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Between Poetry and Life:
George Whalley and the Drama of Mimesis

by

James Frederick Cranton

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
May 1993

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	iv
Abstract	v
List of Abbreviations	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: George Whalley and the Drama of Mimesis	6
Chapter Two: Consecration and Audience in Hamlet	58
Chapter Three: 1 Henry IV and the Making of History	97
Chapter Four: Drama and the Dramatic Monologue	136
Chapter Five: Great Expectations and the Ghosts of Narrative	190
Chapter Six: <i>Pathos-as-Praxis</i> in The Legend of John Hornby	241
Afterword	292
Works Cited	295

Abstract

This thesis takes as its starting-point the literary criticism of George Whalley. One theme treated here is the fearfully broad one of literary *mimesis*. Whalley, following Aristotle's lead, calls mimesis "the bond between poetry and life", and observes that "mimesis is an activity or process and not a thing or product." Much of my attention here is directed to how poems depend upon this active, processive quality, which Whalley also names their "*drama*, the trajectory of pure action traced out by the whole poem."

After an opening chapter wherein I outline and comment on Whalley's criticism, I go on in chapter two to discuss Hamlet with an eye toward examining the nature of the relations that occur (processively, actively) within what Whalley calls poetry's "irreducible unit", the aesthetic triad of poet, poem, and reader. Whalley tells us that readers of poetry should come to their work with "innocence of intent", but without expansion this recommendation may appear simply the product of wishful thinking; Hamlet provides an exemplary instance of how Whalley's notions of the aesthetic triad and innocence of intent can complement each other. I consider a second instance of Shakespearean drama (1 Henry IV) in my third chapter, which concerns the making of history and of history (and other) plays.

In chapter four I move to a less strictly "dramatic" form--the dramatic monologue--with the hope of suggesting how in this case too the relations within the aesthetic triad prove informative of what poems do, as does the fact that both speakers and readers of dramatic monologues perform acts of intention that can be either innocent or not innocent. I move to yet another literary form in chapter five when I take up *Great Expectations*, in response to which I attempt to fathom what it might mean to speak (as Whalley, following Edwin Muir, does) of "the dramatic novel". I conclude with a discussion of Whalley's own *The Legend of John Hornby*. In this final chapter I examine both Whalley's criticism and *The Legend* with Aristotelian principles foremost, and again I adhere to the course of considering a particular poetic text with a view toward seeing whether, as he himself says of Aristotle, Whalley has something "absolute" to say about mimesis.

List of Abbreviations

AC	-----	"The Aristotle-Coleridge Axis"
APA	-----	Aristotle on the Poietic Art
BG	-----	Death in the Barren Ground
BS	-----	"Birthright to the Sea: Some Poems of E. J. Pratt"
FAC	-----	"Frye's Anatomy of Criticism"
FS	-----	"Force and Signification"
IP	-----	Introduction to Poetry
JAP	-----	"Jane Austen: Poet"
LI	-----	"Literature: An Instrument of Inquiry"
M	-----	"Metaphor"
OD	-----	On Deconstruction
OT	-----	"On Translating Aristotle's Poetics"
PAR	-----	"The Poet and His Reader"
PL	-----	"The Place of Language in the Study of Literature"
PF	-----	Poetic Process
PT	-----	"Does Poetry Tell The Truth?"
PUT	-----	"Picking Up the Thread"
RH	-----	"'Research' and the Humanities"
SC	-----	"Some Complex Uses of Language"
SEC	-----	"Signature Event Context"
SP	-----	Structuralist Poetics
SRP	-----	"'Scholarship', 'Research', and 'The Pursuit of Truth'"
TC	----	"The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation"
TP	-----	"Teaching Poetry"

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INTRODUCTION

What follows is a collection of essays on an exceedingly broad subject: the drama of poetic mimesis. The imposing breadth of this subject will be somewhat circumscribed by my interest in and attention to the literary criticism of George Whalley, but the thesis that is to come is not a dissertation on Whalley's poetics. My reflections will at many points start from Whalley's criticism, and at others come back to that criticism, with the aim of delineating and testing it, but the following essays appear here more broadly as reflections on the nature of poetry in a variety of forms. My principal interest will be with poems rather than a body of criticism, and so as I make my way Whalley will not always be at centre stage--with which fact I think he himself would be pleased.

It is an important principle for Whalley that poems are things made with words. Thus in *Poetic Process* he distinguishes "the activity which terminates in a poem" from "the sum of physical objects that may be called poems," declining to enlist both under the familiar but "unfortunate collective term" *poetry* (225). In the essay "Teaching Poetry", Whalley in fact writes not so much about "poetry" as about poems. "The central preoccupation of a poet," he writes there, "is to *make* poems, to construct stable and patterned word-things" (219). Whalley's knowledge of Greek no doubt contributed to his sense of the matter.

From *poiein* (to do or make) we have *poiema* (a thing made--roughly our 'poem'); *poietes* (a maker--roughly our 'poet'. . .); *poiesis* (the process or activity of making--only very roughly our 'poetry', and unhappily the eighteenth century fumbled

the ball in allowing 'poesy' to become an elegant variant of 'poetry' when we badly needed a word for *poesis*). (OT 53)

Poetry has the reputation of an esoteric art, but one effect of Whalley's emphasis on the constructedness of poems is to make them more accessible (though not easy). While not denying to poetry and poems an element of the mysterious--he offers approvingly, for example, Gabriel Marcel's suggestion that "Words are essentially magical," and that "The function of poetry is that of restoring this power to language" (PP 129)--Whalley thinks of this as a mystery to which we have access. "Teaching Poetry" is an exciting essay precisely to the extent it encourages us to believe that we *can* come to know¹ poems--even "without fully understanding" them (217).

What is the basis of Whalley's confidence? To what does he attribute the reader's access to a poem? We might begin to answer these questions by looking at what he thinks to be the nature of poetry, in both of its "collective" aspects. Of central importance is Whalley's belief that a poem communicates meaning. This is not to say that Whalley considers communication the explicit and direct *goal* of poets; "From the practical point of view," he suggests, "the poet in the act of composition can have no regard for his reader" (PAR 206). Rather, Whalley sees communication as an ineluctable and naturally-unfolding part of the poetic process. "By embodying in physical material his feeling of reality, by incarnating his feeling for reality, the artist discovers and realizes both himself and the world," he writes. "And this discovery is of supreme value because *it can communicate itself* to others" (PP 45 emphasis mine). For Whalley, communication in

1. Or *experience*--Whalley uses both terms to indicate the quality of the fullest interaction with a poem.

literature belongs as much to poem as to poet, and in speaking of Whalley's analysis of communication in art, we need to keep in mind the co-operative union he asserts of the poet and the poet's language. "Language in itself does not mean, but persons can," Whalley often says (for example, in FAC 40). This notion has been challenged in recent years, but its place in Whalley's poetics must be stressed. His claims regarding the utterance as the hinge of language, for example, depend upon the presence and power of the meaning subject: "At a 'low' level, the word is the irreducible element; at higher levels the utterance is the irreducible element, its powerful and complex vector supervening upon the integrity of single words" (SRP 87).

But the personal utterance is not a simple matter. One aspect of its complexity is well-expressed by Whalley in the first talk of a CBC radio series entitled Introduction to Poetry. "The main thing to grasp is, that whatever a poet is trying to say, he wants to say it directly and clearly. The difficulty he runs into all the time--and the difficulty his readers run into--is that most of what he wants to say is difficult if not impossible to say" (1.4). Utterance being thus somewhat constrained, the poet has to rely on something else to speak for him. For this something else, Whalley looks in two directions: to the poet's language itself, and to the poet's audience. If, as Whalley says, language is "our most specifically human endowment" (TP 217) and it is language that a poet uses to communicate meaning, it seems unsurprising that with requisite but not unreasonable effort we could understand her. But again, comprehension and the determinacy on which it depends will be made difficult by the limitations of that very language the poet works with.

The poet's problem is to express through the medium of words truths, moods, visions which are ultimately inexpressible in words. He cannot, therefore, like the scientist, go straight for his subject; he must use words in such a way that they will carry the reader beyond the normal minimal meaning of words. (PAR 209)

Thus it becomes apparent that the poet's reader will also be necessary to any invention of meaning. If both poet and words² are ultimately inadequate--even when their influences are joined--to convey meaning, the reader will have to contribute to poetry's cause.³ In any comprehensive treatment of a poem, Whalley writes in "Literature: An Instrument of Inquiry", the activities and procedures of criticism

tend to interlock and interact; but the closer we get to the imaginative reconstruction of a poem--the good-reading of it, the realising of it--the less we find we can rely on these special procedures alone. . . . For which reason we cannot remake a poem if we regard it as a phenomenon; it has to be regarded as something like a living entity, a dynamic event that unfolds according to its own internal principles--a little like a person who has to be approached with respect, almost courted. (210)

Along the same line, in "The Poet and His Reader" Whalley offers early on the seemingly innocuous but in fact potentially far-reaching observation that "The reading of poetry is somehow different from the reading of a seed catalogue," and continues that "unless this fact is widely recognised poets; cannot fulfil any organic function in society"

(1). In sum, he argues, "It is vital that reading be regarded as an art"

(1).

2. Not the same thing as *language*, or *poems*; but these "higher" levels--words raised to utterances--should come out of the meetings of poets and words.

3. Just as he might make a political contribution, for example. And "the cause of poetry", in more than one sense of that expression, is not apolitical.

In the essays that follow I will be especially concerned with "the art of reading", especially as that art may be practiced in the context of what Whalley calls innocence of intent. While Whalley's criticism betrays a tension between the reader and the text that he nowhere definitively resolves, my aim here will not be to blame him for it, but rather to demonstrate how this tension pervades Whalley's understanding of mimesis, and how it is that in this tension the best effects of Whalley's criticism are to be found. After an opening chapter in which I will address some of the central principles of Whalley's criticism, I will go on to discuss, in successive chapters, Hamlet, Henry IV, the dramatic monologue, Great Expectations, and Whalley's own The Legend of John Hornby. Several questions will persist through these chapters. I will, for example, be concerned in them all with the structures of action that can become the forms of poems in the drama of mimesis. I will be interested, too, in the nature of integrity, a quality I see as occurring (dramatically) within relations--the sort of relations that occur in what Whalley calls the aesthetic triad of poet, poem and reader, for instance. And I will in the chapters which follow be particularly interested in the third member of this triad: the reader, whose role in the drama of mimesis I think (and hope to show) Whalley's criticism can shed a useful light on.

In The Ape That Spoke, John McCrone laments our tendency to introduce abstraction into the realm of action. As his central example for this confusion, this "turning of verbs into nouns" (49), McCrone points to the prevalent image of "the mind" as "some phantom object separate from the flesh and blood workings of the brain" (12). McCrone suggests that, rather than accept this image, we ought to

look at the mind as an active process--something that the brain does--rather than as an object with an existence that is somehow separate from the brain. . . . [T]he word *mind* is simply a convenient label for describing the brain at work. . . . [S]peaking correctly, we never have two separate objects--the brain and the mind--occupying the space within our skulls. We have just the brain and the host of things it can do. (11)

McCrone's comments on the relation of verbs and nouns seem to me instructive, and relevant to the question of literary form. Aristotle in a similar fashion warns us against abstraction in the realm of the generic. "[E]pic-making and the making of tragedy--and comedy too--and the art of making dithyrambs, and most of the art of composing to the flute and lyre--all these turn out to be, by and large, *mimeseis*," he writes at the very beginning of the *Poetics* (APA 1447a14-16), to which comment Whalley offers the following instructive note: "Aristotle is clearly not talking about epic, tragedy, comedy, etc., as genres or art forms; he is talking about the *making* of them" (OT 59). Aristotle, Whalley elaborates, "is talking not about things-made so much as about things in the making, coming into being, finding themselves." "Each species 'finds itself', discovers its own nature and form, and progressively--even inevitably--moves towards realising its own peculiar nature" (OT 64). This thesis will concern itself with the *process* of mimesis as that process appears in poems of very different forms ("genres"); following Aristotle's and Whalley's leads, I will seek out the action of forms finding themselves. In the *Poetics*, writes Whalley, Aristotle "uses the word 'mimesis' to indicate the varying but indefinable connection between literature and experience" (FAC 41). This connection being "indefinable", Aristotle accordingly does not try to define it; he leaves the term "open for exploration and for progressive self-definition in the

body of the discussion" (OT 59). My goal throughout the whole of the following discussion is to adopt just such a policy; to the extent that I want to "define" mimesis, I want that definition simply to be a look toward the boundaries of mimesis--and every limit is a beginning as well as an end.

CHAPTER ONE

George Whalley and the Drama of Mimesis

The democratization of interpretation which has of late prevailed upon the ethos of the Western world has helped lead to a distrust of value judgements, but we nonetheless conduct our lives by means of a series of decisive acts, evaluations to which we commit ourselves--if only for the moment. This is as true of our reading as elsewhere; as Stanley Fish has argued (in *Surprised By Sin*, for example), readers **constantly** make choices as they read, even if it is only to replace earlier choices with better-informed ones. To a large extent, the following study will be an examination of the reader as one who is responsible for making interpretive decisions, and thus one who is responsible for acting.

Whalley describes Northrop Frye's *The Anatomy of Criticism* as "perverse, ingenious, desolate" (FAC 43), in large part because he sees it as an attempt to establish a "scientific" mode of literary criticism that would make irrelevant questions concerning value and evaluation in literature and literary studies.

When one looks at the *Anatomy* as an essay in poetics . . . one discovers that the view of language as autonomous, self-shaping, impervious to all external influences is more closely related than one would have expected to the desire to establish criticism as a science free of value-judgements. (FAC 40)

Whalley does not share this desire. Language, he insists, cannot be cut off from either the persons who employ it or the judgements they make (the things they value). Criticism's *raison d'être*, Whalley thinks, is to promote the making of good judgements (judgements *better* than those

we make now), to exercise the organs of perception and deliberation; in short, to work toward an understanding of what is valuable. "Without value-judgement," Whalley writes, "there can be no sense of fact in criticism, no sense of relevance; and I had always supposed that one of the main educative virtues of criticism was in the refinement of value-judgements" (FAC 41).

Some time ago I attended a lecture on *Othello* that took as its starting-point the disagreement between E. H. Gombrich and Ludwig Wittgenstein over what the former calls that "well-known textbook example of ambiguity, the notorious 'rabbit or duck' figure" (35-36). The lecture proceeded along the following line:

Othello is a play centrally concerned with the problem of interpretation. *Othello* thinks he is a competent reader, but in fact as an outsider he doesn't "know the language" of the Venetians. Duplicity is rampant in Venice and Cyprus, and the Moor's tragedy occurs because in a world where sign and signified are ruptured--or at least played with, most notably by Iago: "I must show out a flag and sign of love," he says, "Which is indeed but sign" (I.i.155-56)--*Othello* strives for a certainty in his readings of persons and situations based on a communion of sign and signified. But certainty is never available to human beings: every sign can have multiple meanings at the same time. This is the lesson Wittgenstein teaches us. The duck/rabbit sketch is neither of a duck nor a rabbit, as Gombrich would have us think. It is instead what Wittgenstein calls "a duck-rabbit". If *Othello* had been a more sophisticated interpreter, and ruled out certainty and absolutes, he would not have so dismally erred. But he is nothing if not an absolutist; thus "Away at once with either love or jealousy!" (III.iii. 192)--and thus the tragedy.

The problem of interpretation is indeed central to *Othello*, and as an interpreter (or reader) *Othello* obviously fails miserably. But in fact Shakespeare's play provides a very different interpretive problem than that one posed by the duck/rabbit figure, and so renders doubtful the applicability of the response: "It's a duck-rabbit". *Othello* does not

have to decide about whether a certain drawing depicts a duck or a rabbit; rather, he has to decide whether or not his wife has been unfaithful. He can hardly settle for the answer "she's both faithful and unfaithful"--nor would Desdemona, being faithful, want him to settle for this answer. Othello, in short, is not just about the posing of interpretive questions: it is also about the need to answer those questions.

The nature of Othello's activity as a reader offers us some insight on the challenge that is involved in interpretation. An event in IV.i typifies Othello's action in his role as (mis)interpreter of Desdemona. This event is staged by Iago, and involves his engaging of Cassio in a discussion about Bianca for the "benefit" of Othello, who observes the conversation just out of earshot. Iago (after Othello's withdrawal) rehearses the encounter thus:

Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,
 A huswife that by selling her desires
 Buys herself bread and clothes. It is a creature
 That dotes on Cassio (as 'tis the strumpet's plague
 To beguile many and be beguil'd by one);
 He, when he hears of her, cannot restrain
 From the excess of laughter. Here he comes.
 As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad;
 And his unbookish jealousy must conster
 Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviors
 Quite in the wrong.

(IV.i.93-103)

Iago's ruse works perfectly. Othello, watching the two discourse as one might watch a Dumb Show, completely misreads Cassio's gestures and laughter: thinking the subject of Cassio's disdain to be Desdemona, he interprets the spectacle as final proof of his wife's guilt.

The challenge to readers delineated in Othello is surely not an easy one; the action of the play suggests that readers, who will

sometimes be called upon to make decisive readings, must be at once active and assertive, but it also shows that readers must at the same time be receptive and humble. (This challenge is made all the more imposing when one recognizes that interpretive decisions are most necessary when we are pondering what is most important to us.) If ever an audience was actively involved in a performance, Othello is involved with the show Iago stages for him. The problem, however, is that an audience, as Othello demonstrates perfectly here, can be *over*-active when it comes to how it does its interpretation, an over-activity which expresses itself most readily and characteristically in that audience's willingness--indeed, desire--not only to read but to write the text before it. This is Othello's mistake: he not only judges what he sees, but invents it beforehand. He writes Desdemona into the script and interprets everything *post facto* his invention. Such is his procedure throughout the latter half of the tragedy. Thus, while Othello has the opportunity to tell his own story--in I.iii, for example--Desdemona is not given that chance, at least as far as Othello is concerned (the Willow Song may be seen as her own expression of her story, but only Emilia hears it--until Emilia sings it again at the play's bloody period).

The difference between Gombrich and Wittgenstein used to illustrate the argument of the aforementioned lecture on interpretation in *Othello* helps sharpen our sense of the challenge reading offers. Contrary to our lecturer's use of them, the two theorists in fact share a good deal of common ground in their respective comments on the image of the duck/rabbit. Most important, both agree that in terms of the isolated moment of individual perception there is no such thing as "a

duck-rabbit". As Gombrich explains, perception requires taking sides: because it is "not really possible" to "see the shape apart from its interpretation," "we will discover that we cannot experience alternative readings at the same time" (5-6). Wittgenstein makes the same point, though somewhat less directly:

I may, then, have seen the duck-rabbit simply as a picture-rabbit from the first. That is to say, if asked "What's that?" or "What do you see here?" I should have replied: "A picture-rabbit". If I had further been asked what that was, I should have explained by pointing to all sorts of pictures of rabbits, should perhaps have pointed to real rabbits, talked about their habits, or given an imitation of them.

I should not have answered the question "What do you see here?" by saying: "Now I am seeing it as a picture-rabbit". . .

I am shewn a picture-rabbit and asked what it is; I say "It's a rabbit". Not "Now it's a rabbit". I am reporting my perception.--I am shewn the duck-rabbit and asked what it is; I *may* say "It's a duck-rabbit". But I may also react to the question quite differently.--The answer that it is a duck-rabbit is again the report of a perception; the answer "Now it's a rabbit" is not. Had I replied "It's a rabbit", the ambiguity would have escaped me, and I should have been reporting my perception. . . .

Of course we can say: There are certain things which fall equally under the concept 'picture-rabbit' and under the concept 'picture-duck'. And a picture, a drawing, is such a thing.--But the *impression* is not simultaneously of a picture-duck and a picture-rabbit. (194-99)

Here Wittgenstein proposes a difference between the two answers "It's a duck-rabbit" and "Now it's a rabbit"; the one, he says, is "the report of a perception", the other not. But this seems an odd distinction, since both answers evidently arise from the speaker's knowledge that the image is that of a duck-rabbit, which may at one moment appear a duck and at the other a rabbit ("Now it's a rabbit"). What is the ground for this distinction?

The distinction seems to be based on the difference between perception and interpretation; the answer "It's a duck-rabbit" is merely

the report of a perception because it does not involve the commitment to the image that is present in an interpretation. Wittgenstein begins his discussion of the duck/rabbit by explaining two uses of the word "see": "The one man might make an accurate drawing of the two faces, and the other notice in the drawing the likeness which the former did not see" (193). The former sight is essentially visual and passive, but the latter entails recognition. Calling the image a duck-rabbit is to be inactive before it; it is to repeat what is (visually) seen in the context of one's knowledge that this particular configuration of lines and empty space may be said to constitute either a duck or a rabbit. The second answer--"Now it's a rabbit"--involves taking a further step: this answer contains all the knowledge of the first, and adds to that knowledge the activity of having entered into the image at hand--of having not simply seen it from a detached perspective, but of having become involved in it to the point of recognizing and acknowledging it as a particular form. "[S]eeing is a state," Wittgenstein writes, but "To interpret is to think, to do something" (212). Wittgenstein observes, further, that while the naive perceiver of the image would see only (say) a rabbit, "someone else could have said . . . 'He is seeing the figure as a picture-rabbit'" (195). The naive reader can learn from this alternative reading; he can, indeed, *internalize* the alternative reading and join it to his own earlier response. The way he might do this, Wittgenstein says, is by becoming a sort of audience to the other readers around him. "Do not ask yourself 'how does it work with me?'--Ask 'What do I know about someone else?'" (206).

Gombrich appears uninterested in this communal aspect of interpretation. His concern is with the individual reader in isolation, an

isolation which may prove to be so pronounced as to be consuming.

Gombrich records the following anecdote:

The degree to which a hunt or search can reorganize and transform cues was brought home to me--if I may continue my autobiography--when I was preparing this paper and looking in a library for a book with suitable illustrations of mimicry and protective colouring. Running my eyes along a line of miscellaneous books, I suddenly thought I had got it; I "saw" a book with the odd but promising title "Deceptive Beetles"--obviously some treatise on insect camouflage. Alas, as I looked more closely the title turned out to read Decisive Battles. I felt pretty silly, but I could not help wondering about the flexibility of the preconscious mind. Beetles to battles is not a surprising transformation; it involves the misreading of only two letters out of seven. But that, in this joy of false recognition, my preconscious had changed "decisive" into "deceptive" to keep the promise of a book on mimicry is almost disturbing. (36-37)

This story, he concludes, "illustrates the end of the spectrum, as it were, between perception and projection. I do not know if it is ever possible to separate the two completely" (37).

Gombrich's anxiety at such projection is not unreasonable; it is, after all, just this "misreading" tendency of isolated projection that gets Othello into so much trouble. But it seems to me that Wittgenstein offers the reader who wishes to avoid such interpretive trouble some encouragement: if, as he (*pace* Gombrich) suggests, we *can* keep at once joined and distinct shape and interpretation--if we can say "Now it's a rabbit"--the possibility exists for a reading that is active yet not prescriptive. Of course, Wittgenstein cannot offer us a recipe for achieving correct readings or a way of avoiding misreadings of difficult or ambiguous texts. Such are the texts, Wittgenstein implies, that we would do well to make decisions about with as much prescience as we can manage--but sometimes that won't be enough. "[I]t is easy to

recognize cases in which we are interpreting," Wittgenstein says. "When we interpret we form hypotheses, which may prove false" (212).

Much of Whalley's criticism addresses the fundamental problem of how readers ought to respond to the texts before them. When Brian Crick and John Forns wanted a title for their edition of selected essays by Whalley they chose one in two parts: "Studies in Literature and the Humanities: Innocence of Intent". Crick and Forns at no point explain (or even comment upon) the second part of their title, but evidently it arises out of Whalley's insistence (found throughout *Studies* and elsewhere) that the reader of any poem come to that poem desiring to receive it on its own terms--in its own form--rather than with the ambition of making it over in her own image. Whalley wants readers to approach poems with humility, with what he calls "innocence of intent" (TP 217). In the second installment of *Introduction to Poetry* he begins: "This evening I want to say something about the art of reading poetry and the responsibilities that go with it. I have called this talk *The Still Centre* because I feel that a reader of poetry needs nothing so much as quietness and humility." Whalley reiterates this view in "Teaching Poetry", where he explains how the reader's knowledge of the poem can develop

without any prior knowledge about poetry or about forms of verse, metrics, philology, or theories of analytical procedure. The poetry comes in through the porches of the ear. Inasmuch as most of this, as far as possible, is conducted in the perceptual mode, the experience of the poem is largely in terms of 'feeling' (psychic energy as distinct from 'emotion'). Clearly *this* is not what the kids used unprettilly to call a 'gut response'; for the feeling is not only generated by the poem, but it is also controlled--with increasing fineness--by the poem itself. (222)

How often when "appreciation" is the matter at hand do the values get confused; how often is it the **appreciator** (of a good wine, of good art) whose merits are held up (often explicitly, sometimes implicitly) as worthy of praise, while the wine or art in the relation is ignored (consider where the praise is directed in the commonplace utterance "Smith appreciates art"). To be able to tell the price of (to "appreciate") something is indeed a praiseworthy skill, but to laud the connoisseur or the critic is to miss the main point. With respect to literary criticism Whalley's aim is to direct our attention back to the origin of the exchange: the poem itself. In an essay entitled "The Poet and His Reader", Whalley writes that "The reader of a poem is seeking to discover, not the 'meaning' of the poem, not the poet's character or feeling, not even the *idee genetrice* from which the poem sprang, but the poem itself" (2). In *Poetic Process* Whalley considers how readers can prepare themselves to "appreciate art". This preparation, he says,

far from being a training in adroit technical analysis, is an initiation--an initiation, not into the 'Mysteries of Art', but into purity of heart and innocence of perception. The initiation induces us to discipline our fractious longing to 'understand', to discover 'meaning' in, works of art; and the end of that discipline is a receptive state of mind dynamically engaged with the work of art. In some periods of society art seems to have been widely accessible without such a preparation: in our own time the currents of the technical and practical have for most people silted up the simple naked state of belief--by which I do not mean make-believe--in which alone works of art can be created and recreated. (8-9)

Thus via belief we arrive back at humility, which it seems fair to say is for Whalley a universal value and the most valuable intention. Of as much interest as this proposed need for innocence, however, is what Whalley sees as the cause of this need, that cause being the dynamic nature of the literary text. Readers, Whalley suggests, must not think

of themselves as the only active and autonomous individuals in the matter of their reading: the reader's "presumption" that he "is a knowing *subject* and the poem a knowable *object*" ought to give way to a sense for the literary "*relation*, dominantly perceptual, in which the initiative begins to shift from himself as knower to the poem as capable of directing the process of getting to know--a process . . . that is very much like getting to know a person" (TP 221). The best readers, Whalley argues, are those who allow the poem its own identity.

The sign of a maturing cognitive process is the way a poem separates itself from the reader, becomes a 'thing out there', unchanged by inquiry, distinct and separate, with a life of its own--certainly not a projection of ourselves. As the poem moves away from us, we are aware that we are no longer merely 'experiencing' the poem; we are getting to *know* it as it becomes less and less like ourselves. (TP 222)

As Allan Bloom has argued more recently,¹ Whalley warns us against turning the study of literature into a practice merely self-reflexive. We need to approach poems, he says, "with a quiet mind, subduing our prejudices, presuppositions and formulated responses, even our approximate expectations" (LI 209). If we do not, reading will be "like looking in a mirror and never seeing anything but [our] own face" (LI 207).

But one of the things poetry characteristically does, as Whalley also suggests in "Literature: An Instrument of Inquiry", is just that:

1. Though Bloom's advocacy of "the good old Great Books approach" (344) constitutes perhaps the most noticeable of his recommendations in *The Closing of the American Mind*, he offers advice not only with respect to *what* we should read, but *how* we should read as well. Our approach to great books, he argues, should be a matter of "just reading them, letting them dictate what the questions are and the method of approaching them--not forcing them into categories we make up, not treating them as historical products, but trying to read them as their authors wished them to be read" (344).

show us our own face. Because a poem² can guide our investigation of it by means of its own activity, when we read poems we ourselves become subjects of inquiry: "the poems themselves . . . tell us how to get to know, and we can direct the instrument both towards the poem and towards ourselves" (207). How does literature do this? The poem's capacity for "directing our attention to whatever depth of thought or refinement of perception it demands" (209) arises from the action of its mimetic drama, a drama that makes its presence felt at several points in the action of linguistic incarnation Whalley calls "poetic process".

With respect to how language can itself generate meaning by means of action, Whalley offers the complementary conceptions of the drama of syntax and self-determinate form. The way a poet can "command language to help him sustain and pattern his experience is also his means of *discovering* to himself both his experience and his poem," Whalley writes. "He does not first conceive an idea for a poem and then illustrate it; he discovers his poem in writing it" (IP 1.7). But the poet's "command" is limited; to some extent, words have a life of their own, evident in their ability to discover a poem to its poet (to take command), and in their tendency to act inventively amongst themselves.

In any use of language there are always semantic vectors at work: single words reach out towards their 'meanings' (whether thought of as in a lexicon or in one's head), towards our personal associations with the word, and towards each other in the impulse to complete an unfolding meaningful structure. (This last I think of as 'the drama of syntax', the scheme of action that puts words together). (SRP 86)

2. In this essay Whalley defines a poem as "any shapely and self-contained piece of writing noticeably above the level of discursive competence" (206).

Thus, Whalley argues, we ought to ask of a poem not 'What does it say?' but 'What is it doing?'. Thus "not only do we hear the poet speaking; we also, and perhaps dominantly, hear the poem speaking" (SC 3).

Language, "far from being a mere instrument or notation for 'communicating meaning' . . ., has a life of its own" (SC 9). As an utterance, then, a poem is not merely a statement from a poet: it is a statement from a poet shaped in language and by language. It is a thing made with words.

Whalley finds the complementary dramas of syntax and form in "poems" of very different kinds. In the course of his discussion of Jane Austen's art in the essay "Jane Austen: Poet", Whalley does not exactly mean to argue that Austen is a dramatist; he will be satisfied to show that she is a poet. Drama, however, being in Whalley's view an informing part of poetic *praxis*, it enters his discussion of the novelist at an early point. "I should like to suggest that Jane Austen is a poet in two senses," he writes:

(1) in her craftsmanship in language; and (2) in the conduct of the action within each novel. In the first sense, we need to consider fine-grained detail with an ear alert to the dynamics of language; in the second, we are concerned with the disposition of forces within the whole universe of a novel, particularly that mutual definition of plot and character the product of which Aristotle called *drama*, the thing done, or what I may elsewhere--to distinguish it from the 'action' that is sheer motion--also call 'pure action'; the one sense discloses itself on a small scale, the other on a large scale. The evidence for each is of a particular kind, each different from the other. Yet both kinds or functions interact upon each other and can be seen to be poetic because both reside at the heart, or at the roots, of imaginative activity. (147-48)

The two senses, though different with respect to how they disclose themselves, share in Whalley's conception of them the central dramatic--and poetic--quality of action, whether "pure"--traced out "on a large

scale"--or linguistic--those "dynamics" that arise "on a small scale" of particularities.

Now it is an interesting (precisely because misleading) question as to which of these actions (pure or linguistic) comes first in the poetic practice. Simply put, *neither* "comes first", since each interinanimates--and thus changes--the other in the process of its (and its counterpart's) coming into being. "Incorrigibly a matter of words," Whalley writes,

poetry is informed--or declares itself--by the inventive rhythms of a mind unfolding what cannot be known except in the uttering of it. The rhythms and tone are the indelible marks of energy and of the quality of impulse. To put it another way; poetry is language in the process of symbolising. By 'symbolising' I do not mean so much that poetry typically produces 'symbols'--those distinguishable images that tiresomely invite us to prodigies of allegorical exposition; rather, that 'symbolising' generates (or simply is) 'symbolic events', verbal events that are strongly resonant, in which words tend to assume tactual qualities and complex--even contradictory--upper partials of implication. Under the condition of poetry, language becomes 'musicalised'; it discovers--without renouncing the integrity of language--something like the condition of music, showing typically (as language otherwise seldom does) a capacity for swift unprepared change, modulation, variation, transition, and also a capacity for stillness and composure. (JAP 148-49)

Here Whalley refers to poetry on the "small scale" of words, but we can note how the larger scale of pure action--"*drama*"--begins to make its presence felt in the depth (extension) that words when used poetically (which is mimetically) achieve. By means of energy and impulse words reach across to harmonic "upper partials of implication". They involve themselves in variations, in transitions. Words become the structures of "verbal events", players in a dramatic--a "pure" (but I think it is also an "impure")--action.

And, reversing this field of implication, the drama of poems becomes (is becoming to) words. Robert Beum suggests something of the way small and large scales penetrate one another in an essay on the form of Milton's verse in *Paradise Lost* entitled "So Much Gravity and Ease".³

The truth would seem to be--at least for poets who write in verse, in *metrical* lines--that the poet himself does not, in practice, regard *either* the line or the line-sequence as having primacy, but seeks an equilibrium. The pre-existing tune (the metrical pattern in his head once he has chosen to write verse) helps him find words and a "theme" to fit it, and the theme, the cluster of half-jelling images and ideas that bring him to the act of composition, helps him to find a tune (a variant of the one originally in his head?) to suit it. The rule seems to be that for any given poem or passage the theme, tone, and verse form are all somewhat tentative until somehow the precise form is intuitively confirmed. The whole process resembles a confrontation with a cluster of somewhat interpenetrable experimental proposals: meter and line must be made to fit into the crystallizing vision, and the vision must accommodate the particular metrical line proposed, with each aspect constantly adjusting to the other. It is more than anything else a building process, like the architect's or the musician's, but less conscious: the poet tries to create what will be absorbing, pleasurable (if also sometimes disturbing), and to some degree moving . . . but does not know quite what the specific dimensions and colors of the contrast will be until he is well along. (An engineer who unbuilt a building so often would soon be permanently unemployed.) We are probably well advised to steer clear of the very notion of "primacy". (340)

If a poem's words help to shape that poem's pure action, that pure action as it existed in *potentia* in the poet's imagination will itself suggest and shape those suggestive, shaping words; the "pre-existing tune" and the "cluster of half-jelling images and ideas" eventually adjust themselves to each other, achieving in the process the poem's

3. Like Whalley, Beum notes straight off poetry's capacity for containing apparent contradiction: poetry is a matter of swift change and stillness (Whalley), gravity and ease (Beum).

"precise form". There is in a poem, as Beum suggests, at once collision and interpenetration.

Beum's account calls to mind Whalley's description of metaphor in "Jane Austen: Poet" as a process "that secures and enriches the interaction not only of single words, but of elements within sentences, of sentences within paragraphs, and the collusive interaction of elements of much larger scale if they can be constructed with strong-enough identity" (157). It was of course Aristotle's assessment that a talent for metaphor is the most important thing for a poet, and as what Whalley calls poetry's "principle of internal structuring" (PT 8), metaphor inevitably bears on the problem of literary form. Whalley's observations on the subject of metaphor indicate his readiness to see metaphor as act, as a process that occurs at the very heart of literature. In an entry on "Metaphor" for *The Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1965), Whalley writes approvingly that critics have begun to ask questions such as "Is metaphor not a 'thing', or a trope, but a process or event?", and suggests that the question "how does metaphor work?" should come second in our investigations to "the much more profitable question 'what happens in a metaphor?'" (493). In C. Day Lewis' observation (from *The Poetic Image*) that "we find poetic truth struck out by the collision rather than the collusion of images" (72), Whalley found an important aid in his efforts to answer that profitable question. Metaphor, Whalley writes in agreement with Lewis, involves "the collision of elements that refuse to give up their identities" (PL 21); it is, again, "a mode of collision, in which two terms (or sometimes more) are vigorously placed side by side and induced or allowed to react upon each other" (PT 16). Such terms "do not in fact become identified, but

rather . . . preserve their individual integrity, and strike out a
 'meaning' which is neither the product nor the fusion of the terms" (PT
 16-17).

Whalley praises I. A. Richards for introducing the word
 "interaction" to the critical discussion of metaphor because "it allowed
 [Richards] to think of the metaphorical elements as preserving their
 integrity, and to think of the 'total meaning' as the outcome of the
 impact of elements rather than as a derivative by comparison, fusion, or
 combination" (M 493). In the midst of his fullest treatment of the
 subject--the chapter in Poetic Process entitled "Metaphor"--Whalley
 offers in response to certain observations of Herbert Read the following
 summary account of the nature of metaphor's activity:

His terms are not used in precisely the same sense as my own;
 but this passage emphasizes some valuable features of the
 process of metaphor--the notions of tension, collision,
 resonance, shock, illumination. Metaphor establishes a relation
 between things not normally (logically) connected; thereby it
 illuminates a fresh relation between the metaphorical image and
 the poet, and in turn between the image and the reader. But
 the influence of metaphor is not confined to illuminating only
 the terms it brings into collision. It can strike out a fresh
 image which cannot be produced in any more elementary way--
 an image which is not the sum of its elements nor their
 identity but one which grows to its individual form by a
 process of mutual enrichment, the elements of the metaphor
 cross-fertilizing each other. (145-46)

The "impact" that occurs within metaphor is a requisite part of
 whatever "integrity" we find there: individual linguistic elements become
 poetic only through engagement with other elements. In such cross-
 fertilization, individual integrity is not merely "preserved" (PT 17);
 there, Whalley suggests, it finds its fullest growth, its most "mutual
 enrichment".

But because metaphor--or at least that variety of it that Whalley calls "true" metaphor (JAP 156)--never "settles down" in the identity of its parts, its form, and so the form of the poem it structures, will characteristically be volatile--another source of the drama of poetic forms. Dylan Thomas' comment on his own poetic practice suggests how telling this volatility, which is the energy of poetry, can be:

Each image holds within it the seed of its own destruction,
and my dialectical method, as I understand it, is a constant
building up and breaking down of the images that come out of
the central seed, which is itself destructive and constructive
at the same time. (qtd. in PP 146n)

"It is conceivable," writes Whalley in "Metaphor", "that, if energy involves 'tension' or bipolarity, metaphor like poetic experience exhibits an incorrigible dualism--or duplicity" (494).

Is the same tension apparent as well in poetic form, including that aspect of form that develops through a poem's relation to (collision with) its audience? If by "true" metaphor Whalley means "not simply a verbal locution or 'figure of speech' but a commanding process radical to poetry itself," a process which "secures and enriches the . . . collusive interaction of elements" within a literary text (JAP 157), it would be surprising to see this radical energy, both destructive and constructive as Thomas says, become spent by the time it meets its audience. If, then, metaphor is indeed "a dynamic verbal relation" (PP 144) and poetry's "principle of internal structuring", perhaps what is true of it may be true as well of form, whose integrity may also be secured and enriched by those readers who help constitute its context in encountering its energy--which energy itself helps secure and enrich (even as it unsettles) them.

Such a supposition arises naturally from Whalley's criticism, in part because Whalley does not see poetry as a purely **verbal** relation; for Whalley, poetry's value arises from and resides in the persistence of its fundamentally human relations. A poem is a word spoken from one person to another; it is a human exchange. The "irreducible unit of meaningful language", Whalley suggests, is "the utterance" (PL 17):

The primary function of language is to communicate between human beings. The problem of communication can never be solved because at its fullest it implies communion, some mutual identification of the persons. Only the deceptive search for 'scientific objectivity' could have suggested that language has an existence and mechanism of its own, that it can be turned into a quasi-mathematical system of cyphers. The radical situation for language is intercourse between two persons, an 'I-Thou' relation. (PP 125-26)

The bond between language and the people who use it is such a close one that without a people the language/poem perishes. "The meaning of a poem is not what the **words** mean, but what the **poet** means--what the I at the centre of the poem means, speaking passionately to a **Thou**, to another person intimately engaged" (PP 129).

Many contemporary critics are wary of the notion of authorial intention, but for Whalley intention is central to the poetic process and the value of the individual poem. Or, more precisely, Whalley considers the author's **intension** to be central to her artistic endeavour. He explains the term in Poetic Process:

By **intension** I mean something more comprehensive and internal, something less deliberate and 'conscious', than is implied by 'intention'. Intension may be defined as the impulsive orientation of the person in a moment of awareness. Part of the task of resolving intension into action is to externalize the impulse into an 'intention'; the Greek for intend being to 'have it in mind [to do]'. (xxviii)

A sense for this quality proves useful to the critic because, "if in a particular case we can distinguish intension, we are in a fair way to adopt an appropriately receptive attitude; and this applies not only to works of art but to any kind of action or utterance whatsoever" (PP xxvii). Whalley claims that to hold a concern about authorial intension is to assert that "will and value and moral judgement are of the irreducible essence of art" (PP xxvii). Furthermore, it is to affirm the human formulation--and the corresponding need for judgement--of the shared (I-Thou) utterance-event. Because art is conducted on the "irreducible" level of the personal utterance, value enters at two points: we value the human speaker, and evaluate the spoken/written word. This, however, is not to say that Whalley thinks the poet should write "with conscious designs upon the reader" (PP 217). On the contrary, the surest sign that the author's intension is one we ought to value is that the author's ambitions are not an issue that the poem--standing by itself, independent--even raises. "The highest artistic creativity in man," writes Whalley, "arises from a state of humility which is in truth not merely self-abasement, but self-annihilation" (PP xxx).

In a chapter of Poetic Process entitled "Science and Poetic", Whalley comments upon the difference between "poetic language" and "the technical use of language" (119), a difference surprisingly relevant to this state of humility (or "innocence"). "The antithesis to a poem," Whalley argues in this chapter, "is not prose simply, but technical or scientific prose" (119). Whalley usefully outlines certain formal characteristics of technical prose--the "dominance of the static noun and passive verb removes all muscle and movement from the sentences"

(122)--but his main point concerns authorial intension. Consider the following short comments on the two kinds of language:

the function of poetic language is neither to describe nor to explain. Poetry may be called the expression of an unusual state of awareness. (120)

[the technical writer's] intension is characterized by a conscious desire to convince his reader by unambiguous exposition, description, argument; he fulfils this purpose by concentrating upon meaning and by making his words refer 'objectively' only to meaning and not to feeling. (123)

What matters, it seems, is not so much the words used as the use of the words. The appeal to authorial intension, explicit in the second quote, is less clear in the first; nonetheless, the phrase "the function of . . ." introduces the notion of use to the equation, and from there the step to the author and his intension--how it was that he chose this particular "function"--is but a short one. Later in the chapter, Whalley places the emphasis in the technical/poetic distinction on the author from the other direction--that is, from the direction not of the intension but of the language:

Words, however, are not detached units of meaning; nor can single words be distributed into two classes--'untuned' (good) and 'emotive' (bad). All words are emotive, inasmuch as every single word can and must evoke some responsive feeling otherwise it could not even 'mean' in that very cold and specific way that science seems to demand. (124)

Because words neither carry their particular meaning nor evoke their particular feeling independent of context, the shaping of that context becomes the crucial issue in all writing. No good writer can dodge the problem of shaping her context; if she does, she will lose control of the words she is using--all of which are emotive--and so lose control of both text and audience.

Whalley's distinction in "Science and Poetic", then, is not really between poetic language and technical language, but rather between language used poetically and the same language used technically.

Whalley's aim is to **contextualize** language, and thus meaning.

Fundamentally, he wants us to see that language is something **used**--and something that is used at both ends: "The primary function of language is to communicate between human beings. . . . The radical situation for language is intercourse between two persons, an 'I-Thou' relation. The scientific convention starts by ignoring this relation" (125-26).

Although we have seen that Whalley disapproves of the reader who begins his reading by searching for a poem's meaning, his disapproval does not arise from a disbelief in the possibility that literature might have and communicate meaning. Language does communicate--that is its "primary function"--but it does so in a contextualized way, at least two levels of which contextualization are suggested here. Just as a single word means in the context of its sentence--a word is not, as in "the scientific convention", an independent x --a sentence means in the context in which it is spoken: the "'I-Thou' relation".

Stanley Fish takes up the question of the technical language/poetic language distinction in the 1973 essay "How Ordinary is Ordinary Language?" There he effectively dismisses the distinction as a false one dependent upon the mistaken assumption that technical language--or "ordinary" language--is an inert tool used only to communicate that which might be said in any number of ways. Fish cites David Hirsch as one advocate of such a view--"In our everyday utterances," writes Hirsch, "we communicate meanings in one form that could as easily have been communicated in another" (100)--but had he

known of Whalley he might have used him just as well. Considered merely a tool for the transfer of meanings, a "carrier-wave", Fish writes, ordinary language is seen to be barren of "matters of purpose, value, intention, obligation, and so on--everything that can be characterized as human" (101). This "impoverished notion of ordinary language," however, has the effect of in turn impoverishing whatever of language is left over--namely "poetic language", the other half of this distinction--by defining it as a deviation removed from the normative center. "Every norm is also a morality, and whatever is defined in opposition to it is not merely different, but inferior and inessential," Fish argues (102). Thus human content, Fish concludes, is "declared a deviation" (102) by the positing of the technical/poetic distinction.

Fish finds this "reduction of language to a formal system unattached to human purposes and values" (106)--precisely what Whalley laments in the technical use of language--entirely untenable, and his response to it is (as he claims) at once interesting and liberating: he denies the existence of ordinary language.

[T]here is no such thing as ordinary language, at least in the naive sense often intended by that term: an abstract formal system, which, in John Searle's words, is only used incidentally for purposes of communication. (106)

But perhaps Fish does not do justice to the line of thought he attacks here. For Whalley, at least, the positing of a technical language/poetic language distinction does not resign the normative centre to ordinary ("non-valuable") language. His argument is that the *poetic* use of language is the normal use of language, and the technical use (in its extreme--and not uncommon--form) a deviation. Thus for Whalley the centre held by the poetic use is the normative one, even if it is not the

most common one. Somewhat surprisingly (given Fish's rigorously sceptical bent), while Whalley's concern over language used technically seems to place him in the camp of those who believe that value is constructed rather than universal, Fish's confidence that language will always, in every context, be valuable and dynamic makes him appear as one who believes in a universal order, at least in the realm of language. Whalley acknowledges a vulnerability with respect to the place of human value in language that Fish is indifferent to. Value for Whalley is something human beings can abuse and lose; for Fish, values are a way of shaping our world that we could not conceivably live without.

Fish derives his sense of the theoretical sameness of language from his sense of the theoretical sameness of readers, for he does not, like Whalley, divide the literate world into the innocent and the unduly assertive. He sees *all* readers as reading in a context of assertiveness, and denies the possibility of an "innocent" reading of any text. Literature he defines as "language around which we have drawn a frame. . . . What characterizes literature then is not formal properties, but an attitude--always within our power to assume--toward properties that belong by constitutive right to language" (108-09). With regard to how this definition affects evaluation, Fish draws his own conclusions:

One obvious difficulty with this view is that it contains no room for evaluation. It can, however, explain the *fact* of evaluation by pointing out that the formal signals which trigger the "framing process" in the reader are also evaluative criteria. That is, they simultaneously *identify* "literature" (by signalling the reader that he should put on his literary perceiving set; it is the reader who "makes" literature) and *honor* (or validate) the piece of language so identified (that is, made). Of course, these signals change periodically, and when they do there is a corresponding change in the mechanism of evaluation. All aesthetics, then, are local and conventional rather than universal, reflecting a collective decision as to

what will count as literature, a decision that will be in force only so long as a community of readers or believers (it is very much an act of faith) continues to abide by it. (109)

Much of what Fish says here Whalley has said before him, and yet the central thesis of the comment seems to declare Fish to be in direct opposition to Whalley. Literature--any specific poem--can hardly be read innocently, runs Fish's argument, since it is the very act of the poem being read that constitutes its status as literature. The poetic process as Whalley describes it seems to become in Fish's account irrelevant. That Fish has recently turned his attention to legal studies should not be surprising, considering the emphasis in his approach to literary studies on evidence, rhetoric, and the notion that the critic with the best case wins. The reader's role in such a context is a patently assertive one, allowing for not merely an imposition onto the poem, but one that would impose upon (that is, persuade) the entire interpretive community as well.

Nevertheless the challenge Fish offers to Whalley's view is a valid one. Whalley on occasion speaks of the reader/text relation in the terms of courtship--a poem, he writes, is "a little like a person who has to be approached with respect, almost courted" (LI 210). But surely the innocence of the courter is not self-evident; indeed, his designs, expectations and presuppositions may more immediately come to mind. The divide between Whalley and Fish appears more definitively in the series of four essays which constitutes the second part of Is There a Text in This Class?, where Fish argues that "the opposition between objectivity and subjectivity is a false one because neither exists in the pure form that would give the opposition its point" ("How to Recognize a

Poem" 332). The interpretations which arise from the relation of reader to text, he writes,

will not be objective because they will always have been the product of a point of view rather than having been simply "read off"; and they will not be subjective because that point of view will always be social or institutional. Or by the same reasoning one could say that they are *both* subjective and objective: they are subjective because they inhere in a particular point of view and are therefore not universal; and they are objective because the point of view that delivers them is public and conventional rather than individual or unique. (335-36)

With respect to the reader of poems, Fish's deconstruction of this opposition itself leads to a rather dichotomous end. On the one hand, Fish's theoretical approach valorizes the individual reader; he offers us as readers and critics "a greatly enhanced sense of the importance of our activities" ("Demonstration vs. Persuasion" 368). No longer, he enthuses,

is the critic the humble servant of texts whose glories exist independently of anything he might do; it is what he does, within the constraints embedded in the literary institution, that brings texts into being and makes them available for analysis and appreciation. The practice of literary criticism is not something one must apologize for; it is absolutely essential not only to the maintenance of, but to the very production of, the objects of its attention. (368)

Because "Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them" ("How to Recognize a Poem" [327]), their (our) talents are invaluable ones.

But there is an other hand: the "importance" of our activity as readers is subverted by Fish's dismissal of the personal point of view as the product of a vision "public and conventional rather than individual or unique." In Is There a Text in This Class? Fish defends reader response theory against those critics (for example E. D. Hirsch and Meyer Abrams) who fear that by allowing the audience to make the

poem we lose the necessary "fixed and stable text" ("How to Recognize a Poem" 322), and get in return readings that become merely "a matter of individual and private construing, none of which is subject to challenge or correction" ("Is There a Text in This Class?" 317), by insisting that when it comes to interpretation the private is subsumed by the community in which the individual is located. "[A]n individual's assumptions and opinions," Fish writes,

are not "his own" in any sense that would give body to the fear of solipsism. That is, he is not their origin (in fact it might be more accurate to say that they are his); rather, it is their prior availability which delimits in advance the paths that his consciousness can possibly take. ("Is There a Text in This Class?" 320)

Culture fills brains "so that they are alike in fine detail," Fish approvingly quotes Harvey Sacks as saying ("How to Recognize a Poem" 333); thus, no matter how strange any reading of any text may seem, it "would never be individual or idiosyncratic, since its source would always be the institutional structure of which the 'see-er' was an extending agent" (335). Fish proceeds to the following conclusion:

without the notion of the unconstrained self, the arguments of Hirsch, Abrams, and the other proponents of objective interpretation are deprived of their urgency. They are afraid that in the absence of the controls afforded by a normative system of meanings, the self will simply substitute its own meanings for the meanings (usually identified with the intentions of the author) that texts bring with them, the meanings that texts "have"; however, if the self is conceived of not as an independent entity but as a social construct whose operations are delimited by the systems of intelligibility that inform it, then the meanings it confers on texts are not its own but have their source in the interpretive community (or communities) of which it is a function. (335)

By keeping to such a course, Fish manages to satisfy a number of interests: he upholds the authority of the reader; he retains the sense

of the text as an "utterance" ("Is There a Text in This Class?" 306-07) that is determinate and intelligible ("but of a determinacy and decidability that do not always have the same shape" [306]); he rules out the possibility that absurd readings might win the day; and he validates the work of the institution of which he happens to be a leading member. And for all these gains, Fish (with the rest of the contemporary culture with which he is in step) has to give up only one thing: the independent self.

Can we afford the loss? Fish wants us to be encouraged by the individual's inability to make meaning; after all, it ensures that "A text cannot be overwhelmed by an irresponsible reader and one need not worry about protecting the purity of a text from a reader's idiosyncracies" ("How to Recognize a Poem" 336). I for one, however, take little comfort in the implication that, as Allen Thiher puts it, the poet (that other individual who, along with the reader, becomes institutionalized in Fish's analysis) "has become a machine for reading other texts" (184) and readers, taken as a lump, poem-making machines. "Literature has become a kind of mechanical process--a writing machine, perhaps," writes Thiher (184). Fish's advice on "How to Recognize a Poem When You See One" suggests the same "conclusion":

The conclusion, therefore, is that all objects are made and not found, and that they are made by the interpretive strategies we set in motion. This does not, however, commit me to subjectivity because the means by which they are made are social and conventional. That is, the "you" who does the interpretive work that puts poems and assignments and lists into the world is a communal you and not an isolated individual. No one of us wakes up in the morning and (in French fashion) reinvents poetry or thinks up a new educational system or decides to reject seriality in favor of some other, wholly original, form of organization. We do not do these things because we could not do them, because the

mental operations we can perform are limited by the institutions in which we are already embedded. These institutions precede us, and it is only by inhabiting them, or being inhabited by them, that we have access to the public and conventional sense they make. Thus while it is true to say that we create poetry (and assignments and lists), we create it through interpretive strategies that are finally not our own but have their source in a publicly available system of intelligibility. Insofar as the system (in this case a literary system) constrains us, it also fashions us, furnishing us with categories of understanding, with which we in turn fashion the entities to which we can then point. In short, to the list of made or constructed objects we must add ourselves, for we no less than the poems and assignments we see are the products of social and cultural patterns of thought. (331-32)

The comment indeed has the ring of the "closed case", but it seems to me that Fish has the relation of community and the individual backward. Selves are not made up of communities; rather, communities are made up of selves. In the same way, norms and conventions represent the coming-together not of communal norms but private ones. Of course communities, once established, do affect individuals--but well they should: the ahistorical view is a bleak one when applied to the investigation and evaluation of the human condition.

