement is crucial to the understanding of Davies' interpretation of the problem of religion, both in the Deptford Trilogy and Rebel Angels. It confirms that the thrust of his writings, visible since the 1940's when he first indicated his concern over the spiritual nullity he observed around him, had been and continued to be an attempt to examine human identity in order to ascertain the relationship of man and God, rather than as an end in itself. He had been concerned with the blight that afflicted men when the One God lost His place in the hearts and minds of men, and had considered some of the reasons for His passing.

As he had maintained in the 1940's he continued to maintain into the 1980's: it is not God who is wrong; it is man's concepts of God that have gone astray. Freud had, it would appear, correctly read the "God is Dead" mood of the twentieth century, but Davies pointed out one of the consequences of this rejection of God has been that,

Inevitably our ideas of right and wrong has suffered as well. Extraordinary horrors and indecencies are now regarded, not simply as evil, but as a consequence of some iniquity in society or in nature for which we are all, in vague terms,

⁸ Davies, "Thunder Without Rain," p. 264.

thought to be responsible, and against which, therefore, we should seek redress. The death of God has loaded us all with a new kind of guilt.⁹

In A Voice from the Attic he had condemned the "intensely materialistic concept of religion which is common in our day" (VA, p. 73). He had criticized the lack of a concept of a true morality, stating that

what is wrong with scores of modern novels which show literary quality is not that their writers have rejected a morality, but that they have one which is unexamined, trivial, and lop-sided. They have a base concept of life: they bring great gusto to their portraits of what is perverse, shabby and sordid, but they have no very clear notion of what is Evil, the idea of Good is unattractive to them, and when they have to deal with it they do so in terms of the sentimental or the merely pathetic. (VA, p. 105)

Davies had constantly been attempting to distinguish between the kind of evil which is psychologically relative and that which is truly evil: "It is a tough world, and it only seems irrational or illogical to those who have not grasped some hints of its remorseless irreversible and often cruel logic. It is a world in which God is not mocked, and in which a man often reaps--only too obviously what he has sown.¹⁰ Even though in another context he admitted, "it is sometimes very difficult to know what they have sown or to be certain about what the harvest is";¹¹ overall, what

⁹Davies, "Gleams and Gloom," p. 244.

¹⁰Davies, "The Conscience of the Writer," p. 131.

¹¹R. Davies, "Ham and Tongue," One Half of Robertson Davies, p. 16.

Davies has been attempting to do is to clarify the ameliorating quality of religion for the minds and hearts of men. In an interview with Tom Harpur, in 1974, he said, "We've got to stop pounding away at the Logos idea (word, reason) and do some serious thinking about the Eros principle, i.e. the principle of love as women know it, instead of the frosty, disembodied love of God which seems to exercise itself in such horrifying ways."¹²

He did not offer his readers a definition of God, and he clearly stated his aversion to doing so:

If people want to define a silly God and then declare that he does not exist, I am not interested in their fame. Defining God has always seemed to me a pompous and self-defeating exercise. I am content that God should encompass me; I do not think it likely that I shall encompass Him. Where God is concerned I am the object, not the subject.¹³

As he had made clear from his earliest writings, for Davies religion should be more than a social system, it should be a way of looking at life which enabled the individual to cope with all the varied experiences that make up his life. This is a far cry from the idea that leading a religious life is leading a 'good' life--or a life which forbids contact with anything deemed sinful. As Simon Darcourt, the Anglican priest in Rebel Angels defined it:

¹² Tom Harpur, "Author Says Messiah Could Be A Woman," Toronto Daily Star, 16 February 1974, rpt. "A Talk With Tom Harpur," in The Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies, p. 318.

¹³ Davies, "Gleams and Grooms, p. 243.

If you are determined to live the religious life, you have to toughen up your mind. You have to let it be a thoroughfare for all thoughts, and among them you must make choices. . . . If you cling frantically to the good, how are you to find out what the good really is?¹⁴

At the conclusion of World of Wonders, the final volume of the Deptford Trilogy, Dunstable Ramsay had said to Leisl:

God wants to intervene in the world and how is He to do it except through man? I think the Devil is in the same predicament. . . . It's the moment of decision--of will--when those two nab us and as they both speak so compellingly it's tricky to know who's talking. Where there's a will, there are always two ways.¹⁵

Davies' final novel Rebel Angels attempted to approach these questions of good and evil, and the nature of God, from an entirely different perspective from the one he had taken earlier. This latest novel is, like World of Wonders, set outside the mainstream of society. Its setting is a university. This setting has a symbolic significance, because "Universities were creations of the Middle Ages and much of the Middle Ages still clings to them, not only in their gowns and official trappings, but deep in their hearts" (RA, p. 187). In one of his earliest book reviews (supra, pp. 4-5), Davies had connected the Middle Ages with a particular kind of religious feeling which the world has since lost.

