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The climacteric of the comic novelist: a study of the novels of Robertson Davies.

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THE CLIMACTERIC OF THE COMIC NOVELIST: A STUDY OF THE NOVELS OF

ROBERTSON DAVIES

by

Allan Edward Wallbridge

A Thesis

submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of English
in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts
The University of Windsor

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ABSTRACT

Robertson Davies' theory of humour and of the humorist's climacteric proposes that the successful comic novelist reaches and passes a climacteric in middle life in which the humour of his earlier work undergoes a transformation, evident in changes in the writer's style and the themes which concern him. While maintaining its essentially humorous aspect, the comedy is balanced in his later, more emotionally mature work, by a sense of tragedy, a wider vision and a recognition of the darker side of life. The humorist who is unable to achieve this growth and attempts to exploit his gift to retain his reputation, ends up as a writer of mechanical humour. But the comic novelist who attains and passes his climacteric is aware of that essential humanity which is the essence of his art, and which distinguishes his work from that of the clever but superficial humorist.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the novels of Robertson Davies in the light of his theory of the humorist's climacteric, which becomes apparent in the transformation in theme and characterization in his later novels. The Marchbanks books provide an outlet for Davies' satirical wit, in which he models his persona on
great essayists of the past and experiments with situations and characterization while eschewing the conventional form of the novel. The Marchbanks persona is transposed into the omniscient narrator of the early Salterton novels, in which comic vignettes and caricatures predominate; yet there is little attempt by the author to probe beneath the surface of his topic. The final novel of the Salterton trilogy is transitional; while it adheres to the third person narrative form, it also offers the sense of an inner vision and depth of characterization in the central consciousness of its chief protagonist. In the Deptford trilogy, with its insight and subjective viewpoint combined with the first person narrative technique the comic satire of the earlier work is balanced by a recognition of the Shadow or darker side of the personality, and the need for the integration of the spiritual self with the outer persona in order to achieve self-knowledge. It is this theme which finds its source in Jungian depth psychology, and specifically in Jung's theory of individuation, which shapes Davies' later novels, and is the basis for his theory of the humorist's climacteric. Thus in his later work, Davies transcends the egoistic stance of his earlier novels, particularly apparent in his problem with characterization, in recognizing the spiritual side of the personality and the need for feeling and emotion as well as egoism in order to achieve self-knowledge.
DEDICATION

For Ann.
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INTRODUCTION

As a comic writer, Robertson Davies has achieved a position of the first rank in Canadian letters, enhanced in recent years by international recognition following the publication of his later novels. A deft and clever essayist in his Marchbanks works, Davies demonstrates a ready and often cutting wit that is heir to the eighteenth century tradition of Dr. Johnson, Addison and Steele, who attacked the follies of their time. In the Salterton novels, Davies is a potent caricaturist who mocks the foibles and manners of Canadian society, and the anti-cultural attitudes deriving from our Calvinist origins, which stress materialistic goals and utilitarian ideals. In his Deptford novels, however, Davies' satirical humour is balanced by a turning inward, a look at our spiritual selves and how the unconscious side of the personality can sometimes surface and create chaos in our lives. Novels like Fifth Business and The Manticore show a remarkable insight and maturity, a wider vision and a depth of characterization not found in his earlier works.

Anticipating this transformation in Davies' writing, certain essays written by him during the sixties in A Voice from the Attic and elsewhere, expound his theory of humour and of the humorist's climacteric. In The Hue and Cry After a Good Laugh, Davies observes that, for those who have achieved some reputation as humorists,
at some point in middle age the brilliant and often nervous quality which distinguished the humour of their early work gives place to a humour of a different nature; the source of the writer's humour seems to have changed, and what he draws from this new well is of a fuller flavour. If this change does not take place, the humorist may lose his power and his faith in himself....But less conscious craftsmen who are greater artists seem, if they are lucky, to approach and pass a climactic in middle life which leaves them changed for the better, though it rarely leaves them humorists pure and simple. After this crisis, it is evident that humour is an important aspect of their work, but not the whole of it.  

While unable to explain the reasons for this change, Davies perceives a difference in the writer's attitude, "an increased emotional quality", reflected in style and theme, a sort of "distillation of experience," characteristic of the later, more mature work of many great comic novelists: Twain, Dickens, Waugh, Cary, Huxley, among others. Although the writer does not abandon humour, he balances it against another quality which has arisen in him and demands expression, and that quality is a sense of tragedy....a sense of the evanescence and dream-like quality of life, and a sense of the imminence of death.  