It is not a large (nor a very revelatory) concession to agree that society imposes itself on us all, nor to say that we are indeed capable of doing only what we are capable of doing. But we are not machines, grinding away under the weight of society's momentum. Or, rather, we need not be machines, though all of us respond mechanically at times, and some of us perhaps most of the time. Henri Bergson considers the mechanical to be the paradigmatic form of the comic: because, as he says, "All that is serious in life comes from our freedom"--freedom being the essential quality of the human--all that is "requisite to transform [human life] into a comedy" is the image of the mechanical (79), freedom's opposite. The "law in accordance with which" Bergson defines

"all broadly comic situations in general" runs as follows: "Any arrangement of acts and events is comic which gives us, in a single combination, the illusion of life and the distinct impression of a mechanical arrangement" (69). Fish encourages us to take a comic view of our lives. To resist the temptation his encouragement poses is to insist upon the individual subject's ability to find in the collision of and interpenetration of his own form and those of the subjects he encounters that mutual enrichment--which is at once that integrity and that potentiality for tragedy--which poetry so often provides.

Fish's objection to "fixed and stable texts" seems to me sound but unnecessary. Of course texts are not fixed and stable; but who ever said they were? Certainly not Whalley, who stresses just the opposite quality of texts; namely, their drama. Fish's prose pressures us; he seeks, as he says, to persuade us to his beliefs ("Demonstration vs. Persuasion" 368). But there are other voices in the debate, and Whalley's commendation of innocence of intent represents a different pressure, a different system of values. Fish of course considers innocence an impossibility; in his thoroughly political critique of reading and readers (a critique which has the convincing air that scepticism always has), there is no way to rid ourselves of our prejudices and assumptions. Yet, paradoxically, Fish's reader has a kind of perfect innocence--an innocence, you might say, "without intent". Lacking any individuality, including the ability to intend, the reader in Fish's analysis⁴ is entirely innocent--a machine, in fact, "Doing What Comes Naturally." But to be "innocent of intent" is not to be a blank page, a

4. Though not in his best criticism, which seems so good to me because when he comments on "what texts do" Fish ignores many of the more severe implications of his theory.

passive non-entity, an ineffectual suitor: we do have, after all, intent along with our innocence. Fish, despite his characteristically pugnacious air, advocates a poetics of collusion. Whalley promotes collision. The reader with innocence of intent has influence when it comes to her reading experience, but she has her integrity too, and allows others theirs. In that respect she is a lot like the poet who came before her, and the poem which persists alongside her.

Any emphasis on the role of convention in language--whether it be in terms of reading or writing--tends to act as a challenge to the role (or even the presence) of the determining and originating individual subject. With regard to literature, the thesis that, as Jonathan Culler writes, if "human actions or productions have a meaning there must be an underlying system of distinctions and conventions which makes this meaning possible" (SP 4), leads critics such as Culler and Fish to posit the conventions of literary competence (Culler) and interpretive communities (Fish) as those which determine the meaning of poetic forms (as well as the forms of poetic meaning). Culler suggests that three principal conventions of literary competence are those of significance, metaphorical coherence, and unity (SP 115). Fish isn't as concerned to offer a list of specific conventions; in terms of a theory of reading, his discussion is more broadly-based.

Literature, I argue, is a conventional category. What will, at any time, be recognized as literature is a function of a communal decision as to what will count as literature. . . . Indeed, it is interpretive communities, rather than either the text or the reader, that produce meanings and are responsible for the emergence of formal features. Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading but for writing texts, for constituting their properties. In other words these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read

rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around.
 ("How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love Interpretation"
 10/14)

In the Introduction to Is There a Text in This Class? Fish advances his argument to the following resting-place:

since the thoughts an individual can think and the mental operations he can perform have their source in some or other interpretive community, he is as much a product of that community (acting as an extension of it) as the meanings it enables him to produce. (14)

In short, once authority is granted to convention everything can be seen to act as a function of convention; individual persons as well as individual words and utterances become textual, and ripe for deconstruction. "'Could you move that box?' may be a request, or a question about one's interlocuter's strength, or even, as rhetorical question, the resigned indication of an impossibility," depending upon "not the speaker's state of mind at the moment of utterance but conventional rules involving features of the context," says Culler (OD 110-11), who notes that

once meaning is explained in terms of conventional systems which may escape the grasp of the conscious subject . . . the self can no longer be identified with consciousness. It is 'dissolved' as its functions are taken up by a variety of interpersonal systems that operate through it. (SP 28)

In the realm of language specifically, the matter for the individual reader is to "operate" rather than to think independently, to "function" (that is, to be acted upon) rather than to act.

In asserting that "Language speaks. Man speaks only in so far as he artfully 'complies with' language," Heidegger sums up the nature and role of subject-as-function in language (qtd. in Culler SP 29).

Roland Barthes similarly challenges individuality. "[I]t is language

which speaks, not the author," he writes; "to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality . . . , to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'" (143). "[T]he birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author," Barthes proclaims, but even that reader's life is severely restricted:

The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that ~~someone~~ who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted. (148)

"[T]he ultimate goal of the human sciences," writes Claude Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind*, is "not to constitute, but to dissolve man" (247).

It seems a bizarre end for "the human sciences", despite the progress that has been made toward it. But whether or not we can accept this goal as an end for the study of poetry, its assumptions force us to question the independent innocence of the unconventional and intending reader. "Reading," Culler asserts with some justice, "is not an innocent activity. It is charged with artifice, and to refuse to study one's modes of reading is to neglect a principal source of information about literary activity" (SP 129). But the case need not be as artificial as some would have us think. Levi-Strauss acknowledges the "intentionally brutal turn" of his thesis, and goes on to explain that the reason the anthropologist aims to dissolve man is so that he can better understand him. "The solution of a solid into a liquid alters the disposition of its molecules," he writes. "It also often provides an efficacious method of putting them by so that they can be recovered in case of need and their properties be better studied" (247). And such

study need not imply a reduction of the human properties in question.

In a comment that reminds us of Fish's analysis of the "literary" quality of "ordinary" language, Levi-Strauss suggests that dissolving man can represent one step on the way toward appreciating him:

one must be ready to accept, as a consequence of each reduction, the total overturning of any preconceived idea concerning the level, whichever it may be, one is striving to attain. The idea of some general humanity to which ethnographic reduction leads, will bear no relation to any one may have formed in advance. And when we do finally succeed in understanding life as a function of inert matter, it will be to discover that the latter has properties very different from those previously attributed to it. Levels of reduction cannot therefore be classed as superior and inferior, for the level taken as superior must, through the reduction, be expected to communicate retroactively some of its richness to the inferior level to which it will have been assimilated. Scientific explanation consists not in moving from the complex to the simple but in the replacement of a less intelligible complexity by one which is more so. (247-48)

In the midst of deconstruction there is room for reconstruction; in the world of Barthes' inert *someone* there is a place for that one whom Gabriel Marcel calls the independent and responsible *person*. As Levi-Strauss cautions, however, we must not become prisoners of Descartes' Cogito, which "made it possible to attain universality, but conditionally on remaining psychological and individual" (249). The individual does indeed live a life of relations--which relations (and so which life) literature embodies and partially disentangles by means of the collusive union in the poetic utterance of three individuals: poet, poem, and reader.

The tension that can arise within this union is itself of value, and bespeaks the practically dynamic character of innocence suggested by Whalley's criticism. Although the appeal to innocence somewhat humbles the reader in Whalley's account of the poetic process, his treatment of

literature ranges widely, and he in fact emphasized the role of the reader long before Fish. Early in Poetic Process, Whalley introduces what he calls "the irreducible unit for art": the aesthetic triad.

The process which ends in a work of art is at once an act of discovery and self-discovery; it is an act of self-realization which at the same time makes the world more real. A work of art is, as it were, an extension of some valuable experience of the artist's--and it is an extension, not simply in mental, spiritual, or experiential terms, but also in physical terms. The artist's experience has somehow been embodied, incarnated, made physical while still preserving its spiritual identity. As a physical entity it is accessible to others; with due preparation others can engage themselves with the work of art (both physically and mentally), and so enter into the experience which the artist has embodied in his work. The irreducible unit for art then is not simply the work of art but the 'aesthetic triad'--the poet, the poem, and the reader. When these three come into relation through the physical focus of the work of art, we may expect that there will be some similarity between the momentary experience of poet and reader, and between the process by which the poem has been created and the process which recreates it. These two processes are not identical; nor are they mirror-images of each other; consequently the aesthetic triad cannot be reduced to two terms. And since this triad is the irreducible unit, and the work of art in isolation is not sufficient basis either for a theory of art or for a theory of criticism, it is advisable to inquire into the processes as well as into the persons and things. For the relations within the triad are dynamic relations. (11-12)

The subtitle "Innocence of Intent" may appear innocuous enough, but it is not as innocent as it seems. Our responsibility as Whalley's readers is to place this subtitle in *its* proper context, to understand the reader's innocence in the illuminating and liberating context of the aesthetic triad, where the relations are dynamic and recreative. In the various analyses which are to follow I hope to elaborate Whalley's conception of this triad, and to focus especially on two of the above passage's most critical terms: "process" and "dynamic relations". To speak of literature in terms of process and relations is to define art--

and re-define innocence--in the context of mimesis, "the bond between poetry and life" (BS 179).

In the poetic process the innocence of a poet's intension is in Whalley's view seen nowhere better than in the way he allows a poem's form, what John Livingston Lowes called its "incommunicable, unique essence" (qtd. in PP 92), to develop of its own nature. "A work of art is not first conceived and then made," Whalley claims; "it is discovered and realizes itself in the making" (PP xviii). Thus Whalley speaks of "the inevitability of form" (PP 221), of how the poet should allow a poem's form "to grow internally, according to self-causative and self-determining principles" (PP 34).

Whalley encapsulates his highly sympathetic reading of Aristotle's position regarding the nature of form and the formal in the following comment from "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*":

He is seized by the individual, the particular, as substantial. What interests him, as [Werner] Jaeger puts it, is the fact, "not that something is *coming to be*, but that *something* is coming to be": something that will be final and normative is making its way into existence; when it has come into existence it will have achieved *form*, it will have become what it had to be. The form then is the final statement--assertion, if you like--of an activity seeking its own end, its own fulfilment.
(66)

Again, Whalley emphasizes the activity of the individual (the individual poem, for example), which emphasis encourages him to speak of a poem's form as though it were strictly self-determinate. Aristotle, he writes approvingly,

is a 'formal' critic, not in the sense that he prescribes what form, structure, mould, generic framework, a work should have, but in the sense that his way of looking at anything--man, creature, poem--inevitably presents it as becoming or

having become what its internal necessity demanded of it. (AC 100)

This idea of "internal necessity" appeals greatly to Whalley; indeed, one is tempted to call it the most important principle in all of his thinking about literature. Certainly, it informs his understanding of any particular poem's form, or structure, which (he agrees with Aristotle) "is indefinable until the thing has grown into existence. . . . The form is simply what the thing becomes and is" (AC 101).

Such a view of form--which is also Whalley's view of literary action, or "the self-declarative drama" of a poem (AC 94)--has much to recommend it. It prompts us, for example, to allow for the uniqueness of works of art rather than to see them in terms that we already know, "so that [as Whalley says] there's no more work to be done" (TP 228). It registers as true to how good poems do in fact work: they are driven from within, full of an energy of their own and capable of compelling us with their force in the direction they would have us go. It is true too to how the words of a poem can exceed, in the drama of syntax and language used sensitively, their "ordinary" or nominal uses. And it reminds us of one point at which poems touch life, wherein our actions have consequences and will lead to further acts that arise from them in accordance with probability or necessity.

But Whalley's theory of self-determinate form nonetheless requires some rather strong modification, or at least amplification. Perhaps the main reason I have for saying this can be approached by means of one more comment from Whalley himself. Again he is speaking approvingly of Aristotle, and again his subject is closely related to form:

[Aristotle] recognizes that a poem is complex but unified, that the whole is logically prior to the parts, and that each part bears intimations of the whole; a poem is not something put together out of components, but a whole which--both in the making and in the remaking--can be regarded from different angles of vision. (AC 97)

Of course, this accords with the idea of self-determinate form: the form is there in the whole, already-established, original, awaiting the development that comes with recognition and delineation. The whole precedes the parts. But what such a conception underestimates is the power of those parts to change the whole, to alter it, to revive it, to parody it. Form, and our reading of form, is not only a matter of looking at the whole from "different angles of vision"; it is, more fundamentally, a matter of how the whole depends upon those different angles of vision.

If, however, Whalley's theory of self-determinate form requires strong modification, Whalley himself has given us the tools with which to effect these alterations. I am thinking here in part of Whalley's thesis that the poet is a maker with words, of his sensitivity to the reader's responsibility in her "good-reading" of a poem to "remake" or "reconstruct" it (LI 210), and of the bond he asserts between poetry and human life, but I am thinking more especially of his notion of the aesthetic triad, in which these several ideas coalesce. "The relations within the triad are dynamic relations" (PP 12), Whalley writes, and the dynamic nature of these relations is a large part of what makes the idea of self-determinate form problematic. To see the whole as prior to the parts is to close off, to determine those parts before they ever appear; it is to stop their activity--their dynamism, their energy--before it even gets started. "[M]imesis," Whalley reminds us, "is an activity or process

and not a thing or product" (OT 60). The same drama applies to literary form (and other living forms--human beings, for example). I propose that we take Whalley's notion of self-determinate form as a starting-point rather than a finish line, and use his understanding of mimesis to help chart our course from there. Rather than thinking of form as self-determinate, I think we would do better to think of it as self-determining.

Whalley's suggestions concerning the reader's need for "innocence" and the inevitability of form appear to cast both reader and poet (but especially the former) in a passive and detached role, but Whalley recognizes too (though not always at the same time) that readers also need to be active, imaginative, even poetic--a recognition that complicates his theory if it does not quite overturn it with contradiction. Explaining his own approach to reading Aristotle's *Poetics*, Whalley called it "a very Aristotelian way":

to accept the *poiema* [poem/text] as given and made; to consider its *physis* (nature); to infer the *dynamis* (power) that realises itself in the given *poiema*, and to work out from this why it has assumed the form it has--which is to say, simply, what it is. (OT 50)

Though Whalley does not say so directly here, he implies that the responsibility of the reader--to accept, to consider, to infer, and to work out an understanding of form--is to participate in the very work of the poet. The reader, too, he seems to tell us, has to do some of the work of mimesis, has to enter into its "processive implications" (OT 54), its activity.

In his attempt to explain how readers can be responsible for both creative activity and receptive passivity Whalley sometimes finds himself

in difficulty, for if, as he claims, to focus on the language of a poem is to strive for "an engagement" with the poem, the aim of which is "to know the poem itself", Whalley himself offers as the solution to this epistemological problem recourse to that which is outside of the poem. This should not be surprising, since it is the only recourse that is available to him; it does, however, appear to clash somewhat with his stated, ideally innocent objective. The following comment from very near the end of Poetic Process should help to demonstrate Whalley's own account of what I have called his "recourse":

When one seeks strenuously to 'understand' a poem, there is a temptation to direct attention upon the poem as a physical entity and to suppose that, like any other physical object, it will yield its secrets to systematic analysis. Certainly the reader-critic can never afford to neglect anything 'to do with the poem', and he must keep his attention very steadily upon the poem; but he does so in the same way the poet contemplates his symbols and for the same reason. A poem is inexhaustible to analysis because it terminates in a 'vision of reality'. Reality is a matter of relationships; we cannot refer a particular poem simply to 'reality', because reality is not a determinate entity. Reality is the great unknown and unknowable. We are constantly in quest of it, yet we can never fully know it and certainly we cannot possess it; the best we can hope for is to preserve our capacity for encountering reality in some of its aspects. Whatever judgements of reality we may make rest upon judgements of value. There are, strictly speaking, degrees of reality to correspond with degrees of value; for reality and value are inseparable.

Critical judgements then are internal; referable only to the internal nature of the poem when it is wholly and directly grasped, and to the internal nature of the reader when he is grasping the poem integrally. There is no external test, there is no quantitative test for the value of a poem; there is no way of being certain except through the 'holiness of the heart's affections'. (235)

Whalley says elsewhere in Poetic Process that there can be "no scientific criticism" of literature, which point he appears to be driving at here.

Because poems terminate in visions of reality and reality is unknowable,

poems are inexhaustible to analysis. Poems--as non-objective entities not subject to our detached observation, but accessible only through our relation with them--cannot be fully known, nor can any knowledge about them--in particular about their value--be verified by "external test". The test must be "internal": a test of the individual reader's "affections".

This account is all well and good, but is it consistent with the account of poetry Whalley himself provides elsewhere? How can Whalley advance the complementary ideals of looking only to "the poem itself" and innocence of intent when, by his own account here, all readings of poems must ultimately depend upon the hearts of individual readers, readers who imitate the poem's maker in their contemplation of the poem's symbols--and by that action themselves re-make the poems again?

It is hard to tell how Whalley can so emphatically condemn the scientist's purported quest for objectivity, as he does throughout *Poetic Process*, while at the same time calling for readers to come to art with innocence of intent, for it would seem that any attempt to see "the poem itself" must depend upon the assumption that perception can be direct, unfiltered through personal biases, opinions, beliefs, values, experiences, and so on: the assumption that it can, in short, be passive, impersonal, "objective". Does Whalley take both sides of an argument in which the sides are not fully complementary? He blames the scientist for ignoring the radical 'I-Thou' relation of language--"a purely objective statement," he approvingly quotes John Macmurray, "would have to be made by nobody to nobody" (PP 126)--but does his explication of the reader's "impersonal" role itself lead in "Science and Poetic" to a call for what

might be called "a scientific poetic"? Or perhaps Whalley's point is that most striving after objectivity is not innocent, and that neither "the poem itself" nor the person reading are quite "objects" in any event. One eventuality of a consideration of the relation of poet and reader may be the better delineation of objectivity--and person-ality.

An image of the tension between the two demands that Whalley places upon readers--the reader must be innocently passive and yet personally and dynamically related to the text--is found in the classic work of Erich Auerbach, a critic who perhaps not coincidentally shared Whalley's interest in mimesis. In the first chapter of *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Auerbach develops the argument that between Homeric and Biblical epic there exists a world of difference. "The two styles, in their opposition," he writes, "represent basic types" (23). Auerbach's comments on the Biblical text are particularly intriguing for the dilemma they pose. The Bible, he says, being a multilayered and entangled text (12), calls for interpretation:

In the story of Isaac, it is not only God's intervention at the beginning and the end, but even the factual and psychological elements which come between, that are mysterious, merely touched upon, fraught with background; and therefore they require subtle investigation and interpretation, they demand them. Since so much in the story is dark and incomplete, and since the reader knows that God is a hidden God, his effort to interpret it constantly finds something new to feed upon. (15)

Demanding interpretation, the Bible presumably must allow its reader the liberty of interpretation. Furthermore, the Bible advances the cause of the liberated reader by calling for its reader to become personally engaged with its narrative. When Auerbach says that "the Scripture stories do not, like Homer's, court our favor, they do not flatter us that they may please us and enchant us--they seek to subject us, and if we

refuse to be subjected we are rebels" (15), he implies among other things that the Bible--just like the Bible's God--makes no allowance for a distant, detached audience. "I would thou wert cold or hot," Christ announces in Revelation. "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (3:15-16). But in such a revelation the double edge of the word of God becomes evident. The Biblical text wants to compel us to choose a side: by its rule, we must believe or rebel. While demanding this personal response on the one hand (a response which can only come out of a context of liberated independence), however, the Bible on the other hand (in a way it is the same hand too) sets itself up as a tyrant before us (it "seeks to subject us"), insisting that we believe in the truth and value of its narrative and the authority of its consuming vision. What the Biblical writer produced, Auerbach says, "was not primarily oriented toward 'realism' (if he succeeded in being realistic, it was merely a means, not an end); it was oriented toward truth. Woe to the man who did not believe it!" (14). Of course, this substantially limits the reader: as Auerbach informs us, "without believing in Abraham's sacrifice, it is impossible to put the narrative of it to the use for which it was written" (14).

The liberty of interpretation that the Bible demands, then, it also apparently suppresses:

Far from seeking, like Homer, merely to make us forget our own reality for a few hours, it seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history. (15)

As Auerbach suggests, "[t]his becomes increasingly difficult the further our historical environment is removed from that of the Biblical books"

(15). But to lose sight of the Bible's authority is to lose sight of the Bible, is to make its stories into legends and its doctrine into "a disembodied image" (15). Perhaps we have no alternative. My point is that when Auerbach asks us to be at once liberated and tyrannized over, he is posing in extreme form a prescription akin to Whalley's. The critical question that both Auerbach and Whalley ignore is, which is to come first, the faith or the liberty? The faith, it seems to me, cannot come first without shaping--and therefore radically denying--the liberty. Surely faith must be earned; it is worthless outside the context of freedom, a cloistered faith being as insipid as its virtuous cousin.

As readers, are we to be humbled or freed? The role of the reader-as-(already characteristic)-self in art will inevitably complicate (while it enriches) the effort for innocence, and we get a glimpse of this complication in Whalley's explication of the order of mimesis or "poetic process". Because language "at its best [is] the vehicle of an inexhaustible and fruitful inventiveness" (199), mimesis begins in a language's (they become a poem's) "actual sounds, patterns, emphases and dynamics of the internal energy--that is, the whole drama of energy interacting upon deftly chosen formative limits" (212). The drama persists through the poet's attempt to "realize" that energetic language, "to select and arrange, and by various means intensify and find significance in what [she finds] or what is given to [her]--and so to make poems out of words" (206). And it continues through the progress of poetic form, for "making a work is not thinking thoughts but accomplishing an actual journey,"⁵--although "when the journey has

5. Whalley is quoting David Jones here, from the Preface to *The Anathemata*.

crystallised into a substantial and stable form, the poem moves away from the maker of it, assumes its own life, begins its own history" (206). In each of these "places" in the life of a poem, action is prominent, even preeminent: the making of a poem constitutes a lively encounter with life. What Whalley shows, however, even as he asks us to be "humble" (211) before poems, is that the drama of mimesis does not conclude with the poem as autonomous entity. The poem as "substantial and stable form" is not yet complete and at rest. It has only *begun* "its own history", which history continues to be made in the meeting (collision) of poem and reader. As readers (or audience), we too are part of the action of poetry, as well as part of what's being studied or defined in the mimetic inquiry, and it is partly because poetry compels us to be active (energetic) that it can show us our own faces. Reading proves to be a "process of self-discovery and self-realisation" (198) for both poem and reader insofar as both, engaged in the particular poem's *praxis*, are more fully discovered and realized there.

Something of what this realization entails appears as Whalley moves toward the end of his argument in "Literature: An Instrument of Inquiry". When he begins to comment on the exacting and delicate discretion required by the reader of poetry, the distinction between poet and reader becomes blurred. "[T]he premisses which make sustained historical or scientific thinking possible," writes Whalley, "are very different from the premisses that assist the making of a poem or the remaking of a poem in the reader's mind"; "a respectable scholar," he suggests, "needs to be a bit of a poet" (210). As Whalley proceeds, the way in which his recognition of the reader's part as "remaker" in

the poem's mimesis complements his primary concern with "the poem itself" becomes clearer:

For the making of a poem, even when the poem is (as is often the case) carefully thought out, intelligently disposed and of fine craftsmanship, is itself a process of discovery guided primarily by an exquisite sense of what is 'right' for the poem coming into existence. The test is neither logical coherence (though that may well be required), nor a plausible similarity to a world generally known, nor the poet's deliberate intention or expectation (if known or knowable), but simply and pitilessly what belongs--and will be found to belong--to the unique universe that is coming into existence. A good reader develops a corresponding sense of 'rightness' to guide his analysis, to discern the pattern and disposition of forces, to realise the drama that declares itself. (210-11)

Literature, Whalley states early in the essay, is "not an enchantment but a disenchantment" because "imagination is a realising-process" (199).

The complicated nature of innocence leads one to find that the realising of the self-declaring drama takes place on both sides of the mediate (and mediating) poetic text, in both poet and reader. But in fact such a dichotomy misleads, it being just Whalley's point that in this inquiry into reality, poet, poem and reader ought to be on the same side--which is not properly speaking a "side" at all but a whole, a poem.⁶

"Innocence of intent" thus appears a matter of both bold humility and busy patience, whereby the very act of reading can show us the world by virtue of taking us outside of ourselves. We might wonder, however, whether in this conception of innocent intention there is something of the vicious circle. In the Gospel of Mark, Christ tells his

6. Of course, such a notion of the whole is nothing new. The classical conception of *justice* took its bearing from the attempt to achieve *wholeness*, which attempt Milton may have had in mind in *Paradise Lost*, where he seeks to justify (that is, to show the justice of) the ways of God to men. The law that both God (concerning the Tree) originally and then the Son (concerning love) put into place may be seen as not external and proscriptive, but internal and performative; the law will be fulfilled, that is, by us: we are parts of the whole of divine justice.

disciples that "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (4:11-12). Christ offers what we might call an illustration of this "moral" in the parable of the talents: "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt. 25:28-29). Whalley's ideal of innocent disenchantment seems to have a similarly esoteric bent. Since our ability to allow literature its disenchanting nature depends upon our innocence--our already-existing disenchantment--it may appear that in Whalley's scheme poetry is only for those who have ears to hear.

Whalley's response to this challenge is to advance the poem itself as an integrated and self-revealing form which acts to encourage and support our exercise of innocence. Poetry, that is, *will* have a certain esoteric quality, but it is not a closed club: every poem invites entrance. Certain demands are made, however; the fact that the reader's goal must be to achieve "the quality of mind required by the work he wishes to read" (LI 208) implies that the work itself places certain demands upon us, that it has its own expectations of and designs upon us. Thus we must read poems, Whalley writes, "with respect for the integrity of the original."

For a poem is not an alternative or approximate record; it is the only way that what is to be said could have been said. And, since its integrity grows from the fact that every part is indispensable and every part is an intimation of the whole, it

cannot even be "taken apart" without becoming something else.
(LI 208)

Of course the link here to Whalley's notion of self-determinate form is a close one. The same independent character--the same organic (active) form--is demonstrated in a poem's ability to become an "instrument of inquiry . . . directing our attention to whatever depth of thought or refinement of perception it demands" (LI 209) as is demonstrated in the fact that it becomes itself by means of its own internal energy (*dynamis* becoming *telos* through *energeia*, to use Aristotle's terms). As readers, we will have to enter into a communion with this energetic form, for "If we do not find our instruments of inquiry in the poem, somehow self-fashioned and placed by the grace of quietness in our own hands, our efforts at literary inquiry will have a curious progeny--logically consistent, even plausible, but parodies none the less; speculations that look impressive and intelligent but have become fantasies from losing touch with what they are about" (LI 207). Only when we do respect a poem's integrity--that respect entailing in part an absence of expectations regarding it and a willingness to oblige its expectations (prior to evaluating them)--can we come into contact with its life (or, we may decide, its lack of life: bad poems do exist). "I claim for criticism," writes Whalley, "a humble and ancillary duty: to seek fidelity, to heighten awareness, to disclose the literature intact and well lighted" (LI 211).

Much of the import of the central critical question "What does this poem do?" arises from the more particular question, "What does this poem do--to us?". When a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound? I happen to think that it does, but I think so

only because I have heard the sounds trees have made when the forest has not been deserted (when I have been there). As literary critics, our principal concern must be poems as we find them falling (and rising) about us. Insofar as this concern demands the introduction of the reader into the self-assertion of the poetic form, it naturally bears upon the dialogue of form as it is worked out in the poem's action: what a poem does will depend on what we are as well as what the poem is. While it is true that if we are bad readers, as Whalley says, the fact that the poem seems to do nothing--that it becomes merely the occasion for us to do something, to utter our "grave discourses on the obvious" (LI 207)--will not necessarily be that poem's fault, even the best reader will be a human reader, and the poem will have to come to terms with that. But what else could it expect? In the "complex events" (LI 208) that are poems, the integrity of selves (of both poems and readers) cannot be a matter either of self-determination or generic pre-determination: the self too is a complex event.

In short, then, I am positing with regard to poetic form a dialogic version of the conception of self-determinate form that Whalley promotes, a version that has what is to my mind the virtue of being analogous to Whalley's own account of metaphor, which is "a process of mutual enrichment". In the case of poetic forms, both form and reader are enriched--made more real, real-ized--by the collision that occurs when they come together. But certainly Whalley is right to stress the dangers of anticipatory and pre-emptive prescription with respect to the forms of poems: innocence--in conjunction with action--is indeed essential to our practices as readers, as Othello (by the end of the play) could attest. The parable of the talents may be seen as a rather

unchristian one; not only does the moral Christ concludes with seem rather mean-spiritedly capitalistic, but we might say that the lord's act of casting the third servant "into outer darkness" (Matt. 25:30) does much to justify that servant's opinion of his master: "Lord I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth" (24-25). Sure enough, it seems, the lord proves himself to be hard, and so validates the servant's opinions and actions. But the parable can be seen in terms of action--the expectative act of reading--as well as character, and in that light (the light of the interpenetration of character and action) things look a bit different. When we focus on character (the hard master, the wary servant), everything seems fixed in a course of inevitable and so indiscriminately (not free) just and unjust cause (some are justly rewarded, some unjustly punished); certainly it seems so to the third servant. But this servant was the one who started us on this course of prescriptive readings of character insofar as it was his reading of the character of his master--"hard"--that determined the performance that his lord found unsatisfactory. Perhaps what was most unsatisfactory about this servant's performance was just this prescriptive reading, a reading on which he based his actions. (The parable offers us--or, tempts us with--the chance to do the same, since as readers of the Bible we are in the position of servants too.) The lord responds to this action (and reading is always a course of action) by accommodating the servant's expectations--he responds as "an hard man" would--but not in a way the servant had expected. In this way, the lord also shows the error of his servant's expectations. As action is character here--character is not

a prescriptible form, but one still waiting to be realized through independent action--so too form is a matter of action, of working-through.

CHAPTER TWO

Consecration and Audience in Hamlet

The implication of audience in the drama of mimesis emerges as a central theme in Hamlet. In the following essay I want to consider certain aspects of the nature or action of this implication, for a consideration of the audience's part in Hamlet can prove useful to a better understanding of the nature of tragedy, and even of the nature of dramatic action more broadly. To this end, I will broach a number of distinct but (I hope to show) related topics, including Gabriel Marcel's analysis of the character of the person and the act, Aristotle's accounts of catharsis and recognition, and the role of distance as part of the practical operation of mimesis.

Two scenes from Hamlet which involve their participants in the act of "spectating", of being audience to an event of some note, are I.i and II.i. The play's first scene enacts the following discussion between Horatio, Barnardo, and Marcellus:

Hor. What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?

Bar. I have seen nothing.

Mar. Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us;
Therefore I have entreated him along,
With us to watch the minutes of this night,
That if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

Hor. Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

Bar. Sit down a while,
And let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we have two nights seen.

Hor. Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Barnardo speak of this.

Bar. Last night of all,
When yond same star that's westward from the pole

Had made his course t' illume that part of heaven
 Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
 The bell then beating one--

Enter GHOST

Mar. Peace, break thee off! Look where it comes
 again!

Bar. In the same figure like the King that's dead.

Mar. Thou art a scholar, speak to it, Horatio.

Hor. Most like; it harrows me with fear and wonder.
 (I.i.21-44)

The nature of the Ghost's appearance here warrants comment. Having just been joined on his watch by Horatio and Marcellus, Barnardo is about to tell the sceptical scholar of how the Ghost has appeared to him the past two nights. Barnardo promises Horatio a narrative--"let us once again assail your ears"--and begins one at line 34--"Last night of all . . ."--but he is cut off abruptly by the appearance of the Ghost. The play opens, then, not with a narrative about the Ghost but with a drama featuring the Ghost, with Horatio and the others in the role of audience. It is an appropriate way for *Hamlet* to begin.

Also appropriate to *Hamlet* is the response of this audience to the performance it sees. The play opens with the soldiers in a mood of nervous expectation; they are wondering both about what has happened the past two nights and what will happen on this night. But if they come to the Ghost's performance wondering, the witnessing of that spectacle does nothing to lessen their wonder. On the contrary, seeing the Ghost provokes an increase of wonder. Now even the rational Horatio is harrowed "with fear and wonder". After the Ghost disappears for the second time, Horatio and the guards decide that their best course of action is to "impart what we have seen to-night / Unto young Hamlet, for, upon my life, / This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him" (169-71). While I call this a course of action, however, it is at the same

time a course of deferral. Full of wonder but not knowing what to do with what they have seen, the men think it best to refer the matter to someone else.

A second scene in the play in which we learn of a similar relation of performance and audience is II.i.71-117. In this scene Ophelia tells her father of Hamlet's appearance before her in her closet. Hamlet, following his encounter with his father's Ghost in I.v, has made his way to Ophelia's room and enacted a Dumb Show before her. The Prince's similarity in his performance here to that of the Ghost of I.i--both appear mysteriously and silently--and the Ghost of I.v--both appear, in Ophelia's words regarding Hamlet, as though they had been "loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors" (in the Ghost's case this is not far from the literal truth; he seems to have come from a particularly unpleasant purgatory)--aside, what most interests me is Ophelia's response to this spectacle, for it seems precisely that of the men in I.i. She too is harrowed with fear and wonder. "O my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!" (72), she first exclaims to her father; later, when Polonius asks her if Hamlet appeared "mad for her love," she answers, "My lord, I do not know, / But truly I do fear it" (82-83). And what does Ophelia do, having been audience to such a scene? She does what Horatio had done before her: not knowing what to do, she defers to a higher authority (here, her father--who himself decides to go to the King).

Tragedy, Aristotle observed, is the mimesis of an action. Hamlet is a play with a pronounced interest in acting, with dramas and the audiences of those dramas. In the following discussion I want to bring together these two subjects--action and acting--with an eye toward responding to one of the "perennial" questions (Jenkins 125) concerning

Hamlet--namely, having been told by the ghost of his father to murder Claudius, why does Hamlet delay? why is he so slow to act? The aforementioned instances of audiences made static--or, at least, hesitant and uncertain--through the wonder evoked by dramatic appearances seem to me to supply an interesting comment on this question. Is the sort of meeting of performance and audience that we find in I.i and II.i put forward by Shakespeare as the dramatic norm, which norm might help to explain Hamlet's delay? Or does Shakespeare imply that in both cases both performance and audience are somehow limited? I think the latter, and offer the following possibility: these "dramas" are incomplete because although they evoke wonder on the part of the audience--wonder being a quality of isolation, an emotion which arises out of the distance between two entities--they evoke very little recognition--recognition being a quality of connection, entailing on the part of the audience an understanding of the performance's relevance and significance with respect to its own affairs. Perhaps in Hamlet Shakespeare demonstrates that ideally drama will harrow its audience with wonder and *knowledge*--which, of course, can be a fearful thing too.

In the final scene of the play, just prior to their fencing match, Hamlet makes the following apology to Laertes:

Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong.
 But pardon't as you are a gentleman.
 This presence knows,
 And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd
 With a sore distraction. What I have done
 That might your nature, honour, and exception
 Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
 Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet!

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
 And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
 Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
 Who does it then? His madness. If't be so,
 Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged,
 His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
 (V.ii.226-39)

In some ways, Hamlet reminds me of the fellow who thought he'd try to swim the English Channel. He got half-way, but decided he couldn't make it--so he swam back. In other tragedies by Shakespeare--in Richard III and Romeo and Juliet, for example, and perhaps most emphatically in Macbeth--we find a tragic rhythm: events move along (or move down; it is in part very definitely a decline) an inexorable course towards the action's end--which is also the protagonist's end. But that rhythm is not present in Hamlet. If we consider the central action here to be the avenging of Hamlet's father's murder, the course of the protagonist with respect to this action--**his** action--does not seem definable in terms of a beginning, middle, and end (the movement of tragedy, according to Aristotle); rather, Hamlet seems disinclined to follow any course. The Prince appears preoccupied for most of the play: preoccupied with thoughts of his mother (especially her sex life), preoccupied with his **desire** for revenge, preoccupied with his preoccupations. By the time he prepares himself for the duel with Laertes, Hamlet has lost whatever momentum he ever had in his role as "scourge and minister" (III.iv.175): it is **his own** death he thinks of when he tells Horatio that "There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come--the readiness is all" (V.ii.219-222). The passage from V.ii in which Hamlet disclaims responsibility for his previous actions (in particular the murder of Polonius) is in keeping

with his loss of direction: not knowing where to go, Hamlet's words to Laertes suggest his desire to go back to the beginning--to erase the past, including his own past acts, with a friendly handshake and the plea of temporary insanity.

Of course, Hamlet has throughout the play claimed that his "madness" is "just an act". "I perchance hereafter shall think meet / To put an antic disposition on" (I.v.171-72), he tells Horatio and the others after his first encounter with the Ghost. "I am but mad north-north-west," he later tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. "When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a hand-saw" (II.ii.378-79). What he tells Laertes in V.ii, then, is that his actions (scorning Ophelia, killing Polonius, abusing Laertes at his sister's grave) have arisen out of what he earlier called his acting (his "craft" [III.iv.188]) but what he is now calling his own very genuine "enemy". But the problem of how far we can trust Hamlet is an unavoidable one here. For what has he claimed all along? That he is not mad, but just acting. And what does he claim at the play's end? That he really was mad. The problem of Hamlet's reliability arises not merely from the patent contradiction that exists between these two claims; it arises more pointedly from the sameness of these two claims, for both are pleas on Hamlet's part for a freedom from accountability, and it is hard to trust the person who will never assume responsibility for his acts.

Indeed, it is hard even to find the person who will never assume responsibility for his acts. That, at least, is the opinion of Gabriel Marcel, the philosopher whose essay "Observations on the notions of the act and the person" is full of interesting relevance to Hamlet. "I

believe that the person is first posited in opposition to the *man*, the *one*," Marcel writes.

What characterizes the person as opposed to the *one* which is anonymous, incapable of being apprehended, irresponsible? We can start at the very heart of the question and affirm that to *confront* is what is characteristic of the person. We can maintain, from this point of view, that courage is the dominant virtue of the person--while the *one* seems on the contrary to be the locus of every flight and every evasion. Nothing is more typical in this respect than the mental procedure of someone who, not daring to adopt a position, hides behind this kind of shield: one claims that . . . one guarantees that. . . . Anyone who talks in this manner does not even identify himself with this *one*, but literally hides himself behind it. (110-11)

What characterizes the "*personal* course of action," Marcel suggests, is not that I hide from it, but "that I assume responsibility for it" (113).

The "person"'s willingness to assume responsibility for his actions is closely tied to the *personal* quality of action: the fact that the actor has a concern in his act, that it matters to him. "[I]t is of the essence of the act," Marcel writes, "that it is not objectively verifiable nor perceivable; it is not conceivable without a personal reference, a reference to an 'it is I who. . .'" (108).

Let us consider a newspaper story Most of the time a kind of invisible partition separates us from the thing referred to. Images parade before us as in the cinema; our attitude is that of the spectator; we do not have the slightest idea that the situation might have something to do with us. . . . We passively adopt the "system of values" of the editor--which amounts to saying that we are not evaluating, for to evaluate effectively, is to evaluate in one's own name, to commit oneself. Let us now assume that a specific detail in the story attracts our attention; we get a certain shock; at a certain, specified moment, we no longer have the impression of just a story related in the newspaper which does not concern us; we are possessed with a feeling of reality. What is especially noteworthy, is that *ipso facto* the invisible barrier I mentioned above, disappears. My indifference was linked to an implicit judgement of unreality (this may be expressed in somewhat different terms as: to a basic non-belief). Now

everything has changed. The story takes place in my universe; it is no longer possible for me not to adopt a position with respect to it. (112-13)

Marcel goes on to suggest a possible "personal course of action" that may arise from this instance of concern, this "feeling of reality" experienced by the person reading. But the closer an act comes to being indifferent or im-personal, Marcel stresses, the less aptly it can be called an act. And the closer an individual comes to feeling distant or partitioned off from his acts--the closer he comes to being a spectator--the less he becomes a person able to act.

Marcel posits, then, an interdependence of person and act. Persons are persons when and because they act; actions are actions by virtue of being carried out by persons. Consider the following comment on the nature of the act:

Ordinarily, we first of all compare the act to desire; we say of a certain person: when will he stop being satisfied with desires; when will he begin to act? . . .

Let us consider these elementary data; it is clear that desire is opposed to the act in the sense that it is at once indeterminate and impotent; on the one hand, the person who desires does not succeed in deciding and he remains basically divided, hesitant, fearful; on the other hand, he is incapable of biting into reality, of effectively modifying it. Everything remains static. . . .

At the moment, therefore, we can see that it is the essence of the act to effectively change--change what? a certain situation to which it is applied and which it is possible the agent cannot completely take in at a glance. Nevertheless, . . . it is evident that a change is not a sufficient condition of an act. And here we make further inroads into the nature of the act. When I say of a crime, for example: this is the gesture of a madman, this expression implies a negative counterpart; if it is a gesture it can't be an act; I postulate a difference here. . . .

Rightly or wrongly, the gesture seems to us to be assimilable to an accident in the strong sense of this term (an illness, a catastrophe). Hence there is something more in the act besides the fact of occurring. (105-06)

That "something more", Marcel argues, is the will and commitment of the person. But just as there are many occurrences that are not acts, there are many people who are not, by Marcel's standard, persons. Here again the notion of the "gesture" as the activity of the fragmented "one" enters his discussion.

If I lie, for example, I commit myself to acknowledge later on that it was I who lied Otherwise, it was not I who lied, I nullify myself as subject, as person. To express this somewhat differently, it may be said that there is solidarity between me and my act, as if we were both members of a certain inner community, a certain clan. And it should be observed that this assuming of responsibility is impossible without an appraisal or evaluation; hence it may be that I applaud my act, or on the contrary, that I regret it, or even that I do not know whether to regret it or to congratulate myself on it. In any case, however, it seems to me that the act is qualified: it is good or bad. The closer it comes to indifference, the less it is an act. . . .

Let us assume, for example, that I have intervened to protect a child against an adult who was abusing him; there is no doubt that it is within my power to detach myself from this act, to treat it as no longer mine, but as the act instead of someone whom I am observing, at the performance of which I am present; from that moment on, I can dismember it, so to speak, and denature it to the point where it becomes unrecognizable. This act will imperceptibly cease to be *my* act, hence cease to be *an* act, and becomes a kind of gesture. We may observe that the act is *mine*, i.e. the more it is incorporated into the totality of what I am--the less I am capable of succumbing to a temptation of this kind. . . . An act, I shall maintain, is more an act to the degree that it is impossible to repudiate it without completely denying oneself. . . . It may be said that the more a life is paid out, i.e. divided into discontinuous phases, the less will it involve acts, the less will it be assimilable to an act. Inversely, the less it is paid out, the more it is consecrated, in the deep sense of this term, the more it tends to assume in its totality the form of a unique act. (108-09)

Thus the act is presented by Marcel as that which is incorporated into and arising out of the unified, the "consecrated" person. It seems a noble ideal. Already implicit in this account of the personal act, however, is a threat to both person and act in the introduction of the

split that can separate the two. Recall the words: "There is no doubt that it is within my power to detach myself from this act." We can, Marcel suggests, become witnesses to our own acts, spectators to our own performances--and in the process "dismember" and "denature" them.

Could this be part of Hamlet's difficulty? Might the Prince find it hard to act because in watching himself he becomes merely an actor? By Marcel's account, it would not be surprising if he did encounter this dilemma, for the philosopher sees this split between person and act as all but inescapable. "At bottom," he comments,

our formula: *the characteristic of the person is to confront*, reveals its inadequacy insofar as it cuts off, at least implicitly, the person from the act in which the former realizes himself--and every theory of the person is in danger of somehow exploiting this unwarranted cleavage. . . . We are in the realm of the fragmented The contradictions I have indicated are therefore really inscribed in our very condition. (116-17)

Thus Marcel suggests that when we become spectators to our acts--which event we can hardly avoid--we deny those acts their unique essence as inseparable parts of us, as self-defining statements. When we observe our act we establish a partition between ourselves and it--we make it impersonal--and the unity of person and act is lost. We return to the status--and the stasis--of the spectator. "Images parade before us as in the cinema; our attitude is that of the spectator; we do not have the slightest idea that the situation might have something to do with us" (112).

The dilemma Marcel poses is not entirely applicable to Hamlet, for the Prince surely cannot be accused of thinking that the events around

him don't "have something to do with him". How far his concern¹ extends to his own actions, however, is a different matter, and for the present a more important one. Hamlet's disinclination to accept responsibility for his acts, evident in his apology to Laertes, also appears in his final few moments. As he and Laertes both near death, Hamlet receives from his rival his confession, apology, and request for forgiveness. All he offers in return is the granting of the request; he makes no acknowledgement to Laertes of his own misdeeds. Then, turning to Horatio, Hamlet asks his friend to "Report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied," lest he die with "a wounded name" (V.ii.339-344). Thus Hamlet's next-to-last words are used to secure an apologist.²

Hamlet's life is, to use Marcel's phrase, "paid out, divided into discontinuous phases." Just as Hamlet is a sprawling play, Hamlet is a sprawling character. Revenger, Jealous Son, Lover, Courtier, Antic: Hamlet's roles are varied, but the variety is not merely evidence of a man with a wide range of talents, as Ophelia's praise of him (in III.i) would have us think. Hamlet's variety is actually correlative with his weakness, not his greatness. It paralyzes him because it is a variety that lacks an organizing centre--a consecration to a unique act--and articulates itself in the context of Hamlet's refined self-consciousness. Hamlet is aware of his various roles and his conduct in them, and by becoming a spectator as well as a performer he distances himself from his actions, in the process ultimately denying both them and himself.

1. A word with serious implications for Whalley. "From whatever angle we approach art," he writes, "there is no avoiding the element of personal engagement, of what the Quakers vividly call 'concern'" (PP 9).
 2. His last words are used to nominate Fortinbras as his replacement as successor to the throne.

Playing a variety of characters, Hamlet loses sight of his own unique person.³

The Prince's self-consciousness appears most clearly in his soliloquies. While his first soliloquy (which comes before he receives his orders from the Ghost) is concerned primarily with his mother, the second, fourth, and fifth are uniformly concerned with his primary role--"scourge and minister"--and how badly he has enacted that part. (In the third soliloquy he considers how enterprises can "lose the name of action" more generally.) Hamlet's response to the Player's speech in II.ii helps illustrate the extent to which the Prince thinks of action as performance (acting). "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" his second soliloquy begins:

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all the visage wann'd,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
A broken voice, an' his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing,
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have?

(II.ii.550-62)

It seems as though Hamlet intends to establish a sharp distinction between the nature of the actor's merely "fictional" grief and his own real distress and motive for action. But the word "cue" (561) gives us a hint of what's to come, and the would-be distinction falls flat in the lines that immediately follow:

3. The first line of the play is, appropriately, "Who's there?". The question goes unanswered.

He would drown the stage with tears,
 And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
 Make mad the guilty, and appall the free,
 Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
 The very faculties of eyes and ears.

(562-66)

Had the Player his motive, Hamlet says, what he would do is act (perform) even more excessively--not differently, just more convincingly. Hamlet, picturing the Player in his place, imagines him still in terms appropriate to one on a stage, acting from a script for an audience waiting to be amazed. Appropriately, he turns at the end of the soliloquy to the idea of the play as the best means of pursuing his revenge.

To use Marcel's terminology, Hamlet appears expert in the dramatic *gesture*, but a failure when it comes to the committed *act*. His killing of Claudius, ironically, might be seen as the final demonstration of his lack of consecration. This act we may want to see as his triumph: finally, after so much delay, the Prince avenges his father's murder. But in fact Hamlet's part in the actual event arises largely through accident and the machinations of others. Hamlet's thoughts are clearly more with his mother than his father--he responds violently only after her poisoning, and exclaims to the "damn'd" (V.ii.325) Claudius: "Follow my mother!" (327)--and after the brief flurry of activity that kills off Gertrude, Claudius and Laertes, he immediately turns his attention to Horatio, those that are nearby ("audience to this act" [335]), and his future reputation. We are forced to wonder just how important killing Claudius is to Hamlet. There is something more in the act besides the

fact of occurring, Marcel says, but I can't find much more than mere occurrence in Hamlet's final gesture of "revenge".⁴

But is it as an audience *per se* that Hamlet cannot act? Does the very fact of watching entail inactivity? I don't think so. If Hamlet is a spectator who is in a state of stasis, he is very different from the audiences we find in I.i and II.i. Unlike Horatio and Ophelia, Hamlet cannot be accused of not understanding (or recognizing) what he sees; his static position, in contrast to what we saw in those early scenes, results from an imbalance on the other side of the dramatic equation. Hamlet's inability to act as a spectator arises not because he has no recognition, but because he has no wonder--or, more accurately, because he tries to adopt the pose of one without wonder. This pose requires that he know not only his own role(s), but the roles of those around him as well. Thus Hamlet writes or aims to write not only his own scripts, but also scripts for others in the play--including the players who come to Elsinore, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. When he speaks of how he escaped Claudius' plot involving these latter two, he does so in explicitly dramatic terms:

Being thus benetted round with villainies,
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play. I sat me down,
Devis'd a new commission, wrote it fair.
... Wilt thou know
Th' effect of what I wrote?
(V.ii.29-37)

4. At least with respect to how it relates to Hamlet as an avenger carrying out what ought to be a consecrated act of vengeance. But an act may be consecrated at different levels. In terms of the overarching tragedy and its action, the fact that the Prince finally slays his murderous uncle may be seen to complete, as John Baxter suggests, Claudius' original act of fratricide. Thus Claudius' own death "is part of the meaning of [his] crime," and his early action now fully consecrated by means of its nemesis. I will return to this point.

Effectively, what he wrote is a new "play"--and having written the play, he needn't wonder about it. But Hamlet demonstrates the pervasiveness of wonder even as he tries to control or deny it. It makes a "coward" of him much as it does of others in the play (Claudius and Gertrude, for example), and in the process perhaps surprisingly serves to improve the quality of his recognition, its complement. And as recognition and wonder act upon one another through the course of the tragedy their respective values escalate, as do their respective costs. In one respect, Hamlet is a study in the denial and inevitability of this escalation.

While the quasi-dramatic scenes in I.i and II.i give us incomplete drama, Shakespeare has in mind a dramatic paradigm that can join wonder to recognition, as well as the person to the act, even while allowing for the gap between them. In doing so, this drama can offer its spectators what Marcel calls the "feeling of reality". What's more, it also offers its spectators the chance to be actors too, for when the dramatic action becomes like "reality" (when the action is realized in the play) the spectator also becomes more fully real. Where Marcel looks toward the need for commitment between person and act in the ethical world, and toward the concurrent destructive force of indifference with respect to both person and act, I want to consider the role of commitment in the meeting of spectator and drama (or, more broadly, reader and poem). Is the commitment of the spectator/reader necessary to the action of the drama/poem? Perhaps indifference renders action as trivial in the poetic sphere as Marcel argues it does in the ethical. Marcel asserts that ethical action requires a personal reference ("a reference to an 'it is I who . . .'"). Can the same principle be applied to poetic action? If so, where would we locate that

personal reference? in the protagonist? in the audience? in the poet? The most helpful answer may be that the personal reference which validates the action of poetry is to be found in what Whalley calls poetry's "irreducible unit": the aesthetic triad. I would like to return to Hamlet with the goal of examining once again this triad, and in particular the idea of the spectator--an examination which I think can help illuminate the very nature of tragedy.

It seems to me that Marcel and Aristotle agree to a significant extent on the nature of human action. "There is," Marcel says, "more to the act than the fact of occurring." The something more that Marcel attributes to the act is the actor: an act is an act because it belongs to a person. But even to say that the act *belongs* to a person is to qualify Marcel's view because it splits person from act and objectifies the act as if it were portable property. The extent of human content for Marcel is not merely large, it is complete. The act is im-personated, so to speak, and the person is en-acted. Aristotle, as Whalley argues, wants to direct us in terms of the drama to a similar interanimation of character and action:

the characters are the "body" of the action (will body forth the action) and are shaped by, as well as generating, the action. The person acting does not disclose or externalise his character in action, as though the character existed before the action: the character . . . is *shaped* by his actions. (OT 71)

Like Marcel, Aristotle stresses the personal quality of action--and, by extension, of tragedy. We are concerned with the action first in tragedy--"The plot is the first essential and the soul of a tragedy," he says (Grube 1450a39)--not because action is essentially more valuable than persons (characters), but because it is through action that life

(including the life of characters, and the life of tragedy) realizes itself. Tragedy, he says, "is a *mimesis* of an *action* (*praxis*) and therefore particularly [a *mimesis*] of men-of-action in action" (APA 1450b4).

In terms of the *mimesis*, it is only through his action that we as audience can see the protagonist come to his precisely individual end. Why would we want to witness this movement toward individuality? What can the experience of tragedy offer its audience? Whalley offers one possible answer:

In [Aristotle's] view, the action of tragedy . . . is not a "representation" or "imitation" at all, but the specific delineation, within extremely fine limits, of a moral action so subtle, powerful and important that it is almost impossible to delineate it; an action self-generated that has as its end a recognition of the nature and destiny of man. . . . In this view, *mimesis* is simply the continuous dynamic relation between a work of art and whatever stands over against it in the actual moral universe, or could conceivably stand over against it. (OT 73)

Why would we want to be audience to a tragic action? Because, Whalley suggests, a large part of the function of tragedy is to show us what it means to be human--or what it could conceivably mean. By the terms of Marcel's argument, though, *Hamlet* gives us neither an action nor a man-of-action; instead, it gives us merely an accidental sequence of events involving a man (a "one") unwilling to take responsibility for what he does. The implications engendered by the application of Marcel's standards to *Hamlet*, then, might lead one to suggest that while the play may be *about* tragedy, or may *contain* several tragedies (Claudius', Ophelia's, Gertrude's), *Hamlet* is not in fact a tragedy because it does not give us a protagonist who acts; as such, it is incapable of tracing the inexorable course of a human action.