¹⁴ R. Davies, The Rebel Angels (1982; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 120. Subsequent references to this novel will be abbreviated RA and included in the text.

¹⁵ R. Davies, World of Wonders (1975; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 316.

He said then that we could not go back, and he meant it. But he could do the next best thing--examine a community which was free from many of the restrictions and repressions of the modern world, at least in its hearts: "There is every kind of creature here, and all exhibiting what they are so much more freely than if they were in business or the law or whatever" (RA, p. 13).

The characters of The Rebel Angels are all humanists, and they are all very intelligent people. The way in which religion operates in their lives should surely tell us the truth about the nature and reality of God. Not so--time for another myth to be demolished. Just as Davies said in A Voice from the Attic that "Psychoanalysis is no bigger than the man who is using it, even when he has a good understanding of its theory and practice" (VA, p. 69), in The Rebel Angels he indicated through Simon Darcourt, "universities cannot be more universal than the people who teach and the people who learn within their walls" (RA, p. 47).

This university does not contain perfection, but wholeness. In this novel the characters reveal their mythological derivations very rapidly. They are all here, the Trickster figure, the Magus, the Redeemer, the Devil, the Angel-of-Light and the Angel-of-Darkness: their outlooks as varied as their personalities. If there is such a thing as a definitive work in the Davies canon, this is it. Every attitude to religion that Davies had examined, from that of the Calvinist Puritan to the Devil worshipper is present. The

attitudes of Jung, Freud, and several twentieth century philosophers and theologians co-exist side by side with the belief in magic and superstition which characterized our ancient forebears. In the midst of all this, was there a final answer to the problem of religion? The answer depends on who is being asked the question. For this is the very world of the unconscious in which ambivalence is the reigning force . . . or is it?

There is clearly a tension of opposing opposites--but in the end, the reader is left in no doubt as to which forces were on the side of good, and which evil, even though during the novel there may have been some difficulty detecting the difference. The characters themselves recognized this, and rather than worry about it, they were quite prepared to enjoy it, even if doing so meant a reversal of the ethical and moral judgements of society at large. The irony of this novel rests on its reversal of most of the assumptions about art and magic and wisdom and religion : that had been presented in many of Davies' other writings. For example, the character in this novel who possesses the creative imagination of the artist is a scientist whom most people in the outside world would regard with derision because of the nature of his work, which is the study of the meaning hidden in human feces, and the apparent Jungian magus turns out to be a victim of his own evil.

The message of this book is that there is no message; things are never quite what they appear. Just as Davies

had earlier been extremely critical of the underdeveloped intellect, in this novel he displayed the pitfalls of the overdeveloped one. However, one character, Simon Darcourt, did emerge as possessor of an outlook which Davies appeared to favour. Darcourt was a clergyman, but he was not blind to the inadequacies of his creed. Darcourt freely admitted that there is no one completely satisfactory or adequate Imago Dei, but that he also believed "the essentials of Christianity, rightly understood, may form the best possible basis for a life and a marriage, but in the case of people of strongly intellectual bent, these essentials need fleshing out" (RA, p. 315). Interestingly enough, this fleshing out involved getting in touch with the irrational, the mythical, rather than more rational theological debates. Systemization, the trying to make of religion, "the barber's chair which fits all buttocks" (LM, p. 6) appeared to be the one great sin. As the Dean of the University said, "It is good modern theology to acknowledge every man's right to go to hell in his own way" (RA, p. 326). Of course, the reverse is equally valid!

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As the thesis topic was limited to an examination of the problem of religion in the earlier works of Robertson Davies, the bibliography which follows is limited in three ways:

(i) Only those articles and columns by Davies which provided information relating directly to the topic and quoted from in the text have been included in the bibliography.

(ii) Critical writings relating primarily to the Deptford Trilogy and other works of Robertson Davies published after 1960 have not been included in the bibliography.

(iii) The secondary sources included in the bibliography have been selected using two criteria: first, those works or volumes of a writer from which quotations included in the text have been taken, and second, a selected listing of those works not quoted from, but which the writer found most helpful in clarifying the topic.

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