The climactic of the comic writer suggests a coming to terms with the dark side of human nature, the recognition that evil is a part of the human personality, that good is often an aspect of evil, and inversely, evil may be a result of good, and that the two often run into one another. Humour may stem from dark feelings of anger or grief, and "is not something which a man possesses, but...which possesses him".  

It is daemonic in character, and, like a daemon, it is most respected by those who best know it. Like a daemon, also, it resents all attempts to put it in chains, and the

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2 Ibid., p. 226.
3 Ibid., p. 227.
5 Ibid., pp. 201-20.
biographies of many humorists give evidence of the vengeance which the daemon wreaks upon those who set it to drudgery.\textsuperscript{6}

Being daemonic, humour is a "dangerous profession"\textsuperscript{7} because of its uncontrollable nature; like poetry, it is a gift, and its inspiration cannot be forced. The humorist who attempts to channel his sense of humour in this way ends up writing formula pieces.

This is the sort of trap into which many newspaper columnists fall in attempting to gain as wide a readership as possible. Their original sense of humour may lapse into contrived merriment, as they desperately struggle to maintain a following by relying on silly domestic adventures and bumbling ineptitude, adopting the role of "Columnist as Fool".\textsuperscript{8}

But unless he can change to something else, he will find that what seemed an inexhaustible freedom has become a slavery, for this masochistic self-mockery is extremely difficult to maintain at a high level, and in time only those who like mechanical fun will read him.\textsuperscript{9}

Certainly, the Marchbanks books display some tendencies toward those faults or weaknesses typical of this form: repetition of the kind of mundane humour found in Marchbanks' continual battle with his furnace, the weather, dogs, and his own inertia, even though these subjects provide amusing material within their own narrow limits. It is clear, however, as Davies has indicated, that this particular form of humour is difficult to sustain at a high level, and ultimately bears the stamp of forced humour. It is surely significant that Davies, whose Marchbanks books began as newspaper pieces, has since

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 202.
\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., p. 221.
\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., p. 219.
\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., pp. 218-19.
turned to other forms of writing. In referring to the "pitfall of humorous writing," Davies cites the example of Stephen Leacock as a humorist who failed to become a great novelist. In Leacock, Davies detects a comic writer "in the greatest tradition... of true and deep humour, the full and joyous recognition of the Comic Spirit at work in Life," The essence of Leacock's humour lies, Davies believes, not in his funny pieces, which an avid public read year after year, but in his "unusual maturity of outlook... in the uncompromisingly adult quality of his mind, and the penetration of his glance" which under different circumstances might have made him a great novelist in the tradition of Mark Twain or Dickens.

Leacock's inability to reach his true potential lay, Davies maintains, in his need for popularity and financial reward, and significantly in Leacock's belief that humour should always be gentle and kindly. Yet many of Leacock's caricatures in Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town are far from innocuous, and Leacock must have been aware of the pain which often underlies humour. In Leacock, Edmund Wilson notes the sense of "a typically Canadian violence beneath the surface of the humour"; it is this aspect of Leacock's humour, an awareness

10 Ibid., p. 217.
11 Ibid., p. 222.
"of great self-control, and of having much that needs to be controlled" which Davies finds distinctive in the Canadian soul. It is also characteristic of Canadians to deny the existence of this soul; in response, this denial may express itself in uncharacteristic violence. Leacock's surprise over the reaction of the Little Town to Sunshine Sketches apparently caused him to retreat from the use of humour as a weapon, leaving him only with a wish to be inoffensive in his writing.

Specifically referring to Leacock, Davies comments:

Humour is not always innocent or kindly; it is a comment on life from a special point of view, and there will certainly be times when it will give sharp offence and be deeply resented - often to the astonishment of the humorist. But Leacock wanted, above all things, to be free from the charge of having wounded anyone.\(^\text{15}\)

Yet in Sunshine Sketches, Davies finds the basic ingredients of the comic novel:

The godlike view, the assumption of the writer of a power to judge his characters, certainly leads toward the composition of novels of a particular kind. If he had persisted, Leacock might have written another kind of novel - the kind in which characters are described from the inside, instead of being examined from the outside.\(^\text{16}\)

Being also somewhat vain about his achievements, Leacock felt that it was he who was in control of his art, whereas the opposite is true: "In truth, only technique can be mastered; art masters those who serve it, in whatever form".\(^\text{17}\)

Humour, being daemonic and uncontrollable, is a part of our nature which is rooted in the subconscious. For Freud,

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\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 264.