Such a judgement would seem to have the support of the ethos that supports much traditional criticism, for Marcel's distinction between the act and the accident (the illness, the catastrophe) is based on a view of action that has long contributed to the study of tragedy. Illnesses or catastrophes (earthquakes, say) characteristically have no close connection to human choice and human mistakes, and so are thought to have no close connection to tragedy either; the catastrophes that periodically befall us have a status other than the action of tragedy. But while Marcel's principles apply in some ways to what Shakespeare was about in making Hamlet, they do not apply in all ways. Part of the reason for this is that Marcel is writing about ethics, not art, and--in the essay "Observations" at least--wants to keep the two quite far apart. His comment on spectators at the cinema indicates something of this separation. He dismisses the art audience as passive and uninvolved, and assumes that the spectator only begins to be critical of a piece when something "attracts [his] attention", when something compels him to *think* about it. This act of analysis he considers the beginning of an involvement with what had previously only been observed.

Whalley asks us to think about art differently. In *Poetic Process* he distinguishes between two ways of mind--the technical and the contemplative--and presents the latter as appropriate for the study of art. "We can *experience* poetry," he writes in "Teaching Poetry", "without fully understanding the poem."

Until a poem is in some sense experienced, it does not exist in the mind; nothing relevant to the poem can be done with it. An elaborate expository or analytical reconstruction of the 'meaning' of the poem cannot substitute for direct perceptual

experience at the outset; and it is unlikely to serve well as an introduction for a responsive activity that best arises from innocence of intent and is free from anxiety about 'meaning'.
(217)

The "analytical" approach Whalley glances at here is, he says in *Poetic Process*, "limited to certain scientific postulates about cause and effect" and "directed towards specific or potential practical ends." It is, "in short, a way of setting the mind to 'think about' things, events, persons with a view to controlling or 'understanding' them" (36-37).

This approach seems to be what Marcel has in mind when he speaks of the film audience or the reader of the newspaper story. According to Whalley, however, the technical way of mind will not serve for poetry's sake. Whalley wants to bring together the fields of ethics and aesthetics, a project that doesn't interest Marcel in "Observations". Does it interest Shakespeare in *Hamlet*? Perhaps if the events of *Hamlet* are accidental gestures on the one (ethical) hand, they are tragical actions on the other (mimetic) hand. After all, any claim that *Hamlet* is not a tragedy must come to terms with one rather stubborn fact: Shakespeare himself called it a tragedy. Why did he do so? Perhaps looking at the play again will give us a better idea of what the playwright considered the nature of tragedy, and further our attempt to understand both art and ethics.

As we take this look we could benefit from a return to Aristotle's way of thinking about the relation of action and protagonist. In "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*", Whalley begins his defence of Aristotle against critics who disapprove of his emphasis on "plot" in the following way:

To claim that Aristotle is simply talking about a 'tragedy of action' out of poverty, not knowing anything else, and that later dramatists discovered a 'tragedy of character' that Aristotle had never considered possible, is a radical misunderstanding of Aristotle's position. (70)

Those who read *Hamlet* as a "tragedy of character", Whalley implies, might get the character at the cost of the tragedy. This danger seems to me partly due to the fact that to put entire authority in the tragedy on the protagonist's will--his choices, his mistakes--can be to put undue weight on the ethical nature of the dramatic action to the neglect of its mimetic nature. Tragedy is not *necessarily* a process, an experience, a reality that has its beginning in the action of a protagonist. Perhaps, for example, there may be a tragedy of circumstance as well as one of choice, a tragedy in which misfortune is (initially, at least) of greater consequence than mistake. In terms of the protagonist, this would also be a tragedy of enforced inaction as opposed to a tragedy of action; but the protagonist's terms, as Aristotle advises us, are not tyrannical.

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare seems to be dealing with action as a quality at once part of and distinct from the protagonist; action and character are interdependent here, but they are nonetheless two distinct dramatic forces. The protagonist in *Hamlet* is first (prot-) in the *agon*, but he is not responsible for it, for in this play Shakespeare examines tragedy from a different perspective from that of his other tragedies; in this play he considers tragedy as a matter of distance and detachment--of frustrated stasis--as well as of willed determinate action. This is to say that in *Hamlet* Shakespeare considers tragedy from the perspective of the audience as well as the protagonist.

But though they are detached, audiences need not be passive or impotent, "partitioned off" (to use Marcel's words) from the action they

see performed. I have suggested that the distance between Hamlet and his acts is at once an aesthetic separation and a paralysing detachment--aesthetic because based on his knowledge that he can watch himself act as he would watch one of the players perform, paralysing because it leaves him fragmented and non-committal. But to criticize or condemn, after the standard of Marcel, Hamlet (the prince or the play) for living in this gap, for experiencing this splitting of person and character, would demonstrate a misguided and misplaced notion of unity. We live, as Marcel says, in "the realm of the fragmented". Such difference is of the essence of the human condition--as is our desire and ability to make meaning in the midst of those gaps our fragmentation engenders.

In the realm of language itself we find a paradigm for dealing with fragmentation. Theorists who have seen the gap that exists between a word and the object that word is meant to signify have on occasion used this gap to suggest the indeterminacy of language (and literature). Unless a word is indissolubly linked to its referent, such theorists ask, how can we ever be sure of that link, how can it ever remain stable? This is essentially Marcel's argument with respect to ethical action; unless person and act are one, he says, they threaten to become mere "parodies" (117) of themselves. As A. D. Nuttall suggests, however, the gap present in language is not only, or even primarily, a barrier to meaning; rather, it is the basis of how meaning in language works. "It is," Nuttall writes,

because words are conventionally ordered and thus separated from other things that they can be used to refer or describe. You don't point at a cat with a cat. You use your finger, or a word. You don't describe a cat with a cat. You may illustrate the word "cat" with a real cat and you may explain that the word for that animal over there is "cat", but in all these cases

the so-called paralysing "gap" between word and thing is in fact indispensably necessary to the practical operation. (53-54)

The gap between action and audience is analogous to that between word and thing: it is part of "the practical operation" of mimesis. Tragedy--indeed, all art--does not suffer for being observed. On the contrary, its observation is central to its nature: the drama depends upon being watched. This "gap" is, ideally, a distance that ultimately becomes narrowed with recognition, but the original separation of tragedy and audience makes the whole of the action of the drama possible. In that space part of the tragic action unfolds.

Whalley speaks of literature as a dynamic relation involving three parties: the poet, the poem, and the reader. To this point I have spoken of the distance in tragedy as being characteristic of the third part of this triad--the reader, or audience, is distanced from the text before her. But *Hamlet* demonstrates that the second part of the triad can involve detachment too.⁵ *Hamlet* is not only distanced from an external audience, it **contains** distance as well. The gap between act and person is not only what we as audience know: it is part of the play's mimesis that it dramatizes the nature of this gap.

Frank Kermode comments in the Riverside Introduction to *Hamlet* on the nature of the play's theatricality:

Hamlet is an extremely theatrical play. It is part of the story of the development of the Elizabethan theatre that as it grew more and more professional and self-conscious, it more and more distanced its audience. The medieval custom of using direct address for simple exposition, of treating the spectators as part of the show, rapidly disappears; only the soliloquy

5. The triad's first member, the poet, is also in Whalley's view quite separate from the finished poem, which becomes "a thing out there".

survives, and we see how far even that is in Hamlet from the tradition of direct explanation. (1139)

This "distancing" of the audience is clear enough, but the *effect* of this distance is less easy to be sure of. It seems to me that the effect of the gap between drama and audience is to give to the drama a separateness that leads to autonomy. Whalley speaks of the poem as "a distinct monad" (PP 234)--"a 'thing out there', unchanged by inquiry, distinct and separate, with a life of its own" (PP 222). This is the sort of autonomy that can be created by the gap that customarily exists between drama and audience. Kermode goes on to say that, due to its theatricality, "Hamlet does not pretend that the stage is the little world," but I think he is wrong about this. Paradoxically, Hamlet's self-consciousness makes its creation of "the little world" all the more believable, all the more affecting, and potentially all the more tragic. (This is also true of Hamlet's self-consciousness.) The drama that is distant from its audience must create its own world--and it is a world with, among other things, its own capacity for audiencing. In Hamlet, this internalization of audience is especially evident in the protagonist's own aforementioned reflections on the subjects of acting and action, though we see it as well in Claudius' response to the Mousetrap, wherein he sees his crime re-enacted.

Marcel's ethical analysis would view such self-consciousness as a threat to action, but must it be so? In a way, yes; but it is in a very particular way, and it is in a way that is along the way to the heart of Hamlet's tragic mimesis. The threat to action, or movement, that self-consciousness poses brings us to Aristotle's notion of catharsis.

Aristotle's sole use of this term in the *Poetics* occurs very early in the text.

Tragedy, then, is the imitation of a good action, which is complete and of a certain length, by means of language made pleasing for each part separately; it relies in its various elements not on narrative but on acting; through pity and fear it achieves the purgation (the catharsis) of such emotions. (Grube 1449b24-28)

This passage has inspired a lot of commentary, some of which has been extremely helpful. In *Poetic Process*, Whalley cites the following statement of James Joyce regarding pity and fear (or "terror"), the two elements Aristotle names as central to the process of catharsis but which he at no point defines:

Pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the human sufferer. Terror is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the secret cause. (17)

"The tragic emotion," follows Whalley, "looking towards both pity and terror, is static--it **arrests** the mind" (17). The tragic emotion is static--and it belongs, in Joyce's account, to the audience.

Joyce's insight applies directly to the tragedy of *Hamlet*, and it applies to no one more than to Hamlet himself. The Prince begins the play in a state of stasis--"But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue," he says at the end of his first soliloquy--and he never really moves far from this state for most of the play, at least with respect to the one thing that he should **not** be static about (killing Claudius). Thus, while he is really quite active throughout the play, he finds the one crucial act impossible to commit. But this would not be surprising

if Hamlet were as much a spectator as I have been saying he is. If Hamlet's place in the play is that of an audience, what he is audience to is a tragedy--specifically, the tragedy of two brothers. The Ghost of his father has appeared before Hamlet to tell his story of a brother's murder, and the story harrows him with fear and wonder.

Before Hamlet meets the Ghost he is, though constricted and aware of his constriction, quite settled in his opinions. His first soliloquy condemns in no uncertain terms the world ("tis an unweeded garden" [I.ii.135]), his mother and her sex ("Frailty, thy name is woman!" [146]), and Claudius ("a satyr" [140]), and gives as high praise to his deceased father ("Hyperion" [140]). After meeting the Ghost, however, Hamlet's perspective changes, as evidenced (for example) in his third soliloquy: "To be, or not to be, that is the question" (III.i.55). Hamlet suggests in this soliloquy that conscience makes him unable to act--"Thus conscience does make cowards of us all, / . . . And enterprises of great pitch and moment / With this regard their currents turn awry, / And lose the name of action" (82-87)--but his words here indicate otherwise, at least if, looking to the word's etymology, we think of "conscience" as knowledge that is shared with another.⁶ What creates Hamlet's stasis here is not only his recognition of certain moral laws but his wonder about what he does not know, his "dread of something after death," his fear of dreams. If Hamlet pities his father on the one hand, on the other hand he fears both Claudius who originally caused and more especially the afterlife that is now causing his father's suffering; unlike Laertes, Hamlet is not willing to "dare damnation" (IV.v.130). If Hamlet

6. *Con* = together, *scientia* = knowledge. Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* opines that the conscience is indeed a thousand witnesses (132).

began the play immobile, his immobility is more deeply entrenched now, in part because it is more enlightened (he recognizes more, though he cannot understand or exert control over the whole of it).

If such enlightened wonder leads to a stasis for the audience (here, Hamlet), does it leave matters there? According to Aristotle, it should not. The role of the audience in tragedy is not merely to be stuck between fear and pity, or between knowledge and wonder: the audience is ultimately expected to complete its experience in the *end* of catharsis--"the purgation of such emotions". The most important recognition on the part of twentieth-century scholarship with respect to Aristotle's conception of catharsis, however, is that catharsis is an event which takes place within the tragedy, as opposed to outside of it in the audience. "It is," writes Whalley, who on this point borrows from Gerald Else,

the incidents within the action itself (not the emotions of the audience) that are purified, brought into a sharp focus specific to tragedy, by the *mimesis*, by the presentational action--by the *mimesis*, not by "tragedy". Events in the area of pity and terror are minutely defined in a kathartic process towards Unity of Action--that is, Purity of Action; and so the peculiar pleasure to tragedy, because of its refinement, is aroused by the quality of the action. (OT 72)

Whalley is helpful here, but perhaps not entirely right. My disagreement with what he says arises from his parenthetical dismissal of "the emotions of the audience," for Hamlet at least does not make us choose between action in the play and action in the audience. By making the character of Hamlet himself an audience to the action, the catharsis of the action and the audience can occur simultaneously. It is indeed the action that is "purified", or completed, and thus "dissolved"

(to use Joyce's term). But since the action of the tragedy and the action of the audience interanimate one another, it is also the emotions of the audience that are completed and dissolved.

Whalley suggests that tragedy shows us something about "the nature and destiny of man", and that its field is "the actual moral universe". When I denied to Marcel's ethical approach to action wholesale applicability to mimetic action, I did not intend to deny the existence of an ethics of tragedy. But that ethic, whatever it is, cannot be discussed apart from the *action* of tragedy--or, I should say, of any particular tragedy, for every tragedy works out its own unique ethic by means of its own unique action. And the action of any tragedy cannot be discussed apart from the audience that witnesses it, for the audience participates in that action's working-out. Thus ethics, action and audience meet, and it perhaps becomes clearer why it is wrong (unethical) for any reader to decline (or presume to think he can decline) the full extent (and responsibility) of his activity. The internalization of audience in *Hamlet* illustrates the dynamic relation of audience to drama by showing how the dissolution of the audience's stasis is also the final movement of the tragedy's action.

Where Joyce speaks of the tragic audience's "stasis", William Butler Yeats speaks of the "ecstasy" of audience--its "standing outside of", which can be a stasis too. "The end of art," writes Yeats, "is the ecstasy awakened by the presence before an ever changing mind of what is permanent in the world, or by the arousing of that mind itself into the very delicate and fastidious mood habitual with it when it is seeking those permanent and recurring things" (qtd. in PP 22). In that end we find the ethic of tragedy. For the audience of tragedy, the

recognition of "permanent and recurring" values is possible even in the midst of varied personal beliefs, attitudes and preferences--permanence, of course, not being that which does away with the personal, but that which provides a support for it. Art joins the personal and the universal; in tragedy, the particular action shows the permanent value. Whalley offers the following relevant comment on the way of thinking--and, by extension, reading--Marcel calls "reflection":

Most valuable, if the integrity of the poem is of primary concern, is the way this kind of reflection reverses (as it were) that habitual reconciliatory movement of the mind from the particular to the general, from the less to the more, which is a spontaneous resolution to equilibrium (so that there's no more work to be done). Reflective inquiry shows us how to think from the more to the less, from the generalised to the particular; and this, when luminous, evokes the otherwise unattainable recognition of the universal. (TP 227-28)

We move from the generalised to the particular when we move from our own world to the world of a poem, poems being singular entities made not with ideas (concerning universal values, for example, or extractable morals) but with words--than which what could be more particular, or more communal?

Hamlet concerns the valuable bonds that exist within families, and shows those bonds to be vulnerable. Claudius, rather late in the play, reassures Gertrude in the face of Laertes' anger that "There's such divinity doth hedge a king / That treason can but peep to what it would, / Acts little of his will" (IV.v.124-26), but his own earlier murder of his brother-king betrays the falseness of his words: the bond between subject and king or brother and brother can be violated. The story of Cain and Abel may be said to represent the archetypal violation

of the latter bond, and as his reference to it in III.iii demonstrates, Claudius knows the story: "O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven, / It hath the primal eldest curse upon't, / A brother's murther" (36-38). But an earlier reference he makes to the murder is less direct. In I.ii, where Claudius tries to comfort Hamlet by reminding him of death's universality, the course of his sermon takes him back to "the first corse" (105). Since tradition has it that that first corpse was Abel, the "moral" of Claudius' speech is, as John Baxter says, ironically "overturned" (10).

The difference surrounding these two references to the Biblical myth and the moral judgement it carries--Claudius is oblivious to the judgement in I.ii, condemned by it in III.iii--raises the question of what has prompted Claudius' recognition, and the answer seems clear: the play-within-the-play. As Baxter writes, the fact and nature of this prompting can lead us toward the heart of Shakespearean tragedy:

Shakespeare uses [the first] allusion to the story of Cain and Abel to suggest the moral order within which his characters are destined to act. . . . Claudius has the makings of a conscience, whether he realizes it or not, . . . and the process by which it emerges is one of the fundamental principles of Shakespeare's drama. (10-11)

What is the nature of the drama--the play-within-the-play--that thus catches (or makes) the conscience of the King? Harold Jenkins points to what he rightly calls a matter of "profound significance" (508) in glossing Hamlet's comment that Lucianus is a "nephew to the King" (III.ii.244):

Not, as we should expect, brother. But the likeness of The Murder of Gonzago to the murder of King Hamlet is already sufficiently established, and upon the image of the murder can now be superimposed an image of its revenge, with the single

figure of Lucianus active in a dual role. The Court, who are ignorant of the brother's murder, will see Lucianus as the nephew only and hence can interpret the Gonzago play as a threat by Hamlet against the King. For us of course it must depict simultaneously crime and nemesis. When Lucianus becomes the image of Hamlet he does not cease to be Claudius too--after all, this is the very moment of the poisoning--as is sometimes implied by the few commentators who have remarked at all upon his nephew's role. The identity of the killer and avenger which the tragic plot will exhibit in Hamlet himself and which has already been symbolized in Pyrrhus (see II.i.448-514) is here sharply focused in the person of Lucianus. (508)

In dramatizing at once crime and nemesis, *The Murder of Gonzago* illustrates well Whalley's conception of mimesis as an *active* representation or embodiment. As Baxter notes, "If the role of Lucianus represents both the crime and its nemesis, it is no static imitation of a past that is dead and gone, but a dynamic image of past and future simultaneously" (8).

It is when the action of the play-within-the-play (which is also the central action of *Hamlet*) is embodied in this dynamic way that it has its effect on Claudius. Jenkins divides into three groups the possible reasons why Claudius does not react to the Dumb Show that precedes *The Murder of Gonzago*. While the first two reasons--that he doesn't see it, or that he doesn't recognize himself and his crime in it--seem simply unlikely, the third--"Since he must have both seen and recognized [the Dumb Show], it follows that he was strong enough to stand the sight of his crime once but not twice" (502)--seems, although better, somewhat incomplete. It is not simply, as this reading would have it, that Claudius now has a "second tooth" bothering him; the difference in the particular ways these two teeth hurt him matters too.

The Riverside edition of the play glosses Hamlet's advice to the players that the drama should show "the very age and body of the time

his form and pressure" (III.i.23-24) with the following note: "24.

pressure: impression (as of a seal), exact image." What the play-within-the-play helps show, however, is that the pressure of the dramatic image works best when it is not "exact". The exactly-coined image is the static image but, as Jenkins and Baxter have said, the play-within-the-play's image is dynamic, changing, simultaneously a variety of images. It is an instance of mimesis, not impression. The simultaneous identity and distinctness of Hamlet and Claudius as regicides, for example, is achieved by Shakespeare in part through a simple alteration (an inexactness, if you will) of his historical material. Jenkins informs us that "It appears to be true that the play The Murder of Gonzago . . . is based on an actual murder, that of the Duke of Urbino in 1538" (507). Significantly, however, Gonzago "was not the name of the Duke," as is the case in Hamlet, "but of his alleged murderer, Luigi Gonzago" (507). Thus the play's title "The Murder of Gonzago" plays with the historical source and raises doubts as to which side of the murder "Gonzago" is on. As it happens, he is on both sides.

The Murder of Gonzago certainly raises doubts in Claudius' mind--doubts as to his own future well-being. These are doubts the Dumb Show does not raise. Its image is a fairly exact imitation of a past event. For Claudius it evokes no wonder, for he knows the story only too well (having written and performed it). But the play-within-the-play does not end with the Dumb Show; the play is only half over, and with the wonder aroused by The Murder of Gonzago joined to the earlier recognition of the Dumb Show, the drama begins to work its complete dynamic purpose: to join poet (Hamlet), poem (the story of a murder), and reader (Claudius) in a dynamic relation.

The inexact and variable nature of the mimetic image calls to mind the gap, the absence of entire correspondence, that exists in language between sign and signified, and it does nothing to suggest that this relation is a simple one. At the same time, however, the mimetic image seems by its very nature to demand of its audience an encounter with its difficulty; that is, it seems to call for an interpretive response. As readers, we will need to be active simply to keep up with the poem. Here the balance of wonder and recognition is critical. Whereas the exact image requires no activity beyond recognition, the unfathomable image arouses only wonder: both will leave us static and without the impetus for movement. But when mimesis is both familiar and new and so engages both recognition and wonder, the reader innocent of intent will find both direction and impulse for her activity. Ultimately, perhaps, recognition and wonder are not that far apart; certainly, both can inspire the fear that restricts movement, the stasis in which tragedy cannot, according to Aristotle, indefinitely persist. (Recurring tragedy, in Marx's words, runs in the direction of farce.) The fear of the Lord, one might add, "that mingled feeling of dread and reverence toward God" (OED), is contiguous to knowledge of the Lord. This is knowledge that is shared in a conventional way, but knowledge that is incomplete too, because it is of something outside of us. Such is the knowledge--and the wonder--that catches conscience. Such too is the knowledge that purifies actions, insofar as it brings them to an end.

The effect of such conscience may be seen for the final time in Hamlet in V.ii, in the muted reconciliation of Hamlet and Laertes. Once again it is the inexact image that exerts the pressure which provides both the impulse and the direction for the end of action. Just before

Osric appears to propose the duel which is soon to end the lives of Hamlet, Laertes, Gertrude, and Claudius, Hamlet makes the following comment to Horatio:

But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself,
For by the image of my cause I see
The portraiture of his.
(V.ii.75-78)

Laertes presents to Hamlet an image of his own cause because Laertes too seeks vengeance on his father's murderer. Hamlet, then, is both revenger and one upon whom revenge is sought. Like Claudius, who is both the murderer and the one to be murdered, both brother and uncle, and Lucianus, who serves a double function in the Mousetrap as brother and nephew to the King, Hamlet plays two roles. The two roles in each case are different, yet they may be contained within one mimetic action or one mimetic reality.

After Osric delivers the challenge, Hamlet comes before the assembled court and addresses Laertes. "Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil / Free me so far in your most generous thoughts, / That I have shot my arrow o'er the house / And hurt my brother" (V.ii.241-44). Laertes responds:

I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive in this case should stir me most
To my revenge, but in terms of honor
I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation
Till by some elder masters of known honor
I have a voice and president of peace
To keep my name ungor'd. But till that time
I do receive your offer'd love like love,
And will not wrong it.
(V.ii.244-52)

"I embrace it freely," Hamlet responds, "And will this brother's wager frankly play. / Come on" (V.ii.252-54).

Thus twice does Hamlet refer to Laertes as his "brother", and thus does Laertes take the first step toward accepting Hamlet's apology and reconciling himself to the prince. He takes a further step a few lines later. He proposes to hit Hamlet when he is not looking, and then says in an aside: "Yet it is almost against my conscience" (296). He takes a final step as he lies dying after being poisoned by his own sword. "Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet," he says. "Mine and my father's death come not upon thee, / Nor thine on me!" (329-31). Hamlet of course is at this very moment himself dying, a fact entirely appropriate to the reconciliation that arises between these two brothers. After all, the action of Hamlet begins with the falling out of two brothers, Hamlet Sr. and Claudius. It is the story of Cain and Abel once again: it has the primal eldest curse upon it. But Hamlet and Laertes play the action out again; they mimic it (inexactly), they mimesis it. In doing so, they complete it--and themselves.

The question of how natural (how permanent and recurring) human values are arises throughout Shakespeare's tragedies. In *King Lear*, one matter held up for our consideration is that of the bond between parent and child. Cordelia claims to love her father "According to my bond, no more nor less" (I.i.93). The play means to show us the nature of that bond. Thus in III.iii, for example, both Gloucester and Edmund disclaim against the "unnatural" (1/7) betrayal of Lear by Goneril and Pegan, but after Gloucester's exit Edmund expresses another view:

62

This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me
That which my father loses: no less than all.
The younger rises when the old doth fall.

(III.iii.23-24)

And surely Edmund (though he is a bastard) has a point. Lear demonstrates an understandable parental desire to retain power unto the very end (even after he has relinquished it), a wish that his children just as understandably resist. The decline of parents is a universal trial (it will happen to children, soon enough), and one that parents have somehow to come to terms with (both Lear and Gloucester ultimately do). But if the bond of parent/child is thus a restricting one (if parents are--naturally--bound by their prospective humility before their children), it can be at the same time an ennobling one. Cordelia loves her father--that too seems a natural part of the bond. Both Gloucester and Edmund, then, express truths in III.iii, and the action of the play brings each of them to recognize the truth the other knows. Their recognition is perhaps incomplete, but recognition does not need to be in the characters of a drama to be in the drama itself, since it may also be in the audience of that drama.

Would such "recognition" on the part of the audience indicate that the "truths" of King Lear and of Hamlet with regard to familial bonds do indeed carry universal import? Whalley connects tragic recognition closely to the mistake that precedes it, and suggests that both are directed at the knowing (and not-knowing) audience:

Recognition (*anagnorisis*) is not a device of plot-structure, but an essential crisis in the action; and *hamartia* a mistake rather than a sin, a distinction that was clearer to Peter Abelard and other subtle Fathers than it seems to be to us--*hamartia* is an *ignorant* act, and in tragedy (as in "The Ancient Mariner") ignorance is no excuse, for in these matters the plea is made not to a court of external law, but is argued in the inner

dialogue of moral choice according to the law of our nature. And these things have to be declared outwardly, presented openly in action, so that they strike us not only with the *frisson* of horror and pity but with the shock of recognition; we too must be drawn into that intricate web of knowing and not-knowing. (OT 70)

Whalley calls this shock of knowing "the peculiar pleasure of tragedy" (OT 70), and while the designation "pleasure" seems to me somewhat optimistic (there is another side to the shock of recognition, as Lear and Gloucester might attest), I think he is right to point to recognition of "the law of our nature" as central to the audience's experience of tragedy. The "bond" of King Lear's opening resonates with a legalistic tone, but it is this natural law that Cordelia has in mind. Lear seems not to understand this--which suggests further that shock is the right word, for the laws of our nature may come as something of a surprise to us.

If indeed the mimetic action pushes us to the recognition of what we had not previously known, it can be said to do so by engaging--even making--our conscience.⁷ Thus permanent human values may become visible to a reader even in despite of that individual's personal perspective. In the case of the action of King Lear, not everyone would agree that the bond between parent and child matters (arguably it is purely a biological and accidental relation, for example, or merely a social construct); but if the action of the play is effective (shocking) it is so in part just because that bond, for whatever reason, *does* matter. As Baxter suggests, those "vulnerable" and valuable "centres of our existence" that Whalley sees tragedy as pointing to are characteristically "illuminated by their violation" (24).

⁷ "Consciences, like characters, are made as they are engaged ("committed") in action.

In concluding this discussion of Hamlet, I am most interested in thinking about what the play-within-the-play suggests concerning the relation of the dramatic audience to the dramatic action. If Whalley is right and "A tragic action correctly traced will lead to the end of recognising at least something about the nature of man, the values that are paramount, the vulnerable centres that we must at all costs preserve" (OT 69), then the auditors to the drama will naturally (necessarily) have something to say about the shape of that nature. They are men (and women), after all; "the nature of man" is their nature. In this context the question of whether Hamlet not only catches but also makes Claudius' conscience appears an important one. If conscience is, as I have proposed, from the outset a public matter (a matter of shared knowledge), and the notion of the conscience as a private agent is, as Hobbes says, a metaphor derived from this (Leviathan 132), are conceptions of the natural, the valuable, and whatever else has been traditionally assumed to shape the "healthy" (and private) conscience, also part of the public order? "Claudius has the makings of a conscience, whether he realizes it or not," writes Baxter (10), evidently relying on "the moral order within which [Claudius is] destined to act" (10) to serve as the foundation for that conscience. But with the drama that Hamlet stages providing an important catalyst for that making--the making of the mimesis leads to the making (if not the makings⁸) of the conscience--the role of communal construction with respect to our moral order appears inescapable. It is our order, after all; if something is going to be of

8. Claudius' conscience is not entirely inactive prior to the play-within-the-play. In III.i he reveals in an aside that Polonius has unknowingly given his conscience "a lash" (49).

universal value, it will first have to be of value to individuals. Universals contain value because of the individuals who make up the universal, while individuals, though independently valuable, only **understand** their value in relation to a community of value-laden individuals--that is, in terms of a (relative) universal. Value is very much a shared quality, or recognition--which is to say that it is very much a matter of conscience. Among the many qualities that join the mimetic drama and the actual moral universe is the fact that they are both constructions, at once autonomous and interdependent.

Claudius' reaction to the drama Hamlet puts on for him shows this to be the case. The "catching" of Claudius' conscience proves to be a public affair, in keeping with the notion that conscience is a matter of shared knowledge, of communal values (the laws of our nature). Furthermore, although Baxter argues that Claudius in fact dodges recognition by generalizing the matter of the play-within-the-play and thus turning his attention away from his own particular case, the "shock of recognition" he experiences ("Give me some light. Away!" [III.ii.269]) arguably arises from just the moral order Baxter says Hamlet, as dramatist, depends upon. "[I]n superimposing crime and nemesis in this way," Baxter comments, the Prince "means to imply that that nemesis was engendered at the very instant of the crime, is part of the meaning of the crime, inseparable from it" (8-9). Baxter names this intention a "threat", but implies that it is more than that, that it is also a fact, a law of our nature, which Claudius may now (if only for the mimetic moment) understand. (He knows he is "cursed" in III.iii.) While Claudius seems to escape the Mousetrap Hamlet sets for him insofar as his conscience does not trouble him much after III.iii, he doesn't in fact

escape the **action** of the Mousetrap at all. The Prince does kill him, and the action of Hamlet does indeed show crime and nemesis to be two parts of a single, consecrated life.

Perhaps Claudius does turn from this recognition, but the fact that he reacts so passionately to the play leads to the somewhat surprising conclusion that, in terms of his nature as a reader, Claudius is notable for his innocence. Because he comes to the play-within-the-play ready to receive it on its own terms he is able to see how its form exerts its pressure directly against him. Thus his visceral response. Claudius may be a lousy brother and uncle, but he is a good reader: both innocent and active, Claudius--unlike Othello--does not attempt to pre-empt the text before him (not until he has read it closely, at least, and sees that it threatens to pre-empt him). Images do not parade by him as though they have nothing to do with him. As audience to *The Murder of Gonzago*, he demonstrates that when it comes to dramatic mimesis the text is not entirely a "distinct monad"; while the text being observed certainly matters, it matters too who's watching as well as who's staging the show. If perchance Claudius ever happened to forget this aesthetic relation, his nephew could no doubt remind him.

CHAPTER THREE

1 Henry IV and the Making of History

The play-within-the-play of Hamlet provides an obvious illustration of dramatic practice in Shakespeare, but it could be said that Shakespeare's entire career as playwright consisted of an exploration into the possibilities and limitations of dramatic form. We can find throughout Shakespeare's plays internal dramas, instances of "playing" which, in a relation of dynamic interdependence, weave the larger plays that serve as frames for them. In this chapter I intend to focus on the nature of such internal play in 1 Henry IV with an eye toward commenting further on both the nature of dramatic form in Shakespeare's practice of mimesis and the form of mimesis more broadly. My discussion here will touch on what repetition entails in a number of contexts, including those of semiology, Shakespeare's second tetralogy, parody, and 1 Henry IV's own play-within-the-play. In each context, what seems to me most striking about iteration is how it characteristically provides images neither of simple reversal or mimicry, but of a mimetic interpenetration of meaning and form.

In coming to one of Shakespeare's history plays, I have an interest both in deriving origins and in the nature of origins themselves as derivations. The designation "history play" captures something of both of these aspects of the origin. It suggests to us that the play follows the history; it accords to history the function of origin, meaning, presence. But it indicates as well the "play" of history--its excessive and forward-looking systems of signification, its contextuality, its

dependence and absence. The designation suggests, in short, the textual nature of history.

Robert Clairborne muses that 'history' and 'story' may both come out of (originate from) the Greek *histor* (wise, knowing), a speculation which makes one familiar question--"Is that history or is it just a story?"--quite easy to answer--"Of course, it's both"--and leads us to the tempting conclusion that the wise one, the knowing one, will be the one who can re-member (re-make) the most history, the most stories. For Thomas Carlyle, who had a pronounced interest in history, stories and history were joined in the figure of the "Artist in History", an inspired maker able to "inform and ennoble" the "Chaos" of historical life "with an Idea of the Whole" ("On History" 88-90). George Eliot, another eminent Victorian with a pronounced historical bent, begins *Middlemarch* with a similar conception:

[Saint Theresa of Avila] was certainly not the last of her kind. Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept into oblivion. With dim lights and tangled circumstance they tried to shape their thought and deed into noble agreement; but after all, to common eyes their struggles seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness. (25)

As Carlyle does in "On History", Eliot here grants to the "sacred poet" a privileged place in the production (which is the disentangling) of texts. What to "common eyes" appears at once confused and disparate, to the artist appears in the unified, whole form of tragedy--and thus is rescued from the "Chaos" of formlessness.

The slant seems distinctly Aristotelian. Positing the artist in history as a maker who imposes an order on the relentless push and

resisting claims of historical action, Carlyle and Eliot put forward for history something of tragedy's agenda as the Poetics presents it. Of course, it might be argued that rather than place an emphasis on the poet as the maker of plots and the producer of meaning, Carlyle and Eliot see the artist in history primarily as a reader, and so advance Roland Barthes' view that "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (148). Thus history may be manufactured by the activity of readers. But the Aristotelian presence is stubborn, and nonetheless works to call into account the hegemonic authority of reading, whether it be that of the poet's or the poet's audience. For while I said above that the poet (reader) makes history by virtue of *imposing* form on historical Chaos, neither Carlyle nor Eliot in fact make this claim. If we seek the origin of form, they tell us to look for it not in the poet's making (which is not a creating but a telling), but in the history that is itself being made.

Certainly Carlyle, while aware of the infinite textuality of human life, believes in the presence of an underlying and organizing form.

It is not in acted, as it is in written History: actual events are nowise so simply related to each other as parent and offspring are; every single event is the offspring not of one, but of all other events, prior or contemporaneous, and will in its turn combine with all others to give birth to new: it is an ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being, wherein shape after shape bodies itself forth from innumerable elements. . . . But the Artist in History may be distinguished from the Artisan in History; for here, as in all other provinces, there are Artists and Artisans; men who labour mechanically in a department, without eye for the Whole, not feeling that there is a Whole; and men who inform and ennoble the humblest department with an Idea of the Whole, and habitually know that only in the Whole is the Partial to be truly discerned. ("On History" 88-90)

For both Carlyle and Eliot, unity of action figures prominently in the relation of textuality and form. Eliot describes the epic life which the

poet sees as one "wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action"; in *Middlemarch's* Finale she closes her narrative by commenting on "those determining acts of [Dorothea's] life" (896). Carlyle's interest in action leads him to challenge the artist in history with the well-known aphorism "Narrative is linear, Action is solid" (89); the artist in history, he implies, should strive to embody in his work the "solidity" of action.

Locating the forms of actions as already whole in and waiting to be conscripted from the past is an activity with a distinctly "innocent" ring to it, and the extent to which it is a reasonable project will occupy a good deal of our attention in what follows. One question raised by the notion of such conscription concerns the *present* quality of historical action. Does history exhaust the energy of actions, or does it release it? Does it play actions out, or begin their play? At the heart of the distinction history/history play, I propose, is the problem of imitation; at the place of the slash-mark functions what Whalley calls mimesis--or the bond between poetry and life.

A second question that will interest me here concerns the extent to which what Aristotle says about tragic form applies to history plays. "[T]he question of what *kind* the history play belongs to," writes Harold E. Toliver, "can no longer be answered in strictly Aristotelian terms" (170). The history play "at its best," Toliver asserts, "achieves an essentially new structure and dramatic rhythm, both peculiar to itself and effective" (172). Presumably one of the things Toliver means by "new" is "new to Aristotle", but Whalley asks us not to give up on "Aristotelian terms" quite so readily. "What Aristotle says about tragedy," Whalley argues, "is not limited by the *genre* he seems to be

discussing: it applies very well to any **genre**--which is precisely what is to be expected if in examining tragedy he was paying close attention to what he took to be the most highly developed kind of poetic art" (AC 96).

One of the aspects of the history play that in Toliver's view makes it unique is the openness inherent to the form.

The history play must be plotted so as to satisfy our sense of form as though it had beginning, middle, and end, and yet must somehow be left open. Its subject matter leads to plays in a series rather than to single, self-contained works, and even the series cannot be decisively ended. . . . Rather than concluding things once and for all, the history play ends at a plateau or brief breathing space from which the state looks backward with relief but forward with apprehension. (191-92)

Seeing that Toliver refers here to what we might call the construction of the historical plot, it is interesting to note that in the *Poetics* Aristotle treats of the well-constructed plot in the same section as he does the difference between poetry and history. There, as Whalley says, he organizes his thoughts on the good plot into three main sections: (a) its wholeness and order; (b) its length and unity; (c) its subject--the 'universal'. "The discussion moves from aesthetic/artistic qualities to substantive/philosophical considerations" (APA 40/6). The proximity of the tragic and the historical plots in Aristotle's discussion is designed primarily to point by means of their difference to the true nature of the former. "The proposition about 'beginning', 'middle', and 'end'", Whalley notes,

invokes **internal** necessity: the dramatist is bound by **tragic** necessity, not by the plausible sequence of biographical or historical events. The formula "likelihood or necessity" which Aristotle introduces a little later reinforces this position and provides the dynamic inner law of poetry. (APA 40/10)

Aristotle makes the contrast between the two kinds of plots (tragic versus historical) all the more emphatic by the word he chooses to designate his conception of how the tragic plot should conclude: "The word for 'end' here is not *telos* as in paragraph 20, but *teleute*--termination, conclusion"--a word used of death as the end (rather than fulfilment) of life (APA 40/10).

But after establishing such a sharp contrast, Aristotle amplifies his argument in such a way as to suggest that his juxtaposition of tragedy and history is not ordered solely on the basis of difference. In a passage which immediately follows his comments on tragedy's uniqueness, Aristotle indicates the ground that the poet and the historian can share.

So it is clear on these grounds that the [tragic] poet must be a maker of his plots rather than [merely a maker] of verses, particularly if he is [considered] a maker in terms of his *mimesis* and if what he represents is actions (*praxeis*). And indeed even if it turns out that he is making [his work] out of *actual* events, he is none the less a poet--a maker: for nothing prevents some actual events from being the sort of things that might probably happen--and in such case he is the *maker* of those events. (APA 1451b27-32)

Here again, that "formula" of 'probability or necessity' makes its presence felt. What happened does not, for the purposes of art, necessarily matter. But if what happened is at the same time in keeping with the action the poet wants to embody and with what would have happened according to probability or--better--necessity, then it has a legitimate place in the poet's work. Whalley appends the following note:

"The paradox inherent in Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* rises to a climax in the last sentence. . . . What the poet 'makes' . . . is not the actuality of events but their logical structure, their meaning. . . . A poet, then, is an *imitator* in so far as he is a *maker*, viz. of plots" (Gerald Else). The poet, in using

ta genomena (actual events), uses them selectively, taking those that can be constructed into a **praxis**--the specific kind of action the **mimesis** of which alone can produce a tragedy. Una Leigh-Fermor admirably describes the **praxis** as "a brief, shapely series of related deeds such as sometimes emerges from the chaos of events in daily life or historical record" (quoted by D. W. Lucas, p 124). Aristotle is very much aware that, whatever role 'invention' plays in the poietic art, selection and arrangement are of paramount importance. (APA 50/2)

This is certainly helpful, though we should not be entirely swayed by Whalley's emphasis on the production of **tragedy**. As he himself tells us, Aristotle's central concern is poetic making, and in that making there is room for forms other than the tragic.

If Whalley's emphasis on the poet-as-maker accords with Else's, as it seems to, does that accord extend so far as to take up Else's claim that while the poet doesn't make "the actuality" of events, he gives to those events their "structure" and "meaning"? Else's observation strikes one with its modern sensibility (modernism, of course, is never brand-new). The notion that the poet imitates only by virtue of his making complements, for example, Jacques Derrida's understanding of the iteration as necessary to the origin(al sign). In both accounts the copy-work is productive as well as imitative of the form and meaning of what it copies; it "copies" in two senses: passively (it mimics) and actively (it makes **both** halves of the copy).

Derrida's notion of the duplicitous operation of **différance** in signs--signs function on the basis of difference ('hat' can mean fedora and not feline because 'h' differs from 'c'), and so their meanings can always be deferred as differences accumulate--forms part of his critique of what has come to be known as the metaphysics of presence. This metaphysics purportedly privileges the "meaning" of the sign, as though

the correspondence between form and meaning were exact (because intended by a present subject), with the meaning in the position of the origin and the formal sign serving simply (merely) as the intended meaning's notational mark. But if the sign has, so to speak, a life of its own--if it is, as Jonathan Culler writes, "an object in its own right" (SP 133)--then no sign can at any one (metaphysical) point belong to any one meaning and any sign will always engender a "play of signification":

If meaning is a function of differences between terms and every term is but a node of differential relations, then each term refers us to other terms from which it differs and to which it is in some kind of relation. These relations are infinite and all have the potential of producing meaning. (Culler SP 245)

Texts (and readings of texts) will always be open to "deconstruction" because, while they will always work from the bases of certain givens, it will always be possible to find a position outside of those givens from which their textuality--the "excess" of their signs, their relations, their founding oppositions, their apologies--will be evident. One can identify deconstruction, writes Culler, "with the twin principles of the contextual determination of meaning and the infinite extendability of context" (OD 215). This is not to say that deconstruction necessarily grants the principle that "any word in a text has all the meanings ever recorded for it or for any signifier differing from it by no more than one phoneme," but rather that there are no principles "by which signifying possibilities can be excluded in advance" (OD 219). "This is my starting-point," writes Derrida in the same vein: "no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation. What I am referring to here is not richness of substance, semantic fertility, but

rather structure: the structure of the remnant or of iteration" ("Living On" 81).

If the structure of iteration is rich, its wealth is founded on convention. Charles Sanders Peirce recognizes this in his comments on the chronically deferred nature of the sign. Every sign, he says, requires something more to be employed in an attempt to fill the gap it creates:

If a Sign is other than its Object, there must exist, either in thought or in expression, some explanation or argument or other context, showing how--upon what system or for what reason the Sign represents the Object or set of Objects that it does. Now the Sign and the Explanation together make up another Sign, and since the explanation will be a Sign, it will probably require an additional explanation. (136-37)

In the course of his discussion, Peirce amplifies the suggestion that some "system" or "reason" must be in place to allow signs to function.

The Sign can only represent the Object and tell about it. It cannot furnish acquaintance with or recognition of that Object; for that is what is meant in this volume by the Object of a Sign; namely, that with which it presupposes an acquaintance in order to convey some further information concerning it. . . . But if there be anything that conveys information and yet has absolutely no relation nor reference to anything with which the person to whom it conveys the information has, when he comprehends that information, the slightest acquaintance, direct or indirect--and a very strange sort of information that would be--the vehicle of that sort of information is not, in this volume, called a Sign. (137)

The extent to which a sign is an object in its own right, then, is evidently limited. It depends upon its human context; it depends upon its use, the activity to which it is put and through which it is understood. To put this another way, the iterability of the sign is necessary to the existence of the sign: if a sign cannot be repeated, it cannot be a sign in any "systematic" or "reasonable" way. As Culler

writes, "Something can be a signifying sequence only if it is iterable, only if it can be repeated in various serious and nonserious contexts, cited, and parodied. Imitation is not an accident that befalls an original but its condition of possibility" (OD 120). This is a principle with important ramifications, as Derrida's comment on the iterability of the signature--that prototype of iterability--suggests:

In order to function, that is, in order to be legible, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form; it must be able to detach itself from the present and singular intention of its production. (SEC 126)

The meaning of signs, it seems, is a function of their conventionality, their form. Thus a reversal is worked regarding the notion that meaning determines or serves as the origin for form.

A similar reversal may appear in Shakespeare's practice as a maker of history. 1 Henry IV makes up part of Shakespeare's tetralogy on English history 1398-1420. The period covered by this series of plays is prior to that covered by Shakespeare's first tetralogy (which spanned 1422-1485), but the evidently backward course of Shakespeare's work on English history seems entirely appropriate to me. Rooted within a context of passing time, within a long continuum of beginnings and endings that are beginnings yet again, the form of the history play allows its maker a surprising liberty with respect to how he will treat the matter of origins--which, no matter how definitive they might seem, in history will always be preceded (and followed) by yet other origins. As origins give rise to preemptive origins, the notions of source and precedence take on a new air. To see how Shakespeare handles the task of beginning a history play (and his second history tetralogy) in

the middle of time and historical action, we might turn to the beginning of Richard II. We have to start somewhere, after all.

The action of Richard II begins with a dispute that never gets anything but a political settlement. Bullingbrook and Mowbray both claim to speak truth and accuse the other of treachery; Richard hears their reports, and must "rule" on them. In this way, the King resembles Shakespeare's readers, who also read the accusations with the question of their truth (the historical truth) in mind. But if we share the place of reader with Richard, what we find in the opening scene of Richard II should make us wonder about the extent to which we can arbitrate over texts by locating the originary event or truth behind the later representation, for the King's authority here is limited; in short, he simply cannot know the truth of the matter, and so must invent a solution of his own--a political (though not a democratic) reading.

Although Richard finds it impossible to judge who speaks the truth, it is important that he try to do so, since for a king treachery is not simply a political matter, but a personal concern as well. If either Bullingbrook or Mowbray has been disloyal, he has been disloyal to Richard; if either plots further treachery, the King's rule may be threatened. Richard appears, however, unconcerned about the personal stake involved. "[I]mpartial are our eyes and ears" (115), he states, and certainly the King observes the trial with the attitude of one who knows that his gaze on the matter is directed down. His response to Bullingbrook's outrage over Woodstock's death--"How high a pitch his resolution soars!" (109)--almost mocks with its sense of being removed from Bullingbrook's passion: whether Richard is an amused aesthete here

or an ironic critic of Bullingbrook's rhetoric, he evidently feels himself distanced from the conflict unfolding beneath him. But Richard's ironic perspective is itself ironic: the quarrel, after all, concerning treachery toward him, will touch his impartiality before long.

Richard's ironic attitude as reader at the beginning of Shakespeare's tetralogy may be encouraged by the fact that despite his position as arbitrator, Richard is not *asked* by Bullingbrook and Mowbray to make a determination as to which of them is telling the truth. They don't in fact want him to judge; instead, they want to settle the disagreement in combat, which combat will serve for their "trial day" (151). Determinacy, in this matter, will come with terminacy.

My name is Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk,
 Who hither come engaged in my oath
 (Which God forbid a knight should violate!)
 Both to defend my loyalty and truth
 To God, my king, and my succeeding issue,
 Against the Duke of Herford that appeals me,
 And by the grace of God, and this mine arm,
 To prove him, in defending myself,
 A traitor to my God, my king, and me--
 And as I truly fight, defend me heaven!
 (I.iii.16-25)

There is a true fight and a false one, Mowbray says, a right reading and a wrong one, and because the former has heaven's assent the end will tell the beginning. Bullingbrook similarly declares his support for such determinacy, repeating Mowbray's prayer: "And as I truly fight, defend me heaven!" (41). The words might serve as a motto that at this early point in the play introduces the contiguous and fluid nature of starts and finishes in the play of historical action.

The declared premiss of the proposed Bullingbrook/Mowbray contest is that right equals might. That this premiss is "theological" in

nature may be seen in the ruminations of one of its real-life adherents, Thomas Carlyle. "Might and Right do differ frightfully from hour to hour," he writes in "Chartism";

but give them centuries to try it in, they are found to be identical. . . . No property is eternal but God the Maker's: whom Heaven permits to take possession, his is the right The strong thing is the just thing: this thou wilt find throughout in our world;--as indeed was God and Truth the Maker of our world, or was Satan and Falsehood? (173-74)

"All fighting," Carlyle adds in *Past and Present*, "is the dusty conflict of strengths, each thinking itself the strongest, or, in other words, the justest;--of Might which do in the long-run, and forever will in this just Universe in the long-run, mean Rights" (190).

Richard himself appeals to his own divine-right application of this principle at several points in the play, most notably upon his return to England as he prepares to meet Bullingbrook's challenge:

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from off an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.
(III.ii.54-57)

The play, however, demonstrates the slippery nature of this ethic, and no scene does so more pointedly than the very one in which Richard makes this claim. Three times in this scene Richard pretends to look to God and the justice of his cause for strength, but his virtual disintegration at learning that he is without military support betrays the fact that the real source of his confidence was not the old-fashioned principle of right but the equally old-fashioned influence of military might. The puzzle of Richard's loss of the crown--does he abdicate or is he deposed?--is resolved when we define the king in Richard II's own

terms--namely, as the one with practical and political authority. Since Richard himself, despite his protestations on behalf of a different standard, feels the force of this definition, he accedes readily to it when Bullingbrook proves his capacity for taking charge--as he does, for the first time, when he prosecutes Bushy and Green on the ground that they have injured him personally ("Myself . . . / Have stoop'd my neck under your injuries, / . . . Whilst you have fed upon my signories" [III.i.16-22]). Bullingbrook here makes personal grievance cause for national grievance, punishable by publicly-sanctioned execution--and the one for whom the personal and the public meet is, of course, the king.

In Richard II, then, while the culture depicted rhetorically fashions and claims one ethic--right is might--it lives by another--might is right. But such a statement of the play's play on right and might is not wholly true to the way in which Richard II illustrates not the reversal of an ethic to its opposite but the relation and interanimation of these two "opposites". That is, Richard II shows that such oppositions cut both ways. If we say right is might, we prove the right by seeing after the fact who had the most might. Thereby might becomes the basis of right, and thus the end becomes that which serves as the defining quality of the origin. In oppositions, as in equations, it is easy to see the end as the source--or, at least, the proof, justification, or signification--of the beginning. Thus signification (like imitation) is not an accident that befalls an original but its condition of possibility.

The problem of what constitutes beginnings and endings is a natural one for the history play to take up. With regard to the

Bullingbrook/Mowbray text (a quarrel), its end is never clear; even after Bullingbrook takes over the kingdom, Mowbray's role in the death of Woodstock is still up for discussion and creating disagreements--which, it is proposed in IV.i, will be settled by combat. Mowbray cannot be called to further account, however, his life having come to its end. Thus an end suspends indefinitely the end of the trial that began the play with a suspension (the trial is postponed from I.i to I.iii, and then again by means of the banishments Richard therein imposes). With regard to the history/history play text, the two pressures influencing determinacy in *Richard II*--the end will tell the origin, but the end is easily, naturally postponed--work to produce a surprising tension, which the two adversaries in I.i, as well as Richard himself, attempt to step outside of by appealing to God. The end each arrives at, however, owes less to divine providence than it does to the conventions and compromises of political life.

A talent for making the familiar new would seem requisite for the artist in history, and in *Richard II* Shakespeare achieves this aspect of his making by means of aligning us at the play's outset with one (Richard) who is incapable of making a determination on the situation he presides over. The unresolved feud with which *Richard II* begins functions in part to create in the reader a mood of wonder. Furthermore, by putting his audience in the action--by asking them to engage in Richard's action--Shakespeare makes the action and re-invents the history he treats. But while uncertainty (or, roughly, suspense, the suspension of determination) might seem important to evoking in any audience the sense of wonder which can enliven historical representation, Shakespeare's strategy of giving us the

revelation in soliloquy of Hal's private plan of disguise and public reformation at the outset of 1 Henry IV appears designed as a blatant rejection of suspense.

Despite this appearance, however, Shakespeare employs the same kind of suspension in 1 Henry IV that he does in Richard II, and in very nearly the same way. In I.iii a debate that (after the pattern of Richard II) was first raised in I.i breaks out once again between King Henry and Hotspur. The debate concerns in part Hotspur's support of Edmund Mortimer--"revolted" (92) Mortimer to the King, "noble" (110) Mortimer to Hotspur. The last speech Henry addresses to Hotspur in the play begins with the following straightforward refutation and censure:

Thou dost belie him, Percy, thou dost belie him;
He [Mortimer] never did encounter with Glendower.
I tell thee,
He durst as well have met the devil alone
As Owen Glendower for an enemy.
Art thou not ashamed?
(113-18)

Again, we are confronted with a disagreement we cannot settle. Even Holinshed, Shakespeare's primary source, can't help us.¹ That Mortimer at some point joins with Glendower is clear, but his reasons for doing so--that is, whether he forfeited himself, as Henry claims, or "never did fall off . . . / But by the chance of war," as Hotspur claims (I.iii.94-95)--are not.

But perhaps our difficulty here differs from that one experienced in reading Richard II after all, since I.iii in 1 Henry IV follows I.ii, and

1. See the *Chronicles*, pp. 36-38 ("whether by treason or otherwise, so it fortun'd, that the English power was discomfited" [36]). Later historians could perhaps help us; but theirs is another story.

in that scene we have had revealed to us in Hal's soliloquy information which (we may feel) overrides any more peripheral uncertainties that might arise through the course of the play. Thus the disagreement in I.iii may be marginalized, its indeterminacy made to seem irrelevant, by Hal's declaration, offered to us upon the exits of his Eastcheap acquaintances, that "I know you all, and will a while uphold / The unyok'd humor of your idleness, / Yet herein will I imitate the sun . . ." (I.ii.195-97). But while the suggestive verb "imitate" appears placidly here, the amplification the determined Prince gives it in the whole of his soliloquy suggests something of "imitation"'s dynamic--and so *not* entirely "determined"--quality. On the one hand, admittedly, the imitation promises to be static enough; Hal's imitating will lead him to attempt to be like the sun, to be a copy of its originary form. But the Prince's words show such passivity to be inadequate to the task of imitation insofar as they show the imitable origin itself to be not a fixed, autonomous entity but one that exists only in relation to something else--namely, "base contagious clouds" (198) and "the foul and ugly mists / Of vapors" (202-03). The simple process of imitating the sun, therefore, must take into account not only the sun but also its rivals, the clouds (the not-sun). Furthermore, the imitation must take into account the relation of sun and not-sun. The clouds "smother up" (199) and "seem to strangle" (203) the imitable object, a contest Hal's imitation intends to bear out.

Hal's plan, then, is not to copy statically a stationary object, but to capture the essence of an object defined in terms of an active relation with what both opposes it and helps to make it. The pattern is repeated through the rest of the soliloquy, first in the binary

opposition sport/work, and more significantly by the principle of the foil with which Hal ends his utterance.

By how much better than my word I am,
 By so much shall I falsify men's hopes,
 And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
 My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
 Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
 Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
 (210-15)

The introduction of the foil pushes Hal's imitative procedure further away from mimicry to mimesis, or the activity of embodying activity. Foils work on the basis not of independent origin and dependent, detachable copy, but of perpetual and shaping interaction (something can neither be a foil nor "foiled" unless it is active), a fact that not only will make any imitation of this interaction oblique--that is, the imitation will be of a relation, not an object *per se*--but also will cause it to depend in part upon the foil itself; the foil, its quality and its activity, will be necessary too to the imitative enterprise.

But in part the sort of imitation that I have described here is not so much declared by Hal as it is betrayed by him. Hal is clearly more interested, in this speech at least, with the sun and the bright metal than with those things which oppose (yet help determine) them. This interest perhaps stems from his somewhat arrogant, self-enclosed confidence. Hal, it may be, does think he can simply be like ("imitate") the sun, an object by which so much is (conventionally) measured. He wants to be (though not quite after the manner of Louis 14th) a sun-king. The Prince's imagery, however, suggests the complex (relational) nature of his mimetic ambitions, and suggests too that here as in Richard II the indeterminate appears marginalized, theoretically and

rhetorically, only in the light of the comforting but suspect principles on which its characters allow readings to be made. Hal suggests that the sun "permit[s]" (198) the clouds to smother up its beauty,

That when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wond'ered at
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapors that did seem to strangle him.

(200-03)

Perhaps it is tempting to think of sun and clouds as related only by their opposition, but clouds are not merely "permitted" by the sun: they are both made and dissolved by the sun, the action of whose heat causes them to come and go. Imitating the sun, then, can be no passive matter; at the least, it will involve Hal in accepting responsibility for the "ugly mists" that he has made, and thereby acknowledging his relation with them.

In this scene and throughout the play, the actions of the "misty" Falstaff suggest how the Prince may not have quite the determinating control that he would like to have. Just before Hal announces his private plan, he and Falstaff engage in the following discussion:

Falstaff. But, Hal, I prithee trouble me no more with vanity; I would to God thou and I knew where a commodity of good names were to be bought. An old lord of the Council rated me the other day in the street about you, sir, but I mark'd him not, and yet he talk'd very wisely, but I regarded him not, and yet he talk'd wisely, and in the street too.

Prince. Thou didst well, for wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man regards it.

Falstaff. O, thou hast damnable iteration, and art indeed able to corrupt a saint. Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal, God forgive thee for it! Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing, and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked. I must give over this life, and I will give it over. By the Lord, and I do not, I am a villain, I'll be damn'd for never a king's son in Christendom.

Prince. Where shall we take a purse to-morrow, Jack?

Falstaff. 'Zounds, where thou wilt, lad, I'll make one, an' I do not, call me villain and baffle me.

Prince. I see a good amendment of life in thee, from praying to purse-taking.

Falstaff. Why, Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal, 'tis no sin for a man to labor in his vocation.

(I.ii.81-105)

The moment seems typical of the relationship, but Falstaff's promise to "give over this life" gathers special force here, coming as it does immediately before Hal's declaration of *his* intention to stage a reformation. Falstaff's promise of reformation patently lacks substance, or even genuine inclination--but what connection, if any, does the play ask us to make between it and the Prince's promise which follows on its heels? Could Falstaff's promise be a parody of Hal's?

Certainly, we can see it as such. The *Harper Handbook to Literature* contains the following entry for "Parody":

Originally, 'a song sung beside' another. From this idea of juxtaposition arose the two basic elements of parody, comedy and criticism. As comedy, parody exaggerates or distorts the prominent features of style or content in a work. As criticism, it mimics the work, borrowing words or phrases or characteristic turns of thought in order to highlight weaknesses of conception or expression.

The Prince's confidence, so evident in his soliloquy, in his ability to control matters--even his assurance that he can, by an act of will, "be himself" (200)--is at the heart of his and the play's plot, but Falstaff's laughable stab at self-determined reform provides us with an opportunity to question Hal's self-knowledge. In this way Falstaff "parodies" Hal by standing alongside of him and asking us (if we see the standing alongside of) to be critical of him.² But two aspects of this parody ought to strike our attention. The first is Hal's own

2. Of course, we can be critical of Falstaff too in this relation of standing-alongside-of. The prince may parody the scapegrace.

participation in it. True, Falstaff's "reformation" falls short, but Hal helps in that failure ("Where shall we take a purse to-morrow, Jack?"). If the scene parodies Hal's later resolve, he abets his own undercutting. The second is the positioning of the parody: it comes *before* the scene it parodies, an alignment that has at least two effects. First, it places the onus of noting the parodic relation on the reader, who is responsible to read "backward", from origin-as-parody to iteration-parodied. At the same time, such a practice of parody challenges our ordinary sense of the originary (which is usually what is parodied, after the fact of its occurrence); placing the parody before the object parodied calls into question the location of the origin. The Harper comment on parody cited above begins well, but in the end it suggests the same sort of origin/copy framework often applied to ideas about imitation (or "mimesis"). Shakespeare demonstrates in this brief scene from 1 Henry IV both that the origin of parody need not be fixed and that iteration need not be a matter of the derived or merely supplemental. In a play about history, a history play, the demonstration is apt.

Parody--or what could be considered parody--dominates II.iv, the scene which gives us 1 Henry IV's own play-within-the-play, the performance of the meeting between King Henry and the Prince that Falstaff and Hal enact (twice, switching roles for the second act). While this performance itself has a strong element of the parodic, parody is enacted earlier in this scene as well, introduced by Hal's reference to Hotspur, his arch-rival:

I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the north, he
that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast,

washes his hands, and says to his wife, "Fie upon this quiet life! I want work." "O my sweet Harry," says she, "how many hast thou kill'd to-day?" "Give my roan horse a drench," says he, and answers, "Some fourteen," an hour after; "a trifle, a trifle." I prithee call in Falstaff. I'll play Percy, and that damn'd brawn shall play Dame Mortimer his wife. "Rivo!" says the drunkard. Call in ribs, call in tallow.

(101-12)

This explicit and brief parodic swipe at Percy is meant, as Hal indicates, to serve merely as prologue to a longer satiric "play" on the Hotspur image, and indeed that longer play does unfold--though not in the way Hal envisages. The scene that follows can certainly be seen as a comedic critique of Hotspur, but the send-up is impromptu, and effected principally by Falstaff, not the Prince. When Sir John comes on stage swearing, boasting, complaining, and swaggering, he takes Hotspur's part, and relegates Hal to the role of questioner.

Falstaff. A plague of all cowards, still say I.

Prince. What's the matter?

Falstaff. What's the matter! There be four of us here have ta'en a thousand pound this day morning.

Prince. Where is it, Jack? where is it?

Falstaff. Where is it? taken from us it is: a hundred upon poor four of us.

Prince. What, a hundred, man?

Falstaff. I am a rogue if I were not at half-sword with a dozen of them two hours together.

(155-65)

The performance of the play effectively brings about a reversal of what Hal had promised in its induction: Falstaff assumes the role of Hotspur, and Hal plays Dame Mortimer his wife.³

Clearly this is not entirely anticipatory parody, since the scene giving us our first view of Percy and Lady Percy together immediately precedes it. Neither is it, as a parody of Hotspur, particularly damning,

3. In the forty-seven lines she speaks in II.iii, Lady Percy asks no fewer than eleven questions.

for not only is the parody introduced in II.iii by the real (though misguided) vigour of Hotspur, but it also ends by returning to that vigour in Falstaff's words concerning the grave danger the rebels' uprising represents:

But tell me, Hal, art not thou horrible afeared? Thou being heir-apparent, could the world pick thee out three such enemies again as that fiend Douglas, that spirit Percy, and that devil Glendower? Art thou not horribly afraid?
(365-70)

The critique of Hotspur here is, like Falstaff's lies, "open, palpable", and because Falstaff follows it up with a gesture betraying respect for Percy it is easy at the end of it to view Hotspur in a generous spirit. The less explicit parody in the scene is the more telling one. This is the parody of Hal that Falstaff's spontaneous and virtuoso performance invents. Hal intends to stage a certain play, to himself adopt a certain character and to force his companion into another--a subject--predetermined form. But Falstaff upstages the Prince, and in the process shows Hal's ability to write scripts for himself and the world around him to be suspect.

The "layered" quality of the parody in this scene creates a solidity of critical/comedic comment that is characteristic of 1 Henry IV's action. L. C. Knights remarks helpfully on how the play as a whole satirizes Hotspur's world--which is also King Henry's world, and (sometimes) Hal's--not only on occasion, but in a persistent and patterned way.

The reverberations of the sub-plot also help to determine our attitude towards the main action. The conspiracy of the Percys is sandwiched between the preparation for the Gadshill plot and counterplot and its execution. Poins has "lost much honour" that he did not see the "action" of the Prince with

the drawers. When we see the court we remember Falstaff's joint-stool throne and his account of Henry's hanging lip. Hotspur's pride in himself and his associates ("Is there not my father, my uncle and myself?") is parodied by Gadshill: "I am joined with no foot land-rakers, no long-staff sixpenny strikers . . . but with nobility and tranquility, burgomasters and great oneyers." (333-34)

In this woven text of parody, both plot and sub-plot "reverberate" on uncertain ground. Virtually all the play's scenes touch at once what has passed and what is to come, creating a drama in which all actions are interdependent--born of all others, and giving birth to all. Yet while the play thus suggests how action is indeed "solid", the texture of this solidity seems more like web than rock. As Knights says, "satire implies a standard, and in Henry IV the validity of the standard itself is questioned" (335).

While I Henry IV's confluence of action makes such a term somewhat unnecessary, II.iv shifts to a more explicit "anticipatory parody" with the news of the impending war. Falstaff initiates the shift, but Hal again shows his willingness to enter into the very parodic action which threatens his image as the one in command.

Falstaff. Well, thou wilt be horribly chid to-morrow when thou comest to thy father. If thou love me, practice an answer.

Prince. Do thou stand for my father and examine me upon the particulars of my life.

Falstaff. Shall I? Content.

(373-78)

The scene the two enact looks forward to the meeting of the King and Hal that will take place in III.ii (or, as Falstaff says, "to-morrow"), and illustrates well Knights' point that in Henry IV satire cuts both ways. We may indeed have Falstaff's joint-stool in mind when we later come to the dialogue of King and Prince, and find the serious meeting undercut

for that reason, but a second target of the parody here is Falstaff himself.

This latter parody is effected on two fronts. First, a comparison of the two meetings (II.iv/III.ii) shows that whereas Falstaff is at the centre of the meetings of King and Prince which he helps to orchestrate--whether as "virtuous" (417) or "reverent Vice" (453), he dominates the two "Acts" of II.iv's play--he is absent from the father-son talk of III.ii, apart from the King's oblique and dismissive references to "rude society" (14), "vulgar company" (41), and "vile participation" (87). A second undercutting of Falstaff is more violent. Not only is Falstaff's self-aggrandisement parodied; his trust in and reliance upon Hal's friendship also are judged in the play-within-the-play. Falstaff initiates the play and carries the show for much of the way, but in the end Hal is the one with the power--and the willingness--to depose. His one lengthy speech begins thus: "Swearest thou, ungracious boy? henceforth ne'er look on me" (445-46). The utterance meets its complement and confirmation at the play-within-the-play's end, where Hal follows Falstaff's excessive, exuberant and comic plea in his own defence--a plea which concludes, "banish plump Jack, and banish all the world" (479-80)--with a deposition very much to the point: "I do, I will" (481). These words too are anticipatory; they may be sung beside a later moment in the text of Shakespeare's tetralogy, that moment at the end of 2 Henry IV when Hal, now King Henry V, publicly turns away from his old acquaintance:

Falstaff. My King, my Jove! I speak to thee, my heart!

King. I know thee not, old man, fall to thy prayers.

How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester!
(V.v.46-48)

As I have described it, II.iv contains two "acts", not only in the sense that the play-within-the-play proper is divided by a role-reversal in the middle--"Dost thou speak like a king? Do thou stand for me, and I'll play my father" (433-34)--but also in that while the early part of the scene shows Falstaff overthrowing Hal's control in the Hotspur parody, the play-within-the-play shows Hal resuming control in the parody of Falstaff. Playing thus serves different and conflicting ends in 1 Henry IV. Or perhaps I should say it serves different and conflicting beginnings; after the Prince loses his authority in this scene through the play on Hotspur, he regains it through the play on the future meeting of himself and his father.

The utterance that most definitively signals Hal's return to authority--"I do, I will"--is of special interest. This "sentence" is two sentences, both performative utterances. But while both are concerned with banishing Falstaff (and all the world), to say that the first is a promise for the present (the play) and the second a promise for the future (for a time and place outside the play) is to tell only part of the story, for both take place within the play (within the play), and that play-world allows for--even invents--the fundamental contemporaneity of the two utterances. The action of banishing Falstaff in the play embodies banishing him in the future: they are not two actions, but one. The play-within-the-play does not exhaust Hal's act of rejection, it releases the *energeia* of it. To say 'I do' here *is* to say 'I will' later, and at the moment of the later 'I will' (2 Henry IV V.v) the Prince could as a matter of course say as well 'I already have'. But despite the

import of the drama within the play, the unity of its action, and the way the larger play takes up that action in its encompassing solidity, the Prince doesn't establish (or re-establish) his control once and for all with its end. Though this play concludes with his terse comment, Falstaff's own energy has not yet been exhausted. "[P]lay out the play," he says when the Sheriff's entrance disrupts the scene, "I have much to say on behalf of that Falstaff" (484-85). Indeed he does.

Up to this point I have used the word "parody" broadly, choosing to take the first part of the Harper's definition--"Originally, 'a song sung beside' another"--as more apt than the second part of that definition, which implies the copied nature of parody. Such a choice, necessary if one wishes to call the play-within-the-play of *1 Henry IV* parody, seems to me a legitimate proceeding; the play-meeting is certainly "beside" the play's "real" meeting, though not strictly speaking a copy of it. But, of course, **everything** in a text is "beside" everything else, and so potentially thus broadly parodic in effect. To see parody as such, then, is to allow us to take our choice as to its object(s). We can write in the parody as we see fit--in much the way Falstaff and Hal do themselves. One word for this activity--which is the reader's as well as the play's--is "practice". This is the term Falstaff uses to introduce the play-within-the-play ("If thou love me, practice an answer"), and the several meanings the word carries makes it an especially appropriate one for the working-through of the drama. Two meanings are particularly relevant: practice as activity, and practice as repetition.

The play-within-the-play of *1 Henry IV* shows releasing the energy of action--which is activity in practice, or drama--to be the

prerogative not merely of history but also of the history play. To see more clearly the nature of this activity, we can contrast to the self-consciously "dramatic" meetings of father and son in II.iv the later meeting of III.ii.

King. God pardon thee! yet let me wonder, Harry,
 At thy affections, which do hold a wing
 Quite from the flight of all thy ancestors. . . .
 Had I so lavish of my presence been,
 So common-hackney'd in the eyes of men,
 So stale and cheap to vulgar company,
 Opinion, that did help me to the crown,
 Had still kept loyal to possession,
 And left me in reputeless banishment,
 A fellow of no mark nor likelihood.
 By being seldom seen, I could not stir
 But like a comet I was wond' red at,
 That men would tell their children, "This is he";
 Others would say, "Where, which is Bullingbrook?"
 And then I stole all courtesy from heaven,
 And dress'd myself in such humility
 That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
 Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,
 Even in the presence of the crowned King.
 Thus did I keep my person fresh and new,
 My presence, like a robe pontifical,
 Ne'er seen but wond' red at, and so my state,
 Seldom but sumptuous, show'd like a feast,
 And wan by rareness such solemnity.
 The skipping King, he ambled up and down,
 With shallow jesters, and rash bavin wits,
 Soon kindled and soon burnt, carded his state,
 Mingled his royalty with cap'ring fools,
 Had his great name profaned with their scorns,
 And gave his countenance, against his name,
 To laugh at gibing boys, and stand the push
 Of every beardless vain comparative,
 Grew a companion to the common streets,
 Enfeoff'd himself to popularity,
 That, being daily swallowed by men's eyes,
 They surfeited with honey and began
 To loathe the taste of sweetness, whereof a little
 More than a little is by much too much. . . .
 And in that very line, Harry, standest thou,
 For thou hast lost thy princely privilege
 With vile participation. . . .
Prince. I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord,
 Be more myself.
King. For all the world

As thou art to this hour was Richard then
 When I from France set foot at Ravenspurgh,
 And even as I was then is Percy now. . . .
 What never-dying honor hath he got
 Against renowned Douglas! . . .
Prince. . . . Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
 To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf;
 And I will call him to so strict account
 That he will render every glory up. . . .
 (29-150)

With this scene Hal is no longer in the realm of play, but of serious business. Concurrently, he is no longer in the world of practice as dramatic activity, but practice as repetition, or (strictly speaking) imitation. The gaze here is consistently directed backward: the king (who begins the discussion by wondering if his son's misbehaviour is meant as a punishment for his own past "mistreadings" [11]) defines Hal--and, I suspect, his own present, unpopular self--against his own past self, whom he in turn defines against the king who preceded him (Richard). Then he defines Hotspur by the same process (in contrast to Richard and Douglas, in comparison to his past self)--which means of definition Hal accepts and himself adopts, revealing to the King his plan to define himself against Hotspur. While the Prince intends to go beyond Hotspur, the approach both he and his father employ is imitative--they see the future as formed in the terms established by a past model.

It is a common approach--we saw the Prince attempt it in I.ii--but it is not the only approach. Falstaff's theme is not comprehended by such repetitive 'imitation', but constitutes a fuller practice, as his exercise of parody without regard for temporal sequence illustrates. Parody and Falstaff meet once again at the very end of the play, in the battle scene of V.iv. Falstaff, who has been watching Hal and Hotspur

fight, is challenged himself by Douglas who, the stage directions tell us, "fighteth with Falstaff. He [Falstaff] falls down as if he were dead. Exit Douglas. The Prince kills Percy." After a generous tribute to the vanquished Hotspur, Hal "spieth Falstaff on the ground":

What, old acquaintance! could not all this flesh
Keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell!
I could have better spar'd a better man.
O, I should have a heavy miss of thee
If I were much in love with vanity!
Death hath not strook so fat a deer to-day,
Though many dearer, in this bloody fray.
Embowell'd will I see thee by and by,
Till then in blood by noble Percy lie.

Exit. Falstaff riseth up.

Falstaff. Embowell'd! if thou embowel me to-day, I'll give you leave to powder me and eat me too tomorrow. 'Sblood, 'twas time to counterfeit, or that hot Termagent Scot had paid me scot and lot too. Counterfeit? I lie, I am no counterfeit. To die is to be a counterfeit, for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man; but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. The better part of valor is discretion, in the which better part I have sav'd my life. 'Zounds, I am afraid of this gun-powder Percy though he be dead. How if he should counterfeit too and rise? By my faith, I am afraid he would prove the better counterfeit. Therefore I'll make him sure, yea, and I'll swear I kill'd him. Why may not he rise as well as I? Nothing confutes me but eyes, and nobody sees me. Therefore, sirrah [*stabbing him*], with a new wound in your thigh, come you along with me. *He takes up Hotspur on his back.*

Enter Prince and John of Lancaster.

Prince. Come, brother John, full bravely hast thou flesh'd

Thy maiden sword.

Lancaster. But soft, whom have we here?
Did you not tell me this fat man was dead?

Prince. I did, I saw him dead,
Breathless and bleeding on the ground. Art thou alive?

Or is it fantasy that plays upon our eyesight?
I prithee speak, we will not trust our eyes
Without our ears: thou art not what thou seem'st.

Falstaff. No, that's certain, I am not a double man; but if I be not Jack Falstaff, then am I a Jack. There is Percy [*throwing the body down*]. If your father will do me any honor, so; if not, let him kill the next Percy himself. I look to be either earl or duke, I can assure you. . . .

Exeunt Prince and Lancaster

I'll follow, as they say, for reward. He that rewards me, God reward him! If I do grow great, I'll grow less, for I'll purge and leave sack, and live cleanly as a nobleman should do.

(V.iv.102-65)

This is a comical scene that reminds us also of the comedic, insofar as in comedy mortification of a sort plays a part in the development or reformation of individual characters and the movement towards a newly coherent social order.⁴ Here, after this pattern, we have Falstaff dying and returning to life; we have Falstaff reborn. In this rebirth, however, something is missing--namely, change. The Falstaff who falls and the Falstaff who resurrects are precisely the same Falstaff, despite his promise to "live cleanly as a nobleman should do." "I am not a double man," Falstaff quite rightly observes.

Thus Falstaff parodies the very notion of comic mortification, but his suspect rebirth is furthermore an implicit parody of Hal, who of course has been planning a rebirth of his own, and evidently has just acted on that plan by leading the forces loyal to his father and defeating Hotspur. With Hal's triumph over his chief rival, it would seem that he has attained his objectives as stated in I.ii: Hal, apparently, has completed the action he had planned all along. For this reason, the positioning of Falstaff's parodic rebirth warrants our attention. Immediately following the Prince's moment of triumph, it undercuts the Prince in a way that is hard to justify by means of a look backward to the martial action we have just witnessed, but which we will find in accordance with what is to come in 2 Henry IV.

4. Sylvester Stallone observed in a recent interview that in writing unsuccessful screenplays before the first Rocky he "hadn't yet realized you have to die in the *middle* of the movie and be reborn at the end" (Sports Illustrated Nov. 12, 1990).

The relation between the two parts of *Henry IV* has received more than a little critical attention, and a number of commentators have noted what seems to me its outstanding quality: repetition. M. A. Shaaber, for example, notices "the similarity of the structure of the two plays. Structurally *2 Henry IV* is almost a carbon copy of the first play" (303). Shaaber develops his point in what follows:

in the second [play] the clock is turned back most flagrantly. At the end of *1 Henry IV* the king and the prince are **en rapport** and united against the Welsh; in *2 Henry IV* we find them estranged all over again so that they must be reconciled a second time. No new cause of misunderstanding is shown; the situation simply reverts to what it was in the beginning. (304)

As he says, Shaaber is arguing against those critics--in particular J. Dover Wilson and E. M. W. Tillyard--who "have offered us interpretations of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays which assume that these plays form a unified whole" (298). After demonstrating the close correspondence of "the order of the historical and the comic scenes" in the two plays, Shaaber provides the following summary comment:

The question is, then, would Shakespeare be more likely to plan the plays in this fashion if he were working out, in a single fit of creation, a play of ten acts or if, after *1 Henry IV* proved a resounding success, he aimed at repeating it? To me the latter view is the more probable. (304)

Another critic who has called attention to the similarity of the two parts of *Henry IV* is James L. Calderwood. "Part 2," Calderwood writes, "is not the successor to Part 1--there is no creative advance involved--it is its shadow" (119). Part 2, he goes on to state,

is necessarily a holding action. *Henry IV* can no more succeed *Henry IV* than Bolingbroke can succeed Bolingbroke. It can only linger out the life that was in the earlier play while repeating its formal structure, its dramatic order.

Shakespeare is engaged not in an advance but in a doubling back, not in creation but in re-creation. (126-27)

As a re-creation not of history but of literature and of a particular dramatic form, Calderwood argues, *2 Henry IV* accords with the political realities of Bullingbroke's reign. "Like Henry's reign," he explains, "*2 Henry IV* represents a marking of time" (126), and "[t]he cost of retracing the pattern of *1 Henry IV* . . . is nothing less than dramatic form. The old order survives, but emptily, and preserving it is seen to be at odds with the formal obligations imposed on the dramatist by the sequential nature of his art" (128), just as the deposition of Richard is at odds with the conventionally sequential nature of the divinely ordained hereditary monarchy.

While Shaaber looks to the repetition in *2 Henry IV* of *1 Henry IV* as an argument against the view that the two parts of *Henry IV* are "a single play" (Tillyard 295), noticing the parallel structures of the two plays hardly commits us to the view that the two plays cannot in fact form a coherent and unified whole. Calderwood moves toward joining parallelism and unity with his analysis of how the repetition of *2 Henry IV* helps embody Shakespeare's political thesis. A. R. Humphreys, following closely the lead of Harold Jenkins, joins the two perspectives even more effectively in his Arden Introduction to Part 2. Jenkins' argument, writes Humphreys,

is presented most thoughtfully, lucidly, and persuasively. To that part of it which argues for the paradox of simultaneous independence and interdependence of the two parts there can be nothing but assent--each play requires the other, yet each stands on its own. As for the problem by which Hal, redeemed in Part 1, is unredeemed again in Part 2, with no one showing any cognizance of the excellence he so eminently displayed at Shrewsbury--that problem is beautifully dealt with by the observation that "there is a type of hero whose adventures

always can recur", that "in folk-lore, though not in history, you can be at the same point twice". Prince Hal is a folk-lore hero, as well as a historical person. His glory at the end of Part 1, and his ignominy in the early scenes of Part 2, are not a matter of reform and relapse, the purely naturalistic process Johnson pointed towards in saying, "The trifler is roused into a hero, and the hero reposes again in the trifler. This character is great, original, and just." No: Shakespeare's psychology with Hal is not wholly naturalistic, any more than it is when he gives him the apparently cynical but in reality merely expository soliloquy in Part 1, I.ii. Naturalistically, Hal would not, after redeeming himself at Shrewsbury, be thought of by almost everybody as a wastrel, his merits unrecognized. But symbolically, demonstratively, or parabolically he may be shown going through two quite separate moral evolutions which the play's chronology presents as successive but which in fact are in parallel. "In the two parts of Henry IV there are not two princely reformations but two versions of a single reformation. And they are mutually exclusive," Professor Jenkins excellently says. (xxvi)

Humphreys' suggestion that what seems successive is in fact parallel, or contemporaneous, brings to mind once again Carlyle's maxim: "Narrative is linear; Action is solid". Is the drama limited in the same way as narrative? Humphreys' recourse to what "the play's chronology" demands (that is, a "successive" action) invites us to answer in the affirmative; his analysis of how action is made parallel by means of its successive replication (in Part 2) compels us to pursue the matter further.

Of course, language itself necessarily works by means of linear succession--all language, in whatever form (dramatic, narrative, lyric, scientific). The challenge for the poet is to join succession and solidity. Beginning in I.i with a report of Hotspur's death, 2 Henry IV. seems at its outset a model of linearity, a representation of the progress of the history of Shakespeare's characters after Shrewsbury in keeping with the manner we might have expected to find in Holinshed. But a funny thing happens in Part 2: it ends up seeming more cyclical than linear.

We get, as the critics cited above suggest, the feeling that we have read this story before--as indeed we have, in Part 1.

But perhaps there is something appropriate about this experience when the mimetic encounter happens to be with history, that most linear and cyclical of all human constructs. In observing that "[the historian] tells what happened, . . . the [poet] tells the sort of things that can happen" (APA 1451a39), Aristotle asks us to acknowledge the probability or necessity of the effective dramatic action, and so of dramatic form. In assigning to the poet such a scope, Aristotle looks toward how the humanity we all share naturally plays itself out in certain actions. But where in the dichotomy of history and poetry does the history play fit? Aristotle's position on the question can most readily be seen in his assertion, cited earlier, that "even if it turns out that [the poet] is making [his work] out of actual events, he is none the less a poet . . . the maker of those events" (APA 1451b30-32). As a form of dramatic mimesis, the history play tells both what did happen and what does happen. In its use of parody and practice, *Henry IV* explores especially the latter of these two concerns, showing how history unleashes action into a world of relations and political pressures. In that world an action can be purified or lost, it can serve as parody or can itself be parodied, it can be re-defined and itself define the actions and characters around it. Chronological order in such a dynamic environment matters less than might be expected. When action is contemporaneous--when it is what does happen--it will always be beside itself, any way you look at it.

It would be tempting to forward the backward-looking meeting of 1 Henry IV III.ii as a telling of what did happen and the anticipatory

parody of II.iv as a mimesis of what does happen, but the matter is not so straightforward. The meeting Shakespeare records in Act III is not in fact what did happen, at least according to Holinshed, the dramatist's principal source. Holinshed's account of the father-son encounter is clearly the foundation for the meeting of 1 Henry IV, but it is not a foundation that summarily determined Shakespeare's treatment of history. To begin with, there is only a single private conference between King Henry and Hal in Holinshed, but Shakespeare gives us two meetings--one in Part 1 and a second in Part 2 (IV.v.89-180)--each of which uses certain elements from Holinshed's singular history. This "splitting" of the historical data reminds us that no historical text--and pre-eminently no historical drama--comes to us as a perfect copy of a past action ("what did happen"). In this case Shakespeare projects from the action of Part 1 into a future time and place (the action of Part 2) the King's grievous illness and Hal's offer of his life (ll. 142-46). He can do this because he is not only copying the past, but in part making it--and making, in the process, the presence and form of the present.

A. D. Nuttall describes Falstaff as a myriad-minded "genius with words" who "might in fact be an ectype of Shakespeare himself" (154). I find the suggestion just. The scene in Part 1 in which Falstaff ruminates that to live is to counterfeit is also the one in which he states "I am not a double man" (V.iv.138). Typically, the apparent contradiction belies a deeper truth. Counterfeiting involves duplicity (involves being "a double man"), but it requires as well unity--not only the unity of the counterfeit action, but also the unity of the counterfeitor who makes that action history, who textualizes the "ever-

living, ever-working Chaos of Being" and thereby embodies it in a form that is new, and yet as old as history.

In *1 Henry IV* parody and origin exist not in any particular order, but contemporaneously, just as in tragedy, according to Aristotle, "what can happen" can be "what did happen". Falstaff's "practice" is the activity of making history dramatically. Contemporaneity of action is not, however, peculiar to the history play; it is endemic to the drama of mimesis, which characteristically maintains dualities. The play-within-the-play in *Hamlet* stands at once for past crime and future nemesis--which dualism there implies that the past/future split is part but not the whole of the story with respect to the crime/nemesis opposition. Past and future can exist at once in the present tense (tension) of mimesis. In a complementary fashion, metadrama in *Hamlet* joins audience and text in a relation in which the activities of both are part of the over-arching action. The old joke defines the bureaucrat as the one who asks us to remember that just because something works in practice is no reason to believe that it will work in theory. The way Shakespeare allows various gaps and splits to work in the practice--the practical operation--of his plays might demonstrate to the bureaucrats among us that theory should be informed by practice, as well as practice by theory. The splits between audience and performance in *Hamlet*, or difference and repetition in *1 Henry IV*, or past and present in both, do not function to rule individuals, action, or individual action out of court; rather, the opposition or collision of these splits serves to propel action. But action--and individuals--in a world of such collisions will not be entirely self-determinate, and even if we call it self-determinating, the nature of that "self"-hood will be in part dependent

upon and formed by the relational nature of the action that determines it.

When Whalley says that "form is simply what the thing becomes and is" (AC 101), he posits on the one hand a difference between the two states of becoming and being while on the other he suggests how they come together (in "form"). In the world of history, the difference between becoming and being is hard to pin down: a thing is whatever it becomes, and its becoming is the quality of its nature. Like Falstaff, Hal too engages in the practice of making what he imitates. In his early soliloquy he suggests that when "he please again to be himself" he will act on that wish (I.ii.200). He repeats the intention in his meeting with his father: "I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord, / Be more myself" (III.ii.92-93). As it turns out, Hal accomplishes this project; his confidence proves to be well-founded, in both parts of *Henry IV*. But it is not simply a case of "finding one's self", as if that identity had been misplaced, or deliberately set aside. The ability to be oneself is contingent upon the ability to *make* oneself, which is what Hal accomplishes through the parallel actions of *Henry IV* Parts 1 and 2 (as well as the practice of Part 1's play-within-the-play). To counterfeit, Falstaff says, is "the true and perfect image of life" (V.iv.119). To counterfeit: to make (*facere*) a counterpart. Such opposition, such parodying and foiling, is the stuff of life--and art.

"The *praxis*," as Whalley says, "makes the characters what they are" (OT 71). Aristotle names *praxis* as the centre of tragedy. With a similarity suggested by etymology, the history play 1. *Henry IV* has *practice* at its centre. "If you love me," Falstaff says to his friend Hal, "practice an answer." In history, as in all literary endeavours, our

practice as readers of texts is necessary, not because in itself that practice makes texts perfect (complete) but because the form of history always requires us to serve in the cause of its self-determination. Near the end of *2 Henry IV*, though before his own rude termination, the Archbishop of York makes the following comment on the King:

No, no, my lord, note this: the King is weary
 Of dainty and such picking grievances,
 For he hath found to end one doubt by death
 Revives two greater in the heirs of life;
 And therefore will he wipe his tables clean
 And keep no tell-tale to his memory
 That may repeat and history his loss
 To new remembrance; for full well he knows
 He cannot so precisely weed this land
 As his misdoubts present occasion.
 (IV.i.195-204)

I find the note a good one on which to end this chapter, seeing that it gives me the opportunity to reiterate that just as mimesis is not a product but a process, history is not a noun but a verb.

CHAPTER FOUR

Drama and the Dramatic Monologue

In the following chapter I want to offer a few suggestions as to what makes dramatic monologues dramatic, an effort that will involve further exploration of the nature of the person whose integrity arises from his acts and his relation with those who act alongside him and (sometimes) in response to him. This exploration will naturally touch on the relations that occur within the aesthetic triad, as well as on the relation between character and action as that relation constitutes what Aristotle called the **drama** of tragedy. I will pay particular attention in what follows to certain of Robert Langbaum's comments on the dramatic monologue as they appear in *The Poetry of Experience*, for Langbaum's argument seems to me to suggest (somewhat in despite of itself) how many of the most interesting questions that we can ask of drama we should also ask of the dramatic monologue.

Part of Langbaum's concern is to differentiate between "traditional drama", which "imitates or illustrates a complete idea," and the dramatic monologue, which "projects a partial and problematical idea, a point of view." When we misread "old plays", Langbaum says, it is often because we confuse these two forms.

Instead of subordinating the points of view of the characters to the general perspective and allowing the plot to determine our judgements, we allow the central character to have his way with us; we see the play through his point of view and as an episode in his career. We turn the complete drama into an incomplete one. We turn it into a dramatic monologue. (158-59)

Through the course of the following discussion I want to perform precisely the reverse of the operation Langbaum here warns us of: I

want to turn the dramatic monologue into a drama. But in fact Langbaum himself, at points in his discussion at least, encourages such a performance. Quite justly, Langbaum argues that

It is when we look inside the dramatic monologue, when we consider its effect, its way of meaning, that we see its connection with the poetry that precedes and follows Browning. We see, on the one hand, that the dramatic monologue is unprecedented in its effect, that its effect distinguishes it, in spite of mechanical resemblance, from the monologues of traditional poetry; and on the other hand, we welcome as particularly illuminating just those "approximations" that distress the classifiers. We welcome them because, having without the mechanical resemblance the same effect as the so-called "typical" dramatic monologues, they show us what the form is essentially doing. (77-78)

In asking us to consider "what the form is essentially doing," Langbaum asks us to take up the question posed by both Whalley and Fish ("What does this poem do?"). I hope in the remainder of this discussion to unravel something of that doing, pausing here only to note with interest where the emphasis lies in Langbaum's ambition as he declares it in this passage. In looking to what a dramatic monologue does, Langbaum turns our attention not to questions about character, but action; thus he asks us to consider the dramatic monologue in terms of its drama after all.

An important part of Langbaum's analysis is his treatment of the dramatic monologue as "a closed circuit" (191), a form wherein "inadequately motivated and ineffectual utterances are addressed ultimately across the dramatic situation and across the ostensible auditor to some projection of the speaker for whom the superfluous element of the utterance is intended" (190). Whether the speaker, Langbaum writes,

is St Simeon adding up the sum of his mortifications, or Ulysses explaining his personal reasons for the voyage to

mariners who will undertake it in any case, . . . the speaker does not use his utterance to expound a meaning but to pursue one, a meaning which comes to him with the shock of revelation. The speaker's pursuit of meaning accounts for the tone of improvisation in the best dramatic monologues, as well as for the speaker's rapt absorption in what he is saying and his strange lack of connection with the auditor. The meaning the speaker pursues is precisely his Song, his life's meaning. To prolong that illuminating music, he prolongs his utterance--losing sight of its ostensible motivation and of the person towards whom it is ostensibly directed. (189)

The utterance of the dramatic monologue, Langbaum explains, "is in its ultimate effect a private dialogue of the speaker with himself" (196-97).

Carol T. Christ, writing in *Victorian and Modern Poetics*, sees the dramatic monologue form in a similar light, though she acknowledges that any speaker's "lack of connection" with the outside world is only a "potential" one. "Tennyson, like Browning," she writes, "uses the dramatic monologue to control and objectify the potential solipsism of personal vision" (26). Her comments on particular poems of Tennyson, however, suggest how liable this potential is to be realized.

The speakers of Tennyson's dramatic monologues characteristically poise themselves between the threat and the attraction that the world and death alike compose. The monologue becomes a way for the character to insulate himself from both fears by constructing a world of his own imagining which completely contains the self. It at once offers a narcissistic substitute for the world that is desired while it rationalizes rejection of that world. It protects the speaker from the pain of involvement in the very way that makes death attractive while it staves off death by the process of speaking.

It is easy to see how these paradoxes work in poems like "Tithonus" and "The Lotos-Eaters," which explicitly concern the speaker's difference from the world he inhabits and his yearning for oblivion. "Ulysses" no less concerns the self's desire to contain a world that carries the danger of both alienation and death. Ulysses turns from Ithaca because of the unrecognition that characteristically affects Tennyson's seers. He wants to construct a world that constantly declaims him: "I am become a name." "I am a part of all that I have met." Yet the untraveled world, the world that the self has not made its own, creates a constant anxiety prodding him

forth on a voyage that can only end in death. Ulysses resists the limits that both the world and death impose by an eternal process of self-engorgement. . . . Like "The Lotos-Eaters," like "Tithonus," "Ulysses" suggests Tennyson's concern with the way in which man resists the world's difference from the self by reconstructing the world in his own image. (27-28)

Thus both Langbaum and Christ imply that the speakers of dramatic monologues speak within closed, solipsistic worlds. The speaker seeks to learn "something about himself," his "Song, his life's meaning" (Langbaum). The speakers "protect" themselves by becoming "absorbed" in "personal vision"; they are "self-engorged" (Christ). For both critics, the dramatic monologue gives us an individual "reconstructing the world in his own image."

Langbaum and Christ make this claim for the dramatic monologue form despite the fact that its action seems to depend upon an important external agent: namely, an audience. Ina Beth Sessions' account of the dramatic monologue form is perhaps too formulaic, but her view that two characteristics of all dramatic monologues are the presence in the poem of an identifiable audience and "interplay between speaker and audience" (508) seems to me right-minded. Langbaum himself, despite his conception of the form as a closed circuit and even though he does not hide his dislike for what he considers to be Sessions' "mechanical" approach (78), allows for the place of these two elements. Langbaum's comments on "Childe Roland", however, indicate that he does not see these requirements as necessarily "opening" the circuit of the form's action: the audience in Browning's poem, he suggests, is the knight himself, and there is interplay between speaker and audience insofar as the poem is an utterance the knight "directs outward to a projection of himself" (197).

In advancing this reading of "Childe Roland", Langbaum explains how the drama of the knight's "dialogue with himself" (198) is in keeping with the untraditional, incomplete and "essentially circular movement of all dramatic monologues":

it is the whole technique of the dramatic monologue to set one element of the poem against the other in order to cast doubt upon the validity and meaning of each, in order to render the circumstances and ideas only half substantial so as to break up the normal progress of drama outward and return us at every point to the speaker for the rationale of the poem.

The result is to make the outward movement of the poem a device for returning inward, to make the dramatic situation the occasion for lyric expression; so that in effect the speaker directs his address outward in order to address himself, and makes an objective discovery in order to discover himself. No matter how dramatic the dramatic monologue is, no matter how far outward it moves, its development is lyrical in that the speaker does not develop outward toward an external ideal, he does not change moral direction as a result of the circumstances; he rather makes the circumstances a part of himself as he develops inward toward an intenser manifestation of his own nature. (200)

Christ indicates a similar though perhaps less optimistic understanding of the form's lyric circularity when she suggests that "Childe Roland" demonstrates "the prison of self which the speaker constructs in attempting to encompass and control his world" (19). Browning, she writes, "uses the dramatic monologue to portray the ways in which the self circumscribes its world" (21). While Langbaum does not speak of "the prison of self" as Christ does, his analysis of the dramatic monologue's speaker's self-concern implies a comparable limitation.

It is interesting to note, however, how Langbaum's analysis of "Childe Roland" softens somewhat the sharp distinction he makes between "action" and "character" as these appear in the traditional drama. Langbaum grants to action a broader scope in his discussion of the dramatic monologue than we find in his account of drama, where he

seems to equate action with plot. In terms of *plot*, Langbaum says, the dramatic monologue gives us very little. "We expect the dramatic utterance to alter things in some way, to leave us in the end in advance of where we started" (188), but the utterance of the dramatic monologue doesn't satisfy this expectation insofar as it leaves the situation at the poem's end pretty much what it was at the beginning. "The speakers never accomplish anything by their utterance, and seem to know from the beginning that they will not" (183). Despite this lack of movement, however, Langbaum finds that in fact a lot does go on in dramatic monologues--specifically within the protagonists of these poems (again, despite the fact that there is no "advance": "the speakers of dramatic monologues never change their minds" [152]). About the knight in "Childe Roland", Langbaum suggests that when he "finally achieves the Dark Tower, it is not because the forward movement has brought him there but because of a transformation of consciousness" (192). This "marks no sort of progress" (192), Langbaum says on the one hand, and yet the knight's blast of his horn at the poem's end is a triumph of sorts:

it is a triumph of the knight's own personality. He has added a new side to his nature, he has exercised and expanded his will and consciousness, he has transmuted a hateful reality into experience and thus into a triumphant acquisition. (195)

Thus character and action can meet in the dramatic monologue. The speaker of a dramatic monologue, Langbaum argues, pursues a meaning "which comes to him with the shock of revelation" (189)--or, as he also calls it, "the shock of recognition" (49).

Now this, it seems to me, is to speak of the dramatic monologue in terms which call directly to mind the "old plays" of traditional drama,

despite Langbaum's desire to keep the two forms quite distinct.

Langbaum identifies Aristotle (in whose *Poetics* of course "the shock of recognition" is a principal concern) as the leading spokesman for the traditional drama, and proposes that the *Poetics* "has much to teach us about modern literature [the dramatic monologue, for example]--just because it so illuminatingly does not apply" (210). This illuminating irrelevance arises because "[t]he whole point" of the dramatic monologue "is to present not the Aristotelian complete action but habitual action" (157).

Since the speaker's death is the only ultimate conclusion of a dramatic monologue, the dramatic monologue must be read not as a definitive unit, a complete action, but as a characteristic and characterizing episode in the speaker's career. (157)

Langbaum goes on to say that Aristotle's interest in "a metaphysically objective morality" (210) limited him to a "strictly mechanical" (214) drama wherein characters were merely types, and actions (that is, the events of the plot) not much better. "[W]here action rather than character is the primary object of imitation," Langbaum writes, "the events must have only as much meaning and the agents as much character as the generalization requires"; thus Aristotle offers us a poetics of "moral generalization" and "prescribed moral pattern[s]" (215).

The modern poet of experience, Langbaum says, seeks to avoid this old-fashioned art of "moral equation" (215), but the spectre of "the mechanical" may in fact be turned against Langbaum's own model of the unchanging, self-enclosed character(s) of the dramatic monologue. In an essay on *Pride and Prejudice*, Tony Tanner writes insightfully of how, as Jane Austen knew, society demands of us all the performance of certain roles. Austen, Tanner writes, "certainly believed in the value of

the social rituals of her time--be they only balls, dinners, evening entertainments--and would have seen them, at their best, as ceremonies and celebrations of the values of the community" (26-27). One of the dangers of such a societal demand, however, is that individuals will become *merely* role-players, in which event the person beneath the actor--the one who might assert "some independence from the patterns of thought which have predetermined [her] readings of things" (7-8)--will be lost.

While those who give up this independence would seem likely to accommodate their society by virtue of their complaisance, in fact they pose (as we see in *Pride and Prejudice*) a threat to that society for being unthinking. Austen, writes Tanner, was well aware of how

the failings of some of the performers--insensitivity, malice, arrogance, foolishness, and so on--could spoil the ritual, and transform a ceremony to be enjoyed into a nightmare to be endured, as Elizabeth has so often to endure her mother's agonizing ceremonial violations. But although we are all role players for much of the time we spend with other people, there will obviously be a difference between those people who are unaware of the fact--who disappear into their roles, as it were--and those who are at all times quite aware that the particular role they are performing in any one particular situation is not to be identified as their whole self, that they have facets and dimensions of character which cannot always be revealed on every occasion. The former type of person may sometimes appear to be something of an automaton, incapable of reflection and detachment, while the latter type may often wish to make a gesture of disengagement from the roles he is called on to play, to indicate that he has not become mindlessly imprisoned in those roles. (27)

Pride and Prejudice is a comedy not because everyone in the novel "plays their part", but because some of its characters have sufficient freedom *not* to play the roles society expects of them. The most important events in the novel as Tanner identifies them--"a man changes his manners and a young lady changes her mind" (7)--express this

freedom in terms of the potential for change. In contrast to Langbaum, Tanner speaks of this **freedom** as it appears in Pride and Prejudice in distinctly dramatic, Aristotelian terms. The novel, he writes,

is a drama of recognition--re-cognition, that act by which the mind can look again at a thing and if necessary make revisions and amendments until it sees the thing as it really is. As such it is thematically related to the dramas of recognition which constitute the great tradition of Western tragedy--Oedipus Rex, King Lear, Phaedra--albeit the drama has now shifted to the comic mode, as is fitting in a book which is not about the finality of the individual death but the ongoingness of social life. (8)

Thus Tanner denies that the characters of the traditional drama are, as Langbaum suggests, "strictly mechanical", and furthermore helps us to see more clearly the context in which the dramatic monologue can be (as Langbaum says) a drama of recognition--whether that recognition belongs to speaker or audience. This context is not one in which the speaker is an "automaton", "mindlessly imprisoned" in his desires and performance, but one wherein detachment and engagement, freedom and necessity, both operate.

In my attempt to examine this context, I will begin with "Ulysses" and "Tithonus", two poems that Tennyson began shortly after his friend Arthur Hallam's death in 1833. "Ulysses", Tennyson said, "gave my feeling about the need of going forward, and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in In Memoriam" (Memoirs 1.196). Much of the power that the poem generates from its theme arises from the fact that Ulysses' utterance is not a closed circuit, but one which opens onto the world beyond him. Who is audience to Ulysses' words? As has often been proposed, there appear to be several audiences. The poem's opening movement (1-32), a lyric meditation which Ulysses

addresses to himself if to anyone at all, is followed by Ulysses' public address to the people of Ithaca (33-43), which is in turn followed by his call to the mariners with whom he is about to sail. While these voices are themselves distinct, they are not entirely closed to each other; there is a certain interanimation at work within this tripartite structure, and room for exchange between the three speech forms of meditation, public address, and exhortation. After the business of resigning control to Telemachus is concluded, for example, Ulysses seems to allow himself another moment of meditative reflection--"There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail; / There gloom the dark, broad seas" (44-45)--before turning to his fellow sailors, and a similar pause may be observed at 54-56: "The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks; / The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep / Moans round with many voices."

The many (or at least several) voices of this poem seem to me to offer an arch of discourse wherethro' gleams a distinctly non-solipsistic act of speech. As I have said, each of these voices is distinct. Ulysses' opening meditation is moody and variable, alternately reflective and aspiring. The poem begins with an extended period of five lines in which Ulysses dwells on his current unacceptable state, and the winding trails of adjectives--little, idle, still, barren, aged, Unequal, savage--and concluding verbs--hoard, sleep, feed, know not--themselves suggest the dangerous state Ulysses is in. But with the abrupt period that follows Ulysses pulls himself to, as it were: "I cannot rest from travel; I will drink / Life to the lees" (6-7). The meditation returns to a similar course, however, in the reflection that follows on Ulysses' past; several long periods evoke a former busy and happy life, until again Ulysses raises himself from the idleness of mere reflection at line 22--"How dull

it is to pause, to make an end, / To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use! / As tho' to breathe were life!"--from which point his cause is determined: he will "follow knowledge like a sinking star" (31).

The poem's second voice, Ulysses' public voice, is marked by stability rather than volatility: the utterance, which is a performative speech-act in that it involves Ulysses completing by declaring the transfer of power ("This is . . . Telemachus, / To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle" [33-34]), is succinct, efficient, and formal. The private voice that appears at 44-45 and 54-56 in the poem's third movement again lingers (though now more briefly) over its matter--in these instances the lay of the land Ulysses is about to leave--but the exhortation as a whole, uttered in the third voice to the assembled mariners, is more assertive, for obvious reasons more forward-looking, and more definitive (virtually every line offers a certain judgement, a somewhat surprising fact in light of the partly uncertain journey that lies ahead). And like the second voice, this third voice too enacts a performative. "Come my friends" (56) is not in this context merely an invitation: it is as well a signal marking the beginning of a journey--the beginning, Ulysses knows, of the end.

In the context of speech as performance, the image of experience as an arch proves particularly striking.

I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
(18-21)

Though these lines surely betray something of poetry's untranslatable essence, their meaning can at least partly be rendered by the prosaic

suggestion that while Ulysses is joined to (or composed by?) his experience, at the same time his experience only shows him a world receding from him with his every act (movement). For Ulysses, action frames the world he seeks, which world is itself never still. His own speech acts bear this principle out: from the opening wavering meditation, to the succinct abdication, to the forward-looking call to his men, Ulysses does just what he says, even as he says it.

"Tithonus", written "originally as a pendant to the 'Ulysses'" (Letters 252), represents a very different kind of response to Hallam's death, but nonetheless shares several elements of its companion poem's form. Like "Ulysses", "Tithonus" opens with what appears at least to be a private meditation:

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapors weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes.

(1-6)

I say these lines **appear** meditative, addressed to no one in particular if not to the speaker himself, and indeed they may be; but the poem registers a change when in line 6 comes a somewhat surprising revelation: an audience appears with Tithonus' lament "I wither slowly in thine arms." "Thine" is the only indication in the poem's opening movement that Tithonus addresses anything but his own troubled self, but the hint is elaborated fully upon in the second movement, where Tithonus, if he did indeed begin his utterance alone, now has fully awakened to Aurora, whose presence one might literally say has as he speaks begun to dawn on him (and on us). Throughout the second

verse paragraph, Tithonus continually addresses Aurora directly; indeed, the poem from this point on proceeds on the basis of what appears to be direct address.

But the nature of this address is not straightforward, for as in "Ulysses" there appears here a patterned alternation of address, a pattern evoked metaphorically by the poem's central image: the coming--and going--dawn. In the third verse paragraph, Tithonus describes the signs of the coming dawn; in the fourth, he comments on one effect of that awakening:

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.
(43-45)

The present tense of these lines suggests that Tithonus' beloved has, in the course of (her) nature, left him once again. If one in fact makes this supposition, the rest of the poem marks a return to the original mode of speech: a cross between self-addressing meditation and words spoken to an audience just coming (opening movement) or leaving (as here), but in either event certainly on the speaker's mind. The "Ay me! ay me!" of line 49 does not discourage one from seeing this part at least of Tithonus' speech as self-directed, but again I think it right to concentrate not on the self-direction of this speech-act, but the pattern of alternation that it traces. This dramatic monologue, like "Ulysses", is not a closed circuit: it is a circuit that opens onto the world, even onto that world's most lamentable effects.

The contention that the poem is not a closed circuit finds support from the emphasis in this poem on drama, which I take to be the union of character and action, rather than on character alone. The character

of Aurora is of course an essential part of the poem, since she is such an essential part of Tithonus' experience, but it is interesting to note the nature of Aurora's character as we find it depicted here. We may be tempted to think of Aurora as Tithonus' partner in quite familiar terms; to imagine the two of them sitting together, for example, him "marr'd and wasted" (19), her beautiful and bright. But the gods work in mysterious ways, and Tennyson's poem does not in fact advance such an image of this couple. Aurora is a corporal entity--she is a person of sorts--but how does her "personality" reveal itself? by what means does she relate to Tithonus? Tithonus describes their meetings thus:

Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
 From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
 And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
 Thy cheek begins to redden through the gloom,
 Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine.
 (34-38)

Aurora, the goddess of the dawn, appears only in the action of the dawn. She is the dawn, and the dawn is what happens when the dawn comes. Tithonus' love of such an embodiment of the dramatic and external world makes him and his speech unlikely candidates for solipsism.