\(^{15}\) Masks of Fiction, p. 109.


\(^{17}\) Davies, A Voice from the Attic, pp. 228-29.
humour is a way of giving expression to things which would be intolerable if they were said directly... the humorist's object is to strip away, momentarily, the heavy 'intellectual and moral trappings of adult life,' including so many things that we regard as virtues, and to set us free again in that happy condition which we enjoyed in the morning of life, when everything came to us freshly.  

As archetypal images link the unconscious world of the psyche to the conscious self, the later work of the humorist reflects the spiritual sources from which he derives his inspiration, evidenced by changes in theme and style, in which humour remains an important part of his work but is no longer the whole of it. The humorist who has passed his climactic recognizes that he is also a creative artist who can not only make people laugh, but also make them feel, and even make them cry, honestly and convincingly. In the work of the comic writer, while there is an "inevitable artificiality... more obvious than in novels of romantic or tragic theme", it should not be at the sacrifice of truth, of "our common humanity". The comic spirit which underlies what may basically be a serious theme is an indication of the humorist's growth and virtuosity and the essentially humane quality of his work, a quality which Davies observes in the novels of Peter DeVries:

It is no accident that the best novels of....Peter DeVries are related in the first person....a man who is writing in the first person even of a creature of his own invention has a potent force at work upon him which prevents his work from escaping into the realm of the inhumanly clever. Mr. DeVries produces excellent comic effects by his revelation of his central character, his narrator, in

18 Ibid., p. 228.
19 Ibid., p. 240.
20 Ibid., p. 241.
several aspects — as he sees himself, as he hopes the
world sees him, as he discovers to his dismay, that the
world actually does see him. His narrator...is a man of
lively intelligence, scornful of his achievements, doubt-
ful of his effectuality with women, and given to fantasy;
the complexity of this invention serves the author well,
for he is able to present both his principal character
and his story on several levels...[the novels] are amply
sustained by that essential humanity which alone seems
to be able to keep such novels from falling apart, and
from being remembered in terms of incidents and phrases,
rather than as unities.21

It is the first person narrative technique in the Deptford
novels which marks a change from Davies' earlier novels, and which
provides an intensity of vision, a sense of emotional identification
with the protagonists, and a confessional approach which his previous
novels lack. Similarly, Davies' narrators present a more subjective
as well as a more condensed view of character, along with absorption
of the viewpoint of others into the narrator's own speech. While
the narrator is also a confidante, there is less sense of an omniscient
author so apparent in the earlier novels. In the later novels of
Peter DeVries, as in Davies' later works, the narrator's mirror image
of himself may be a disturbing one to contemplate, and these novels
are marked by a darker vision in which the tragic becomes an aspect
of the comic. DeVries' protagonists, Don Wanderhope in The Blood of
Lamb, and Tillie Seltzer in The Cat's Pajamas, and Witch's Milk dis-
cover

the ability of grief to accommodate gaiety or at least
to alternate with it, a contradiction that distinguishes
it from depression.22

21 Ibid., pp. 241-42.
22 Peter DeVries, The Cat's Pajamas, and Witch's Milk (Boston, 1968),
pp. 268-69.
In *The Blood of the Lamb* the narrator's comic vision arises out of dark feelings of bitterness and rage at the meaningless tragedies which engulf him. The emotion aroused in Don by the death of his daughter, reflecting a similar tragedy in the author's own life, reaches an intensely personal level.

Like Don, Pete Seltzer and Hank Tattersall in *The Cat's Pajamas*, and Witch's Milk, and McGland in *Reuben, Reuben*, find that the only way of coping with a life that has become "a tale told by an idiot" is to treat it as a Comedy of the Absurd. All find, however, like McGland (whose prowess as a lover hangs by a thread in his three remaining good teeth, and who commits suicide when one good tooth is extracted by the cuckolded dentist), and Tattersall (whose head is caught in a dog door, his fate sealed in the typical DeVries pun, "Well, your end is in sight, Tattersall"), that the absurd reverses itself to the point where a darker vision intrudes. It is this aspect of DeVries's novels, referred to by Davies as their "essential humanity", which enables one to read them on several levels, as works of humour and as serious commentaries on modern life in which man finds his own image reflected, an image which can sometimes be both funny and dismaying, akin to the comic writer's self-realization in middle life.