One final aspect of Tithonus' utterance marks his lack of solipsism and supplies the poem's tragic resonance: his recognition that he is not a suitable partner for the divinity he so much admires. In the early days, Aurora's love made him seem "To his great heart none other than a God!" (14), but Tithonus now sees the error of his hubris.

Let me go; take back thy gift.
 Why should a man desire in any way
 To vary from the kindly race of men,
 Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance

Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?
(27-31)

The answer to this question the poem makes plain enough: a man would desire immortality so that he might always enjoy the delights of his beloved. But the poem also makes plain the impossibility of such unending enjoyment, and the tragedy of pursuing it. Tithonus has come to recognize the difficult facts of mortality through his immortality.

Perhaps Tithonus' recognition is not so complete that he fully articulates it. There may be in his words some betrayal of this realization as well; that is, we may enact part of this recognition ourselves, for we may see that Tithonus closes the utterance in which he prays for death not with his allusion to the "grassy barrows of the happier dead" (71), but by lingering for one more bittersweet moment on the beautiful goddess of the dawn.

Release me, and restore me to the ground.
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave;
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn,
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.
(72-76)

By making these his last words Tithonus betrays not ignorance, but only the love he has for the one he begs leave to part from. Our recognition of this helps us see just what is involved in the drama of Tithonus' suffering. Early in the poem Tithonus speaks of how "Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath" (3). Death in "Tithonus" is not a passive occurrence, but one that must be sought out, an event that--like harvest--is enacted. In Tithonus' case, he seeks death with the act of a prayer, his final accomplishment and performative utterance.

Christ's claim that in "Tithonus" and "Ulysses" speaking is a means of "staving off death" is notable in part because it constitutes a reading that runs directly contrary to what the speakers themselves claim; Tithonus, after all, is praying *for* death, and Ulysses acknowledging his own advancing end, recognizing that all possible sea lanes will lead to it. Indeed, when Langbaum wants to demonstrate that Ulysses' final journey is to be "undertaken with a sense of diminished strength, as the last thing possible" (90), he can quote Ulysses' own words regarding his condition: "Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho' / We are not now that strength which in old days / Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are" (65-67). But Langbaum, like Christ, doesn't give Ulysses much credit for this recognition; both critics, and Christ in particular, operate under the assumption that they know the speakers of these dramatic monologues better than the speakers know themselves.

In short, Langbaum and Christ read "Tithonus" and "Ulysses" ironically. In the case of the dramatic monologue, irony will arise from the difference between a character's words and a character's nature, which his words reveal. "The speaker," Michael Mason writes, commenting on Browning's monologues, "**betrays** important aspects of his state of mind rather than **articulating** them" (234). But irony has several faces, and in any reader's ironical response to a dramatic monologue exists the potential for further irony. This is so not only because in certain cases the speakers of dramatic monologues--Ulysses and Tithonus, for example--will articulate at least as much recognition as they betray, but also because in all dramatic monologues the dialogue occurs between speaker and audience, that audience being made up of

those who listen within the text and ourselves without. Evidently the drama ends with us, and having no other voices to confront we take comfort in the fact that our own analysis will not itself be undercut or qualified (no one is audience to us). Conscious of the speaker's self-betrayal, the reader may see himself as party to the poet's exposing of character, and so think himself on the side of truth. Any feeling of detached objectivity that accompanies our supposed isolation is, however, unfounded. We too live in the gap between perception and truth rather than squarely on the side of the latter. Any assumption of superiority on our part (and such assumptions are quite accessible, often being an element of the dramatic monologue form's design, and its designs upon us) will therefore add to the poem's ironic action.

Ironic readings, that is, may evoke laughter, but such a response can have a double edge. One view of laughter which reminds us of this fact is that forwarded by Henri Bergson, who considered laughter a didactic tool, a "social gesture" (20) and "means of correction" (194) offered by an audience as judgement on behaviour it perceives to be dangerous to the human community. The function of the communal--one might say formally comic--perspective in laughter does not appear at first glance, Bergson acknowledges; an engagement with the ongoingness of social life "is not what we are immediately struck by in our first impression of the laughable."

The comic character is often one with whom, to begin with, our mind, or rather our body, sympathises. By this is meant that we put ourselves for a very short time in his place, adopt his gestures, words and actions, and, if amused by anything laughable in him, we invite him, in imagination, to share his amusement with us; in fact, we treat him first as a playmate. (194-95)

This sympathetic "*relaxation*" (195), however, cannot last long, since "[l]aughter is, above all, a corrective."

The sympathy that is capable of entering into the impression of the comic is a very fleeting one.

. . . Being intended to humiliate, [laughter] must make a painful impression on the person against whom it is directed. By laughter, society avenges itself for the liberties taken with it. It would fail in its object if it bore the stamp of sympathy or kindness. (196-97)

Langbaum argues that "where dogmatic sanction recedes, sympathy rushes in to fill the vacuum" (168), and tells us that just this exchange is accomplished in the relativistic dramatic monologue; Bergson's view of the comic, however, offers us another view of the relation of sympathy and judgement, one that I think helps to explain more fully the dramatic monologue form's drama.

But the didacticism of the comic is not a one-way street: the note of caution for audiences (laughers) with which Bergson ends his brief survey of laughter should also be taken into account. Should we look to ourselves in the midst of our laughter, Bergson writes, we might note a disturbing tendency, for "laughter cannot be absolutely just" (198). "Perhaps we had better not investigate this point too closely," he continues,

for we should not find anything very flattering to ourselves. We should see that this movement of relaxation or expansion is nothing but a prelude to laughter, that the laugher immediately retires within himself, more self-assertive and conceited than ever, and is evidently disposed to look upon another's personality as a marionette of which he pulls the strings. In this presumptuousness we speedily discern a degree of egoism and, behind this latter, something less spontaneous and more bitter, the beginnings of a curious pessimism which becomes the more pronounced as the laugher more closely analyses his laughter. (198-99)

Alan Sinfield similarly touches on the conceit that can arise as an effect of an ironical perspective (what Sinfield calls "our larger consciousness") in his study *Dramatic Monologue*. The monologue, Sinfield writes, evokes simultaneously two quite different responses.

On the one hand we have a powerful impression, through his own mind, of the kind of person the speaker is. On the other, we feel the pressure of an alternative way of viewing these matters and perhaps of an external force which threatens to qualify or even nullify the efforts of the speaker. . . .

Such a reading experience is surely a salutary correction to the self-importance of almost everyone and if dwelt upon is likely to produce a teasing self-awareness. Indeed, one may begin to feel, in a simple regress, that oneself also could be under scrutiny. The reader of a dramatic monologue might well say with Vladimir in Becket's *Waiting for Godot*, 'At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on'. (34)

Thus both Bergson (indirectly) and Sinfield (directly) alert us to the vanity of practicing an ironical solipsism of our own in our responses to the speech-acts of those characters we encounter as readers of dramatic monologues.

One quality necessary to the effort to avoid the curious pessimism of the self-enclosed reading is *integrity*, a trait which I have touched on in the foregoing discussions of *Hamlet* and *1 Henry IV*, and which I think is evident in the protagonists of both "*Ulysses*" and "*Tithonus*". Integrity begins within the person, whose person-ality arises in part from the union he effects of will and act and responsibility; as Marcel says, the man of integrity is the one who commits himself to his actions, the one for whom his actions are "incorporated into the totality of what [he is]" (109). But if integrity begins with the self, it does not end there. Consider how *Hamlet* demonstrates the way in which protagonist and audience can meet in the drama of tragedy. *Hamlet* is actor and

auditor both. As such he is a divided self, but divided only in the way that all sentient beings--when they are being sentient--must be; while this split between self and self-image (so to speak) can alternatively paralyze or make artificial (it may lead to mere "acting" or mechanical caricature), it can also come to a certain completion (unity) in the dramatic poem or dramatic character. The internalization of audience that we find in *Hamlet* we find as well in the dramatic monologues "Ulysses" and "Tithonus". The speakers of both poems demonstrate an ability to join themselves to the world outside of themselves, a world that, among other things, has the capacity to watch and judge them--in short, a world that is an audience. In their capacity to become this world Ulysses and Tithonus adopt just that "general perspective" which Langbaum finds so contrary to the spirit of the dramatic monologue. Of course, this is not to say that these speakers are omniscient: just the contrary, in fact, for there is still much to be recognized. If Marcel is right to say that the gap between person and act is inevitable, personal integrity will necessitate moving between the two--bridging that gap in audiencing (and it is a bridge that always burns)--in order to increase our commitment to and knowledge of ourselves (as makers), our acts (as things made), and our world (audience to our acts).

The difference between character in a drama and character in a dramatic monologue can best be understood, Langbaum suggests in *The Poetry of Experience*, with reference to dramatic soliloquies, since "[t]he dramatic monologue is largely modelled on the Shakespearean soliloquy" (160). Langbaum explains the critical response to soliloquies thus: whereas nineteenth-century readers saw them as "just the moments

when the point of view of the central character seems to obliterate the general perspective of the play" (160), twentieth-century scholars have recognized that soliloquies are "not characteristic and self-expressive at all but just those moments when the speaker steps out of character to make an expository utterance, to speak not for his own particular perspective but for the general perspective of the play" (160-61).

Following the lead of E. E. Stoll, Langbaum applies this insight to both the central characters in *Macbeth*. Lady Macbeth, he writes, "in the soliloquy in which she calls upon the spirits to 'unsex' her and fill her of 'direst cruelty,' describes her new character of murderess not from a murderess's but from the general moral perspective." Like Hamlet, who knew (in soliloquy) when was "the very witching time of night" (III.i.406), she too "conceives the murder in its appropriate setting, the croaking raven and 'thick' night" (161). As for Macbeth, the way he responds to the dagger that appears before him demonstrates his own tendency to apprehend experience from the general moral perspective.

Macbeth on his way to murder Duncan stops to describe the hallucinatory dagger he sees before him. This would be an excellent example of particular perspective were he absorbed in the hallucination; but he has a perfectly external awareness of ambiguity . . . even comparing the hallucinatory dagger with his own, which he draws from its sheath. He is perfectly aware of the moral significance of the hallucination, that the dagger with its "gouts of blood" belongs to the realm of the living hell he is about to enter; and in going on to describe for the murder an appropriate setting, he describes the landscape of that realm making abundantly clear the moral judgement he is turning against himself. (161-62)

Stoll proposes that both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth call their deed a murder because they could see it in no other way. "In short, the doctrine of the point of view simply had not arrived. There was as yet no Ibsen in the drama, no Henry James in the novel, no *Ring and the*

Book" (qtd. in Langbaum 162). This being the case, Langbaum proposes, we must "adopt" when reading a soliloquy the same "general perspective by which to judge among the utterances" of the various characters which they themselves adopt.

As a ground for distinguishing between dramas and dramatic monologues, however, this account of character does not seem to me very helpful. To begin, we might wonder how persuasive is the argument on behalf of the authoritative and encompassing "general perspective" when applied to the characters of traditional drama: Langbaum himself admits that Stoll's approach leaves him "wondering why in the world we still read Shakespeare" (167). In the case of *Macbeth*, there is a great difference between knowing enough to call an act a murder and being "perfectly aware of the moral significance" of such an act. To state the case in stark terms, Macbeth and his wife would have to be mad to call the act they contemplate anything but murder, and they do not become mad until *after* they carry it through--which is also when they become fully aware of the significance of their act. Lady Macbeth looks forward in I.v to the consequences of the deed; she can see the future, and wants to seize it: "I feel now / The future in the instant." But her desire for the future is not satisfied with the act to which she is an accomplice; instead, just that act frustrates her desire as she becomes locked into the present of the murder--which is to say the past, where there is always blood on her hands and knocking at the gate. Similarly, Macbeth states (in soliloquy) that he is willing to "jump the life to come" if only he might commit the murder and escape "judgement here" (I.vii.7-8), but he finds that in the pregnant act of his murder he brings together hell and earth in one

judgement against his deed. He *can't* jump the life to come; in killing Duncan, in fact, he jumps directly into the hell of the life to come. He doesn't realize this, however, until he commits (and is committed or engaged to) the act of regicide. As was the case in *Hamlet*, the consequences--for both plot and character--are in the action itself. Characterization in Shakespearean tragedy is so compelling in part because it shows how even when in possession of intelligent awareness--which Langbaum quite rightly says the Macbeths have--protagonists can still meet with the shock of recognition.

In providing the alternatives for reading dramatic soliloquies, Langbaum gives us two choices: "we have really to choose between reading the soliloquies from a particular or from the general perspective" (164). His own response to this imperative is, rather oddly, to declare his unwillingness to choose--"Fortunately, we do not for our purpose have to decide the issue" (167)--but in fact he demonstrates his support for the latter option at numerous points throughout his discussion (for example, when he suggests that the traditional character "acts out his own story in order to reinforce the moral order" [163]). But it is not necessary to oppose the particular and the general in this way, and if Shakespearean soliloquies are not wholly general after all, might dramatic monologues in turn not be so particular or "absorbed"? A character such as Macbeth--or Tithonus--need not be acting (or speaking) in order to prove a moral point: he may simply be acting, and in the process discovering a moral point--and a moral order. A "publicly acknowledged" moral code can exist very readily beside the experience--the "self-expression and self-discovery" (Langbaum 160)--of an individual character. The value of certain

conventions is never so well verified as it is in the particular acts that serve as their violations.

The character with whom such verification registers may be either inside of the poem (it may be Macbeth) or outside of it (it may be us), the community we can come to share with dramatic protagonists on this account being one of the principal effects of drama. When Langbaum suggests at several points in his discussion of Shakespeare that characters can be spectators to their own deeds, he himself seems prepared to acknowledge this community. His observation that Hamlet may be said to have "the most exaggerated self-consciousness" (161) is expanded a bit later to allow for the possibility that characters in Shakespeare might be outside of the plays they are part of: "have they a residue of intelligence and will beyond what the plot requires and not accounted for by it, so that they stand somehow above the plot, conscious of themselves inside it?" (170). Langbaum discusses Maurice Morgann's defence of Falstaff as an heroic rather than a cowardly figure in this light:

To entertain so radical an idea, we must have apprehended in these characters a residue of consciousness which is as much a spectator of the action as we are, this consciousness being precisely the quality we apprehend through sympathy. (174)

I myself have a good deal of sympathy with this view, as my earlier discussion of Hamlet should indicate, but Langbaum pulls away from this "sympathetic" reading of character in Shakespeare because in his view it moves the drama in the direction of the dramatic monologue: it is, he writes, "in the isolation of character from plot that we can best see the psychological interpretation of Shakespeare as dissolving dramatic structure and leading us toward the dramatic monologue" (177). Rather

than name this "the isolation of character from plot," however, we might (following Aristotle's lead) call it the union of character to the over-arching action of the drama--character and plot being as Whalley says "two aspects of the prime delineation of tragic **drama** (action)" (AC 100). Drama requires plot, character, and an audience; part of the concreteness of the traditional drama arises not only from its making of character, but from its making of audience as well. But it is the peculiar grace of dramatic mimesis to give us this single triad not once but twice, for as Langbaum says this spectating "consciousness" is not restricted to the characters in the drama; or, more precisely, there are more characters in the drama than we might have thought.

To help trace the pertinence of these reflections to the untraditional drama of the dramatic monologue, we might turn to *The Ring and the Book*, Browning's novelistic sequence of dramatic monologues. In keeping with the distinction he maintains between the drama and the dramatic monologue, Langbaum suggests that with *The Ring and the Book* Browning "does not entirely succeed" in his aim "to replace the objective view of events of traditional drama and narrative with points of view" (109) because the poem

achieves completeness through juxtaposing dramatic monologues, creating a master context in which each dramatic monologue is to be read. . . . [S]uch a total organization works against the single perspective and thus against the organization of each dramatic monologue. For the juxtaposition of dramatic monologues turns them into a dialogue; we can no longer give entire assent to any single perspective, but must adopt a general perspective by which to judge among the utterances. Browning helps to establish this general perspective by abandoning the dramatic monologue entirely--by speaking in his own voice in the first and last Books in order to establish the **right** judgements, and by bringing the poem to a **right** conclusion with the Pope's monologue which is,

according to the distinction I have drawn, less a dramatic monologue than a soliloquy. (158)

Certainly, The Ring and the Book invokes dialogue: not only do the speakers of each monologue and the Poet who presents each speaker's voice (the Poet is a character in the poem) address the reader, but the Poet speaks with his "British Public" (I.410), the speakers answer each other (if not literally then fancifully, within the context of the drama--Caponsacchi, for example, defends himself against Guido's claims in Book VI [1792-1859]), and the reader must respond to each of the various speakers of the poem as well as to the poem as a whole, a diverse group of monologues that becomes in one sense a single dramatic monologue delivered by the Poet (whether or not he's "right"). But if dialogue is an essentially dramatic effect, it does not follow that it is contrary to the effect of the dramatic monologue. The dialogue engendered in The Ring and the Book introduces a tension or ironic gap with respect to all the individuals involved--the various speakers, the Poet and the reader--which is typical of rather than contrary to "what dramatic monologues do".

In the context of Langbaum's resistance to The Ring and the Book's dialogue and "right" expositions, it may be useful to note how he shares the enthusiasm that the Poet demonstrates early in Book I for the "crude pure fact" (86) of that historical manuscript--the "old yellow Book" (33)--from which he unearths the story his poem will tell. In Langbaum's view, the Poet's reliance upon and "Word for word" (132) transcription of the "Pages of proof" (239), the "pleadings" (242), the "epistles" (257), "the print" (258), and the Pope's "particular chirograph" (346), mark his modernist return to the "extant facts" of

the concrete experience that precedes formulation (Langbaum 134). Browning's treatment of "fact", however, is more ironical--more dialogical, one might say--than Langbaum allows. The "British Public" the Poet appeals to prides itself upon the evidence of its senses and the truth of (for example) its recorded history, and has little more than a brief "Thanks" for "poetry, make-believe, / And the white lies it sounds like" (447-56). But Browning challenges rather than accedes to the assumptions of this audience. The "concreteness-quotient" of the written documents the Poet exhumes--"Primary lawyer-pleadings for, against" (145) and "Pages of proof this way, and that way proof" (235) included--extends to their actual presence in the tangible old yellow book, but no further. The various statements are indeed "Here in the book and nowise out of it" (154), but in their production--the more important concern that returns us to the original experience that surrounded them--fancy played as great a part as fact. In short, the expository "facts" of the old yellow book are revealed through the course of the poem to be the result of the meetings of limited and subjective perspectives on reality; as such, they become evidence that experience as well as dogmatic formulation is problematic. The Poet's suggestion that "Fancy with fact is just one fact the more" (464) closes the imagined gap between fancy and fact in identification.

The dialogue Browning invokes between fancy and fact is not designed to leave us convinced of the pointlessness of evaluation in the face of so little certainty and so much "make-believe". On the contrary, the ambition evident in *The Ring and the Book* is to discover truth by means of the imaginative faculty. The Poet purports to offer a "mediate word" (XII.857), a word spoken by one in the middle of perception and

truth to another in the same place, but spoken as well to mediate between the pervasive ironies and many voices of life. As both the Poet and the Pope agree, human knowledge is unavoidably limited, but truth is nonetheless accessible, if only in fragments. The latter speaks of truth as the product of an evolutionary process: "Truth, nowhere, lies yet everywhere in these [the various documents]-- / Not absolutely in a portion, yet / Evolvable from the whole: evolved at last / Painfully" (X.228-31). Like Saint John in Browning's "A Death in the Desert", the Pope sees the absence of "solid truth" as helpful--"This life," he says, "is training and a passage; . . . solid truth / In front of it, were motion for the world?" (X.1410-14)--and whether or not the Pope is right in claiming that uncertainty has a good effect, it is clear at least that it has an effect. Lacking certainty, individuals must make choices. Those characters in *The Ring and the Book* whom we judge to be most admirable--Caponasacchi, the Pope, the Poet--all take an emphatic stand on the critical issue of Pompilia's innocence.

The Poet--like the dramatic monologue form itself--pushes us as his readers to do likewise with respect to the murder case he presents. Ours, he tells us, is the "ultimate / Judgement" (I.1220-21). But judgements offered as authoritative words--right expositions--will never be as monolithic or unilateral as they might (and might generally like to) appear. Authority will always be dialogic after *The Ring and the Book*'s own fashion: always a matter of compromise, always a joined effort, always a balancing of differing perspectives, needs, desires, lives, voices. Thus *The Ring and the Book* offers an image of how the dramatic monologue is well suited to comedy as a dramatic form, at least insofar as that form may be defined (as by Tanner) in terms of freedom

and "the ongoingness of social life" (8), for wherein lies freedom but in the ability to choose, and wherein social life but in the encounters we have with other people? Ironically, closing off the dialogue of the dramatic monologue in an attempt to distinguish it from traditional drama is one way of moving the dramatic monologue toward tragedy, whose end is (very traditionally) defined by Tanner as "the finality of the individual death" (8)--in response to which the rest must be (as Hamlet says) not dialogue but silence.

We might further consider the dramatic monologue's dependence upon dialogue by turning to Tennyson's "Mariana", from the volume *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. In an 1831 review of this collection that Christ calls "perhaps the best description to this day of Tennyson's early poetry" (58), Hallam divided poetry into the two camps of reflection and sensation, and enlisted Tennyson in the latter camp. H. M. McLuhan, one of a number of critics who have offered to flesh out Hallam's description of "the sensational", describes the poetry of sensation as that which relies on "suggestion rather than statement" (266), and remarks that the employment of starkly juxtaposed images of which Hallam approved leads to a poetry of "metaphysical landscape" in which "the places and things utter themselves" (271). Christ similarly comments that in the "non-discursive poetry of the image" of which Hallam spoke, "the juxtaposition of images alone recreates for poet and reader a complex poetic emotion inarticulable by any other means" (53-55).

Christ proposes that in "Mariana" Tennyson supplies no "organizing intelligence in his presentation of the landscape." The poem, she writes,

asserts that the broken sheds "looked" sad and strange, but who is the looker? Is it Mariana? Is it the speaker? Or are the sheds so constituted that anyone passing by would think them "sad and strange"? . . . Tennyson builds into the poem a blurring of subject and object that leaves ambiguous its organizing principle. (59)

But is "Mariana" in fact a "non-discursive" poem in which images *alone* establish the poetic emotion which poet and reader share? It seems to me that the poem's "blurring of subject and object" which Christ identifies here, rather than leaving ambiguous the poem's "organizing principle", itself constitutes that principle. "Mariana" certainly offers us a cluster of abruptly juxtaposed images "without discursive connection" (Christ 56)--disconnection being a quality of the chiefly lyrical impulse--but it does not quite leave these images to "utter themselves," nor does it insist that the reader alone supply connections for the varying images. The poem supplies its own unifying principle by providing a perspective on the images, and that perspective belongs to the poem's protagonist, even though she is not always speaking. This is, however, a complex unification; or, one might say, Mariana is a complex protagonist. Because Mariana's perspective is only accessible to us as she is interpreted by her reader, the poem's narrative voice, while in "Mariana" the protagonist's view is in fact (relatively) authoritative (Langbaum's claim for the dramatic monologue), to become so it has first to be "translated" for us by the speaker. The protagonist and the narrator together, then, function in the poem as an organizing presence--though only, as we shall see, in conjunction with the poem's reader.

Appropriately, the way in which this complex presence organizes the poem is most clearly seen in the opening stanza, where a principle of organization has the best chance of being established.

With blackest moss the flower-plots
 Were thickly crusted, one and all;
 The rusted nails fell from the knots
 That held the pear to the gable-wall.
 The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
 Unlifted was the clinking latch;
 Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
 Upon the lonely moated grange.
 She only said, "My life is dreary,
 He cometh not," she said;
 She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead!"

The images suggest of themselves a certain landscape and desuetude, but both place and mood get a particular focus with the introduction of Mariana in line 9 because we at once see that the perspective on the grange that we have been privy to is one peculiar to Mariana. Indeed, we may for a moment (the moment during which we pass from line 8 to line 9) syntactically *identify* "the lonely moated grange" and Mariana ("She"). Thus we learn that our particular perspective--what we have experienced in the opening eight lines--is in fact Mariana's; or, we see that her perspective has become our own. And yet the two perspectives remain distinct, since ours comes ultimately to be tempered by our awareness that this other perspective belongs to a locatable subject and requires the mediation of a third party. The remainder of the poem works on the basis of this double (or triple) perspective. The second stanza begins where the first left off--with "Her"--and all the images we meet with henceforth come to us clustered around the image of the poem's protagonist. Thus the character of Mariana--or, more precisely,

the character of our relation to Mariana and the poem's speaker--organizes our experience of the poem.

The activity of the poem's language complements this organization insofar as it shows itself capable of embodying the sorrow Mariana expresses in each stanza's refrain. The repetition of the refrain is one obvious way the poem records Mariana's bleak life: not only does Mariana say virtually the same thing in all seven stanzas, but the poem has her on each occasion say it three times, so to speak, with the repetitions of "she said". A similar effect, though by different means, is worked with the use in stanzas 3 and 7 of enjambed quatrains, where the excess that breaks into line 5 brings only more of the same by returning us to Mariana: "Came to her" (s. 3) and "Her sense" (s. 7). Here, even when we think to be coming to something new, we meet again Mariana's particular desolate perspective; we are indeed, as stanza 3 tells us, "without hope of change" (29). The only other stanza in which this design appears, stanza 6, is one which in general seems poised to begin a move away from the particular perspective by means of its references to "Old faces", "Old footsteps" and "Old voices" (66-68)--images which call to mind the lover whom Mariana thinks of, and who represents the world beyond her narrowed view. In this case, the enjambment from the first to the second quatrain even catches something of this independent life:

All day within the dreamy house,
 The doors upon their hinges creak'd;
 The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
 Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
 Or from the crevice peered about.
 (61-65)

The mouse's action is not only described but embodied in the peeking around the corner of the quatrain. But this (past) life exceeds Mariana's (present) grasp, and the final stanza returns us to her sorrow. The poem's rhyme scheme too embodies the quality of Mariana's restriction. Each stanza begins with a quatrain in **abab**, but moves in the second to **cddc**, leaving the enclosure of the second quatrain to resist the more forward-looking opening quatrain and to image Mariana's closed-off world.

If the speaker as translator and we as readers of the poem are somehow outside of the enclosed experience the poem evokes--since we are not Mariana, it is not our experience--and Mariana inside that experience, we can see that organization is in this poem both an external and an internal matter. Both speaker and protagonist have a role to play in how the poem's experience is shaped for us. So too does the language in which that experience appears to us--and language is very much a relation and interpenetration of the external (form) and the internal (utterance). Finally, so too does our willingness--even tendency--as readers both to identify with and distance ourselves from Mariana. The case, then, proves akin to Christ's account of it insofar as there is no single authority governing "Mariana", but the poem does not for this lack an organizing presence. "Mariana" at once contains and releases an organizing presence; it makes its own organizing presence. That presence, however, is not single, but several. To invoke the terms of Whalley's central thesis, "Mariana" is a dramatic event involving poet (represented here by the speaker), poem and reader.

But "Mariana" is not a dramatic monologue. Alongside Christ's reading of "Mariana", which clearly follows Hallam's lead, we might usefully place certain other of Hallam's comments regarding *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. In terms striking for their applicability to the dramatic monologues that were soon to follow¹, Hallam writes that Tennyson's "expressions of character"

are like summaries of mighty dramas. We do not say this method admits of such large luxuriance of power as that of our real dramatists; but we contend that it is a new species of poetry, a graft of the lyric on the dramatic, and Mr. Tennyson deserves the laurel of an inventor, an enlarger of our modes of knowledge and power. (858)

Two terms of Hallam's account are especially noteworthy: *summaries* and *lyric*. Christ calls "Mariana" "non-discursive", but surely this can't be an entirely just description of a poem that is delivered by someone who appears very much like an omniscient narrator; though the poem's images may be "abruptly juxtaposed," the poem is itself a discourse, the speaker's discourse on Mariana. Christ considers the poem ambiguous on account of its non-discursivity, but the discursive role of the narrator helps make the poem less ambiguous than it could otherwise be. It is the presence of this narrator, this translating third party, that makes "Mariana" a poem different from dramatic monologues, which are not summaries of dramas but themselves the dramas--although in both cases the mimetic event involves poet, poem and reader.

The summary nature of "Mariana" is of a piece with what Hallam calls its lyric graft. Langbaum and Christ suggest that self-absorption is part of the dramatic monologue's essence, but as Langbaum implies in

¹ Tennyson's first dramatic monologues were written in 1832-33; they first appeared in the 1842 volume *Poems*, twelve years after "Mariana" was published in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*.

his comments on "Childe Roland" absorption is more suited to the lyric than the dramatic. There is at no point in "Mariana" any particular audience, which is to say that the poem might be addressed to anyone at all, or everyone. Mill's view that lyric poetry is not heard but overheard comes to mind--lyric is not heard by any one person, but paradoxically may be overheard by all. Dramatic monologues are not thus. The particularity of their audiences marks them off as occurring within the context of a concrete and dramatic action (the speaker of "Mariana" is not obviously involved in any action, though Mariana is); they are not in this sense universal. And yet this particularity of audience is balanced in the dramatic monologue form by the alternation between audiences (the other and the self) that we find in "Ulysses", "Tithonus" and *The Ring and the Book*, which alternation will often have the effect of making dramatic monologues even more ambiguous than poems like "Mariana", which are uttered in a single register. The dramatic monologue has only one speaker but characteristically several vectors along which that speaker moves, a quality which helps make (to borrow Carlyle's phrase) the solidity of the dramatic monologue's dramatic action.

Like "Mariana", Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" also has its genesis in Shakespearean drama, building a verse edifice on the foundation of a single line. "Childe Roland", as Langbaum says,

is Browning's materialization of that wild snatch of song in *Lea*r from which the poem takes its title. Just as that single line means little as an idea, so it means intensely and all-inclusively as the expressive distillation of many possible ideas. Browning projects one of these possibilities through the circumstances of his poem. (198)

While "Mariana" and "Childe Roland" share this "projected" quality, however, the two poems contrast noticeably with respect to form, the single biggest difference being that in "Childe Roland" the protagonist tells his own story, the poem being a first-person account in which the speaker is, as Sessions says, "the leading dramatic figure" (509).

Accordingly, Langbaum can say of "Childe Roland" that it is "among the best and most famous of all dramatic monologues" (76), a claim no one would think to make for "Mariana".

I cited above Langbaum's and Christ's remarks on the enclosedness of "Childe Roland", but is "Childe Roland" in fact such a "solipsistic" (Christ 20) poem? Its opening stanzas offer an interesting illustration of how the knight's solipsism may be less than absolute. Arguably, the first stanza illustrates perfectly Christ's notion of the dramatic monologue as a form that presents a world circumscribed by the self.

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
 That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
 Askance to watch the working of his lie
 On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
 Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
 Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

The proffered subject here, one might say, is the hoary cripple the stanza describes, but that subject (object) is framed in lines 1 and 6 by the speaker (by the real subject): the stanza opens with "My first thought" and closes with the speaker's reference to himself as the cripple's victim. There is, however, something specious about identifying framing of this kind as imprisoning. The knight's view of his experience will inevitably be filtered through his own perspective, and so framed by his judgements, but "Childe Roland" seems to me a

monologue in which we see the protagonist in the act of striving, despite his limitations, to reach the ground of a perspective truer than the one he can attain independently. In this poem the speaker attempts to understand the outside world, even to join with it, as the assonance of "his lie / On mine" suggests in the union of the first stanza's two subjects (cripple and victim). Consider the second stanza, which like the first is typical of what the poem does, though quite other than what we find there:

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
 What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
 All travellers who might find him posted there,
 And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
 Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
 For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare.

In the questions and guesses of the knight we find an appeal to a second audience of this dramatic monologue: the reader. As the protagonist reveals his own uncertainty he wonders aloud whether someone else--someone like himself, someone like us--would think any differently. And the knight's questions are "rhetorical" in the root sense that they are meant to have an effect on us: they are designed to make us respond.

In denying that "Childe Roland" is a closed circuit, I do not mean to imply that the poem is strictly "linear", an utterance directed from one voice to one clearly-defined audience. Indeed, because the poem does not establish a particular audience, it does have something of "Mariana"'s lyric absorption. What's more, the obvious narrative bent of the speaker-protagonist--his use of the past tense throughout being one sign of this bent, as in "it came on me all at once" (175)--further universalizes the utterance, and so lessens the drama by making less

impressive the poem's evocation of audience. Nonetheless, there is in "Childe Roland" a use of the linear that keeps the poem engaged by means of action with the outside world, and that use of the straight line appears, in at least two ways, in a context of alternation.

"Childe Roland" evokes as a central metaphor the image of the quest, an image which encourages us to think in certain terms, one of which is the term of the linear: questers, presumably, move from point A to point B during the course of their quest. But Browning raises this expectation in "Childe Roland" primarily to frustrate or complicate it, for in terms of forward movement the knight here doesn't actually accomplish much; the fact that the knight reaches the Dark Tower, Langbaum writes in stating the case of the knight's non-movement, "marks no sort of progress" (192). To be fair, I think we would have to say that Langbaum somewhat *overstates* the case, for the knight does experience *some* forward progress. The following is a survey of the knight's literal progression after his initial meeting with the cripple in stanza 1: "I turned" (48); "on I went" (55); "Back therefore to my darkening path again!" (107); "I forded" (121); "I reached the other bank" (127); "a furlong on" (139). Certainly, these brief moments do not register much literal progress, and may in fact be said to mark the knight's movement as somewhat circular in nature ("I turned", "Back therefore"); still, there is present here just enough mention of forward movement to keep in our minds the image of the linear quest. Ultimately, however, we have to discard this image as an unreliable model for the knight's experience. The idea of "the end" that the linear model of experience presupposes is found to be illusory, at least in terms of any end that might be external to or separate from the

knight's own actions. The knight expresses joy early on at the thought that "some end might be" near for him (18), yet 140 lines later he is "just as far as ever from the end" (157), and that end comes upon him finally more as the result of a recognition than a relocation.²

What interests me most about Browning's use of linear progress in "Childe Roland", then, is the way he uses it in tension and collision with the non-linear progress of recognition--which may be a recognition of failure, and so a tragic "progress". In a similar and related way, the poet uses alternation in the knight's address. At certain points--when he asks us questions, for example, or asks us to reflect on the events he relates--the knight clearly has an audience in mind. For much of the poem, however, he appears engaged in meditative reverie, lost in a kind of dismal lyric expression. Such absorption is evident, for instance, at the poem's opening where, after (in narrative fashion) introducing us to the cripple, the knight becomes lost through stanzas IV-VII in reflections on his bleak state. Appropriately, it is a question that pulls him, at the end of stanza 7, back to the audience that awaits expectantly the telling of his story (the question is: "And all the doubt was now--should I be fit?"). Thus the notion of an "end" is on two fronts complicated in "Childe Roland": the end of a quest and the end of an utterance are both shown to be not merely linear constructs (the place one arrives at, the person one speaks to), but reciprocal eventualities as well. Our actions help determine our ends, and ourselves help make up our audiences.

2. Browning's use of the model of linear progress is rather like Bunyan's in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. See Fish's excellent treatment of "Progress in *The Pilgrim's Progress*" in *Self-Consuming Artifacts*.

The analyses Christ and Langbaum offer impose a severe limitation upon the questing knight of "Childe Roland" (and so, by implication, on us all), but the imposition is unjust. Questers are not inevitably only self-interested, and the fact that they will pursue their quests with their own perspectives always active does not necessarily mean that all they will ever find throughout their quests is themselves. The movement of the first two stanzas is indicative of this poem's drama, and points not to solipsism but to the potential that does exist for innocent readings of experience. While the first stanza gives us analysis framed by subjectivism, the second gives us in the appeal to an audience an acknowledgement of that subjectivism and a request for a second (not an "objective", but another) opinion. The two stanzas differ, but in a way that complements rather than contradicts. In stanzas xxvii-xxviii we find a similar complementary movement.

And just as far as ever from the end!
 Naught in the distance but the evening, naught
 To point my footstep further! At the thought,
 A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
 Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
 That brushed my cap--perchance the guide I sought.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
 'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
 All round to mountains--with such name to grace
 Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
 How thus they had surprised me,--solve it, you!
 How to get from them was no clearer case.

These stanzas demonstrate succinctly the knight's position. He seems quite aware of the possibility of failure--indeed, he is all but resigned to it--and his utterance accordingly declares (rather than betrays) his recognition of his limitations as an individual quester. It also, however, declares the knight's ability to act, part of which acting is his attempt

to join himself to us, which attempt constitutes his making-up of a discursive audience to himself.

Whalley of course adamantly resists the suggestion that readers can only see images of themselves in the world/words before them; his principle of innocence requires our refusal to be self-absorbed. It is both possible and salutary, Whalley writes,

to find in works that we could not conceivably have made ourselves the substance of our own nature, and to find in such commanding presences an exhilarating liberation--if only momentary--from the oppressive circularity of our own personal limitations, the squalor of our desires, the stifling self-preoccupation that we are often told is the necessary condition of modern man. (LI 199)

Paradoxically, for poetry to liberate us in this way it must also judge us, which can make for a humbling (a fully ironic) relation. But we are not condemned by the judgement; one might even say that that judgement is part of poetry's delight, showing us as it does "the substance of our own nature" even in that which is to us so unexpected. "[T]he point of studying literature," Whalley writes, "is first to enjoy it, then to find in it the figures of a life and intelligence that is clearly not our own" (LI 213). In Whalley's view, the "two" points of discovery and enjoyment are a single point, and not divisible.

But to say that solipsism is not inevitable is not to say that we can (or ought to try to) remove ourselves from our experience of reading. On the contrary, we are necessary to the poems we read. James Smith, in an essay "On Metaphysical Poetry", writes that the metaphysical conceit possesses the strange and yet strangely satisfying quality of being at once "startling" and also "plausible, satisfying, natural or--the contradiction forces itself upon me and should perhaps

not be resisted--**not** startling" (273). The comment seems to me relevant to the practice of reading in a broad sense as well as to the specific context Smith is addressing. Innocent readings of good poems--readings engaged in without solipsism but with human intent--will often, perhaps characteristically, repeat this measure of the startling and the natural. Whalley writes that readers of literature should learn "to enjoy things that they know have no ulterior use, to respect what they cannot hope to understand, to value those things that are strangely unlike themselves or remote from their (often unexamined) view of life" (LI 199). But those remote things (characters or actions, for example), having been respected and valued, come home again, so to speak. The centre and the periphery touch upon each other until "By grace, through patience, and through a curious combination of passive attention and alert response, we are certain that we can enter into the universes of poems, and that these are new worlds that for all their strangeness are recognisably our worlds" (TP 227). In this tension of the passive and the alert, the poem and the world, the poem and the reader, the strange and the natural, mimesis brings to bear its human but certainly not solipsistic shock of recognition.

In such a context, what becomes of integrity, what of self-image, what of character? What are these, and how do we arrive at them? Certainly, we cannot arrive at them passively (by just "being ourselves"), for "they" do not happen to be there waiting for us--we make them as we go along. Just as there can be no purely innocent reading, there can be no pure self-discovery: self-creation will play its part. And the comparison to reading has particular relevance because just as readers help make texts by virtue of being audiences,

characters make themselves (in texts or out of them, though it seems we are always in them) partly by the quality of their self-consciousness-- by how well they read. To the extent that the speakers in dramatic monologues such as "Childe Roland", The Ring and the Book, "Tithonus" and "Ulysses" seem enlightened, they pose an interesting challenge to us as readers. They tempt us to be like the spectator at Marcel's film: "Images parade before us as in the cinema; our attitude is like that of the spectator; we do not have the slightest idea that the situation might have something to do with us" (112). But to think the situations we encounter in dramatic monologues such as these have nothing to do with us would be to make the mistake that the less enlightened protagonists of other dramatic monologues make: it would be to separate character from action and action from audience.

It would also be to mistake a living frame for a dead one, for the dramatic monologue is not only about character; it is more nearly a complete **drama** in the Aristotelian sense. Something that the protagonist of "Childe Roland" says at the very end of that poem (his quest) captures the essence of the meeting of character and action in the dramatic monologue. "There they stood," he remarks of "all the lost adventurers my peers" (195),

ranged along the hill-sides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture!
(199-201)

Who is the living frame? Logically, it would seem to be the peers who are ranged around the knight, framing him who makes the picture. But complementing this reading is a second one, proffered by the lines syntactically, which grants to the knight himself (to "me") the status of

a living frame for one last picture. The first reading situates the speaker of the dramatic monologue, contextualizing his action and suggesting the importance of that context and that action to the utterance. The knight is framed--for us and, in this case, for himself--by what has come before and what will survive after (though that will not be himself, it will include the action of "his Song"). The second points us more directly toward the character himself, and specifically his utterance. In this view we can see the protagonist and his speech-act as at once an instrument and a subject of inquiry; in sum, we can see "Childe Roland" (even in this title the poem/utterance appears to frame the protagonist by name) as an object of self-creation. The knight frames himself, insofar as he is our means to encountering him (in the dramatic monologue form). But he is a *living*--that is, *acting*--frame: it is in his action that we find him. Thus in the dramatic monologue, as in the drama, the distinction between framing and being, like the distinction between character and action, becomes blurred. To be--specifically, to speak--is to frame oneself, and it is at the same time to alter the frame that is already there.

Of course, not all dramatic monologues develop the same kind of relationship between poet, poem and reader. The speakers of some dramatic monologues are more self-absorbed than are those of others, which fact naturally leads the readers of such monologues to respond more ironically to the utterances and characters before them. "Andrea del Sarto" and "St. Simeon Stylites" are two dramatic monologues of this kind, though even between these two poems there is a good deal of difference. But while such poems are not the same as poems like

"Ulysses" and "Tithonus", the same kind of questions about action can be asked of these dramatic monologues that we have asked of others.

What is the action of Browning's "Andrea del Sarto"? What is the effect of Andrea's speech? We might begin by noting that the audience in this poem consists of two parties: Andrea's wife, to whom Andrea speaks throughout the poem, at times in a manner which denotes a dialogue between them (for example, at ll. 199-200: "What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo? / Do you forget already words like those?"), and Andrea himself, who makes up the principal audience to his monologue. If its making of audience pushes "Andrea del Sarto" in the direction of drama, so too does the fact that the poem reminds us how speech-acts are themselves inextricably joined to the life (and lives) "outside" of those who practice them. Andrea's acts are not only acts of **speech**: he alters a copy of Raphael's work at l. 196, for example--and then recognizing the inadequacy of his alteration wishes to "rub it out!" (197)--and surviving on the margins (and in the footnotes) of his appeal to his wife are actions of his past--defrauding Francis and deserting his parents, for instance, two actions that have set too firmly to be erased, but which remind Lucrezia, Andrea, and us as well of the contexts of action that frame speakers and speech-acts.

More than anything, however, the source of the action in "Andrea del Sarto" arises from Andrea's motivations. What does he mean to accomplish in speaking? What act is Andrea engaged in? Perhaps what sets "Andrea del Sarto" apart from the other poems we have looked at is the multiplicity of Andrea's aims, and therefore of his acts. A list of Andrea's intentions could include the following: (1) he wants to console himself for his artistic (and perhaps social) mediocrity; (2) he wants to

excuse himself for this mediocrity; (3) he wants to blame his wife for this mediocrity; (4) he wants to persuade himself that he is "a mountain" (96), oblivious to and isolated from the praise or (especially) censure of others; (5) he wants to gain his wife's attention, and so her company for the evening; (6) he wants to find out more about his wife's "cousin". As all of these aims share a patent relation to the outside world, it would appear that Andrea is not as separate from the world as he would like to be. Despite his protestations to the contrary, for example, he obviously does care about what others think of him, whether they think well (Michelangelo), or ill (the French), or hardly at all (his wife). Andrea's remark that he paints "from myself to myself" (90) sounds like Langbaum's analysis of the dramatic monologue form, but Andrea is not nearly as aloof as he feigns; he is agreeing to paint for his wife's lover even as he speaks of his separateness.

Perhaps the fact that Andrea betrays such contradiction means that he fails in his aim of consoling himself, but the question of whether Andrea succeeds or fails in his various aims proves less interesting than the way the poem makes the question of success or failure in these different aims a single question, and a question that cannot be answered in terms of character alone, as Langbaum would have us think, nor in the terms of fate, as Andrea would like to think: "Love, we are in God's hand. / How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead; / So free we seem, so fettered fast we are! / I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!" (49-52). Willed action also bears on this question. Andrea's speech may be marked by a hedging reserve, but he reveals enough to indicate that he has come to his present mediocrity by means of certain decisions that he has made. Ultimately, Andrea actually designs to take comfort from

the way that choice determines "fate", but he tries to take more consolation from this than he can legitimately claim; recognizing the effect of his own choices, Andrea tries to valorize his present state as one he has consciously taken on.

What would one have?
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance--
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
 To cover--the first three without a wife,
 While I have mine! So--still they overcome
 Because there's still Lucrezia,--as I choose.
 (259-66)

It seems more likely, however, that Andrea has not chosen his end, but rather only the means to his end. The end itself--a life of "common grayness" (35), which would seem utter failure for a painter--has come upon him inevitably, but against his will. That there is no escape from this end, now that it is here, is a recognition that we come to with Andrea as a result of his speech; Andrea's tragic state is betrayed by his own act of self-definition.

There is as well a quality of self-absorption in the utterance of Simeon in Tennyson's "St. Simeon Stylites", but the poem is not for that reason a closed circuit, nor is it only concerned with character, for what Simeon has to say arises in the context of a particular speech-act: a "prayer" (7) that becomes an oath, a formal act of worship that becomes the very "blasphemy" (4) from which Simeon seeks forgiveness. Simeon's utterance is not formally a prayer throughout; as in the other monologues we have considered, there is a pattern of alternation evident in his address. Thus Simeon begins with a private reflection--he does not begin his prayer until he announces it at the end of l. 7--and

leaves off talking to (at) God at l. 131, when he turns to the "Good people" who kneel below him. Then at l. 133 he begins another private meditation, which leads him back once again to the people who have come to admire his apparent devotion: "O my sons, my sons" (157). The end of the poem graphically reveals Simeon's characteristic self-absorption when he begins to experience an hallucination--"The end! the end! / Surely the end! What's here? a shape, a shade, / A flash of light. Is that the angel there / That holds a crown? Come, blessed brother, come" (198-201)--but it concludes with a return first to the people below ("Speak, if there be a priest, a man of God, / Among you there" [211-12]), and then once again to the form of prayer at ll. 218-220.

Simeon's ascetic practice does carry a certain traditional moral weight. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," Christ taught; "if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off" (Matthew 5:29-30). The principles of self-denial and self-sacrifice are present in even the most benign conceptions of Christianity, and it is indeed hard not to admire someone willing to lay down his life for a friend, or for what he thinks to be true. Simeon knows the Christian tradition,³ and on it his rhetoric depends. Likewise, he knows what is expected of saints, and aims to fulfil expectations. But although Simeon "strive[s] and wrestle[s]" (118) with God for a place in heaven, the more he speaks the further he is from achieving this end because his speech gradually betrays the fact that the true aim of his struggle with God is not to win salvation but simply to win--to take God's place. Simeon's intention is not self-abnegation, as he protests, or even self-preservation, as he

3. Indeed, he (sad to say) partly represents it.

grudgingly admits, but self-praise. He has, he says, endured "superhuman pangs" (11)--by which he seems to mean pangs able to be endured only by one who is superhuman. When the "silly people" (126) come to worship him, he disclaims their reverence: "'Tis their own doing; this is none of mine; / Lay it not to me. Am I to blame for this, / That here come those that worship me? Ha! ha! / They think that I am somewhat. What am I?" (122-25). But he asks this final question as though his status (sinner or saint?) were indeed uncertain. When he considers the matter a bit further (that is, when he tries to provide an answer), he finds that his suppliants may be well-advised after all.

The silly people take me for a saint,
And bring me offerings of fruit and flowers:
And I, in truth (thou wilt bear witness here)
Have all in all endured as much, and more
Than many just and holy men, whose names
Are register'd and calendar'd for saints.
(126-131)

He follows the same course when he turns from God to address those who have gathered: first he condemns their worship, then he justifies it.

Good people, you do ill to kneel to me.
What is it I can have done to merit this?
I am a sinner viler than you all.
It may be I have wrought some miracles,
And cured some halt and maim'd; but what of that?
It may be, no one, even among the saints,
May match his pains with mine; but what of that?
Yet do not rise; for you may look on me,
And in your looking you may kneel to God.
(132-140)

If someone beneath him--and Simeon does indeed raise himself up--be "halt or maim'd" (141), Simeon assumes that his virtue will be sufficient for him: "Yes, I can heal him. Power goes forth from me" (144). In

sum, Simeon's observations throughout his speech-act, while in the guise of what purports to be self-loathing, actually stake his claim not merely to sainthood but divinity: the people may kneel to God. Simeon's thoughts consistently turn in the direction we glimpse near the poem's end, when he speaks of the time "When you may worship me without reproach" (191). That is the end Simeon seeks. He concludes with an appeal to God to

Aid all this foolish people; let them take
Example, pattern: lead them to thy light.
(230-31)

If we ask what he means here by "thy light", the light of God, there can only be one answer: Simeon himself is the light. He is the pattern, the example, the topic of his monologue and the object of his own (as well as the silly people's) worship.

Thus Simeon's speech is a sort of imitation of Christ gone very wrong. Simeon "imitates" Christ's sufferings ("in my weak lean arms I lift the cross" [117]) and the sufferings of the saints, and in doing so assumes that his action is theirs. But such imitation is a matter of the external only; it is the imitation of a mirror--wherein the mirror image is static, lifeless, dumb--rather than that of mimesis, where the life as well as the image is recognized and re-made. Simeon's imitation of Christ is the imitation of Hamlet's Dumb Show; the more appropriate imitation would consist of a different kind of action--the kind we find in *The Murder of Gonzago*, for example. In Simeon's case, the death of Christ should become at once the death of self as Lucianus becomes both nephew and brother, and the pressure of that duplicitous but

unified event catch Simeon's apparently impregnable (though elaborately described) conscience.

As I have suggested, it is not alone the alternation of Simeon's speech, but also its particular activity that makes this a drama which joins action and character to form a unified drama. Simeon's own account of his sinful character may surprise us, for how, we might (naively) wonder, can someone who has apparently spent his entire life undergoing severe penance have had time or opportunity to be guilty of the sins whose weight he feels so "crush'd" (25) by? Simeon claims to be "mad with blasphemy" (4), but what has he done to deserve his own condemnation? The question comes to be answered through the course of Simeon's prayer, for the sin Simeon seeks forgiveness from is contained in the very act by which he seeks that forgiveness. Unlike the Psalmist's, Simeon's sin is not "ever before him" (Psalms 51:3), but ever contemporaneous with him, spontaneously appearing in the act of speech by which he assails Heaven for mercy. Thus insofar as Simeon's speech is an act of prayer, it is doubly performative, for it is as well the act of sin that condemns him, an oath by which he creates the need for ever more penance and prayers. Thus it is that the action of this particular character creates the essentially (and essentially ironic) drama of "St. Simeon Stylites".

Conscience, the pressure of knowing together, depends upon an external order and frame for the individual experience or utterance/act. If Simeon's recognition of that external order is limited, we may be responsible to supply his deficiency. When he asks "Can I work miracles and not be saved?", his response is disbelieving: "This is not

told of any. . . . / It cannot be but that I shall be saved" (149-51).

But of course he is wrong. Christ, the one he seeks to imitate, once called attention to the fact that

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

(Matthew 7:21-23)

Simeon neglects this revelation, but we need not neglect it, and in our act of bringing to the individual voice of the dramatic monologue a communal voice (typically, the individual perspective calls to mind and brings to bear the general) we find now the form reminds us of the limitations of the self and the virtues of the community--which virtues happen to be our own. And in this latter point runs the form's fundamental paradox: the dramatic monologue proves to be a didactic form that has as its morally dangerous effect the bolstering of our pride. As a form, it at once cautions and encourages, limits and frees; as a form, the dramatic monologue at once judges and sympathizes with-us.

The form of the dramatic monologue pressures us to make judgements concerning human character and action, but one implication of this pressure is its implication of us as audience in the drama of character and action before us. That is, the dramatic monologue makes (or strives to make) our characters and actions (evaluations) a part of its drama. To use the terms with which Langbaum speaks of the dramatic monologue, by our acts of judgement and sympathy we change

and make ourselves from inside, and in answer to an outside that inquires about us as we make inquiries of it. To use the terms with which Whalley speaks of literature and of language more generally, the form of the dramatic monologue provides an interesting instance of how poetry can be an instrument of inquiry.

"It may be," Whalley writes, "that it is through language as much as anything else that we discover integrity of purpose and integrity of action, recognising that by taking irreversible acts of judgement and decision we change and make ourselves from inside (for better, for worse), being by nature something other than the simple products of those causes of which we have little knowledge and over which we have no control" (LI 199-200). We are not the only subjects when we read dramatic monologues, nor are we only subjects: we are also subjected to a novel revelation of character and action that might reflect surprisingly on our own character and action. To recast the Biblical maxim, one might say that the dramatic monologue pressures us to judge, since we are certainly being judged. Thus the dramatic monologue accords especially well with Whalley's warning to students of literature against "thinking about" poems. When we are able to suppress this mental "habit", Whalley proposes, certain advantages follow.