In *Reuben, Reuben*, the first person narration includes the separate viewpoints of three individuals, and the tragi-comic story of McGland, a "Falstaff prowling among the winding towers of Elsinore".

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23 Ibid., p. 185.


(given a heightened reality by his amazing resemblance to Dylan Thomas), achieves a multi-levelled insight and objectivity free from sentiment, always retaining its essentially humorous theme. Beneath the absurdities of DeVries' novels, however, there is deep concern about the meaning of life and death, and man's loss of faith in the modern world. For DeVries, "tragedy and comedy have a common root: desperation",\(^{26}\) and in the key episode which links *The Cat's Pajamas* with *Witch's Milk*, Tillie who has suffered her most tragic experiences in the loss of her child and the crisis in her marriage with Pete, meets Hank Tattersall at the lowest ebb of his personal tide, and remarks wryly:

> So I mean it's tough on you romantics. There's always somebody who's gone you one better. You will always be topped. Despair is a losing game.\(^{27}\)

Hank is possessed by a daemonic spirit or Doppelgänger, who turns his "real" world into an absurdist, surrealistic fantasy world.

At one point in *The Cat's Pajamas*, Hank observes: "There is a Freudian claim that the work of the wit is done principally by the subconscious",\(^{28}\) and this subconscious comic spirit, this inbred sense of the absurd, allows Hank to enjoy the kind of childhood world when we lived gloriously in the moment, without thought for the past or consideration for the future; when we were, indeed, as the lilies of the field...\(^{29}\)

and enables him to face his tragi-comic end with the same sense of the absurd.

\(^{26}\) DeVries, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 173.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., p. 38.

\(^{29}\) Davies, *A Voice from the Attic*, p. 228.
It is this comic spirit which Davies discovers in successful comic novelists like Peter DeVries, a spirit which is balanced in middle life by a sense of tragedy which adds a richer texture and an emotional quality not found in their earlier works.

Having delved extensively into the works of both Freud and Jung, Davies reveals in an interview with Donald Cameron and in other sources, his greater indebtedness to Jung, owing in part to his increasing dissatisfaction with what he terms Freud's reductive train of thought, which is very welcome to the young mind, but becomes, I find, less welcome to the older mind.30

On the other hand, Jung's intuitive approach is more suited to the artist's view of life, shedding more light on the creative and aesthetic experience. Davies also finds that the Jungian theory of opposites as being intrinsic to each other is closer to the Canadian experience. As a prototype of the complex Canadian personality, Davies cites Mackenzie King, outwardly a bland and dull public figure but with an intensely spiritual inner life. Beneath the placid surface of the Canadian personality may lie a seething mass of suppressed emotions; it is this "bizarre and passionate life of the Canadian people"31 which Davies explores in Fifth Business, in which he contrasts "the appearance and the reality, the grey school-master and the man who was burning like an oil gusher inside".32 This union of opposites in the


31 Ibid., p. 38.

32 Ibid., p. 38.
Canadian personality is, Davies feels, very Jungian, in its orientation; contrariwise, the Freudians tend to view life in terms of the polarization of opposites.

Unlike Freud, Jung finds in the artist the qualities of the visionary, whose imaginative powers spring from some deeper source in the psyche, the collective unconscious, origin of the "primordial experience" which "requires mythological imagery to give it form". 33

For Jung,

Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him its instrument. The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is..."collective man" - one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind. 34

The unconscious self, from which these primordial images rise, is one side of our nature, and in his theory of individuation Jung stresses the necessity for individual growth in the integration of both the conscious and unconscious self to achieve completeness. This theory of individuation shapes Davies' recent novels, and is the source for his theory of the humorist's climacteric.

In addition to the outer Persona or mask which the individual displays to the world, there is the Shadow side, that part of the unconscious Self which contains the repressed, hidden part of the personality, but which may possess both good and evil aspects, and whose integration with the conscious Self is a necessary element in the

34 Ibid., p. 195.
individuation process: 'The Unconscious consists of the personal unconscious (beneath the conscious level, but containing thoughts which were at one time part of the conscious self), and the collective unconscious, which has its roots in man's primitive past, sometimes emerging in the form of archetypal images in dreams, and finding expression through the aesthetic imagination in folk tales, legends, works of art, and religious experience.

Like the physical side of our beings, the psyche has its own form of energy, which is regulated by its opposites or polarities. For instance, the conscious self and the Shadow or unconscious self are opposites and unless the conscious self can come to terms with its Shadow side, the hidden self will erupt into the conscious through the Persona, creating psychic disturbance. As Dunstan Ramsay discovers in *Fifth Business*, faith is a psychological reality, and where our faith in the spiritual side of life has been suppressed, "it invaded and raised bloody hell with things seen". 35

Similarly, the Anima (for the male), and the Animus (for the female) are opposites of the ego, arising from the need for completion in the opposite sex. The whole individual will find a satisfying Anima or Animus in one person. As the individual's spiritual guide, the Anima's nature usually arises out of early childhood influences and the child's relationship to his mother. Consequently, the Anima appears in many guises, and may be a positive or a negative influence. Like the inner Self or Being, which expresses itself symbolically in

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spherical form or in configurations of four, representing the totality
of the Self, there are four stages of the Anima, in whom the possibility
of achieving selfhood lies:

The first stage is best symbolized by the figure of Eve,
which represents purely instinctual and biological
relations. The second can be seen in Faust's Helen;
She personifies a romantic and aesthetic level that is,
however, still characterized by sexual elements. The
third is represented, for instance, by the Virgin Mary —
a figure who raises love (eros) to the heights of spiritual
devotion. The fourth type is symbolized by Sapientia,
wisdom transcending even the most holy and the most pure.36

As an archetypal figure, representing a series of patterns or
motifs emerging from man's primitive past, the Anima manifests herself
differently to each individual, while remaining true to an age-old
pattern of symbolic or mythological images recurring in fantasies and
dreams. Recognition of the Anima has the inherent danger for the
individual that he may identify himself too closely with her, so that
she becomes an object on whom he can project his fantasies rather than
a source of inner power. The individual must be able to derive from
these archetypal images only that which belongs to himself in order to
reach the ultimate goal, the psychic core or nucleus, the Self. These
archetypal symbols play an important role in the process of individ-
uation, representing natural attempts to reconcile opposites in the
psyche. They personify concepts which we often cannot fully understand,
particularly as they appear disguised by the unconscious in our dreams.
There is an analogy in these symbols expressed in dreams and those
myths and ceremonies from the primitive past:

They form a bridge between the ways in which we consciously express our thoughts and a more primitive, more colourful and pictorial form of expression. It is this form, as well, that appeals directly to feeling and emotion. These "historical" associations are the link between the rational world of consciousness and the world of instinct.\(^{37}\)

The various levels of consciousness in the human psyche correspond with the "stages of life" in the Jungian theory of individuation, and these stages have the most immediate bearing on Davies' theory of the humorist’s climacteric. The Jungian periods of individual development are: the early years to age thirty-five or forty, and the later years of maturity. For Jung, the stages of life are analogous to the daily course of the sun, which figuratively speaking possesses human feelings and aspirations, rising to its greatest height in the early part of the day,

and looks upon the wide, bright world which lies before it in an expanse that steadily widens the higher it climbs in the firmament. In this extension of its field of action caused by its own rising, the sun will discover its significance; it will see the attainment of the greatest possible height as its goal. In this conviction the sun pursues its course to the unforeseen zenith - unforeseen because its career is unique and individual. At the stroke of noon the descent begins. And the descent means the reversal of all the ideals and values that were cherished in the morning.\(^{38}\)

In the early years, man's goals are personal and social: the extrinsic goals which include a career and possibly marriage. In later life, having satisfied these aspirations in one form or another, the individual seeks inner wisdom, encompassing a broader vision of life which these earlier goals no longer fulfill, but which may be disturbing


to contemplate. Physically, he is in decline, and he knows that eventually he will die; suddenly religion or faith may become very important to him. While in his earlier years the individual's goals are of necessity a preparation for life, so in his later years he finds that he must revise these goals if he is to achieve self-knowledge, which encompasses the acceptance of death as a goal to be lived towards. If the individual has the courage to change, he will achieve an intellectual and spiritual growth which will provide much satisfaction in his own life, and to others. This crisis in middle life is faced by Dunstan Ramsay in *Fifth Business*, as a man who must battle his own personal devil in order to come to terms with his inner self. This acceptance of the Self, or individuation, can only be accomplished by getting to know the darker or Shadow side of the psyche, in recognizing and integrating the psychic forces inherited from the primitive past, forces which make themselves manifest in the form of archetypal images.