(1) The student becomes increasingly aware of a changing quality of relation between himself and the poem; his presumption that he is a knowing *subject* and the poem a knowable *object* has changed into a cognitive *relation*, dominantly perceptual, in which the initiative begins to shift from himself as knower to the poem as capable of directing the process of getting to know--a process (as I suggested) that is very much like getting to know a person. (2) Instead of the reader dominating and commanding the poem, the poem begins

to command the reader's attention and to establish a hierarchy of relevance--the sense of a centre and a periphery. (TP 221)

In one sense, we are on that periphery--not always a pleasant place to be, especially after our vanity has been flattered with the opportunity to judge and at times find wanting the dramatic monologue's speaker. But in another sense we are part of the centre, since the processes both of our valorization and our marginalization are essential parts of the *relation* of the dramatic monologue's eventuality.

CHAPTER FIVE

Great Expectations and the Ghosts of Narrative

The following discussion will consider how the drama of mimesis can appear in the form of narrative. A central concern here will be Whalley's conception of self-determinate form; through an analysis of the action of Great Expectations, I hope to suggest further the challenges that arise to self-determinacy, and to illustrate further how poetic form ultimately proves to be dialogical, an eventuality of the relations that occur within the aesthetic triad. My efforts in these regards will be conducted not only with reference to Dickens' novel, but also partly by returning to Shakespeare's practice (in Hamlet especially), as well as by considering certain of Derrida's ideas concerning the nature of the play of presence and absence that is to be found in representation.

In the course of his discussion in "Jane Austen: Poet", Whalley argues for a certain family likeness between the novel and the traditional drama. He finds a good deal of support for his argument in Edwin Muir's comments on Austen (and others) in The Structure of the Novel, where Muir devotes a chapter to a consideration of what he calls "the dramatic novel". This novelistic structure, Muir suggests, aims to do away with the action/character dichotomy that the two formal structures he discusses in his opening chapter ("Novels of Action and Character") depend upon. Muir opens the chapter thus:

This is the dramatic novel. In this division the hiatus between the characters and the plot disappears. The characters are not part of the machinery of the plot; nor is the plot merely a rough framework round the characters. On the contrary, both are inseparably knit together. The given qualities of the characters determine the action, and the action

in turn progressively changes the characters, and thus everything is borne forward to an end. At its greatest the affinity of the dramatic novel is with poetic tragedy, just as that of the novel of character is with comedy. (41)

Muir sees the dramatic novel as a form which takes up, joins and enhances what matters most in the novels of action and character. The logical progression of events that appeared in the novel of action retains its place in the dramatic novel; indeed, here it is given even more weight, since in the dramatic novel we find not merely coherence but "strict internal causation" (45), a "spontaneous" as well as "progressive" logic of action (47), a certain inevitability peculiar to the particular world that the novel bodies forth. But here too the characters that ruled the novel of character are also given a privileged place; they are a principal part of the "causation" of action. Indeed, in the dramatic novel character too matters even more than it did in the novel of character, insofar as here character is "no longer a thing merely to delight in It has consequences. It influences events; it creates difficulties and later, in different circumstances, dissolves them" (42). When Muir suggests that the dramatic novel gives us "not merely a succession, but a development" (54), he points to a plot that has been enriched--enriched in large part by those characters who are developing through the course of it, and in the process helping to propel it. In the dramatic novel, as Muir succinctly puts it, "character is action, and action character" (47).

As here, Muir writes throughout his account of the dramatic novel in terms similar to those that Whalley employs in his treatment of poetry more broadly, a similarity that is well illustrated by what Muir has to say about the **end** of the dramatic novel. Because of the dramatic

structure of this type of novel, Muir writes, its end will be crucial, even cathartic. In this respect Muir contrasts *Vanity Fair* and *Wuthering Heights*:

Time surrounds Becky Sharp, it is true; but it reveals Catherine Earnshaw. It is the element in which she unfolds and in which finally her fate is consummated. The end in the dramatic novel is therefore of extraordinary significance; not merely a rounding off of the story as in *Vanity Fair*, but the final illumination. It is the end not only of the action, but of the characterisation; the last touch which gives finality and completeness to the revelation of the figures. (57-58)

Commenting upon Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* as another example of a dramatic novel, Muir remarks how an early "foreshadowing" incident can "throw the wild shadows of the end" of a novel over an action that is only a third of the way through (75). When these shadows finally do become substance, we are at once prepared and surprised:

The end, which comes suddenly and unexpectedly, lights up everything which led up to it; fate which had been playing hide-and-seek for so long manifests itself, and shows the action in one instant as it is. Into this instant all the time traversed by the action seems to fly, transformed and ended by the same stroke. (78)

Transformed and ended, just as in *The Return of the Native*, in the "brief interval between our knowledge of the end and its coming all Eustacia's transit through life is realised as if for the first time, and in our realisation has been ended" (72). Thus Muir reminds us that catharsis is an event formed within the action of the poem but completed by the action of the audience ("in our realisation"), and indeed his discussion of "The Dramatic Novel" resonates with terms relevant to the action that Whalley says poetry engenders within the aesthetic triad: consummation, illumination, completeness, revelation, realisation.

Whalley's response to Muir's analysis of the dramatic novel (and in particular Muir's comments on Austen) is enthusiastic, and entirely to the point: "This account of Jane Austen's procedure sounds very much like a direct application of Aristotle's view of tragedy to the conduct of prose fiction" (JAP 152). Muir himself does not refer to Aristotle, so the connection of Muir's view to Aristotle's is one that Whalley rather than Muir himself makes; nonetheless, Whalley's argument in "Jane Austen: Poet" for the application of Aristotelian theory to the structure of the dramatic novel as Muir describes it is a compelling one. Especially interesting is Whalley's relation of what Muir describes as the "strict interior causation" (45) of Austen's novels to "the internality of Aristotle's view of the nature and sources of tragedy" (JAP 153); Coleridge, Whalley adds suggestively, "also insists upon the internality, the self-originating nature of action; we cannot without damage go behind the statement 'I act'; it is always an 'I' acting, decisively and irreversibly" (153).

If Whalley and Muir agree¹ that the fictions of Jane Austen have the same kind of "dramatic" quality that we find in what Muir calls "formal drama" (147),² what of the fictions of Charles Dickens? Specifically, what of *Great Expectations*? Whalley makes no mention of Dickens in his essay on Austen; Muir, when he does mention Dickens, makes it plain that he does not consider Dickens' novels "dramatic" in the way that Austen's are, suggesting that for Dickens character was

1. Whether or not the terms of that agreement are mutually acknowledged as "Aristotelian"

2. With regard to Austen, Ian Watt also seems to move in the direction of such a position when, near the end of *The Rise of the Novel*, he comments on Austen's ability to "combine into harmonious unity" both "the internal and the external approaches to character" (297).

not consequential but "a thing merely to delight in" (42). With regard to their personages, Muir claims, Dickens' novels of character

need not show us any new quality in them, and at the time when it is manifested. All [they] need do is to bring out their various attributes, which were there at the beginning; for these characters are almost always static. (24-25)

But while Muir seems to consider the case against Dickens as dramatic novelist conclusive, in fact his analysis indirectly helps suggest how we might speak of Great Expectations as a dramatic novel after all. In the dramatic plot, Muir asserts, we must find both "the logical and the spontaneous, necessity and freedom" (48). As readers, we will sense in the world of the dramatic novel not only the inevitability of certain events, but the freedom that led to that inevitability, and those events. Without this independence, a quality most pointedly discernible of course in the characters of a dramatic novel, the plot will appear "mechanical" (48) and the characters will "have no freedom to choose, to reflect, or even to postpone" (48). To this list, one might add that characters in such a novel will have no freedom to plot, to intentionally plan and put into practice the action that constitutes their text. Muir posits a distinction between plots "worked out dramatically" by and within characters and those "arranged by the author" (51), but what of plots which dramatize that very attempt at "arrangement by the author," plots that concern themselves with such "author-ity"? In such plots, character and novelist can share precisely the same concerns, which concerns can in turn become the reader's.

In the process, these concerns can become the very stuff of drama. "We see things," Muir writes, "in terms of Time, Space, and

Causality; and only the Supreme Being, Kant affirmed, can see the whole unity from beginning to end. Yet the imagination desires to see the whole unity, or an image of it; and it seems that that image can only be conceived when the imagination accepts certain limitations, or finds itself spontaneously working within them" (113). In this structuring "conception", whose pregnant imagination is at work? Muir rightly implies here that the search for structure--for plot, for a "unity from beginning to end"--is one we all share, whether we are poets or readers. *Great Expectations* suggests, further, that the same search can engage characters whose own (structuring, plotting) actions in novels constitute the makings of those very novels. There are times, Muir ruminates, that we can see life--usually known only as a "flux without a design" (94)--as a "whole, with a design and a significance" (93). These times he calls "moments of aesthetic vision" (94). The drama of *Great Expectations* consists of the protagonist's and the novel's struggle for and critique of this designed and significant vision. Both struggle and critique (construction and deconstruction) take place in every member of the aesthetic triad: in the novel (plot), in the reader, and perhaps most importantly in this case in the figure of the poet (Pip/Pirrip). But, characteristically, the distinctions within the aesthetic triad are less telling here than the triad's eventual³ unity, for in *Great Expectations* the poet-figure is also the poem's main character and principal reader: his aesthetic vision is what comes to us as the "finished" product (it is not finished in some ways), the story of his character. But Muir seems to have anticipated us on this point as well. Commenting on Proust's *A*

3. I employ the hyphen to suggest that the aesthetic end achieved (eventually) arises out of action (events on small and large scales).

la recherche du temps perdu, he succinctly and pregnantly notes that "the writing of a character novel may be conceived as a dramatic action in itself" (125). I think Pip--not to mention Dickens--would quite agree.

Arguably first-person narratives, especially insofar as they are autobiographical or "fictional pseudo-autobiography", as Peter Brooks calls *Great Expectations* (504), represent a unique comment on the relation of plot and character. One could say that in such narratives character--its origin, its traumas, its development--is plot, not only because the plot concerns the protagonist's progress, but also because plot becomes a function of what the protagonist-as-narrator does (he confesses, for example, or seeks revenge, or discovers himself, or justifies himself: John O. Jordan lists these particular acts as "Pip's reasons for writing the story of his life" [75]). And, of course, as narrator the protagonist of an autobiography also invents, an act of making or plotting that, with its palpable link to the protagonist's own and his narrative's character, may also be suggestive of the nature of the relation of plot and character.

Lawrence Frank is one critic who, like Jordan, sees the action of *Great Expectations* very much in terms of the narrative activity of its protagonist--an activity that has, he suggests, its risks.

Pip chooses to see his first meeting with Miss Havisham and Estella as the shaping event in the narrative that is his life. He seeks consciously to strike out, to censor, the other memorable day, one year earlier, in order to deny its place in the long chain that would never have bound him but for the forging of the first link. Pip's attempt to forge a self in defiance of the self's historical situation, as if it might exist independently of the events that, in part, constitute its structure, leads to impasse, to the figurative death awaiting so many of Dickens's heroes and heroines. . . .

Pip chooses to relinquish his history, willfully misreading events in his life so that he may possess a past consonant

with the future he imagines for himself. He has invented for himself, in [Jose] Ortega's words, "a program of life, a static form of being". (154-160)

Such an account emphasizes Pip's activity as reader as well as author; it makes his choices as a reader a central part of his career as maker, suggesting in the process that a narrative such as *Great Expectations* may integrate plot and character by making plot a function of what characters try to make of themselves (even if their plot involves making themselves "static").

This view of plot, furthermore, may integrate us in the novel's drama insofar as it places weight on our own activity as readers in sympathy with the protagonist. Derek Brewer argues in *Symbolic Stories* that we tend to identify with protagonists, and he applies this principle to a scene from *Great Expectations* with interesting force.

The episode of Mr. Wopsle's reading [of *The Tragedy of George Barnwell*] is also a singularly vivid demonstration of how the hearer or reader of a piece of imaginative literature associates himself with the protagonist, becomes himself the protagonist, sharing his anxieties and joys. So, as we read, we become Pip, just as we centre ourselves on Cinderella, or Jack, or Fanny Price. Unless we place ourselves there, at the centre of the web of relationships, we cannot understand the pattern. Thus it is that we "are" George Barnwell, not his uncle, we "are" Hamlet, or Lear, or Gawain, or Gareth. (169)

But audiencing, here as elsewhere (in the dramatic monologue, for example), becomes a matter of distance as well as concern; if in one sense we "are" Pip, or Hamlet, in another we most certainly are not. Steven Connor argues that Pip's "growth into maturity can be seen partly in terms of his move to the position of spectator rather than that of spectacle" (128)--he joins us in this regard--but of course this move demands on his part what spectating demands of us all: a degree of detachment.

Fundamental to the practice of autobiography itself is a certain detachment, an objectification of the self that first appears (as psychologists such as Jacques Lacan stress) with language; language being our most sophisticated naming system, names are merely the first markers of this objectifying process. Accordingly, one may see the entire project of autobiography as a pursuit of the act of self-naming; like a confession, as Barry Westburg says, the autobiography constitutes "an extended naming of oneself" (122). That this naming involves a "splitting" of the one self into subject (poet) and object (protagonist) accords with the nature of language more generally. Connor, commenting on the opening scene of *Great Expectations*, suggests that there "the ability to make distinctions in language is associated with the ability to discriminate objects in the outside world" (115-16). "Interestingly," he continues,

it is the awareness of the "identity of things" (it's rather odd, but I think we wouldn't be too far wrong in paraphrasing this as the differences between things) which seems to produce a new sense of self for Pip. Though Pip perceives himself as the centre of perception and experience, this centrality is actually diffused by the narrative. When Pip's gaze suddenly arrives back at himself at the end of the long exploratory movement outwards into the landscape he discovers himself as an object within his own perceptual field rather than the origin of that perception, so that he moves structurally from the perceiving centre to the periphery. At the same time he is discovering himself as the object of his own language, the "I" who is spoken of as well as the "I" who is doing the speaking. (116)

Such a discovery is potentially unsettling (it makes Pip, at least, cry), but of course it is also necessary; without a sense of self we couldn't, for example, write our autobiographies, which according to Westburg represent the furthest extent to which self-objectification can go (122).

Nor, without a sense of self, could we lie. Westburg insightfully notices how Dickens complicates autobiography in *Great Expectations* in part by linking it so directly to the similarly self-objectifying art and act of lying. "[S]aying what one knows is false." Westburg comments,

involves duplicity compounded, for one constructs for others a plausible self-image both with words and with accompanying gestures, and all of this is a negation of the "real" self. Lying involves hypocritically making a mask, one which cannot be contrived unless one assesses and manipulates the view that others will have while one is lying. That is to say, lying involves knowing oneself as an object for others, so that false words can issue plausibly from the mask. (131)

Remarking upon the novel's opening, Westburg points out how Pip's declaration of his self-authored name does not go unquestioned by the threatening father-figure who arises from among the graves: "It is a fine piece of psychology for Dickens to show Pip being forced to utter his name over and over to Magwitch, for Pip's identity and existence are being challenged at the very moment they are first firmly established" (122). Part of the challenge Magwitch poses to Pip's right to self-authorization arises from the contiguity that his presence promotes between authorization and fictions--those lies that sound like truth.

How much autonomy, and how much authority, does Pip actually have? Who authorizes his autobiographical plot? Who or what apart from Pip himself shapes the form of his narrative, determining its *telos*? *Great Expectations*, Dickens' "fictional pseudo-autobiography", strikingly illustrates how authorization involves the tension within as well as the unity of the inventive subject. Whalley tells us that to illustrate the principle of formal *telos* "Aristotle sometimes uses the organic example of the seed" (OT 66), and seeds offer themselves as particularly good instances of the meeting of presence and potency. But even so

straightforward a *telos* is complicated--haunted? certainly shaped--by the context of its past; as Carlyle says (in another context), the kind of seed one deals with (which we may know, teleologically, either from where the seed came from--its past--or what it will grow to--its future) does matter:

It is maintained, by Helvetius and his set, that an infant of genius is quite the same as any other infant, only that certain surprisingly favourable influences accompany him through life, especially through childhood, and expand him, while others lie closefolded and continue dunces. Herein, say they, consists the whole difference between an inspired Prophet and a double-barrelled Game-preserved: the inner man of the one has been fostered into generous development; that of the other, crushed-down perhaps by vigour of animal digestion, and the like, has exuded and evaporated, or at best sleeps now irresuscitably stagnant at the bottom of his stomach. "With which opinion," cries Teufelsdröckh, "I should as soon agree as with this other, that an acorn might, by favourable or unfavourable influences of soil and climate, be nursed into a cabbage, or the cabbage-seed into an oak." (*Sartor Resartus* 74-75)

We might view Pip (whose name itself denotes "seed") as a protagonist seeking by means of narrative self-explanation to make a "final statement" or "assertion" of his own end; we might, that is, see Pip as an individual asserting his own potential form. Does the fact that he acts as his own narrator mean that his is more likely to be, when achieved, a self-determinate form?

The action of the novel poses questions about determination and *telos* to Pip in more ways than one. It poses them in terms of plot, for example, since Pip is trying to become a new man ("a gentleman"), and it poses them as well in terms of narrative activity, since Pip is a historian of the self, a self-maker. Graham Daldry identifies Pip's "sense of himself" as "his narrative sense" (153), and several critics have observed the vigorous impetus to narrative in the world of Pip's

fiction. "[T]he connections between Magwitch, Molly, and Estella," writes Frank, "are never proved. They are willed, convincing to Pip, and to us, because they satisfy a profound need: they provide a sense of an ending, achieved by an act of the imagination" (179). In the infamous crux of the two endings to the novel, Jordan finds a suggestion of the narrator's own natural struggle with endings; "the narrator's continuing puzzlement before the figure of Estella," Jordan writes,

is a strong incitement to write, and it should come as no surprise that when he seeks to impose closure on the sequence of events that constitutes his autobiography, he does so by returning to Estella and by trying to fit her into the pattern of his life. But she eludes him again. Her last words are about parting, and, although Pip chooses to end his narrative with the image of the two of them holding hands as they go out of the ruined place, he cannot bring himself to speak of their present relationship. The past tense verb in his final sentence, "I saw no shadow of another parting from her," invites us to question what he sees now and why so much is left unsaid. I am even tempted to regard the famous problem of the two endings, not as Dickens' problem, but as the narrator's and to see it as a symptom of Pip's difficulty in letting go of Estella and closing off a relationship that he still does not understand. (81-82)

Of course, if it is the narrator's problem, it is also ours. We too are implicated in the interpenetration of plot and character in *Great Expectations*. The desire for endings is one we share--maybe even one we act upon, with great (because determining or *informing*) expectations.

Frank suggests that Pip "willfully misread[s] events in his life" (160), and the implication of pride here seems just, since a fair description of Pip's case would be to say that as a reader of his life's events he does not exercise innocence of intent. Whalley proposes that we need to approach literature, and experience more broadly, "with a quiet mind, subduing our prejudices, presuppositions and formulated responses, even our approximate expectations" (LI 209), but of course

expectations are just what Pip does not subdue; rather, he is fairly overwhelmed--and all but undone--by his prejudices, presuppositions and formulations--in short, by his great and approximate expectations. As Brooks suggests, Pip establishes a kind of "fairy tale" plot for his life, censoring at the same time the "nightmare" plot that always threatens to break through (506). As a reader of his life, one might say, Pip is willfully enchanted.

Now I think it is worth noting that enchantment is precisely what Whalley says readers ought to avoid--precisely, in fact, what he says reading (when done properly) ought to help cure. Poetry, Whalley proposes, can liberate us from enchantment--which has much to do with "the oppressive circularity of our own personal limitations, the squalor of our desires, the stifling self-preoccupation that we are often told is the necessary condition of modern man"--because poetry is "by its very nature" "the opposite of an escape: imagination is a realising-process, making the world real, making us real; in this way, poetry is--as [R. G.] Collingwood has said--not an enchantment but a disenchantment" (LI 199). Expectations are dangerous because of their "enchanting" capacity, their ability to usurp the forms that we actually encounter in real life, whether those forms be people, events, or poems. If it is a poem, for example, that we want to know, Whalley writes, "we must know it for what it is and for what it does (for what it acts out)" (LI 208). We must not know it for what we had thought or hoped it was going to be.

But if as I have been arguing dramatic form is dialogic, if readers enrich (and so help make) texts, with what do they enrich them? What do we as readers have, apart from our pre-emptive expectations, to

bring to poetic forms? *Great Expectations* suggests that one thing we have and ought to bring is our wonder. Early on in *Hard Times*, Mr. Gradgrind offers his daughter the following educative rule of thumb: "Louisa, never wonder!" Of course, Dickens invokes this lesson in order to satirize it. "Never wonder. By means of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, settle everything somehow, and never wonder. Bring to me, says M'Choakumchild, yonder baby just able to walk, and I will engage that it shall never wonder" (49).⁴ Dickens' recognition of the need for wonder may remind us of *Hamlet*, and indeed it is partly disclosed in *Great Expectations* by the use he makes of Shakespeare's best-known play. Pip's account of Mr. Wopsle's London stage debut runs in part as follows:

Upon my unfortunate townsman all these incidents accumulated with playful effect. Whenever that undecided prince had to ask a question or state a doubt, the public helped him out with it. As for example; on the question whether 'twas nobler in the mind to suffer, some roared yes, and some no, and some inclining to both opinions, said "toss up for it;" and quite a debating society arose. When he asked what should such fellows as he do crawling between earth and heaven, he was encouraged with loud cries of "Hear, hear!" When he appeared with his stocking disordered (its disorder expressed, according to usage, by one very neat fold in the top, which I suppose to be always got up with a flat iron), a conversation took place in the gallery respecting the paleness of his leg, and whether it was occasioned by the turn the ghost had given him. On his taking the recorders--very like a little black flute that had just been played in the orchestra and handed out at the door--he was called upon unanimously for "Rule Britannia." When he recommended the player not to saw the air thus, the sulky man said, "And don't you do it, neither; you're a deal worse than him!" And I grieve to add that peals of laughter greeted Mr. Wopsle on every one of these occasions.

4. One might remark that the first words Milton has Satan say to Eve in *Paradise Lost* are "Wonder not" (IX.532). *Hard Times* was dedicated to Carlyle, who also stressed the importance of wonder for human development (see, for example, his observation in *Sartor Resartus* that "Wonder is the basis of Worship" [67]).

But his greatest trials were in the churchyard, which had the appearance of a primeval forest, with a kind of small ecclesiastical wash-house on one side, and a turnpike-gate on the other. Mr. Wopsle, in a comprehensive black cloak, being descried entering at the turnpike, the gravedigger was admonished in a friendly way, "Look out! Here's the undertaker a-coming to see how you're getting on with your work!" I believe it is well known in a constitutional country that Mr. Wopsle could not possibly have returned the skull, after moralizing over it, without dusting his fingers on a white napkin taken from his breast; but even that innocent and indispensable action did not pass without the comment "Waiter!" (240)

There is in this metadramatic scene a striking emphasis on the audience, an audience whose response to *Hamlet* is fairly summed up in Pip's own very first statement concerning the play: "On our arrival in Denmark, we found the king and queen of that country elevated in two arm-chairs on a kitchen-table, holding a Court" (239). Pip gestures toward the suspension of disbelief that so much literature depends upon here--"On our arrival in Denmark"--but even this phrase carries in its blankly literal quality an ironic suggestion (Pip might as routinely say "When we first arrived at the chop-house"), and he quickly reinstates disbelief in "showing up" the drama, pointing to the arm-chairs and the kitchen-table as evidence of the play's fictive status. Pip's introductory remarks continue in the same way, exposing as they do the stately Danish court as an assortment of ragged actors.

In his disbelieving response to this enactment of *Hamlet* Pip has the company of his fellow auditors. Neither caught up by the play nor in any way persuaded by it, these spectators are above this *Hamlet*, critical of it, untouched by it, amused by it only insofar as it provides a foil for their own exercise of wit. Their ironical attitude is consonant with the fact that, watching this play, the members of the audience have no wonder concerning it: the play is transparent, and they see right

through it to the world they know well already (the world of kitchen-tables, nagging coughs and kettledrums). But other qualities of this audience are worth noting too. This audience, despite its apparent unwillingness to accept an arm-chair on a kitchen-table as a throne, is highly imaginative. Its various taunts are not merely abusive; they also suggest a talent for seeing similarity in dissimilarity and for making analogies, and thus are keenly metaphorical, poetic in essence. As well, this audience seems to have expectations: expectations concerning what a play ought to be like, what a ghost ought to be like, what Hamlet's fear ought to be like--expectations, in short, regarding what is appropriate or natural. These expectations these spectators bring to the play, and use in their evaluation of it. And one other quality of this audience is its intrusiveness: like the viewers of metadramas in a number of Shakespeare's plays (*Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example), these auditors exert themselves, making their presence a part of the performance.

Are the qualities that Wopsle's audience exhibits appropriate to readers and spectators? The performance of *Hamlet* here suggests that texts have contexts, and that in those contexts the selves of poems or plays may exhibit a certain vulnerability, may be subject to--because they will *per se* invite--the (possibly damning) critical activity of the selves to whom they appeal (and whom they try to shape according to their own ends). Poems will not come entire in such a volatile atmosphere; the expectations, demands and imperfections of the context (which will include an audience) will help complete (in part constitute) every poem. Certainly that is the case with *Hamlet* as it is performed in *Great Expectations*. But if readers help make or unmake poems, they

can do so innocently, and Wopsle's auditors may be at fault on this point. The contextualization that audiences and readers practice will necessarily involve a certain exercise of recognition: to place something in a context involves putting it into a frame that one knows, and will demand a certain distance from the text that will allow for the application of that frame. But innocence of intent brings to this process of contextualization the element of wonder. Wonder, which Pip and the others at Wopsle's performance certainly do not have, is not only as Carlyle says the basis of worship; it is also the basis of innocence. For readers, wonder is innocence in action.

Whalley himself does not explicitly make this claim, but since he says little about the nature of innocence of intent directly this should not be surprising. Still, we find throughout his criticism an *admiration* for literature that exemplifies the etymological bearing of that word: Whalley comes to literature with wonder, and asks us to do the same. "The success of humanist education," he writes, "depends upon the quality of inquiry an instructor can beguile his students into; for that, both instructor and student need to be more than a little learned and to be informed by a sense of wonder" (RH 113). Whalley closely associates this "sense of wonder" with the action of "self-losing" (RH 112) that readers must practice--"humility and wonder being important functions in fertile mental process" (SRP 81). The "nucleus" of activity in the study of literature, Whalley suggests,

is accessible along a single thread that is composed of two strands--as is the case (I suppose) for all things and states imaginative. These strands are a sense of wonder and a sense of language. Plato said that wonder was the beginning of philosophy--and by "philosophy" he meant the affectionate pursuit of wisdom. Without a sense of wonder the mind

remains closed, or irritably aggressive, or morosely fear-ridden. Wonder is a respectful way of mind, a grace that we seem to be born with; by discipline we can nourish it; it brings with it the exhilarating release, the sheer delight, of discovering living things that are not projections of our selves, and that liberate us by their exuberant vitality, their unaccountable otherness and rightness. (PUT 139-40)

In *Great Expectations* Dickens too advocates wonder as a rule for readers. If Pip and the rest of the audience are without it before Wopsle's rendition of *Hamlet* and the play flops, Dickens gives us a second metadramatic scene in which wonder figures prominently, and which scene therefore has a very different effect, at least for the one spectator before it who wonders.

Pip sees the play I refer to during a period in which he is "Condemned to inaction" (361), waiting for an opportunity to get Magwitch safely out of England. One day, in order to avoid the "hours of dejection and solitude" (362) that will confront him should he go home, he decides to attend the theatre--perhaps with more humility than he knew in the days of his great expectations.

The second piece was the last new grand comic Christmas pantomime, in the first scene of which it pained me to suspect that I detected Mr. Wopsle with red worsted legs under a highly magnified phosphoric countenance and a shock of red curtain-fringe for his hair, engaged in the manufacture of thunderbolts in a mine, and displaying great cowardice when his gigantic master came home (very hoarse) to dinner. But he presently presented himself under worthier circumstances; for, the Genius of Youthful Love being in want of assistance--on account of the parental brutality of an ignorant farmer who opposed the choice of his daughter's heart, by purposely falling upon the object in a flour sack, out of the first-floor window--summoned a sententious enchanter; and he, coming up from the antipodes rather unsteadily, after an apparently violent journey, proved to be Mr. Wopsle in a high-crowned hat, with a necromantic work in one volume under his arm. The business of this enchanter on earth being principally to be talked at, sung at, butted at, danced at, and flashed at with fires of various colours, he had a good deal of time on his hands. And I observed with great surprise that he

devoted it to staring in my direction as if he were lost in amazement.

There was something so remarkable in the increasing glare of Mr. Wopsle's eye, and he seemed to be turning so many things over in his mind and to grow so confused that I could not make it out. I sat thinking of it long after he had ascended to the clouds in a large watchcase, and still I could not make it out. I was still thinking of it when I came out of the theatre an hour afterwards, and found him waiting for me near the door. (363-64)

What strikes one about the performance, of course, is its element of role reversal. Pip comes to watch a play, and his early comments suggest that he comes prepared to assume an ironic posture before it much like that one he assumed for Hamlet earlier (he recognizes his acquaintance, not to mention his "curtain-fringe" of hair, "behind" the character on stage). But if Pip comes to the theatre and begins his watching without wonder, recognition of an entirely new sort alters for him the comfortable detachment of familiarity: the recognition that he is being watched, that he has become the dramatic "object". This recognition arrived at, Pip's position becomes less comfortable because less well-defined; thus he begins to wonder. When Wopsle clears up the confusion by explaining after the show that what so attracted his gaze was the presence of Compeyson right behind Pip, he offers a revelation that for Pip is both a clarification and a re-affirmation of his earlier wonder: while it explains on the one hand why he was being watched (by Wopsle), it reiterates on the other that he was being watched (by Compeyson).

Dickens' treatment of these two plays-within-the-novel roughly parallels Shakespeare's own use of the metadramatic in Hamlet. Whereas there the central metadrama consists of two parts, the first a static likeness and the second a mimetic encounter that involves the audience

by making it part of the action, here we find a similar counterpointing of the static and unsuccessful play that leaves Pip free to offer a bemused critique and the more effective drama that gradually draws him into its own action (at least insofar as Wopsle enacts that action).⁵ If this is what literature ought to do--affect its audience--what do we make of what the audience ought to do before it? Pip still brings to the second performance all the qualities that he, along with the rest of the audience, brought to Hamlet. He is still ironical (though this quality diminishes as the play continues and his wonder heightens), still imaginative, still with his surmises, guesses, and expectations, and still intrusive (he affects Wopsle, certainly). But these qualities are not unreasonable ones: indeed, they are to be expected. But when the mimesis looks at its audience, when it reveals that audience to itself in a new way--its "philosophical" responsibility, Aristotle might say--then that audience can indeed be all these things before it, for these elements of its response will in turn be informed by its experience of fear and wonder; accordingly, despite its practice of expectation, the audience won't know what to expect next. To discover that, whatever its suppositions, the audience will have to look to the dramatic text (whether poem or performance) itself. It will have to cede authority to its form, which will just then be seeking its own end in an exercise of dialogical self-assertion.

5. And Pip's connection to the performance is more substantial than even the association with Wopsle suggests, since at this point in his life Pip himself is in the process of being supported by the Genius of Youthful Love while struggling with difficult parent-figures.

The discussion Pip and Wopsle have following the second metadramatic scene helps illustrate further the nature of the link that joins audience and text.

"Mr. Pip, you remember in old times a certain Christmas Day, when you were quite a child, and I dined at Gargery's and some soldiers came to the door to get a pair of handcuffs mended?"

"I remember it very well."

"And you remember that there was a chase after two convicts, and that we joined in it, and that Gargery took you on his back, and that I took the lead and you kept up with me as well as you could?"

"I remember it all very well." Better than he thought--except the last clause.

"And you remember that we came up with the two in a ditch, and that there was a scuffle between them, and that one of them had been severely handled and much mauled about the face by the other?"

"I see it all before me."

"And that the soldiers lighted torches, and put the two in the centre, and that we went on to see the last of them, over the black marshes, with the torchlight shining on their faces--I am particular about that--with the torchlight shining on their faces, when there was an outer ring of dark night all about us?"

"Yes," said I. "I remember all that."

"Then, Mr. Pip, one of those two prisoners sat behind you tonight. I saw him over your shoulder."

"Steady!" I thought. I asked him then, "Which of the two do you suppose you saw?"

"The one who had been mauled," he answered readily, "and I'll swear I saw him! The more I think of him, the more certain I am of him."

"This is very curious!" said I, with the best assumption I could put on of its being nothing more to me. "Very curious indeed!" (365)

Here again in Wopsle's reminiscence we find an image of the stage drama: the convict protagonists performing, the spectating crowd gathered about, looking on. But as Wopsle's description suggests, the gap between dramatic text and audience is dynamic and flexible rather than static and inert: the dramatic frame, as was the case in "Childe Roland", seems alive with the life of the viewers themselves. The ring

of dark night is about the audience as well as the actors: both parties are encircled by it, implicated in the dramatic event. Or, one might say, both parties are *engaged* in it. It is a *ring* of darkness that surrounds them, joining them in the sacrament of life enacted.

The active contribution of readers to texts (their enacted union) is one to which *Great Expectations* pays a good deal of attention. Brooks observes that there are two kinds of plots in *Great Expectations*: official plots and repressed plots. Pip refers to Miss Havisham at an early point in his narrative as a "witch", but he soon suppresses this reading, pushing it down into the plot of what Brooks calls "the nightmare of Satis House/the witch tale" (506); despite the evidence of his senses, Pip sees his involvement with Miss Havisham in terms of the official or censoring plot of "the dream of Satis House/the fairy tale" (Brooks 506):

She had adopted Estella, she had as good as adopted me, and it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together. She reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a-going and the cold hearths a-blazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin--in short, do all the shining deeds of the young knight of romance, and marry the princess. (218)

Pip's expectations cause him to mis-read the text before him, but if his expectations mislead Pip, they do something else too: they lead him. Where Pip got his notions of romance is not clear, but Dickens is less interested in the original source of such expectations than with their own capacity for originating effects. If a rule can be derived from this particular example of reading-as-making, it might be expressed in the following terms: as we go about making our lives, our expectations as

readers will impact upon the forms of our lives--though not in the way or for the reasons that we had expected (we are reminded of the servant with the one talent here). And what we can say about expectations we can say too about forms. That is, form will matter, but not necessarily in the way, or in the form, we first looked for. Poetic form, like the course of our lives, is always up for negotiation, right to the very end--though both become less negotiable as the consequences of actions (formal or our own) accumulate.

I suggested earlier that in 1 Henry IV "practice" may be distinguished from "imitation" by virtue of what we might call the former's excess, the fact that it involves invention as well as repetition. In terms of the history play, the two elements make "practice" the better description of what "the Artist in History" is about, since Shakespeare both copies and makes his text. But this practical mimesis involves a third quality, related to but not comprehended by the qualities of repetition and invention, to which I have not yet paid sufficient attention. Practice also involves **plotting**, which activity we begin to discover in Great Expectations from the very outset, when Pip, as a number of commentators on the novel have pointed out, demonstrates his penchant for "self-naming" (Frank 151), his willingness to "authorize" his own life/story.

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip. (1)

As Brooks has it, "what the novel chooses to present at its outset is precisely the search for a beginning. As in so many nineteenth-century novels, the hero is an orphan, thus undetermined by any visible

inheritance, apparently unauthored" (505). The story of the novel, Brooks suggests, will be an attempt to supply that author.

With Pip, Dickens begins as it were with a life which is for the moment precedent to plot, and indeed necessarily in search of plot. Pip when we first see him is in search of the "authority"--the word stands in the second paragraph of the novel--that would define and justify--authorize--the plot of his ensuing life. (505)

As Frank puts it, in naming himself (an act that involves a rejection of both his father's name and his father's prescriptive naming of himself, as well as, more obliquely, the "authority" of his sister) Pip seeks "to become the father of himself, someone freed from the conditioning realities of social class, of place, of time" (152). Thus Pip seems from the outset of *Great Expectations* a good candidate for the exercise of self-determinate form.

But even when it appears necessary, self-determination proves an unlikely eventuality in *Great Expectations*; one of the things Pip is doing in the churchyard is trying to establish or re-establish a connection with his family, place, and time. Appropriately, at the very moment of this attempt a powerful challenge to the possibility of self-determination appears in the person of Abel Magwitch, the figure who rouses himself from the tombstones of Pip's progenitors, commanding his silence.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!" (1-2)

Of course, this is not the first father we have seen rise from the grave to startle and chide a despondent son, and Magwitch's testy demands as to Pip's name accord with the opening line of *Hamlet* ("Who's there?").

Hamlet announces his own name very late in his drama, proclaiming at Ophelia's grave "This is I, / Hamlet the Dane!" (V.i.257-58) to the assembled antagonistic company.⁶ Pip, rather differently, knows the answer to Magwitch's question (demand) straight off--as well he should, since he named himself.

"Tell us your name!" said the man. "Quick!"
 "Pip, sir."
 "Once more," said the man, staring at me. "Give it mouth!"
 "Pip. Pip, sir." (2)

Whether self-naming is as easy as "giving it mouth", however, is another question, in part because of the various "intrusions" the self has to come to terms with.

For Pip, Magwitch represents one such intrusive threat to self-authorization. The past, which intrudes boldly and subversively into his narrative (as Magwitch himself will at a future point re-appear as a ghost from the past), represents another; as Brooks says, "all the clues to Pip's future, the forward movement of his plot, in fact lie in the past" (514). And his concerns about the future, too, intrude upon Pip's plans for self-determination. Indeed, the past and the future confront Pip at every turn. His principal strategy for dealing with them is to engage in narrative--a mimetic practice that in his case even takes on the responsibility of imitating Time's particular and particularly problematic interanimation of presence and absence. I suggested in relation to Hamlet that consecration may occur in a poem on several

6. Though one might also say that this is his father the King's ("the Dane"'s) name too. It could be argued that Hamlet gradually *becomes* his father's ghost through the course of the play. See for example his comment on his use of the royal signet in V.ii, and the fact that he only acts to kill Claudius when, as he says, he is not *dying* but "dead" (V.ii.303/308)--when he is, that is, just like his father.

levels: not merely relegated to the relation of character and action, consecration can be a formal matter as well, enacted by the present "I" of the poem's own drama. *Great Expectations* engages in a certain formal consecration by mimetically bodying forth the ghosts of past and future whose presence and absence depend upon each other.

In an attempt to elucidate Derrida's critique of "the metaphysics of presence", Jonathan Culler remarks as follows upon the paradox of the flight of an arrow.

If we focus on a series of present states we encounter a paradox: at any given time the arrow is at a particular spot; it is always in a particular spot and never in motion. Yet we want to insist, quite justifiably, that the arrow is in motion at every instant between the beginning and the end of its flight. When we focus on present states, the motion of the arrow is never present, never given. It turns out that motion, which is after all a fundamental reality of our world, is only conceivable in so far as every instant, every present state, is already marked with the traces of the past and the future. ("Jacques Derrida" 162-63)

"There is a crucial sense in which the non-present inhabits and is part of the present," Culler observes (163). Insofar as *Great Expectations* offers its own critique of presence, it too prompts us to consider the communion of the present and the absent, suggesting by means of its mimesis how these two may meet in the making of fictions, those complex events that are consecrated by the human will.

As we have seen, Shakespeare draws our attention to how this "paradox" of presence and absence enacts itself in human life in Hamlet's play-within-the-play; in the "present" of that mimesis, both past (crime) and future (nemesis) are at once (in one present) necessary to the play and bodied forth in it. John Baxter identifies the essence of the play of time as it appears in this image of mimesis when he

observes that the simultaneity of crime and punishment here "implies that justice is eternal, not time-bound; but Hamlet's act in pointing to this meaning reveals an intense engagement with the process of the action, which must unfold in time and in the lives of specific individuals" (6). Baxter's distinction between the eternal and the specifically individual may call to mind that paradoxical flight of the arrow, with its overarching action (flight/motion) and its specific moments (in which there appears no motion), but of course bringing these two paradoxes together suggests an important elaboration of the latter one, since in Baxter's account of Hamlet's metadrama the movement seems primarily a matter for the momentary, while the eternal is presumably constant (in the paradox of the arrow, it was the momentary that was static). Baxter's analysis thus suggests how in the overarching plot (eternal justice, the flight of an arrow) movement is carried forward by the particular, and depends upon time (always a matter of the **now** and the **not-now**, as Culler formulates the basic distinction ["Jacques Derrida" 163]) for its working-out. Appearances, as the truism runs, can be deceiving: the various moments in the flight of an arrow may **appear** to be static, but that is because in isolating and removing them from the complete action in which they are particular players we turn them into something they are not (we murder to dissect). The characteristic, individual moments in the flight of an arrow are what carry forward to its end the action of the arrow that gave these moments life. We find here yet another version of the interpenetration of character and action.

Baxter's diction with reference to this relation is worth noting: justice in Hamlet, he says, is not **bound** by the particulars of time, but

engaged with them. The words carry quite different implications, "engagement" suggesting a greater degree of both intention and activity than the static, more restrictive "bound". Although the two words may be used synonymously, we can register a basic difference when we ask ourselves whether we would rather be **engaged to** our lovers or **bound by** them. The prepositions, which carry something of the force of the distinction here, seem to me of a piece with the terms at issue. Indeed, the OED proposes the etymological link of engagement to willed and active commitment through no less an intermediary than marriage itself, in Western culture perhaps the quintessential image of human intentional action: the OE *weddian* (to pledge), our source for the verb "to wed", becoming the Gothic *gawadjon*, from the Germanic *wadhjojan* (a pledge), from whence our (now antiquated) "gage". (The sense of en-gaging oneself to a duel, of course, is another illustration of the willed--and highly staked--essence of engagement.) The principles of will and act meet in engagement (writ large) at the crucial moment of the marriage service, the moment of transition from engagement (in the conventional sense) to union in marriage, when both parties declare themselves with the definitive "I do"--which is as much to say, "This is what I do will, and will do."

Baxter offers his comments on *Hamlet* as a sort of prelude to a discussion of comic **praxis** in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Here Baxter also raises the question of intention, but in a way that couples it with **praxis**--both the characters' and the play's--and allows us to see intention as something other than a matter of the fully worked-out; intention, Baxter suggests (and it would seem helpful to use Whalley's "intension" here), may also be a matter of characters' "own deep

feelings" (16), which will perhaps be "beyond [their] imagining" (20). Still, Baxter considers the element of choice, even in comedy, critical, and his coupling of choice and *praxis* seems to me useful as a potential, event-ual bridge (an engagement, more than a bond) between the *difference* of the now and the not-now that pervades our plotting and reading, in addition to our being. Plots, as Brooks says, "have not only design, but intentionality as well" (503), and if Pip has his intentions, other plotters--including Miss Havisham, Magwitch, and Compeyson--have theirs too.

While *Hamlet's* play-within-the-play offers a succinct commentary on the relation of the now and the not-now, the play itself gives us a more sprawling commentary on this relation in the figure of the Ghost of Hamlet's father, who appears early and intermittently--though not in the last two Acts--throughout the play. Now, ghosts seem to me exemplary images of the engagement of the now and the not-now. The Ghost who appears in three scenes of Act I of *Hamlet* certainly has a quality of the "now" about him--his presence harrows Horatio and Hamlet both with fear and wonder--but in several ways he demonstrates as well the "not-now". He is, to begin, literally not *all* there: he (it) is a spectre, and the soldiers "do it wrong, being so majestic, / To offer it the show of violence, / For it is as the air" (I.i.143-45). Furthermore, the Ghost stands (now) as a reminder of what is no longer there (not-now)--namely, Hamlet's deceased parent: "Looks 'a not like the King? . . . Most like" (I.i.43-44). As well, the Ghost of Hamlet's father calls to the minds of those who see him--and especially to the mind of the Prince--the future, the not-now because not-yet. (Occasioned as it promises to be with a good deal of weeping and gnashing of teeth, this is not an

overly pleasant prospect.) And, again, this Ghost is after all the Ghost of Hamlet's father: he represents in this sense where Hamlet (who now is) came from (before he was), as well as where Hamlet did not come from (Claudius, who still is, but who is not Hamlet's father, despite his gestures to the contrary: "But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son--" [I.ii.64]).

In Shakespeare's play this Ghost, this image of absence in presence, seeks out Hamlet, and having found him proves immensely unsettling, as Derrida implies such an image ought to. The *praxis* of the play, however, brings Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, Laertes, Ophelia, the Ghost and the reader to various kinds of settlements--consecrations at once formal and personal--by its end: the marriage of Gertrude and Hamlet the King/Ghost is once more consecrated in death, "Hamlet makes himself like Claudius in order to bring him to justice" (Baxter 6), Hamlet and Laertes are joined as "brothers", Hamlet and Ophelia are joined as young lovers in death, Hamlet addresses and fulfills the Ghost's demands of him, in part by becoming just like him. Other consecrations in the play might be identified, and one of the effects of these meetings is the tentative resolution they offer of the tension that characterizes the gap between beginning (presence, signified) and end (absence, sign): by the end of the play, the Ghost has presumably been sufficiently satisfied by the various practices of the play (including his own) to rest in peace.

Great Expectations moves in a strikingly similar direction. That Dickens had Hamlet in mind as he wrote *Great Expectations* is evident from the numerous references to the play that appear in the novel--the most obvious being its own version of the tragedy in the play-within-the-novel of Chapter 31--but Hamlet is not merely a convenient

touchstone for Dickens' practice in *Great Expectations*; it provides a veritable model for this "story of development", and if the progress of the novel proves not to be a matter of development after all, perhaps that too is a debt owed to its dramatic source.

If ghosts do not exactly haunt Pip's narrative,⁷ they certainly do pervade it. References to ghosts run throughout the text: Barnard's Inn is so gloomy it appears to Pip as if "the vengeance of the soul of Barnard were being slowly appeased by the gradual suicide of the present occupants and their unholy interment under the gravel" (162); the fleeting image of Jaggers' housekeeper that Pip unconsciously associates with Estella arises before him like an apparition, such that "the ghost passed once more and was gone" (225); at the theatre, Compeyson is said by Wopsle to have been "sitting behind [Pip] there like a ghost" (364), a phrase that Pip later repeats to himself when he remarks upon the "peculiar terror I felt at Compeyson's having been behind me 'like a ghost'" (365); even the rushlight Pip is given on his uneasy night at the Hummums is "like the ghost of a walking-cane" (347).

Behind these references, informing them, is the tradition's archetypal spectre: the Ghost of Hamlet's father. We find the first trace of this literary and symbolic type in the novel's opening scene, where Magwitch--who later stakes his claim to being Pip's father: "Look'ee here, Pip, I'm your second father. You're my son" (304)--rises up from amidst the graves of Pip's parents, striking Pip with fear and wonder. Magwitch is like the ghost of the pirate hanged long ago on the gibbet

7. It is also Dickens' narrative (a "fictional pseudo-autobiography"), and the author of *Great Expectations* was certainly not unacquainted with the presence of ghosts from his past.

near the graveyard--he limps toward the gallows "as if he were the pirate come to life, and come down, and going back to hook himself up again" (5)--but he is also like the Ghost of Hamlet's father: his appearance here initiates action much as the appearance of the Ghost in Hamlet serves to begin that play; his own condition is one of torment; he takes on the role of Pip's father; he insists that Pip swear an oath to his fidelity; he is (as we learn soon enough) in pursuit of vengeance. All these are marks of Magwitch's similarity to his literary progenitor--similarities to progenitors being something of a theme in *Great Expectations*, of course, as is the progenitive power of the written word. Perhaps to help us see the relation, Dickens has Pip recount that at Christmas dinner on the day following his first encounter with Magwitch, Mr. Wopsle said grace "with theatrical declamation--as it now appears to me, something like a religious cross of the Ghost in Hamlet with Richard the Third" (22). Pip fears Magwitch as much when he reappears (and it is an especial talent of ghosts to reappear) at the Temple as when he first meets him in the graveyard--so much so that, Pip appropriately conjectures concerning his first days with the returned convict, "I doubt if a ghost could have been more terrible to me" (319). But it is not surprising that Pip would find Magwitch thus impressive; as Joe says, with reference again to Hamlet (and Pip, though he doesn't know it), "if the ghost of a man's own father cannot be allowed to claim his attention, what can, sir?" (209).

Of course, it is not quite just to say that Magwitch literally is Pip's father, or the ghost of the same. While he claims upon first re-greeting Pip to be his "second father", a bit later Pip proposes, and Magwitch accepts, a second title: uncle.

"I do not even know," said I, speaking low as he took his seat at the table, "by what name to call you. I have given out that you are my uncle."

"That's it, dear boy! Call me uncle."

(311)

Simultaneously second father and uncle, the ghostly Magwitch is as Brewer says one of the many "father-figures" in *Great Expectations*. "The major process of the story," Brewer claims, "is to be seen, at the latent level, as the progressive identification of the 'true' father-figure, the benefactor, then progressive identification *with* the father-figure, and then his progressive partial *destruction*" (175). Brewer's discussion sheds interesting light on the novel, but my own view is rather different with regard to where the "progress" of *Great Expectations* takes us, for it seems to me that the narrative places greater weight on the collision and mutual enrichment of ghost and son (absence and presence) than on the latter's natural usurpation of the former. Magwitch dies, but while it is true that it is through Pip's narrative that Magwitch's death is realized--Pip may be thus said to write or plot Magwitch's demise--the obverse side is the telling one: namely, that through Pip's (the son's) narrative we also have access to Magwitch's (the father's) life--as well as to the death (eventual absence) of Pip himself, who gradually but inevitably cedes narrative presence to the mature Pirrip; and this latter "death" further identifies (engages) Pip with his father-figure Magwitch.

These points of identification are most succinctly gestured toward in the image of Hamlet that is poised at the very centre of the novel in the metadramatic scene of Wopsle's London stage debut, but there are other ghostly strains in the novel which we might pause to consider. If

Magwitch is a father-figure, Miss Havisham is as Brewer notes a mother-figure (173). Sharing this "originary" role of parent, then, this position of presence (source) and absence (difference, eventual death), it is natural that Miss Havisham would also share Magwitch's ghostly appearance. She, of course, adopts the role with peculiar vigour, being physically as well as psychically a veritable spectre. Her rooms are "funereal", herself a "figure of the grave" (226). She wanders through Satis House at night "in a ghostly manner" (293), and also seeks vengeance for crimes committed against her; indeed, she and Magwitch are alike in seeking vengeance against the same man, Compeyson, though Miss Havisham sees in all men a composite of her betrayer, and seeks through Estella "to wreak revenge on all the male sex" (166). And Miss Havisham makes an effective ghost: her plot haunts Pip's as thoroughly--and with a less generous intent--than does Magwitch's, leading Pip in one nightmare to imagine himself required to "play Hamlet to Miss Havisham's Ghost" (244).

One last ghost in *Great Expectations* that we might consider is the ghost of Pip himself. When Pip first visits Miss Havisham after Jaggers has informed him of his great expectations, he comes in the new clothes of a gentleman, and so looks very different from how he had looked on all his previous visits. Upon answering Pip's ring at the gate, Sarah Pocket "positively reeled back when she saw [him] so changed" (148); when she conducts Pip out again, he tells us, she does so "as if I were a ghost who must be seen out. She could not get over my appearance, and was in the last degree confounded."

I said "Good-bye, Miss Pocket;" but she merely started, and did not seem collected enough to know that I had spoken.

Clear of the house, I made the best of my way back to Pumblechook's, took off my new clothes, made them into a bundle, and went back home in my older dress, carrying it--to speak the truth--much more at my ease, too, though I had the bundle to carry. (150)

Pip is, in a sense, beside himself in this scene, and from this point on in the novel. Like Wemmick in being thus split or doubled (Pip says at one juncture of his friend that he "was as dry and distant to me as if there were twin Wemmicks and this was the wrong one" [368]), Pip's split is more a part of the central pattern of the novel in that his duplicity is not merely one of locale, as Wemmick's seems to be ("Walworth is one place, and this office is another" [277]), but also one of origins. In becoming a gentleman Pip suppresses--must assert his independence from--his "common" origins--and in the process must reject his father-figures Joe⁸ and Magwitch. But Pip's assertions along this line prove impotent: he cannot reject his origins, though he may wish to. Magwitch is not only the father of the common, the criminal, the low: he is also the father of the gentleman. He is, it turns out much to Pip's chagrin, his "terrible patron" (315) after all--not to mention the father of Estella, the exemplar (in Pip's mind) of all that is high.

If Pip is shadowed--haunted--by the ghosts of his origins throughout his career as a gentleman, at the novel's end he is confronted with the prospect of his own ghostliness in a rather more tangible way. Orlick--Pip's alter ego or "split", according to Brewer (170), and clearly another shadow of Pip's past--lures Pip to the limekiln on the marshes--the place of Pip's past--where he intends to

8. "It is plain that in truth Joe is not so much a father-figure as a displaced mother-figure," writes Brewer (180).

"have" (403) Pip's life. In its several connotations the word **have** here supports Brewer's notion of Orlick as Pip's split: to have may mean "to take" in the sense of to kill or destroy, but it may also retain its more usual sense of "to possess for oneself"--Orlick wants what he considers Pip's privileged life--as well as take on a third sense, the homonymic sense of "to halve". The threat posed to Pip by Orlick is characteristic of the challenge he faces throughout his narrative, and is suggested by the description he offers of the air that hovers around the kiln.

I looked about me, noticing how the sluice was abandoned and broken, and how the house--of wood with a tiled roof--would not be proof against the weather much longer, if it were even so now, and how the mud and ooze were coated with lime, and how the choking vapour of the kiln crept in a ghostly way towards me. (400-01)

When Orlick has bound--engaged?--Pip, he announces his plan of putting Pip's body into the limekiln: "I won't have a rag of you, I won't have a bone of you, left on earth. I'll put your body in the kiln--I'd carry two such to it, on my shoulders--and, let people suppose what they may of you, they shall never know nothing" (403). Pip finds the prospect a particularly awful one.

I knew that when I was changed into a part of the vapour that had crept towards me a little while before, like my own warning ghost, he would do as he had done in my sister's case--make all haste to the town, and be seen slouching about there, drinking at the ale-houses. My rapid mind pursued him to the town, made a picture of the street with him in it, and contrasted its lights and life with the lonely marsh and the white vapour creeping over it, into which I should have dissolved. (405)

Orlick intends to return Pip to the ghostly vapour of his origins, to make him part of what had earlier been "like his own ghost." His plot fails, of course; but it is not for that reason wholly ineffectual.

In terms of the structure of this novel, Pip's confrontation with his double (Orlick himself insists upon the identification with Pip: "I giv' it her! I left her for dead But it warn't Old Orlick as did it; it was you" [404]) provides an instance of mortification that brings Pip to a new life: the rebirth of comedy. The meditations Pip practices as he faces death and dissolution work a healthful effect on him, in particular with regard to his feelings about his origins.

My mind, with inconceivable rapidity, followed out all the consequences of such a death. Estella's father would believe I had deserted him, would be taken, would die accusing me; even Herbert would doubt me, when he compared the letter I had left for him with the fact that I had called at Miss Havisham's gate for only a moment; Joe and Biddy would never know how sorry I had been that night, none would ever know what I had suffered, how true I had meant to be, what an agony I had passed through. The death close before me was terrible, but far more terrible than death was the dread of being misremembered after death. (403-04)⁹

Pip's experience in the sluice-house confirms and finalizes (completes) the "softening" of his character that had begun in response to Magwitch's own exercise of narrative practice before Pip and Herbert at the Temple (in Chapter 42). That Pip ascribes to Magwitch such softening suggests one more way that the novel progresses toward the reconciliation of father and son rather than the destruction of one for the sake or even according to the will of the other.

Pip's "rebirth" may be seen as a regression; both Brewer and Brooks suggest that regression is operative in the "third stage" of Pip's expectations. "When Pip goes back to Joe's home, after eleven years of absence," Brewer writes, "**nothing is changed**. We have a striking symbol of regression" (175). Brooks, commenting on the same pattern in

9. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this reference.

9. We might recall that this is Hamlet's terrible dread at his end.

the novel, says that Pip's narrative example suggests "the impossibility of escape from the originating scenarios of childhood, the condemnation forever to replay them" (514). A bit later he elaborates on "the particularly sinister version of the *Bildungsroman*" (509) that *Great Expectations* advances:

Whereas the model of the *Bildungsroman* seems to imply progress, a leading forth, developmental change, Pip's story--and this may be true of other nineteenth-century educative plots as well--becomes more and more as it nears its end the working through of past history, an attempted return to the origin as the motivation of all the rest, the clue to what must else appear, as Pip puts it to Miss Havisham, a "blind and thankless life". (519)

There is a good deal of truth in both critics' observations, but it nevertheless seems to me that both miss the note of Pip's own recognition and acceptance of the nature of his position. I said earlier that I think Brewer is wrong to propose that Magwitch, as Pip's father-figure, must be *destroyed*, and my disagreement hinges on the intentionality suggested by that word. Magwitch dies, and it is, as Pip says, good that he does so, all things considered: "I could not be sorry at heart for his being badly hurt, since it was unquestionably best that he should die" (423). But the death is not so much intended as inevitable, not so much a part of Pip's plot as a part of the *telos* of *Great Expectations*' action. With respect to Pip, the final stage of his expectations involves his growing recognition of his relation to his past, and a complementary awareness on his part of the value of the bond he shares--the engagement he enacts--with what came before him. The final stage of *Great Expectations*, that is, constitutes both on the level of the novel itself as a dramatic text and on the level of Pip's own life/story a consecration of present and past, of presence and absence.

When Pip returns to the forge, intending to propose marriage to his past in the person of Biddy, he finds Joe and Biddy standing before him, "arm in arm".

At first Biddy gave a cry, as if she thought it was my apparition, but in another moment she was in my embrace. I wept to see her, and she wept to see me; I, because she looked so fresh and pleasant; she, because I looked so worn and white. (453)

Pip speaks in hypothetical terms here--"as if"--but in a sense the young man who returns to the forge is in a sense Pip's apparition, his worn and white ghost. Having overturned Orlick's plot to turn him *merely* into the ghostly vapour of the limekiln, Pip experiences a rebirth that nonetheless does incorporate that ghostly element of himself which is his past. He is, at novel's end, not only a ghost, but in part ghostly insofar as the shadow that once haunted him now helps to inform him. Part of that shadow is the shadow of death, and Pip has made that--Magwitch's past, his own future--a part of himself too. Perhaps what Pip has in the end learned is the justice and practical human relevance of Muir's suggestion regarding the action and nature of the dramatic novel: "The end . . . is therefore of extraordinary significance; not merely a rounding off of the story . . . but the final illumination. It is the end not only of the action, but of the characterisation; the last touch which gives finality and completeness to the revelation of the figures" (57-58). Pip, in this respect, reminds us once again of Hamlet, whose consecration to the death and the will of his father is also worked out through the action ("plot") of the poem-as-drama, as well as through his own plotting.

As a way of reflecting upon what has been said here concerning *Great Expectations* and looking forward to the discussion of *The Legend of John Hornby* that is to follow, I want to conclude with a few thoughts on the relation of dramatic form and the form(s) of language. In "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", an essay on the dramatic theory of Antonin Artaud, Derrida contemplates certain of the implications and impossibilities of Artaud's theatrical ideal, an ideal which calls for, among other things, an audience that--like all of the various audiences we find in *Great Expectations*--participates in the spectacle it sees. The traditional stage, Artaud thinks, "comports a passive, seated public, a public of spectators, of consumers, of 'enjoyers' . . . attending a production that lacks true volume or depth, a production that is level, offered to their voyeuristic scrutiny" (235). Artaud's principal object as Derrida understands it is to overturn this "perversion" (237) of theatre, this "forgetting of the stage" (236) which has arisen with the theatre's dependence upon the written word. Western culture "has worked only for the erasure of the stage," Derrida summarizes Artaud's argument, "For a stage which does nothing but illustrate a discourse is no longer entirely a stage" (236). "Since," Derrida writes, citing Artaud, in the theatre of cruelty "'the spectator is in the center and the spectacle surrounds him', the distance of vision is no longer pure, cannot be abstracted from the totality of the sensory milieu; the infused spectator can no longer *constitute* his spectacle and provide himself with its object. There is no longer spectator or spectacle, but *festival*" (244). Artaud--and this is where the impossibilities of his ambitions start to arise--wants dramatic performances to be life--"the theatre must make itself the equal of life"

(234)--rather than to **represent** life: the theatre of cruelty, in Derrida's words, "will no longer operate as the repetition of a **present**, will no longer re-present a present that would exist elsewhere and prior to it, a present whose plenitude would be older than it, absent from it, and rightfully capable of doing without it" (237).

Derrida implies that Artaud is something of a revolutionary, but while his desire to bring significance to the theatrical *per se* is striking, it does not seem to me unique to him; Shakespeare had a similar ambition, and the metadramatic scenes in *Great Expectations* also have the quality of autonomous, spontaneous, non-textual force that Artaud speaks of. The audience's participation in the novel's version of *Hamlet*, for example, is at once inventive and unscripted, as is Wopsle's wonder concerning the "ghost" of Compeyson, as is the dark ring that surrounds spectators and spectacle alike in the scene Wopsle recounts to Pip. But if we can apply Artaud's programme to the dramatic or, perhaps especially, to the metadramatic, can we apply it as well to narrative? Artaud, Derrida suggests, seeks "**to erase repetition in general**. For him, repetition was evil, and one could doubtless organize an entire reading of his texts around this center" (245). Here a significant space seems to open between drama and narrative. Whatever we decide about the role of repetition (of the text) in the former form, its place in the latter seems firmly entrenched as a part of its own form; narrative, that is, though characteristically not the repetition of a pre-existing text as drama may or may not be, is itself a repetition offered by one or more speakers--its narrator(s). Obviously, repetition plays a central role in *Great Expectations*; even the metadramatic scene Wopsle recounts, for example, is his repetition of a prior present ("I

remember it well," Pip says; "I see it all before me"), and to speak in general terms the whole of *Great Expectations* is a remembrance, a repetition on Pip's part of what has gone before. Does the representative nature of Pip's narrative mark it as wholly other than the dramatic or metadramatic ideal Artaud posits?

My own view is that it does not, a view I maintain partly with the support of suggestions that Derrida himself offers both in his essay on Artaud and in other writings. Two principles especially come to mind here, bridging the gap between drama and narrative: first, the fact that repetition is a part of all language; and second, the fact that force is (nonetheless) also a part of all language. That repetition is a part of all presentation Artaud himself seems to acknowledge. He explains that the "essential drama" he looks for exists

in the image of something subtler than Creation itself, something which must be represented as the result of one Will alone--and *without conflict*. We must believe that the essential drama, the one at the root of all the Great Mysteries, is associated with the second phase of Creation, that of difficulty and of the Double, that of matter and the materialization of the idea. (TC 248)

As Derrida points out, Artaud's theatre of cruelty "thus also begins by repetition" (249), begins with the representation ("materialization") of "the idea". But if even essential drama begins in repetition and Artaud seeks to erase repetition, his dramatic options appear limited. Accordingly, Artaud finds himself in the paradoxical position of wanting simultaneously "to produce and to annihilate the stage" (249). "As much as I love the theatre," he writes, "I am, for this very reason, equally its enemy" (249).

This paradox comes as no surprise to Derrida, who sees clearly the impossibility of erasing repetition either in the theatre or anywhere else language is practiced. "A sign," he writes, "which does not repeat itself, which is not already divided by repetition in its 'first time,' is not a sign" (TC 246). Derrida elaborates on the nature of this internal division, this splitting of presence and the sign/subject, in the essay "Differance".

It is because of *differance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called "present" element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present. An interval must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and singularly substance or the subject. In constituting itself, in dividing itself dynamically, this interval is what might be called *spacing*, the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space (*temporization*). And it is this constitution of the present, as an "originary" and irreducibly nonsimple (and therefore, *stricto sensu* nonoriginary) synthesis of marks, or traces of retentions and protensions . . . , that I propose to call *archi-writing*, *archi-trace*, or *differance*. (13)

Presence is penetrated and re-presented by the ghost of the absent that both haunts and helps constitute it. "The present offers itself as such, appears, presents itself," Derrida writes, "only by harboring its own intestine difference, and only in the interior fold of its original repetition in representation" (TC 248). And Artaud, Derrida says, knew this very well. "He knew this better than any other: the 'grammar' of the theatre of cruelty, of which he said that it is 'to be found,' will

always remain the inaccessible limit of a representation which is not repetition, of a re-presentation which is full presence, which does not carry its double within itself as its death, of a present which does not repeat itself, that is, of a present outside time, a nonpresent" (TC 248).

As we discussed earlier, Derrida describes this "doubleness" of signification, this "citationality, duplication, or duplicity, this iterability of the mark," as not accidental or anomalous ("abnormal"), but rather that "without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called 'normal' functioning" (SEC 320-21). But if the lack of a full presence is part of the structure of all signs and texts, this lack or absence need not itself signify the impossibility of significance (or meaning).

"[A]bsence in the field of writing is of an original kind if any specificity whatsoever of the written sign is to be acknowledged" (SEC 314), hypothesizes Derrida, and while we may want to ask how absence can originate without being itself in some sense presence, I think Derrida is right to point to the gap between sign and signified as one capable of producing specificity. Or perhaps one could more accurately say that, just as Derrida posits the "**overturning**" (SEC 329) of the opposition presence/absence, so we might also overturn the notion of **the gap** between sign and signified, and see instead this space/temporization as itself a part of "the practical operation" of language, as A. D. Nuttall suggests it is (54). Derrida seems to me to move toward such a position when he notes that the division worked out in presence is a "dynamic" ("Differance" 13) one; it is a **dramatic** interval, a difference/defferal in which action can--indeed, inevitably will--occur. Derrida aptly describes this activity of linguistic differance as a matter--one might more humanistically say a practice--of "force".

Derrida ruminates on the force of signs in the essay "Force and Signification". This essay, a review of Jean Rousset's *Forme et Signification*, offers a challenge to Rousset's "ultrastructuralist" (FS 26) methodology, whereby Rousset analyses texts and authors according to the "ideal" structures that he perceives to be the intended ends of the texts or writers in question, determining in the process that (in Derrida's words) "everything not intelligible in the light of a 'preestablished' teleological framework, and not visible in its simultaneity, is reducible to the inconsequentiality of accident or dross" (FS 25). "Now," Derrida writes, "Rousset does not seem to posit, in his theoretical Introduction, that every form is beautiful, but only the form that is aligned with meaning, the form that can be understood because it is, above all, in league with meaning" (FS 20).

Derrida associates this method, this alignment, with Aristotle insofar as the "meaning" he speaks of here is tied to a "teleological structuralism" (FS 21) in line with the concept of beginning, middle and end--especially end.

Rousset understands theatrical or novelistic movement as Aristotle understood movement in general: transition to the act, which itself is the repose of the desired form. Everything transpires as if everything within the dynamics of Corneillean meaning, and within each of Corneille's plays, came to life with the aim of final peace, the peace of the structural *energeia*. (FS 21)

When Derrida calls Rousset's method "a practiced preformationism" (FS 23), he explains the designation thus:

By preformationism we indeed mean preformationism: the well-known biological doctrine, opposed to epigenesis, according to which the totality of hereditary characteristics is enveloped in the germ, and is already in action in reduced dimensions that

nevertheless respect the forms and proportions of the future adult. (FS 23)

Applied to poetry, such a "doctrine" does indeed bring Aristotle--as well as Whalley--to mind: we noticed earlier Aristotle's image of the seed as it pertains to the notion of poetic *telos*. But Derrida raises an objection to this image by positing preformationism as an "aesthetic which neutralizes duration and force as the *difference* between the acorn and the oak" (FS 24). Rousset's attempts to "*comprehend*" texts and authors, Derrida says, threatens to conceal meaning "through the very act of uncovering it" (FS 26). "To *comprehend* the structure of a becoming, the form of a force, is to lose meaning by finding it" (FS 26). "*Form* fascinates when one no longer has the force to understand force from within itself" (FS 4).

Much of Derrida's dislike for the preformationist view arises from his conception of language, and specifically writing, as a practice of *force*, as an "inaugural" event (FS 11).

To write is to know that what has not yet been produced within literality has no other dwelling place, does not await us as prescription in some *topos ouranios*, or some divine understanding. Meaning must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself, and in order to become, by differing from itself, what it is: meaning. This is what Husserl teaches us to think in *The Origin of Geometry*. The literary act thus recovers its true power at its source. In a fragment of a book he intended to devote to *The Origin of Truth*, Merleau-Ponty wrote: "Communication in literature is not the simple appeal on the part of the writer to meanings which would be part of an a priori of the mind; rather, communication arouses these meanings in the mind through enticement and a kind of oblique action. The writer's thought does not control his language from without; the writer is himself a kind of new idiom, constructing itself." "My own words take me by surprise and teach me what I think," he said elsewhere. (FS 11)

"[T]he notion of an Idea or 'interior design' as simply anterior to a work which would supposedly be the expression of it, is a prejudice: a prejudice of the traditional criticism called *idealist*" (FS 11), Derrida writes, a point on which Whalley, who also recognizes the inaugurating force of language, is in agreement. Indeed, Derrida's sense of the role of *force* in signification complements well Whalley's understanding of linguistic *drama*. A comment on force of Derrida's that I find at once especially provocative and especially pertinent to Whalley's understanding of the poetic process is the following, which brings together the practices of reading and writing (along with a good deal else).

But, all faith or theological assurance aside, is not the experience of *secondarity* tied to the strange redoubling by means of which constituted--written--meaning presents itself as prerequisitely and simultaneously *read*: and does not meaning present itself as such at the point at which the other is found, the other who maintains both the vigil and the back-and-forth motion, the work, that comes between writing and reading, making this work irreducible? Meaning is neither before nor after the act. Is not that which is called God, that which imprints every human course and recourse with its secondarity, the passageway of deferred reciprocity between reading and writing? or the absolute witness to the dialogue in which what one sets out to write has already been read, and what one sets out to say is already a response, the third party as the transparency of meaning? Simultaneously part of creation and the Father of Logos. The circularity and traditionality of Logos. (FS 11)

Derrida's comments here call to mind questions respecting Whalley's "irreducible triad" of poet, poem and reader. "All faith or theological assurance aside," Derrida begins, and among the challenges to the aesthetic triad that this aside suggests, perhaps the most fundamental is the challenge Derrida intends to the intending subject. (The bond between the humane and the theological is said to be surprisingly close

in much contemporary theorizing.) But how completely is this challenge to the intending subject actually pursued by Derrida? It seems to me that Derrida's aim is to complicate and unsettle the subject without entirely discounting it. And surely such a project is a valuable one; after all, the example it may be said to follow is that of poetry itself.

The "duplicity" (SEC 320) that Derrida sees as inherent in signs--signs "as a small or large unity"--he applies as well to those who employ signs, no doubt a reasonable application if one accepts the principle that language has the force to surprise, to teach, even in part to construct, every one who enters into its order. "[T]he subject (in its identity with itself, or eventually in its consciousness of its identity with itself, its self-consciousness) is inscribed in language, is a 'function' of language, becomes a **speaking** subject only by making its speech conform--even in so-called 'creation,' or in so-called 'transgression'--to the system of the rules of language as a system of differences, or at very least by conforming to the general law of **différance**," Derrida hypothesizes ("Différance" 15). Being thus doubled--deferred, differed--in their language, how might subjects feel? Derrida suggests that they are "haunted" (FS 10) by the absence that marks their own present being as well as the present quality of their language. We carry our doubles as our deaths just as our language does; we too are caught in the web of duplicity, and our everpresent language is one reminder of our common (and paradoxically recurring) end(s). "What is tragic is not the impossibility but the necessity of repetition" (TC 248).

Our duplicity thus assumed, our being dependent upon our deaths--which are archetypally imaged for us, Derrida suggests at

several points (as at TC 249), in the deaths of our fathers--Derrida wonders how full can be the presence of our conscious wills, how *telling* can be our intentions, narrative or otherwise. His observations on Austin's notion of the performative utterance carry certain of his reservations concerning the "authority" of the subject. An "essential element" in Austin's analysis, he writes, is "consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject for the totality of his locutory act. Thereby, performative communication once more becomes the communication of an intentional meaning" (SEC 322): "*intention* remains the organizing center" (SEC 323) of Austin's critique. But Derrida, stressing the "impurity" or citationality of all performatives, denies that the context of intention can ever be fully accessed, and so denies that the intention of the speaker can fully account for the meaning and/or performance (together these two may be said to constitute the event-uality) of any speech-act.

Thus, one must less oppose citation or iteration to the noniteration of an event, than construct a differential typology of forms of iteration, supposing that this is a tenable project that can give rise to an exhaustive program, a question I am holding off on here. In this typology, the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from this place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and the entire system of utterances. Above all, one then would be concerned with different types of marks or chains of iterable marks, and not with an opposition between citational statements on the one hand, and singular and original statement-events on the other. The first consequence of this would be the following: given this structure of iteration, the intention which animates utterance will never be completely present in itself and its content. The iteration which structures it a priori introduces an essential dehiscence and demarcation. (SEC 326)

The structured nature of intention may demarcate the extent of self-determinate form (Pip's, for example), but what those boundaries

will be is something of an open question--perhaps just *the* "open question" that Aristotle takes up in much of his thought. *Dehiscence* seems an apt word to bring to this question with respect to *Great Expectations*, however, invoking as it does "the bursting open of fruits in order to discharge their mature contents" (OED). What will happen to these seeds in the on-going process of their formal determination? The maturation of Pip suggests how individual forms find themselves within a structure of iteration. Pip's narrative comes replete with doubles, with ghosts that haunt Pip as he attempts to attain a new form--the form of a gentleman, as that form is "asserted" by Pip's culture and his own and others' plottings--while his old "common" form continues to make its presence and absence felt. Dickens' novel thus seems an excellent mimesis of the point Derrida so vigorously pursues: that the "self" of any self-determination will be a complex and differential event rather than one "singular and original" ("divine"). Insofar as that plotting self has *intention* ("determination"), we would want to pay heed to, as Derrida puts it, "not only the *in* but the *tension* of intentionality" (FS 27). Selves may *assert*, but will they persuade? can they actually achieve the end, the *telos*, they seek? These are questions that I will consider further in the discussion on John Hornby that is to follow.

Here once again, however, I think that in the realm of literature the mimetic dramas--those plays of writing and reading--of particular poems must be our guides. I have spoken of the plot of *Great Expectations* in terms of presences and absences, but "in order to describe traces," Derrida rightly observes, "the language of presence and absence . . . is inadequate" ("Differance" 21). Pip himself seems to realize this. One might say that the speech-act of his life/story has the

effect of evoking simultaneously the present and the absent: Pip recounts with confidence the details of the past as if they were present, and, what's more, as we join him in reading his narrative we progressively come closer to the present voice--the older Pirrip--who addresses us, moving away in the process from the absent and increasingly distanced young boy who was so terrified by the ghost of the novel's first chapter. But there is never any doubt that the events related are past, gone; and, furthermore, the mature Pirrip is virtually silent on the present: we don't even know for certain whether he has married Estella. Nevertheless, in Pip's working-through of his plot questions about presence and absence do seem "overturned"--perhaps because, as Brooks says, it is so clear that all the clues to the forward movement of Pip's plot lie in the past (514).

Perhaps, formally speaking, narrative is especially well-suited to managing such a play of past and present. "What is a success when the possibility of failure continues to constitute its structure?" asks Derrida in connection with Austin's theory of performatives (SEC 324). Dickens suggests through the narrative practice of *Great Expectations* that we might conceivably--audaciously--call success a matter finally of human intension: intentional because a matter of a poetic *praxis* that ultimately (as was the case in *Hamlet*) belongs not to any one character's plot but to the consecrated utterance (poem) as a whole, and human because enacted in the face of those terrible but inevitable (for humans, not God) doubles, the death of the parent and the death of the self.

CHAPTER SIX

Pathos-as-Praxis in The Legend of John Hornby

After first coming upon the diary of Edgar Christian¹ in the spring of 1938, Whalley "tried to write something that would cast the diary into a different mode; but the time was not right" (BG 6). The diary's first impression, however, was enduring; fifteen years later Whalley wrote "a radio version of the diary scored for four voices and silence" (BG 6), and he himself would later see to press a second edition of the diary, to which he gave the title *Death in the Barren Ground* (1980). Whalley's most significant recasting of the diary "into a different mode," however, appeared in 1962 with *The Legend of John Hornby*, the culmination of a "seven-year inquiry into the life of John Hornby, the leader of the three-man party of which Edgar Christian was the last surviving member" (BG 6).

When the three-man party no longer survived at the austere site on the Thelon River, the place was left empty enough--but it was not entirely empty even then, being as Whalley says "haunted not so much by the three deaths as by the voice that tells of the living that went before the dying: a voice uttered in a firm round hand, the spelling insecure, the punctuation uncertain" (BG 20). Such is the active presence of the written word. "By 1929 all that was left to recall what had happened in that desolate, storm-swept, merciless place was the pattern of Edgar's words, set down day by day in a book bound in red leather" (BG 19). It was this pattern that compelled Whalley to try to

¹ *Unflinching: A Diary of Tragic Adventure*, ed. B. Dew Roberts (London: John Murray, 1937).

"recall" (BG 7) John Hornby, the man who was during their time together in the North "the centre of Edgar's life as well as the thread that his life hung upon" (BG 6). Without Edgar's diary, Whalley suggests, the "shadowy" (BG 6) figure of the real Hornby would have withdrawn altogether "into the coloured mists of Northern legend" (BG 7). But "John Hornby's death--or rather Edgar Christian's account of John Hornby's death--put a stop to the legend; it obliges us to reflect upon Hornby's life and death as the background, or undertow, for Edgar Christian's mortal experience" (BG 7). Perhaps the title "The Legend of John Hornby" suggests that the mystification of legend cannot be wholly gotten past, but like Christian's diary Whalley's own pattern of words nonetheless represents an attempt to real-ize the living that went before the dying, as well as the dying itself.

What follows are certain observations on the drama of that realization, observations that will be informed to a large extent by Aristotle's thought, as well as by Whalley's response to that thought as it appears in *Aristotle on the Poietic Art*, his translation and commentary on the *Poetics*. A central concern here will be to consider for one last time the question of how, in the union of potency and actuality, form comes to be made. This concern will in its turn lead us to other familiar matters, including the Aristotelian notions of *telos* and recognition, the question of intention, and the *human* character of the tragic act. I will conclude this discussion with some thoughts on the reader's responsibility before *The Legend of John Hornby*, and by suggesting why Aristotle's conception of *pathos-as-praxis* seems to me an apt image for reading itself.

I intend to look at *The Legend* partly by the light of Whalley's translation of the *Poetics*, but I wish to begin with certain of Aristotle's comments concerning form, action and the art of making as they arise in the more broadly philosophic contexts of the *Physics*, the *Metaphysics*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, since I think we would be unwise to view Aristotle's treatise on the poietic art as a radical departure from his other analyses of nature and the human condition. According to Elder Olson the method of the *Poetics* is "precisely the method of productive science or art as Aristotle conceives it, and as such determined by the entire body of the philosophy of which it is a part" (186). Apart from a consideration of Aristotle's "philosophy as a whole," Olson writes, "not merely the argument of the *Poetics* but even the doctrines, indeed, even individual concepts, such as those of imitation, plot, and *katharsis*, become unintelligible" (186). Richard McKeon points to a certain family likeness among Aristotle's various works when he says of the *Physics* that it "deals with natural body in general: the special kinds are discussed in Aristotle's other physical works" (218n). The *Poetics* I take to be one of these other works, dealing as it does with the special kind of natural body that we find in the form of a poem.

We may begin to trace the relevance of Aristotle's "whole philosophy" to the individual concept of "imitation" by referring to his dissatisfaction with Plato's explanation of the Forms, or Ideas. Early on in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle offers a brief history of ancient thought wherein he observes that Plato and the Pythagoreans were in one sense aligned with regard to how they tried to account for the relation between the sensible and mutable world of nature and the

unapprehended, unchanging order of definition. Permanent things Plato called "Ideas",

and sensible things, he said, were all named after these, and in virtue of a relation to these; for the many existed by participation in the Ideas that have the same name as they. Only the name "participation" was new; for the Pythagoreans say that things exist by "imitation" of numbers, and Plato says they exist by participation, changing the name. But what the participation or the imitation of the Forms could be they left an open question. (987b8-14)

A bit later in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle underlines his dissatisfaction with such talk of "participation" and "imitation" by accusing other philosophers of resorting thereby to "empty words and poetical metaphors" (991a21-22; he repeats the charge at 1079b26-27). At the same time he suggests the nature of his own concern in the debate about the Forms by asking "what is it that works, looking to the Ideas?" When Aristotle takes up the question of imitation in the *Poetics*, one of his principal aims is to answer with respect to the forms of poetry just this question: what is it that works?

While treating of other matters in the *Physics*, *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*, Aristotle occasionally remarks upon "imitation" in ways pertinent to his project in the *Poetics*. Interestingly (albeit indirectly), Aristotle seems to posit in these remarks two quite different kinds of imitation, or at least two quite different possibilities for the single practice of imitation. In the *Ethics*, for example, Aristotle comments on the relation of rashness to bravery in the following terms:

Of those who go to excess he who exceeds in fearlessness has no name . . . but he would be a sort of madman or insensible person if he feared nothing, neither earthquake nor the waves, as they say the Celts do not; while the man who exceeds in confidence about what really is terrible is rash. The rash man, however, is also thought to be boastful and

only a pretender to courage; at all events, as the brave man is with regard to what is terrible, so the rash man wishes to **appear**; and so he imitates him in situations where he can. Hence also most of them are a mixture of rashness and cowardice; for, while in these situations they display confidence, they do not hold their ground against what is really terrible. (1115b24-34)

For Aristotle, of course, what is at issue here is not the nature of mimesis but the ideal of proportion that he sees as the basis of the virtuous life. Later in the *Ethics* Aristotle elaborates on how right order is typically a matter of what is "due" or "appropriate"--a principle he applies with particular force in advancing his conception of justice. "This, then, is what the just is--the proportional; the unjust is what violates the proportion" (1131b17-18). The justice system serves to restore--indeed, comes to represent or, in the person of the judge, impersonate--the natural order. "This is why, when people dispute, they take refuge in the judge; and to go to the judge is to go to justice; for the nature of the judge is to be a sort of animate justice; and they seek the judge as an intermediate, and in some states they call judges mediators, on the assumption that if they get what is intermediate they will get what is just" (1132a19-24). If we apply this view of justice to the rash man's "imitation" of the brave man, that imitation appears inappropriate because it constitutes a falsification and hence a violation of the order of virtuous action. As an act of imitation, it entails a **false** representation or impersonation; not an act that perfects (completes, and so brings to an end), such imitation constitutes a middling act that will require further action in order to re-establish the just proportion.

The rash man's "imitation", which involves no transformation or inner dynamic principle of change, thus seems closer to the fraudulent

imitation criticized by Plato than to the processive mimesis of the *Poetics*. But whereas Plato banished those poets from his Republic who practiced such (mis)representation, Aristotle--both in the *Ethics* and elsewhere--seems to acknowledge that such imitation has its place. Early on in the *Poetics*, for example, he uses imitation in just this straightforward sense to describe the "Natural Origins" of the poetic art. "To imitate," he writes, "is, even from childhood, part of man's nature (and man is different from the other animals in that he is extremely imitative and makes his first steps in learning through imitation)" (APA 1448b6-9). Whalley provides the following helpful note:

Aristotle's argument here is general and common-sensical, and he is using the common-sense meaning of *mimesis* as "imitation" that Plato used and that can never be entirely separated from the word. In the introductory sections and later, Aristotle keeps *mimeisthai* and its cognates flexible and does not ossify *mimesis* by a verbal or technical definition. The change here to the common-sense meaning is therefore noticeable, but there is no reason to limit the definition of his sophisticated usage to the limited sense of this passage. (APA 20/3)

The point of Whalley's comment may be established by reference to the very passage in the *Ethics* that we have said illustrates Aristotle's willingness to employ imitation in the "common-sensical" way. Aristotle's allusion to the rash man's imitation occurs in the course of a discussion of the ethical mean, and perhaps we are tempted nowadays to think of the mean--for example, the mean of courage--in a rather static, statistical way ("the mean of courage is to have some courage, but not too much courage"). But of course this is not at all what Aristotle had in mind. While the ideal "courage" defines rashness and cowardice, the converse is not so--courage cannot itself be constituted by approaches to the mean from the non-mean (as numbers on a number line may be

approached from either direction). The image of the virtuous mean that Aristotle offers in the *Ethics* is not static but enactive insofar as the virtue of courage practiced is the mean in the process of its being accomplished. The courageous man imitates the ideal mean, but how does he do so? He imitates--and so becomes--the mean by being (or "participating" in?) the mean, by doing brave acts. His imitation is not static, but processive: it is dramatic. In his discussion of courage, then, Aristotle suggests the possibility of a different sort of imitative practice even as he uses the common-sense understanding of imitation to make his point.

Perhaps both senses of "imitation" hover over Aristotle's suggestion in the *Physics* that "art partly completes what nature cannot bring to a finish, and partly imitates her" (199a16-17). Now it would seem an important point whether Aristotle thinks the two processes mentioned here--completion and imitation--are two acts of art, or one. Can imitation itself be a matter of bringing (nature) to completion? The relation of potency and actuality, which Aristotle sees as a determining element in the coming-to-be of form, may bear on this question. When Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics* that "it is not a hand in any and every state that is a part of man, but only when it can fulfil its work, and therefore only when it is alive" (1036b30-32), he points to one aspect of the potency/actuality relation: the actual "real-izes" or completes the potential by virtue of the fact that it acts, or possesses "movement" (1036b28). "For the action is the end, and the actuality is the action. And so even the word 'actuality' is derived from 'action', and points to the complete reality" (1050a22-24). In the case of the living hand, its actuality consists of the fact that not only is it "like" a

hand--it partly imitates--but it completes a hand too, and does so by means of its action (part of a hand is its function as a hand); imitation and completion are the respective processive counterparts of potency and actuality. But such a distinction can mislead, for where art is concerned potency and actuality meet in the process of mimesis, which by the above terms may be defined as imitation plus completion, the poet's act/art of making. A maker's "handiwork", Aristotle writes in the *Ethics*, "is in a sense, the producer in activity And this is rooted in the nature of things; for what he is in potentiality, his handiwork manifests in activity" (1168a7-9). This statement registers an interesting displacement of activity from the maker to his "handiwork", which "manifests" the human agent--the etymological emphasis on *hands* suggesting that the made object acts as an extension of the maker, gesturing forth on his behalf--but the split between potential and actual that re-appears momentarily here is dissolved by the union of poem and poet: the poem is the poet "in activity", at work, complete.

If Aristotle's emphasis in delineating his conception of the mean is (characteristically) on the man-of-action in action, in one sense it remains there when in the *Metaphysics* he addresses directly the Platonic view of the Forms, for what interests him in this address is the maker whose action initiates the coupling of form and matter. Aristotle readily acknowledges that the craftsman or artist² cannot make the *form*--"or whatever we ought to call the shape present in the sensible thing" (1033b5-6)--of his design; "But that there is a *brazen sphere*," he says, "this we make. For we make it out of brass and the sphere;

2. According to Whalley, "Aristotle does not recognise a distinction between 'art' and 'craft'" (OT 59).

we bring the form into this particular matter, and the result is a brazen sphere" (1033b9-11). "No one makes or begets the form," Aristotle notes a bit later, "but it is the individual that is made, i.e. the complex of form and matter that is generated" (1043b18-19).

Is there, then, a sphere apart from the individual spheres or a house apart from the bricks? Rather we may say that no "this" would ever have been coming to be, if this had been so, but that the "form" means the "such", and is not a "this"--a definite thing; but the artist makes, or the father begets, a "such" out of a "this"; and when it has been begotten, it is a "this such". . . . Obviously, therefore, it is quite unnecessary to set up a Form as a pattern . . . ; the begetter is adequate to the making of the product and to the causing of the form in the matter. (1033b19-34a5)

Aristotle does not answer definitively the "open question" of "participation or imitation" here, but his concern for "what works" and who works it is evident. Whalley's assertion that "The meaning of a poem is not what the **words** mean, but what the **poet** means--what the **I** at the centre of the poem means, speaking passionately to a **Thou**, to another person intimately engaged" (PP 129), may strike us as rather "Romantic"; whether or not it is in fact that, it is certainly Aristotelian, for Aristotle always has the maker and the process of making in mind when he writes of art. (Perhaps this point is one along which is formed what Whalley calls "the Aristotle-Coleridge axis".) "[W]hat is the cause of the unity of 'round' and 'bronze'?" he asks. "The difficulty disappears, because the one is matter, the other form. What, then, causes this--that which was potentially to be actually--except, in the case of things which are generated, the agent?" (Metaphysics 1045a28-31). The artist makes unities of substances by releasing the forms potential within them: shaping rings, building houses, making poems. Thus by the practice of mimesis poets confirm by constructing the

formal unity of potency and actuality. "Evidently even of the things that are thought to be substances, most are only potencies . . . for none of them is a unity, but as it were a mere heap, till they are worked up and some unity is made out of them" (Metaphysics 1040b5-10).

The affirmation of agency may be found throughout Aristotle's writings. He has the maker in mind when he writes of virtue, for example--the mean arises in the action of the man-of-action. But while Aristotle's comments regarding human action seem to posit a unified subject capable of reasoned choice in ethical and aesthetic concerns (just the sort of subject that modern philosophers are fond of debunking), his conception of the subject and of human agency allows for complexity and division as well as unity. Division appears in his account of subjective action at several points in the Physics, for example. Inanimate objects, Aristotle proposes here, do not of themselves possess the potential for full agency: "the real cause of the motion of a ball rebounding from a wall is not the wall but the thrower. So it is clear that in all these cases the thing does not move itself, but it contains within itself the source of motion--not of moving something or of causing motion, but of suffering it" (255b27-31). This seems obvious enough. It is interesting to note, however, that Aristotle finds the same quality of suffering in animate beings; and when he proceeds to find evidence of it in their actions too, we see how--like form--agency itself might be dramatic in nature. "It would seem that in animals," Aristotle suggests, "that which causes motion is separate from that which suffers motion, and that it is only in this sense that the animal as a whole causes its own motion" (254b30-33). Neither are

humans exempt from this sort of "animal" division, since Aristotle goes on to advance such division as a general physical law: "Now it is impossible that that which moves itself should in its entirety move itself: for then, while being specifically one and indivisible, it would as a whole both undergo and cause the same locomotion or alteration" (257b1-5).

Therefore when a thing moves itself it is one part of it that is the movent and another part that is moved. . . . For, if the whole is moved by itself, it must be moved either by some part of itself or as a whole by itself as a whole. If, then, it is moved in virtue of some part of it being moved by that part itself, it is this part that will be the primary self-movent, since, if this part is separated from the whole, the part will still move itself, but the whole will do so no longer. If on the other hand the whole is moved by itself as a whole, it must be accidentally that the parts move themselves: and therefore, their self-motion not being necessary, we may take the case of their not being moved by themselves. Therefore in the whole of the thing we may distinguish that which imparts motion without itself being moved and that which is moved: for only in this way is it possible for a thing to be self-moved. . . . That which moves itself, therefore, must comprise something that imparts motion but is unmoved and something that is moved but does not necessarily move anything else: and each of these two things, or at any rate one of them, must be in contact with the other. If, then, that which imparts motion is a continuous substance--that which is moved must of course be so--it is clear that it is not through some part of the whole being of such a nature as to be capable of moving itself that the whole moves itself: it moves itself as a whole, both being moved and imparting motion through containing a part that imparts motion and a part that is moved. It does not impart motion as a whole nor is it moved as a whole. (257b13-58a26)

If human agency--which as a principle of movement involves desire, reason and choice--may be said to begin in self-movement, by the terms of Aristotle's analysis it would seem that division is at work even in such movement. We do not impart motion as wholes, but as divided agents, partly acting and partly suffering.

This aspect of Aristotle's analysis does not so much subvert agency as it does indicate agency's complex, relational nature. The division in subjects as Aristotle observes it is *at work*. One might say of this difference what Nuttall says of the division between word and thing: it is "part of the practical operation" of agency. In fact, Aristotle sees division at work throughout the practical operation of nature quite generally. His ruminations on the nature of time, including those which he offers in response to Zeno's paradox concerning the flight of an arrow, help demonstrate that his view of movement--that "characteristic fact of nature" (Physics 253b9)--is also complex and relational. Aristotle agrees with Zeno that time is in one sense divided by "the now", that moment that is neither past nor future, but which perpetually becomes these absences. Zeno's error, Aristotle suggests, is to overstate the independence of the now, to suppose that time is made up of a continuous series of autonomous, fully integrated "nows".

Zeno's reasoning, however, is fallacious, when he says that if everything when it occupies an equal space is at rest, and if that which is in locomotion is always occupying such a space at any moment, the flying arrow is therefore motionless. This is false, for time is not composed of indivisible moments any more than any other magnitude is composed of indivisibles. (239b5-9)

If time is not composed of moments, the same is true of movement, which exists within time: "motion is always in a period of time and never in a moment" (241a15). What, then, is the role of the "now" in the "period of time"? Its function is to evoke at once continuity and difference; time, writes Aristotle, "is both made continuous by the 'now' and divided at it" (220a5). "So the 'now' also is in one way a potential dividing of time, in another the termination of both parts [i.e. before and after],

and their unity" (222a17-19). In the midst of the *difference* that the "now" embodies, the coherence of unity is possible. Indeed, the two (division and coherence) work together in a process of tension to bring about unified movements--the flights of arrows, for example. Division, again, is part of the practical operation of the whole.

The relation of apparent opposites, such as we find in the workings of time, forms an important part of Aristotle's analysis of the physical (and ethical) world. Unity of form in an action or (as Aristotle says in the *Poetics*) a poem depends upon such process: action and form interanimate one another, making each other possible. Part/whole, particular/universal, prior/posterior, potency/actuality: for Aristotle, each pair offers an image of how forms "define themselves" through the collision and consequent mutual enrichment of difference. Aristotle's reflections in the *Physics* on the nature of the infinite may provide for our purposes a final image of how he sees form as a processive affair. "There will not be an actual infinite," Aristotle suggests.

The infinite exhibits itself in different ways--in time, in the generations of man, and in the division of magnitudes. For generally the infinite has this mode of existence: one thing is always being taken after another, and each thing that is taken is always finite, but always different. Again, "being" has more than one sense, so that we must not regard the infinite as a "this", such as a man or a horse, but must suppose it to exist in the sense in which we speak of the day or the [Olympic] games as existing--things whose being has not come to them like that of a substance, but consists in a process of coming to be or passing away; definite if you like at each stage, yet always different. (206a25-35)

With Derridean aplomb, Aristotle goes on to speak of the deferred nature of infinity: "The infinite turns out to be the contrary of what it is said to be. It is not what has nothing outside it that is infinite, but what always has something outside it" (206b33-07a1). A matter of processive

action, infinity as Aristotle defines it here occurs by means of division. Not like a substance but like an action, the potential infinite is an occurrence, and one that can only emerge in finite events--a description of infinity which may call to mind the dramatic nature of poems, those finite acts of words and poets and readers that somehow tell us about what happens all the time.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle takes up the question of form from the vantage point of mimesis (itself "an activity or process and not a thing or product" [APA 10/7]), applying himself to a study of the processive quality of poetic form. Throughout his translation and commentary, Whalley amplifies Aristotle's suggestions on this theme. He draws our attention to the role of process, for example, in his handling of Aristotle's conception of the "parts" (*mere*) of drama. Early on in the *Poetics*, Aristotle names the six *mere* of tragedy-making: plot, characters, speech, thought, "visuals", song-making. Whalley translates these as "aspects", a word he explains by citing his desire "to avoid the static implications of 'part' and 'element' The temptation in this passage is to think of the 'parts' of a tragedy or of tragedies generally, as though they were constituent 'pieces' that together make up the whole" (APA 32/9). Perhaps the best illustration of how parts belie their "static" reputation in the *Poetics* appears in the course of Aristotle's analysis of "Plot-making" (APA 41), and more specifically of "How to make a tragedy *tragic*" (APA 51). Again, we might be tempted to find Aristotle's view of plot dependent upon several "parts"--reversal and recognition, for example--which together will "piece together" the whole of the plot, but Aristotle sees the various members of plot not as autonomous parts but as integrated embodiments of the whole drama.

"Both *peripeteia* and recognition--which need not coincide in time--are principles of concentration and intensification, not simply 'structural' elements," writes Whalley. "The tragic recognition is an abrupt act of self-knowing" (APA 54/6). When parts of the drama such as recognition themselves come to be seen as "acts", the static implications of the dramatic "imitation" begin to be left behind.

John Gassner and Maxwell Anderson, like Whalley, suggest that we are right to leave these implications behind. Gassner, who sees "enlightenment" as the "decisive" element in catharsis, distinguishes between tragic enlightenment and the conventional moral by observing that "The moral is a summation or tag; enlightenment is a process" (110-11). Anderson offers the following "rule" as to how the "part" of recognition (or discovery) should relate to the drama as a whole: "A play should lead up to and away from a central crisis, and this crisis should consist in a discovery by the leading character which has an indelible effect on his thought and emotion and completely alters his course of action" (116). Thus for Anderson the discovery to a large extent embodies the play's action, rather than merely contributes to it as a constituent part. Whalley elaborates Aristotle's discussion of the dramatic plot in similar terms. When Aristotle returns at a later point in the *Poetics* to "the 'aspects' [*mere*] of tragedy[-making] that must be regarded as shaping principles [*eide*]" (APA 1452b25), Whalley looks back to the earlier reference to the aspects of tragedy-making in offering further comment on the relation of part to whole.

The difficulty in both passages is the collocation of *mere* ("parts") and *eide* ("forms", "kinds"). In both places I take *eidōs* to be a shaping principle in the making of tragedy rather than a type or class of tragedy. In paragraph 52

(55b32)--a note--Aristotle uses *eide* of the four "kinds" of tragedy corresponding to the four [!] "aspects" of making; and in paragraph 55 (56a33) *eide* is a synonym of *mere*. And this reminds us that Aristotle does not use even his own central terms in a consistently quasi-technical manner. In paragraph 20, to which Aristotle refers here, he was speaking of the *mere* as the six "angles of approach" in making tragedy, not as constituent elements out of which a tragedy is constructed. To read *eide* as "shaping principles" recalls Aristotle's Platonic background and is harmonious with his notion of literary "kinds" as self-finding and self-determinate. (60-62/5)

If parts and kinds can be thus collocated, and if kinds are self-determinate, does Aristotle mean to suggest that like the whole poetic form the *mere* of a tragedy can also "find themselves"? "An 'aspect' [*meros*]," Whalley explains at one point in his commentary, "is a shaping principle (*eidos*)" (84/5). As a conclusion with regard to the relation of part (*meros*) to form (*eidos*), this posits a surprising identification of the two. But one final word from Whalley provides a helpful crystallization. Speaking of the fourth aspect of tragedy-making--thought (*dianoia*)--Aristotle comments briefly on "the functions (*mere*)" (APA 1456a35) that expressions of *dianoia* serve in plays. Whalley reflects thus on his translation of "*mere*" as "functions": "'parts' here meaning 'the roles they play', 'the purposes they fulfil'. It is in this meaning that *meros* and *eidos* most clearly meet" (APA 88/7). The parts, it seems, are actors too in the drama of poems finding themselves through the purposive process of mimesis.

Whalley also draws our attention to the role that process plays in the end that Aristotle calls *telos*. "What has happened obviously is possible, for [(we may say)] it doesn't happen if it can't happen," writes Aristotle in the *Poetics* (APA 1451a39), a statement with a certain bottom-line relevance to formal as well as historical action. But while it seems clear enough that forms *have* in fact come to be what they are, *why*

they have come to take on their particular forms remains the "open question". What Aristotle says in the *Poetics* concerning *telos* addresses this question by further clarifying the dramatic character of forms (both natural and mimetic).

Early on in the *Poetics*, Aristotle offers an "historical" (APA 30/1) account of the development of tragedy, a poetic kind that in his view evolved from the earlier epic. Homer wrote **dramatically**, Whalley explains in his commentary, but "he did not write **drama**": "Tragedy, by becoming specifically dramatic, outgrew the epic that had adumbrated the true tragic 'nature' Epic 'followed along with' tragedy up to the point where tragedy became distinctively drama" (APA 30/2). The thesis that tragedy found or "defined itself" (APA 30/8) in relation to epic indicates again how integrity of form is necessarily a matter of relation (we might call such relation **integration**) while at the same time it accords with Aristotle's general thesis concerning **physis**: living particulars experience the "self-discovery" of their "integral natures" by means of a process that runs from **arche** (tentative beginnings) through **auxesis** (growth and increase) to **telos** (fulfilment) (APA 28/3). Sometimes the evaluation of such movement is a simple matter; we can determine whether **telos** has been achieved by any particular oak tree, for example, by means of the authoritative precedent of the generic oak. In more complex cases, such as we may find for example in matters of art, new particulars may re-shape the generic; Hamlet re-defined the revenge tragedy, and so itself changed how readers thought about that form's **telos**. The most complex of all forms are those found in human actions, since more than any other form the human act offers an image of the collision of particular and universal and a stage for the drama of

freedom and necessity. It is therefore both significant and apt that Aristotle makes human action the focal point of the tragic experience. He observes the parallel between the development of form and the development of human action in part by reference to the processive nature of *telos*.

We can discover this nature partly by seeing where it does not apply. Probably the most famous comment in the *Poetics* regarding "ends" appears in the following passage on "Plot-making":

let us next discuss what the structuring of the events should be like, since this is the first and most important thing in [the art of] tragedy. We have already agreed that tragedy is a *mimesis* of an action--purposeful and whole--and of magnitude (for it is possible for a thing to be whole and yet not have magnitude). A "whole" is [something] that has a beginning, a middle and an end. A "beginning" is what does not necessarily have to follow anything else, but after which something naturally is or happens; an "end", the other way round, is what naturally is after something else, either of necessity or usually, but has nothing after it; a "middle" is what comes after something else and has something else after it. (APA 1450b21-31)

Now what we must note here is that *this* sort of "end" is *not* what Aristotle has in mind--or, to be more precise, not all that he has in mind--by *telos*. Whalley's note on this passage is instructive, though perhaps also a bit misleading:

The proposition about "beginning", "middle", and "end" invokes *internal* necessity: the dramatist is bound by *tragic* necessity, not by the plausible sequence of biographical or historical events. The formula "likelihood or necessity" which Aristotle introduces a little later reinforces this position and provides the dynamic inner law of poetry. . . . The word for "end" here is not *telos* (as in paragraph 20) but *teleute*--termination, conclusion. (APA 40/10)

Whalley wants to draw a sharp contrast here between "*internal* necessity" and "the plausible sequence of biographical or historical

events", but in this case the sharpness of the contrast does not seem to me warranted, since the scheme enlisting beginning, middle and end cannot be wholly exempt from the rigours of plausible biography and history. Because the logic of beginning, middle and end possesses of itself the structure of "the natural"--all living forms adhere to it--it invokes a necessity that is **not** wholly internal, calling to mind in fact one aspect of the bond between poetry and life. But of course the biographical and historical can be dynamic too, as can the poet's "making" of it (APA 1451b30), two facts that the final sentence of Whalley's note indirectly calls our attention to by asking us to consider the matter of ends further. That the "end" of the scheme beginning, middle and end is **teleute** rather than **telos** not only suggests the limited nature of this scheme (it is bound by its own structure, which is the history of the natural), but it also compels us to ask the obvious question: if **telos** is not this, what is it?

The more fully dynamic and tragic essence of **telos**--which includes rather than makes redundant the scheme beginning, middle, and conclusion--appears most pointedly in the relation that Aristotle draws and Whalley elaborates between **telos** and **praxis**. In response to Aristotle's observation that the plot "is the **end** [**telos**] of tragedy, and the end is what matters most of all" (APA 1450a23), Whalley provides the following note:

There is no precise English equivalent for **telos** (end). It implies both the decisive issue for tragedy-making and--for the tragedy itself--the condition in which the tragedy simply is an action. The word "end", canonised by long use in Aristotelean translation, is probably the least misleading. (APA 36/2)

In what sense can *telos* be the condition of the tragic action? Whalley's reading of Aristotle on this point takes us from "the natural" to the quality (and character) that more precisely defines tragedy: the human. Responding to Aristotle's central definition of tragedy--"A tragedy, then, is a *mimesis* of an action [*praxis*]--that is, it is [morally] serious and purposeful" (APA 1449b24-25)--Whalley offers the following comment on what this kind of act entails:

praxis (action) is a key-word which Aristotle uses consistently not only in the *Poetics* but also in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*: not just any action, but an action arising from choice, directed towards and implying a *telos*, and to which other subsidiary movements may be attached without deflecting it. It is therefore by its *nature* complete, purposeful, self-contained, end-implicating (*teleios*). Also, *proairesis* (choice) is one of the paramount capacities of the *spoudaios* [the superior or serious man]. The tragic action (*praxis*) is a psychic trajectory, declaring itself as arising from choice and bringing itself to a *telos*. The opening phrase then defines the word *praxis* by recalling Aristotle's standard assumptions for the word; it is not a narrowing down of the general notion of 'action'. (APA 32/1)

The refusal at this early point in the *Poetics* to "narrow down" the field of action brings us to the broadly fertile realm of the human will, and looks ahead to the scheme of action that we find in the conception of a whole which consists of the parts beginning, middle, and end.

In Aristotle's view a play, like any other living (moving, active) form does have an inner movement, but what *compels* this movement? Further, what causes the movement to assume its particular form? On several occasions in the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle looks to the principle of agency to find the *telos* of "action" in this broadest sense. "It is absurd," he writes in the former work,

to suppose that purpose is not present because we do not observe the agent deliberating. Art does not deliberate. If

the ship-building art were in the wood, it would produce the same results **by nature**. If, therefore, purpose is present in art, it is present also in nature. The best illustration is a doctor doctoring himself: nature is like that. It is plain then that nature is a cause, a cause that operates for a purpose. (199b26-32)

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle notes that a syllable is not merely the juxtaposition of its disparate letter-parts, but an invention possessing the trace of agency. For this reason, it can stand as a kind of middle with an end--a kind of limited whole.

Since that which is compounded out of something so that the whole is one, not like a heap but like a syllable--now the syllable is not its elements, **ba** is not the same as **b** and **a**, nor is flesh fire and earth (for when these are separated the wholes, i.e. the flesh and the syllable, no longer exist, but the elements of the syllable exist, and so do fire and earth); the syllable, then, is something--not only its elements (the vowel and the consonant) but also something else, and the flesh is not only fire and earth or the hot and the cold, but also something else. (1041b11-18)

Intention or agency, which appears here as the "something else" of the syllable, bears directly on the central Aristotelian concern with action--in this case, our action ("what do we intend to use syllables for?")--and it re-appears as the source of movement in the *Poetics*, where the subject is mimesis with a particular emphasis on tragedy (for Aristotle the "most highly developed form" of mimesis [APA 62/6]). One might even see agency as the point at which *mere*, *eide* and *telos* meet. As in so much of Aristotle's thought, the question "what is a whole?" emerges in the *Poetics* as a central problem, and here as elsewhere he directs us to the form of action for an answer. But not just any action will do; Aristotle directs us to the action whose form includes an end. In the *Ethics*, Aristotle observes that "every movement (e.g. that of building) takes time and is for the sake of an end, and is complete when it has

made what it aims at" (1174a19-20). In this principle of design--where wills, choices, aims carry so much weight--two movements of form in mimesis meet: the broad formal consecration, wherein beginning and middle and end are naturally joined parts of one continuous whole, and the focussed human consecration of will and act, the consecration of *praxis* (the enacted person, the impersonated act) that directs the trajectory of the formal consecration. In the principle of the practiced design we find as much of the answer to the 'why' of form as it is possible to find. *Praxis*, as Whalley points out, is also a key-word in the two *Ethics*, and "the centre of tragedy is *human*" (APA 84/4).

Whalley's translation of the *Poetics* reads more like a dialogue than a transcription, disclosing to us in its variety of voices, interpolations, notes and asides what Whalley calls "the drama of the discourse" (OT 50): the translation, like *telos* and like the relation of parts to whole, finds its form actively. The same might be said of *The Legend of John Hornby*, a work that brings together not only a variety of literary forms--biography, history, novel, tragedy--but also a variety of voices, including Whalley's own as narrator, Hornby's, Edgar Christian's, George Douglas', James Critchell-Bullock's, the testimonies of numerous sources and official reports, and the authoritative words of maps and photographs. *The Legend* emerges from the collision of these voices, a result in keeping with Whalley's account of mimesis as process rather than product, and appropriate as well to his particular mimetic project here, which is to record the *telos* of a man of many parts.

The Legend of John Hornby invokes the problem of *telos* in several ways, most notably by its own conclusion: Hornby, a man

knowing in the ways of the North, leads his cousin Edgar Christian and another young man named Harold Adlard to their deaths in the Barren Ground of the Canadian North in 1927. Does Hornby **choose** this end? Although the relation of intention to *telos* is a fundamental one-- Aristotle says of movements that "the whence and whither give them their form" (Ethics 1174b5)--evaluating Hornby's intentions proves a difficult task, for he himself offers us few clues as to "the whence and whither" of his actions. At the "crucial juncture" of the departure of Hornby and Edgar for Canada, for example, "at the very time when we most want to know what was going on in Hornby's mind," as Whalley writes, "there is nothing to be seen or known except through the eyes of Edgar Christian" (254). This is typically the case with Hornby, and with our experience as readers of *The Legend of John Hornby*; because of the reticence of Whalley's protagonist, we have to look for him principally through the images of his actions and the writings of others.

Reflecting upon his early research into Hornby's life, Whalley writes in *The Legend's* Introduction that "What little could be found suggested not so much the working of accident or fate, as the process of necessity--as though a man may from the start lay down his life for what he is" (3). The distinctions Whalley draws here-- necessity/accident, necessity/fate--seem to me worthy of note with respect to his treatment of Hornby's actions through the course of *The Legend*. What distinguishes necessity from accident is the element of human will or choice present in the former; necessity **becomes** necessary because at some point it was **not** necessary. What distinguishes necessity from fate is suggested in the phrase 'the process of necessity'. Fate is somehow outside of us, entire, solid--and as such

static; but necessity develops with an impetus we ourselves help provide by means of our actions and choices, and its grip tightens as we come to invoke (upon ourselves and others) the consequences (the necessary ones) of our deeds. Thus Whalley suggests how lives such as Hornby's can call to mind the freedom and restriction of characters in dramatic novels such as *Great Expectations*: persons-of-action in action can shape the patterns of their lives, but only in accordance with the laws of their nature and environment. Thus the forms of lives--like the finer forms of language (poems)--realize themselves in a complex process of necessity and self-definition.

But intended self-definition is not always apparent in Hornby's case. Remembering that Aristotle frequently names the architect as an exemplar of agency and craft, we may do well to begin with two architectural images that serve as traces of the form of Hornby's action: the windbreak he constructs on Dease Bay in 1912, and the cave he and Bullock design and maintain on the Casba River during the bleak winter of 1924-25. George Douglas, who wintered with Hornby on Dease Bay, described his friend's windbreak by saying that it "excelled in the variety of its materials and the picturesqueness of its appearance, a result attained, not by sudden flight, but the sum of successive inspirations; there was no underlying central idea consistently worked out" (73). The cave, which due to a lack of wood and time was a rather desperately conceived structure to begin with, exhibited a worrisome tendency to sag at the top, a problem Hornby addressed by bracing the ceiling with thin poles.

The house was already 'sinking badly and looks dangerous';
but Hornby saw no reason to do anything about this until

bedtime when, growing restless, he set to work to put in a support, covering everything with sand all over again. This support for the dangerously creaking roof was the first instalment of a network of poles that grew in the feverish complexity of improvisation throughout the winter, never quite keeping the sand at bay, and in the end making movement in the cave almost impossible--particularly for Bullock. (203)

The two structures seem characteristic of Hornby's "method": haphazard, inefficient, effected (to use Hornby's own words) "on the impulse of the moment" (173). In the randomness of their design the windbreak and cave resemble other images in *The Legend*--a trap line that is set with difficulty and then never checked (218), animal furs that are gathered only to be rendered (through accident and inattention) "virtually worthless" (244), a prospector's hammer that is purchased and taken into the North, but never used to break a single rock (327).

Yet despite the aimlessness that was so much a part of Hornby's life, Whalley nonetheless invites us to see Hornby's story in terms of a whole, an act of necessary self-definition. As he learned more of Hornby, "the presence of the man" became for Whalley "clearer and more vivid, and with this the feeling of his life, and the way his life worked itself out in its quotidian rhythms, in its own pattern, at its own pace advancing towards its own luckless and inevitable conclusion" (4). Can we agree to speak of Hornby's life in such terms, the terms of the complete Aristotelian action? To do so will require some imagination, at least.

Whalley himself finds in Hornby's movements an "air of improvisation" (133) that made the very notion of completion seem foreign to him, and this trait was perhaps never more in evidence than in connection with the trip with Bullock in 1924-25. Bullock himself was certainly not one whose method consisted of improvisation; as Whalley

reports, he intended the trip to the Barren Ground as "'an expedition' that was to go to a particular place to carry out certain tasks-- photography, weather observations, records of birds and animals, and had planned as carefully as he knew how" (192). Bullock thought Hornby shared his ambitions with regard to the "expedition", and perhaps, Whalley conjectures, "in a melancholy backward glance over the unrecorded unrewarding sixteen years since he first went to Bear Lake with Melvill" (164), Hornby did temporarily think that the trip Bullock was planning for them could salvage his northern career and bring it to a worthwhile end (a fulfilment). Certainly, Hornby suggested as much in a letter to his friend Denny LaNauze.

I am back again, bound this time for the Magnetic Pole. Though late, I intend to reach there this fall, & return to winter either on Artillery Lake or else Mackay Lake. . . . I found it impossible to stay in England as I was always wanting to return to **complete** my life's time ambition to **complete** my writing on the Fauna & Flora of the Barren Regions together with **perfect** photos. This is my **last** trip to the Arctic. (183 emphasis mine)

The reiterated gestures looking toward a *telos* here suggest that Bullock had good reason for thinking that Hornby intended with this trip "to bring his career to a fitting end by doing work of real significance" (164). Unfortunately, Hornby's intentions in this regard didn't last long--hardly a surprising turn of events, since as Whalley suggests Bullock's carefully planned expedition was "precisely the sort of thing that was alien to Hornby's way of thinking, working, and living" (192). The only tangible "end" achieved during the winter on the Casba was the report on the caribou that Hornby prepared for the government.³

³ The caribou, Hornby reports with sympathy and maybe even admiration, are always "on the Move" (342).

For a frustrated Bullock, the winter consisted of little more than a suffering that had, in a way typical of Hornby's Northern experience generally and of his last trip particularly, "no distinguishable purpose" (9).

Whalley explains that Hornby first came to Canada in 1904 at the age of twenty-three with "no particular purpose in mind; he was temporising; he had decided nothing" (9)--an explanation perfectly in keeping with Hornby's customary air of improvisation. But even in the context of such aimlessness, Whalley provides us with an important clue as to what may be seen as the whole and purposeful action of Hornby's life early on in *The Legend*, where he in fact suggests what Hornby's purpose might have been.

No doubt he had heard of the Klondike Gold Rush; but that had exhausted itself long before, and anyway Hornby was neither miner nor opportunist enough to be drawn by that magnet. He may have heard of the land being given away in the west as an inducement to immigrants; but that can scarcely have interested him. There was a cousin who lived near Edmonton--Cecil Armitstead; and John Hornby, partly out of curiosity, partly out of discouragement and disgust, went to stay with him for an indefinite period. The period might well be indefinite: he was in effect running away from home. (9)

In fairy tales, protagonists conventionally run away from home (in one way or another) in order to establish a new home--their own home, as opposed to the home of their parents. The working-out of this act is popularly known as "growing up". Whalley's suggestion that in coming to the Canadian North Hornby was running away from home seems to me at once sensitive and provocative, for if we see Hornby's actions since 1904 in terms of the paradigmatic struggle of fairy-tale protagonists we can see more clearly what the Barren Ground meant to him, and what was at stake in his inability to be happy there.

While Hornby looked to make a home in the Barren Ground, he also saw the land through the passionate eyes of a lover--perhaps not a surprising coupling, the home and the spouse being the principal and virtually contemporaneous images of the protagonist's comedic end (maturation) in fairy tales. In a way typical of much passion, however, Hornby's feelings toward the North fluctuated wildly. Thus while he loved the land, he could also conclude his (unfinished) manuscript "In the Land of Feast or Famine" by saying of the Barren Ground "I wish to God I had never seen the country" (159). Perhaps the unconstant character of Hornby's relationship with the North was part of the reason why just before leaving for the Barren Ground with Christian in 1926 Hornby sought a bride of a more conventional sort, proposing marriage to Olwen Newell while in Winnipeg en route to Edmonton (261). Upon her declining his offer, Hornby wrote to Douglas: "I am heartily sick of the North & I really wish I had never buried myself in the wilds" (263). Perhaps Hornby had never intended to make the final journey to the North; perhaps had Newell accepted his proposal, as she had seemed prepared to do two years earlier, his end would have been a very different one. But Newell "could see quite clearly that there could be no lasting relationship" with Hornby (262), and so once again Hornby turns toward the North. Whalley suggests that, the Newell proposal having failed, Hornby enters upon this last journey desperately and destructively. "It is as though, after a lifetime of living in the present--'living like an Indian', living by his nerves--he is turning intuitively towards his own destruction as though to a lover's rendezvous" (254). Again, the note is a passionate one. It is, as Whalley says of an earlier period in Hornby's Northern career, as if

Hornby "courted" death in the North. "Hardships and starvation seemed to take on a positive value for him, as though they were the only substantial values left, as though an ascetic and masochistic spirit were driving him to some impossible consummation with the country he loved" (131).

The "consummation" Hornby finally reaches with the Barren Ground is of course his death, and as such true to several of the various implications of the ideal of consummation, being at once a fulfilment of his life in the North as well as an ending (the consummation of a betrothal is both these things as well). But if consummation implies an end (both *telos* and *teleute*), it implies too a beginning, since it marks the start of a marriage. Did Hornby intend the consummation of his final journey to be a beginning as well--a beginning not for himself, but for his young cousin Edgar Christian? Certainly, Edgar's family and Edgar himself looked on the trip in this way. "You are out to lay the foundation of your life," writes Edgar's father (254). Edgar, just after Hornby's death, echoes the supposition with a pathetic and poignantly ironic optimism: "We both are very weak but more cheery, and determined to pull through and go out and let the world know of the last days of the finest man I have ever known and one who has made a foundation to build my life upon" (305). Edgar hints suggestively of what he took to be Hornby's intentions in this way in what was perhaps his last written statement--a letter to his father penned on a sheet of writing paper from the Windsor Hotel, Montreal--"a souvenir of [the] gay holiday-like trip a year before":

Dear Father,

My address is not the above but I hope that this finds you one day. Jack Hornby always wished to see this country sometime before he gave up the life in Arctic Regions & wanted someone with him & I was the one this time I realize why he wanted a boy of my age with him and I realize why one other should come in order to make sure I got out safe, but alas the Thelon is not what it is cracked up to be I don't think. I have now been trying to struggle by myself for over a month & help my other poor pal but spring is late here and I cannot get fresh meat although have always had food to eat at times some jolly good meals only a few days ago which did not put me in condition to hunt fresh food but the weather blew cold & to-day June 1st has seen me with fine weather food but not fresh and unable to get fresh being too weak & played out. Adamson Corona Hotel Edmonton finds two trunks of mine in one that "Bible & Prayer Book" which Jack refused to let me bring. Do not be annoyed but I know why now and Jack alone was one man in this world who can let a young boy know what this world and the next are. I loved him he loves me. Very seldom is there true love between 2 men!

Bye Bye now. Love and thanks for all you have ever done for me

Edgar (309)

Bullock writes of his time in the North with Hornby in terms similar to those Christian employs here. After somehow surviving his Northern initiation, Bullock could say of Hornby that he "was a man for whom I had the greatest respect and affection, particularly on our last trip we almost came to an untimely end on several occasions and consequently were brought together as rarely two men are brought together in this day of artificiality" (319). Edgar does not survive his initiation, but hours from his own end he seems to understand Hornby's "impossible consummation" with the North in the context of another consummation: that of an older man's relation with his young initiate, a consummation of the family drama that so often begins with someone's running away from home.

The bonds of family or friendship that are forged in struggle carry rewards, but as both Christian and Bullock learn they can have their costs too. Mired deep in the Casba winter, Bullock reflects in his

journal on the state of his relation with Hornby and the North: "Let it be known, however, that I have won so far and I will not abandon my task. Nothing now would induce me to leave for the comforts of civilisation, till all is accomplished" (211). Bullock's notion of "accomplishment" at this point recalls the "consummation" with the North that Hornby sought, but whatever can he mean by "all"? Evidently, since the Casba winter had been reduced by this point for Bullock to a struggle for survival, the "all" he speaks of is quite elemental in nature: all for Bullock is his life, which he must do battle to escape with. The "accomplishment" that the Barren Ground imposed was just this struggle to the death, or life, and Bullock's desire to see this accomplishment through made him a suitable partner for Hornby after all. Hornby's Northern career consisted largely of such struggle, and he was always prepared to stay until "all"--whether death or life--had been accomplished: a man may "lay down his life for what he is" in more than the architectural sense of the expression.⁴ But Hornby's willingness to lay down his life for the sake of an impossible consummation with the North had implications that reached beyond his own life. As actions characteristically do, his affected others, compelling Bullock to risk and Edgar to give his all. Whalley describes with a tender regard for particular gestures and details Edgar's end, which was one consequence of Hornby's choices:

When the fire had died out and he had decided that he would never light it again, Edgar Christian placed his two letters in the cool ashes of the stove, together with Hornby's will and the last letters he had written, and Harold Adlard's few papers, and his own diary. On top of the stove he left a

4. As is suggested in the Christian maxim, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

note written on a piece of paper: "WHO[EVER COMES HERE] LOOK IN STOVE." He was wearing a heavy grey sweater over a khaki shirt, grey flannel trousers held up by a silk handkerchief, a muffler around his neck, winter moccasins with puttees. He turned in to his bunk and pulled two red Hudson's Bay blankets over him, covering his head. The silence that had frightened him and made him homesick the first time he had been left alone in the cabin was now like wings folding about him. Perhaps he caught the faint sound of ptarmigan feeding outside. The sound brought nobody forth from the house with a rifle to try for an elusive target. The silver watch in the breast pocket of his shirt stopped at 6.45. (310)

In this conclusion we find the end of the consummation that moved Hornby's story from melodrama to farce to tragedy (251-52), but *The Legend of John Hornby* is not just Hornby's story, nor is the tragedy of John Hornby just his tragedy. As is the case in Sophoclean and Shakespearean tragedy, the tragic whole concerns more than one life: it is a public affair.

The public nature of Hornby's tragedy complicates even while it could be said to determine Whalley's own narrative design in *The Legend of John Hornby*. If Whalley indeed wants us to see Hornby's story as tragedy, one of his chief responsibilities will be to demonstrate how the various characters and acts that make up the public context of the Hornby legend come together as a whole somehow consummated from the collision and cross-fertilisation of its members. Whalley speaks in passing of what this challenge entails when he contrasts myth and legend in *Poetic Process*.

I have spoken so far as though a myth were a symbolical narrative; but this was only for convenience. It seems to me that narrative is an accidental and not an essential feature of myth. Myth is rather a grouping of symbols which brings them into resonance with each other to embody a comprehensive view of reality. . . . Once the myth has taken a narrative form it has started to fall from grace, to move in the direction of "legend"--a narrative which treats (or

purports to treat) of historical events with some "imaginative" freedom. It is the function of myth to hold symbols in resonance. In the legend the cluster of symbols dissipates and becomes confused (sometimes by accretion, as in Egyptian mythology), and loses resonance; the emphasis moves from the symbols themselves to the narrative events and the personalities of the actors in those events. (181-82)

Though Whalley himself names his account of Hornby a "legend", he presumably would be glad to retain something of myth's resonant power. But if "Legend as pseudo-history is a movement away from true myth" (PP 181n), *The Legend of John Hornby* would seem to represent a risk on Whalley's part that the comprehensive and resonating "myth" of Hornby's story will dissipate in his telling of it. Whalley reduces this risk by putting to the test of practice certain of Aristotle's most fundamental recommendations with respect to the making of tragedy, itself a comprehensive and resonating form.

Whalley's practice tests, for example, the pertinence of Aristotle's observation that recognition is a crucial aspect of the dramatic plot; despite a nearly complete lack of direct evidence, Whalley manages in *The Legend* to suggest the presence of the recognition that is for Aristotle "of the deepest import" (APA 54/6). "The tragic recognition is an abrupt act of self-knowing" (APA 54/6), writes Whalley, and while we get very little indication from Hornby himself that he has accomplished *this* act, perhaps we get just enough for the import of the *anagnorisis* to be felt. On the night Hornby writes the will in which he leaves "all" (302) to Christian, he writes as well "five short farewell notes" that read "like a single heartbroken message" (323). Tellingly, Whalley does not discuss these notes chronologically, at the point where he gives us Hornby's contemporaneous will, but rather reserves them for the final pages of *The Legend*. Thus he concludes the work with the question of

Hornby's recognition, a subject on which he offers the following reflection of his own:

the central figure in a myth or a tragedy has a stature and power that not even accurate history can confer, and through the blurring and distorting vehicle of [Hornby's] own legend certain features remain clear and distinct: something enigmatic and puckish about the man; a passionate sense of the integrity of the country; a birdlike inconsequence of purpose. His childlike illogical optimism was of a rare kind because his self-confidence was innocent of pride. And at the end all other evidences are inundated by his unrelenting endurance, his tragic light-hearted courage in the face of a disaster that he must have known his own levity and irresponsibility had produced, the slow merciless killing of himself to save two lives he knew he could not save. (325)

Whalley, again cognisant of Aristotelian principles, knew that a tragic plot "doesn't get to be unified, as some people think, [simply] by being about one person" (APA 1451a16). In *The Legend of John Hornby*, the central action seems to be one that several men--Hornby, Christian, the priests Rouviere and LeRoux, perhaps even Bullock--share: the giving of one's all, the laying down of one's life. In his final comment on this act as it was consummated by Hornby, Whalley suggests that in the end at least Hornby came to understand the nature of this act.

We may be better prepared to see this act as tragic if we consider it by the light of Aristotle's conception of *pathos*, 'the thing suffered'. Is it possible to see the "long hopeless pointless suffering" (151) that seems to constitute so much of what happens in *The Legend* as "action" of the kind that Marcel speaks of, that impersonated action which I have advanced as the paradigmatic form of tragedy? Evidently not, if we judge by the contemporary view of *pathos*. The *Harper Handbook to Literature* offers the following definition:

15

The feeling of pity, sympathy, tenderness, compassion, or sorrow evoked by someone or something that is helpless. The death of a pet, an Ophelia, or a Cordelia, arouses pathos, as distinct from the tragic depths and heights of Hamlet and Lear.

Various aspects of Hornby's career may strike us as thus "pathetic"--the failed and aborted trapping ventures, the social missteps, the diet of flour on which a skunk had squirted. And perhaps, too, the tone of Hornby's letters to Douglas ("You are the only person who ever writes to me" [134]) and of his unfinished manuscript ("I wish to God I had never seen the country" [159]) suggests a helplessness in keeping with his various unlucky adventures. Hornby's final effects, discovered at the cabin on the Thelon River, do not necessarily call to mind tragic depths and heights. "A small tin trunk of Hornby's was flooded with two inches of water: it contained photographic supplies (ruined), a film album (just worth bringing out), and a piece of quartz wrapped in an old sock" (321).

Whalley himself asks us to think of Hornby's career in terms of *pathos* at a number of points in *The Legend*. He describes Hornby as "pathetic and endearing" (6); his time in the War, he says, traced "a pathetic pattern of motive and desire" (110); the Bullock episode was "too pathetic to be funny" (251). But if Hornby strikes us as pathetic in the modern sense of the word, is there a tragic depth (and height) to *pathos*, and to Hornby's *pathos* in particular, that goes beyond helplessness? Aristotle understands *pathos* to be something other than a quality of ineptitude. He sees it not as a measure of helplessness but of potential--defining it, in fact, as the tragic act. As Whalley suggests, World War I provides one image of the pathetic in *The Legend*. Hornby's response to this horrific catastrophe was like that of a child

"unjustly treated yet powerless to escape from the crazy insensitiveness of the adult web" (110). The war was a conflict to which Hornby felt he did not belong but of which he was nonetheless a part; his ensuing withdrawal from society both during the War and afterwards as a consequence of it, Whalley writes, "would have been insolent if it had not been profoundly pathetic" (107). Yet while there is an element of helplessness in this *pathos*, something of the dynamic element of *pathos* begins to appear here as well, for World War I was pregnant for Hornby: it changed him, and not for the better. As he wrote to George Douglas from France, "Here I have received many shocks & doubt that I will ever be of such a generous nature [again]" (110).

Following the lead of Gerald Else, Whalley comments at illuminating length in his commentary on the *Poetics* as to how change or development (*auxesis*) figures prominently in *pathos*. Whalley's central concern in this matter is to observe that for the purposes of delineating the nature of the apparently passive *pathos*, Aristotle depends upon his conception of tragic *praxis* as "morally dynamic" and "formative action" (APA 14/4). The collocation is a suggestive one. "These then--*peripeteia* and recognition--are two elements of the [complex] plot," writes Aristotle; "a third [element is] *pathos*. . . . A *pathos* is a murderous or cruel transaction" (APA 1452a20-22). Of this introductory remark on *pathos* Whalley offers the following amplification:

pathos (from *paschein*, "suffer") primarily means something "suffered", something that happens to a person--the complement to something done. Yet Aristotle says that a *pathos* is a *praxis*, an "act". I find it difficult to agree with [D. W.] Lucas that *pathos* in this short section is not a special term comparable to *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. The paradoxical term *pathos-as-praxis* seems to imply that the crucial event is to be seen both as suffered and as inflicted.

Aristotle's choice of the word **praxis**--which he regularly uses elsewhere of the single overarching tragic action as distinct from the separate **pragmata** (events) of which the **praxis** is composed--suggests further that the **pathos** as an event is both pregnant and determinate, the beginning of a process. **peripeteia** and "recognition" heighten and concentrate emotional force: **pathos** is the key event/act that provides substantial foundation and focus for the **peripeteia** and recognition. I have therefore rendered **praxis** here as a "transaction" to indicate the **pathos**-action paradox and to preserve the processive potential of the word **praxis**. (60/3)

A bit later Whalley notes that the double nature of the **pathos** arises because **pathos** is "in one sense the suffering of the person injured by the terrible deed, and in another (and simultaneous) sense the act on the part of the person who does the terrible deed" (68/2), but what if (as could easily--even paradigmatically--be the case; see *Oedipus Rex*, for example) the one who does the **pathos** also suffers it--that is, suffers from it, "suffers the consequences"? In such an event the modern notion of the pathetic begins to be fleshed out; pathetic suffering will not be the extent of tragedy, nor will it denote "helplessness" (it will in fact have arisen from the capacity to act), but necessary suffering may well be a part of the **pathos**, and such suffering will often appear a character of the helpless.

Who suffers and enacts the **pathos** is an important consideration for Aristotle. While Whalley rejects the assumption "that Aristotle was (as Coleridge puts it) 'the infallible dictator'" who in the *Poetics* wanted to give the authoritative "recipe" for tragedy (APA 64/6), he does point out four places in the *Poetics* where in the course of his argument Aristotle employs **ananke** ('it is necessary') rather than the more frequent **dei** ('it is better'). One of the points on which Aristotle does prescribe concerns which persons ought to be involved in the **pathos**: **philia** is for Aristotle "the essential bond in the tragic **pathos**" (64/6).

"The tragic acts (*pathe*)," Aristotle writes, "happen within [the bond of] blood-relations--for example, when brother kills brother, or son [kills] father, or mother [kills] son, or son mother, or intends to kill, or does something else of this sort--*that's* what we should look for" (APA 1453b20-22). Whether the moral revulsion at the murder of a blood-relation "is appreciably weaker among us moderns than it was among the Greeks" is, as Else says, "a point we need not argue" (424); the fact that Aristotle thus stresses the role of *philia* in *pathos* indicates that he sees the act of *pathos* in terms of a relation rather than in terms of the lone protagonist acting independently of those around him. As Whalley notes, "Although many Greek tragedies took their title from the name of the foremost figure, Aristotle's account of the 'forms of *pathos*' in paragraph 43 turns not upon a single 'hero' but upon the relation between two people" (APA 58/1). What's more, in making the blood-relation central to the *pathos-as-praxis*, Aristotle indicates something of what in his view makes a tragedy *tragic*.

Else connects philiatric *pathos* closely to the role of *hamartia* in tragedy, in part because both *hamartia* and *pathos* are "pregnant" with consequence. "The real function of the *pathos*," writes Else, "is not to shock the audience by its physical presence. It is a *premise* on which the plot is built, and the best use of it is that in which it most recedes into the shape of a hypothesis from which other conclusions flow" (358). Commenting on Aristotle's discussion of "The Acts that arouse Pity and Terror" (1453b14-37)--and these are the acts that generate tragedies--Else remarks that to complete his analysis of "the working of the tragic plot" Aristotle must proceed in his argument to develop two points:

(1) **philia**, a close blood-relationship between the doer and the sufferer of the **pathos**, and (2) **hamartia** (or its opposite), the doer's ignorance (or awareness) of that relationship. . . . Here both concepts are made explicit and applied in detail, **philia** as the general basis of the tragic quality of the **pathos**, and **hamartia**--or its opposite--in the further discrimination of the possible **degrees** of tragic quality that may inhere in (be "built into") the nexus of incidents that includes the **pathos**. (414)

In this pathetic "nexus", the **pathos** will either be performed or not performed; if the former, its performance will be consummated either wittingly ("with knowledge of the other person's identity") or unwittingly (Else 417). Now since in Aristotle's view "The ultimate root of the tragic is ignorance" (Else 420), for him the knowingly performed **pathos** will be less tragic than one in which ignorance leads to mistake. But not just any mistake will do: it must be one "which runs counter to man's deepest moral instincts" (420). Thus the quintessential tragic **pathos** will be an act involving close relations, one that somehow violates what ought to be a bond of love--such as there may be, though rarely in these days of artificiality, between two men.

The two best tragic plots, Aristotle says, will therefore be the following: (1) ignorance > **pathos** intended > recognition > **pathos** averted; and (2) ignorance > **pathos** enacted > recognition. "The significant thing" about these two tragic models, writes Else,

is not merely that both begin with **hamartia**, but that **hamartia figures in the tragic calculus only in team, so to speak, with its partner and contrary, recognition**. Three things are required for the highest effect: **hamartia**, **pathos**, and recognition. But the relation of these three elements to each other is complicated. The **hamartia** is potentially tragic, but only if it involves a "dear one" and leads or threatens to lead to a **pathos**. The **pathos** also is potentially tragic, but fully so only if it takes place between "dear ones" and stems from a **hamartia**. (420)

Else's analysis, while of course important as a commentary on Aristotle's views on poetry, can also be of value as a resource for our own literary criticism; it can help us to see, for example, that if Hornby's actions appear pathetic in more than the contemporary sense--if his **pathos** appears not merely helpless, but intended and enacted--it may be because Whalley makes good use in *The Legend of hamartia*, philiatric **pathos**, and recognition--the basic elements of tragedy. Aristotle says nothing about **hubris** directly in the *Poetics*, even though it is surely one of the best instances of **hamartia** available to the maker of tragedies; the explanation for this may be that since the essence of overreaching pride is to be ignorant of one's true status (as human and fallible, for example), Aristotle supposed that what he said of ignorance had direct application to **hubris** as well. In any event, the mistake of **hubris** seems to me an efficient cause in Hornby's end, an end suggestive of how from the two plots that Aristotle admired most a third tragic form can develop, and suggestive too of how what were for Aristotle the principal elements of "the tragic calculus" unfold in *The Legend of John Hornby*.

The nexus whose end can most clearly be seen as a consequence of pride is the blood-relation of Hornby and Christian. Whether or not Whalley and Edgar are right to imply that Hornby took his last journey with the intention of never returning, we feel sure that he did intend Edgar to return. But Hornby took very few precautions to ensure Edgar's return to civilization; indeed, to a detached observer his "preparations" for the trip almost seem designed to secure the opposite result. But Hornby had made the trip into the Barren Ground before, had done so with little regard for taking care, and had always survived

these reckless ventures. It was what everyone always said about him: his ability to manage the Northern "accomplishment" on the North's own terms was the central myth in the popular legend of John Hornby. On this occasion, however, if Hornby assumed that he could dictate who died and who lived in the Barren Ground, he was making a big mistake--a mistake not at all about the bond of kinship as in Aristotle's archetypal examples in the *Poetics*, but rather about the *pathos* itself. Hornby didn't think that his actions would lead to a tragic end, and recognized the truth only when it was too late. Such a plot offers a variant of Aristotle's two preferred plots by making palpable the double nature of the *pathos*, that eventuality which is "in one sense the suffering of the person injured by the terrible deed, and in another (and simultaneous) sense the act on the part of the person who does the terrible deed" (APA 68/2). As we have seen, Aristotle saw agency as the practice of division: one part moves, another suffers movement. The scheme for the plot of *The Legend of John Hornby* articulates this principle by splitting the *pathos* itself while nonetheless making its beginning and end part of a single *auxesis*: *hamartia* > *pathos* engaged > recognition > *pathos* fulfilled.

A second relation in Whalley's narrative that might be seen in terms of *pathos* is the relation between Hornby and the Barren Ground itself. The North in *The Legend* is like a character with whom Hornby has a bond akin to that of a blood-relation--a character with "integrity" whom Hornby loves and respects (131)--but his suffering at its hands is as much an act on his part as it is something passively received: in this instance, the duplicity of *pathos* is principally Hornby's own, the death he suffers representative of the *telos* of a man who suffers his own

181
fate. Hornby must be audience to his suffering, which at the very end includes the feelings he experiences at the recognition of what he has led Christian and Adlard to, but here again, in the practice of watching, the *pathos* is an act--the tragic act that occurs in the context of relation. Audiencing is itself an activity.

John Hornby "eluded inquiry, disclosed only a little of himself," and withdrew in the end "with a gesture of silence" (3). Perhaps his reticence was one reason why so many of those who became acquainted with Hornby or his legend--including Douglas, Bullock, Christian, Malcolm Waldron (in *Snow Man*), and Whalley himself--ended up trying to tell his story. But if Hornby's refusal to speak plainly about himself made the narratives of others seem necessary, it also made these biographers' task a difficult one; Hornby stands, as Whalley says, "with his back to the light: something can be said about what he did, but about his feelings, motives, and desires much has to be inferred" (84). This being the case, it would seem that Whalley's report of how in the course of his work on Hornby's life "the primary materials began to speak in their own rhythms and in their own dialect" (4) tells only part of the story of his own practice. The case of Hornby's "backgrounded" legend suggests that makers (who are also readers) need to be more than receptive ("innocent") listeners; they also need to be active, bringing to their work an exercise of imagination that will complement their innocence of intent by realizing the form potential in the primary materials with which they work.

Whalley says that "we are all . . . capable of responding directly" to poems because we are all "endowed with imagination" (SRP 85-86). If

in the irreducible triad of poietic a poem begins with the poet, he suggests, it "terminates" with "the reader, the re-creator of a poem" (PP 234-35). As a poem *The Legend of John Hornby* has the capacity for imitating and releasing action, and Whalley as its maker imaginatively shapes that action's form in narrative, but what of the third member of poetry's irreducible triad? Is activity also required of the reader of *The Legend of John Hornby*? If so, what sort of activity, and how does Whalley attempt to engage it? The remainder of this discussion will attempt to address just these questions in the way of a final word on the drama of mimesis.

Bullock expressed his own interest in Hornby's biography at a fairly early point in their relationship. "I knowing him," he wrote while preparations for the Casba winter were underway, "must prevent him from passing unrecognised, a genius unproven, a man of exceptional value to his country" (181). Bullock's efforts to tell Hornby's story eventually found expression in various forms, including letters, short stories and a "Novel" that gave "a detailed account of his acquaintance with Hornby from their first meeting in 1923 until Bullock's departure for Fort Smith in the spring of 1924" (355-56), but Bullock met with no success in his efforts to publish his writings, and his intention of making known Hornby's name went largely unfulfilled.

Perhaps the disappointment of Bullock's hopes in this regard was anticipated in that truncated line concerning Hornby that he offered up into the teeth of the Casba Winter: "Cannot understand him" (197). For Whalley, at least, this admission bespoke Bullock's fundamental incapacity to tell Hornby's story. Whalley considers instructive as to the nature of

their relationship the undeclared but entire difference between Bullock and Hornby with regard to how they approached the Casba trip.

Bullock thought that Hornby believed he had now discovered in Bullock the means of "making something out of all that he had seen, sensed and endured"; he thought Hornby wanted, with his help, "to bring his career to a fitting end by doing work of real significance". Perhaps momentarily, in a melancholy backward glance over the unrecorded unrewarding sixteen years since he first went to Bear Lake with Melvill, Hornby may have believed that he could at last make his life into the achievement that might commend itself in the world's eyes. Whatever Hornby had in mind, Bullock thought Hornby relied on him as the person who would bring method to his life; but from the beginning Bullock was deceived about Hornby's intentions: not because Hornby tried to deceive Bullock, but because Bullock had nothing to help him appreciate or penetrate Hornby's way of thinking. By temperament, habit, and instinct the two men were so different that they were quite unable to understand each other. But for the time being they behaved like inseparable friends, sharing plans and confidences as though there were no difference in their ages or natures. (164-65)

Now it seems to me that Whalley is rather unfair to Bullock throughout. The Legend: despite the fact that Hornby's behaviour toward his partner during the Casba winter was often antagonistic, Whalley seems prepared to regard the many difficulties of the trip as merely the result of Bullock's inability to understand Hornby. Whether or not Whalley demonstrates due sympathy for Bullock's position in this case, however, his suggestion here concerning the responsibility of Hornby's reader--whose task it is to **appreciate** (that is, to know the price of, to evaluate) and **penetrate** his subject--seems to me a notable one. If, Whalley implies, Bullock could not accomplish these acts with respect to Hornby, that is no reason why we shouldn't make our own attempts.

When Hornby returned to England for a brief stay (Dec 1925 - Apr 1926) around the time of his father's death, he characteristically left "no record" himself "of what he thought or felt or did or intended

during those weeks" (248). Characteristically supplying that record, Whalley speculates that Hornby's visit home was an unhappy one, partly because there was in England "nobody to penetrate the desolation of his solitary experience" (248). The aim of *The Legend*, it seems to me, is to enable us to penetrate Hornby's experience; this, Whalley implies in his Introduction, is our principal task as readers.

The John Hornby of the legend is a grotesque mask, a bit absurd and stiff; and the mask is mostly of his own making. But enough matter of a different sort remains to help penetrate the mask so that we come upon the quixotic irrationality of the man, his affection, his bleak sense of fun, his half-mocking poignant vulnerability. (4)

At one point in *The Legend*, Whalley relates an anecdote (not surprisingly, at Bullock's expense) of a certain "Public Administrator for the North-West Territories in Edmonton" who was asked by the government "for a confidential report on Bullock." The administrator's response was hardly flattering: he described Bullock as "a well-behaved gentlemanly chap who dances attendance on the flappers of the City, not doing any work at present" (181). Whalley doesn't comment directly on the inadequacy of this description, but he implies that inadequacy parenthetically when he explains that the administrator's observations concerning Bullock were made "(on slight acquaintance)". "Casual" observers, Whalley notes at a couple of points, sometimes thought John Hornby "mad" (8/130)--and perhaps, Whalley conjectures, "he was from time to time" (130). But in *The Legend* Whalley seeks to turn us from our casual ways, wherein we make our judgements (with respect to Hornby, for example, or Bullock) on slight acquaintance. Even by 1914, Whalley writes, Hornby "was thoroughly disillusioned" with his life in the North, yet unable to act on his resolution to leave. "He had been

too much alone, living like an Indian, not to feel that other people-- because they had not shared his experience with him--were very different from himself, and could have no understanding of him or his experience or his need" (99). *The Legend of John Hornby* offers us a chance to share Hornby's experiences. In doing so, it impresses us with the responsibility of trying to appreciate and penetrate a life "very different from" our own. Consequent to that, it offers us as well an opportunity to accomplish the discovery that Hornby's life might be in some senses not so very different from our own.

The Legend of John Hornby consists essentially of three narrative strands: historical reportage (who did what, and when), historical personages speaking in their own voices (through letters, diaries, reported speech), and narrative commentary and assessment. One might expect this latter aspect to carry the burden of Whalley's project in *The Legend*, but what is striking about Whalley's evaluative comments in *The Legend* is the way these judgements consistently come second both chronologically and in terms of emotional import to Whalley's sympathetic presentations of first-person utterances and the more strictly "historical" material. Perhaps this quality of Whalley's method--which I think might be summed up by the phrase *innocence of intent*--is what makes the many bold narrative interpolations and interpretations that he does offer seem so consistently apt. As Hornby's biographer, Whalley confidently proceeds as if he has penetrated Hornby's experience to the point where he can speak alongside of him, sometimes blending his own voice and the voice of his protagonist quite audaciously. The following passage relates a scene from the starving winter of 1920-21 at Great Slave Lake:

"I seem to have collapsed all at once", he wrote the next day. There was a fierce wind that day; to go any distance from the house would be foolhardy. "Tonight I shall have to put everything in order, in case anything happens. It is very easy to lie down and give up, but an entirely different matter to bestir oneself and move about." Despite a strong wind he went out to the hooks that morning--"I have an ice-pick to weigh me down", he noted gaily--and found one small fat trout. (148)

The interplay of voices here captures the essence of Whalley's project--his poetic process--in *The Legend of John Hornby*, a narrative that practices both penetrative sympathy and appreciative judgement.

But one important objection that might be raised to Whalley's method is that his wide-ranging activity as poet/reader consigns us to an inactive role as readers of the Hornby legend. Certainly, if Hornby led a life "fraught with background", Whalley seeks to bring something of that life to the foreground, where interpretation may not seem necessary. He writes of Hornby's mood on heading North after the War, for example, in the terms of a confident explanation of purpose:

He went now into the North alone and with little provision. He loathed "civilisation" with an ineradicable hatred, and hated his own home almost as bitterly; he loved the unfenced land almost to the point of obsession. There was now nothing he could give to the country but his life. No temporal goal had any value for him or meaning: not wealth nor fame nor the oblique satisfaction of factual discovery. (117)

Whalley's tone is indeed confident here, but our activity as his (and Hornby's) readers may begin with a slight quibble: how can he be so sure? Self-assurance is no guarantee of truth. When Bullock first heard of Hornby's death and the circumstances of that event, he too was prepared to offer an assured reading of Hornby in a letter to the Mounted Police:

As I expected. Hornby died last. When the other two died it is evident that he was still sufficiently strong to attend to the bodies and drag them outside, presumably through snow. . . . Knowing Mr Hornby as well as I did I am confident that, after the death of his companions, he would feel wholly disinclined to face civilization alone. Having only himself to hunt for he would be in much better a position to provide for himself than before, and I do feel that he may have **died of his own volition**. (319)

Bullock is "confident", but he is also clearly wrong about one important detail: Hornby died first, not last. For all of his own confident speculations, Whalley too may be wrong about John Hornby. George Douglas certainly thought Whalley in error when he first spoke on the Hornby legend in a 1953 radio broadcast. As Whalley reports Douglas' criticism, "we were wasting our time to be interested in Hornby; to think of Hornby as a skilled Northern traveller was a mistake" (3).

Perhaps, even after further and more thorough research, Whalley still has it all wrong. 'How can he be so sure?': the question opens onto the field of our inquiry and activity as Whalley's readers. But even as we question whether Whalley is himself guilty of narrative overreaching (*hubris*), what appears to be a dilemma for the reader begins to resolve itself. If one of the problems of our relation to the maker of *The Legend* is whether or not we should resist his designs, the eventuality seems to be that in the drama of Whalley's mimesis there is a need for both resistance and cooperation on the reader's part. The *integrity* of *The Legend of John Hornby* arises in part out of the *relation* it seeks to engage with its readers. By allowing us to witness many of the "primary materials" of the Hornby legend first-hand, Whalley *invites* us to question his authority, and to resolve that inquiry to our own satisfaction. He invites us to see (penetrate)--and judge (appreciate)--for ourselves. In the same way, we can evaluate Bullock's

reading of Hornby. While his account of Hornby's end contains error, there is despite the mistaken premiss something that seems right about Bullock's conclusion. Edgar and Whalley also suspect that Hornby took his own life--or at least laid it down. The primary materials of the Hornby legend enable us to see the factual error of Bullock's speculation, but they also enable us to see its value. But while Whalley asks us to be thus active, he asks one other thing of us as well: in inviting us to "penetrate" the legend's "mask" he asks us to leave our presuppositions at the door, to allow the legend--and his Legend--its own dialect and rhythm. In short, Whalley asks us to be innocent of intent.

Whalley (again following Else's lead) draws our attention to intention in his translation of the *Poetics* when during his discussion of *pathos* he remarks upon Aristotle's notion that "the actual deed can be dispensed with, either by being removed from the action of the play or by being averted; but the intention is indispensable to the tragic action" (68/2). Commenting on the tragic "triumvirate" of *pathos*, *hamartia*, and recognition, Else says that for Aristotle "of the three components the actual *pathos* is the least essential," since it may occur before the drama begins or "never take place at all" (420).

What can be dispensed with is *the act itself*. The essential thing is the *idea* of a *pathos*, the intention of performing one. The *pathos* is in fact no more than the lever by which the tragic potentiality is converted into actuality; and for that purpose--at least so Aristotle gives us to understand--the intention can serve as well as the act. (420)

Our popular filmmakers, so enamoured of "action", could learn from Aristotle's treatment of *pathos*, the implications of which treatment are far-reaching. We have spoken of the surprising way in which

200

Aristotle's *Poetics* can change our understanding of *pathos* by removing it from its contemporary context ("helplessness") and giving it all the impetus of tragedy. The "idealization" of *pathos* that Whalley and Else refer to completes this transformation, making the *pathos* no less active but joining it to the more familiar conception of pathetic passivity by making its externalization in action quite unnecessary; *pathos* becomes something that happens within the protagonist, a matter of the inner life of feeling, motive, intention.

Sometimes, it seems, the wish *can* stand for the deed, and Aristotle's concern for intention *within* the poem is at the least suggestive with respect to the role of intention *outside* the poem--the intention of the poet, the intention of the reader. Certainly, poets and readers *will* practice designs of one kind or another. Yet within the relation of each literary structure of design--each poem--there is an opportunity for innocence as well, a chance for both poet and reader to be humble. Within the aesthetic triad, design and passivity must meet, each member respecting while helping to shape the integrity of the others. *Pathos*--a word that allows for both agency and humility, moving and being moved--thus appears an apt image for the nature of the poetic process when we see it in terms of the paradoxical duplicity that Aristotle elaborates for us.

The Aristotelian notion of *pathos-as-praxis* provides an image as well of both freedom and responsibility, two qualities of particular relevance to tragedy, but implicated I think in all human action. Aristotle at least does not restrict his observations on the role of choice--that meeting-place of freedom and responsibility--in human life to his discussion of tragedy in the *Poetics*. "The virtues," he writes in

the *Ethics*, "are modes of choice or involve choice" (1106a3). He later adds that "the origin of action--its efficient, not its final cause--is choice" (1139a32). In the *Physics* he remarks neatly that a child or animal can do nothing by chance because they can do nothing by choice: they are "incapable of deliberate intention" (197b6-7). The same, however, cannot be said of characters in dramas such as *The Legend of John Hornby*. "As far as I know," writes Whalley of one particularly unfortunate incident in the career of his protagonist, Hornby "was never lucky" (229); but by Aristotle's lights Hornby's lack of luck was a function not of his helplessness but of his stature as one capable of making choices--and mistakes. His bad luck was of a piece with his tragic potential--not merely "pathetic", but part of his *pathos*. "When you have let a stone go it is too late to recover it," Aristotle writes in the *Ethics*, announcing a sort of humanist, tragic credo; "but yet it was in your power to throw it, since the moving principle was in you" (1114a18-19). Such is the freedom, and such the responsibility, of *pathos*.

AFTERWORD

I hope that if the foregoing discussion has done anything, it has helped illuminate Whalley's somewhat cryptic but lyrically resonant definition of mimesis as "the bond between poetry and life" (BS 179). That life that poem, poet, and reader share is fundamentally dramatic in nature insofar as the members of the aesthetic triad "mean" by doing--and not just doing what comes naturally, but what comes by design, or by choice: we may most justly say that "what a poem *means* is what it *does*" when we remember that to *mean* is also to *intend*. Part of the intention of *The Legend of John Hornby* is to practice the act of remembering a life that has passed. At the very end of *The Legend*, Whalley tells how a party visiting the scene of Hornby's death found the cabin "utterly derelict":

The walls still stood, but the roof had collapsed inward so that the place would no longer provide even rough shelter for a man in extreme distress. The crosses on the graves had fallen, but the two men set them up again and shored them with stones as before, in the hope that perhaps they might stand for another twenty years. (328)

Whalley's *Legend* can be seen as his way of putting up crosses for Hornby, Christian and Adlard, marking the men and the event they enacted and suffered as worthy of remembrance. No doubt he would be glad to know that his remembrance still stands.

If this particular image of Whalley's activity does not appear to us until *The Legend's* end, in Aristotle's view such suspension would be quite in keeping with the nature of forms. Poetic "kinds", such as epic and tragedy, "disclose their *physis*" in the course of their own histories

(APA 96/4), and movements are complete only at their ends. In the *Ethics*, Aristotle writes that

every movement (e.g. that of building) takes time and is for the sake of an end, and is complete when it has made what it aims at. It is complete, therefore, only in the whole time or at that final moment. In their parts and during the time they occupy, all movements are incomplete, and are different in kind from the whole movement and from each other. (1174a19-23)

What is true of buildings and building is true too of poems and poietic. Perhaps it is true too of all actions, since activity, as Aristotle also says, "comes into being and is not present at the start like a piece of property" (*Ethics* 1169b30). But we cannot be wholly persuaded by Aristotle's analysis of "wholes". "The beginning is a limit," he writes in the *Metaphysics*, "but not every limit is a beginning" (1022a13). In one sense--the sense of tragedy--this is indeed true; Hornby's and Christian's limits involve tragedy just because they do mark an end, a completed whole. But in another sense--the sense of the drama of mimesis by which their story still lives--the limit of their experience does necessarily mark a beginning. When Aristotle remarks in the *Ethics* (and he is speaking particularly of poets here) that "we exist by virtue of activity (i.e. by living and acting), and that the handiwork is in a sense, the producer in activity, . . . for what he is in potentiality, his handiwork manifests in activity" (1168a6-9), he himself suggests why limits (the limit of a poetic form, for example) may in fact characteristically mark the beginning of activity for poet, poem and reader.

I have argued throughout the foregoing discussion that poetic texts of very different kinds can even in the midst of their difference

exemplify the **drama** of mimesis, that action which takes place within the aesthetic triad. Admittedly, such an argument has its risks. If Edward Casaubon, the dusty and bleak scholar of *Middlemarch*, is remembered for anything, it is for the claustrophobic project that consumed him: his search for the Key to all Mythologies.

[H]e had undertaken to show . . . that all the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed. Having once mapped the true position and taken a firm footing there, the vast field of mythical constructions became intelligible, nay, luminous with the reflected light of correspondences. (46)

Perhaps it seems as if I am offering mimetic drama as "the key to all poems", but I am willing to venture the appearance of excessive claim in the hope that the various readings I have offered here may indeed point toward a poetics relevant to poems quite broadly. Not all poems do the same thing, but all poems do something, and it seems to me that Whalley's delineation of mimesis as "an activity or process and not a thing or product" (OT 60) provides a powerful tool for understanding those goings-on.

Aristotle provides some authority for a far-reaching theory of reading--one that can span literary kinds and periods--in the *Poetics*, where he "is clearly not talking about epic, tragedy, comedy, etc., as genres or art forms; he is talking about the **making** of them" (OT 59). In this **making**, which takes place within the context of the aesthetic triad, correspondences inevitably occur--in part because as readers *we* share a certain context (wherein, again, there will be many differences). Whalley suggests that "A tragic action correctly traced will lead to the end of recognising at least something about the nature of man, the values that are paramount, the vulnerable centres that we must at all

costs preserve--which is the law, our law" (OT 69). But in Aristotle's view tragic actions need not end "tragically" for them to teach us the law of our nature, nor must they appear in formal dramas; this is no doubt why Whalley proposes that "what Aristotle has to say about tragedy is absolute, that his account is not limited by the number of examples that he happened to have at hand" (OT 74). Aristotle's observations on plot, recognition, catharsis, mistake, intention and form (for example) can apply to a dramatic monologue such as "Andrea del Sarto" or a novel such as *Great Expectations*, even though Aristotle did not have these literary *kinds* at hand.

The analytical breadth that Whalley and Aristotle look toward, however, should not cause us to forget that what poets make and what readers remake are individual poems, and that no "theory of reading" should dictate in advance what we will find in these unique presences. Theoretical "keys", if we are to use them after all, ought to open the doors of texts, not close them--and fortunately no theoretical key can be so "absolute" as to close good poems anyway. Perhaps the sometimes absolutist tendencies of Whalley's own theorizing--evident for example in the chapter headings of *Poetic Process*: "What is Art?"; "Reality and the Artist"; "Science and Poetic"--made him especially sensitive to the fact that the theorist must be humble enough to allow his theory to be informed by the particular dramas of the particular poems that are before him, and sufficiently full of wonder to know that her own elegant conclusions can never be the final word. Aristotle is not the "infallible dictator" (APA 64/6): at the heart of his investigation in the *Poetics*, he "does not define either 'the poietic art' or *mimesis*; he leaves both open for exploration and for progressive self-definition in the body of the

discussion" (OT 59). The method reminds us of Whalley's own with respect to his exploration into the life of John Hornby, as does the end (not) arrived at. In the Preface to *Death in the Barren Ground*, Whalley reflects on conversations he had with George Douglas, "Hornby's closest, most loyal, and most candid friend":

He showed me the notes and comments he had written in his own copy of *Unflinching*. Many times he discussed the dismaying questions that arise from the last journey: this was a matter of deep personal concern that (I think) never ceased to trouble him. I do not pretend to bring that discussion to a conclusion. (12)

Aristotle's approach to mimesis and Whalley's approach to John Hornby is my own with respect to the nature of the mimetic drama and the applicability of that drama to poetry in its many forms. My principal ambition here has been to test Whalley's view of mimesis against a variety of texts with a view toward getting to know poems better. I do not pretend to have brought the discussion to a conclusion, nor can I imagine why I would want to do so.

Whalley proposes that the readers who will find poems open to them are those who read quietly and humbly--those who know that poems are not to be assailed, but gently courted. The innocence of intent that such courting involves is at once passive and active: it is itself an image of *pathos-as-praxis*, the suffering of a poem (to come unto us) that is an intensely and intentionally vital act on our parts. Whalley's account in *Death in the Barren Ground* of Hornby's response to the Canadian North registers well in a different context the terms on which he thought readers should approach poems.

Hornby accused Douglas of being "a man of expeditions"; Douglas, he said--not altogether fairly, because Douglas was a

man strong-minded and of unorthodox opinion--was interested only in projects that were clearly definable and easy to accomplish because they were like invasions in which, especially in a short campaign, the initiative always lay with the attacker. Hornby had developed strong feelings for the integrity of the country: you had to live and grow with the country; you must not try to dominate the country or you would become destructive in ways that would probably be self-destructive in the end; the exploratory and commercial instinct could not fail to be destructive. (34-35)

The life at stake in the bond between poetry and life is a shared one, at once ours and the poem's, and if with an exploratory and commercial instinct we destroy the poem, we destroy a little of ourselves too, for poems can enlarge us--can bring us closer to our fulfilment. But perhaps the mimetic bond implicates life even more broadly than that. John Hornby, Whalley records, lived "a life that had not much implicated the lives of others" (BG 29), a fact that perhaps blinded Hornby to the danger Edgar Christian and Harold Adlard were assuming by casting their lot in with his. But Hornby learned in the end the terrible--and wonderful--lesson of Donne's meditation: his life implicated Christian and Adlard, after all, for he was *not* an island. Whose lives might be implicated when we engage in the *praxis* of reading? The bond between poetry and life is elastic in ways we cannot foresee. "In this view, mimesis is simply the continuous dynamic relation between a work of art and whatever stands over against it in the actual moral universe, or could conceivably stand over against it" (OT 73). Destructiveness in such a context is at once personal and political. It is also tragic.

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