This individuation process evident in the changing goals and attitudes in middle life has its counterpart in the transformation which marks the later work of the humorist. As Davies has remarked in his essays,

The sense of humour, as opposed to the mere ability to see the point of a formal joke and laugh at it, cannot be dissociated from the rest of a man's personality ... a man's sense of humour is as clearly indicative of what he is as his grief, or his capacity to love. A great sense of humour can only exist in company with other elements of greatness.  

As Samuel Marchbanks, Davies reiterates this observation on humour and humorists in a typically cryptic Marchbanksian fashion:

I never decided to be a humorist; if I am one, I was born one; but I have never really given the matter much thought.... Men who bother their heads too much about being something particular – a Humorist, or a Philosopher, or a Social Being, or a Scientist, or a Humanist, or whatever – quickly cease to be men and become animated attitudes.  

There is, however, at the conclusion of this passage, a comment which anticipates Davies' own widening perception in his growth as a comic novelist:

Don't you know what humour is?... I don't know what it is, though I suspect that it is an attribute of everything and the substance of nothing, so if I had to define a sense of humour I would say it lay in the perception of shadows.

Davies' literary persona, Samuel Marchbanks, originated in a weekly newspaper column during the nineteen forties. Essentially a fictional character, he mirrors in Davies that daemonic spirit at work which provides an outlet for some of his stronger feelings, including his pungent observations on Canadian manners and customs: weather, education, politics, people and dogs do not escape his crusty observations.

While Marchbanks provides a vehicle for Davies' satirical wit, the series also offers embryo characters and situations upon which many of his later works are constructed. The characters, like Osceola Thunderbelly, Chief of the Crokinole, tend to be exaggerated and eccentric, and situations, exemplified in Marchbanks' unending battle with the mechanical monster which is his furnace, border on

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the surrealistic. Davies' humour in the Marchbanks books is exaggerated and sometimes venomous, and in an interview with Donald Cameron, he discusses humour as a reaction to life's annoyances and as a way of distancing things:

It's defensive and it's diverting. You know, you suddenly send the dogs off in that direction, instead of straight ahead...the narrow outlook, and limited sympathies, and want of charity, and general two-bit character of what is going on under your very eyes, which drives you to the point of great extravagance. It comes out in terms of savage, bitter humour, just because you don't quite want to go to savage denunciation, but you want to blast them like an Old Testament prophet. Instead you just swat them around with the jester's bladder. But the impulse is the same. 42

Davies has modelled his larger-than-life persona on great essayists of the past including Dr. Johnson and Swift, a recognition of that eccentric side of his personality in which he indulges his pet peeves.

In the Marchbanks books and the first two Salterton novels, Tempest-Tost and Leaven of Malice, in which the omniscient narrator adopts the dramatic Marchbanks role, commenting on situations and characters with satiric wit, when Davies' characters express their thoughts, they tend to reflect his own ideas and opinions. In Leaven of Malice, while the narrator fades into the background, Davies' opinions are diffused through the voices of several characters. Although some sympathy is aroused over the plight of certain characters in these novels, particularly the unhappiness of Pearl Vambrace and Solly Bridgetower who are both browbeaten by domineering parents, the

42 Cameron, Conversations with Canadian Novelists, p. 43.
characters themselves lack depth, being little more than caricatures. Davies accounts for Hector Mackilwraith's repressed personality by his rigid Presbyterian upbringing and loveless family life, but he is basically a comic figure, and there is as much a tone of mockery as of compassion in Davies' portrait of Hector. Although Tempest-Tost and Leaven of Malice display Davies' fine comic spirit at work within rather narrow limits, they lack the central consciousness and broadened vision of his later novels.

Davies' later novels show his growth as a comic novelist, corresponding to his theory of the humorist's climacteric. His third novel, A Mixture of Frailties, marks the transition point in Davies' work. It is the first of his novels to project a central consciousness in Monica Gall, a young Canadian woman who wins a scholarship to study singing in England, and moves from a narrow provincial background to the wider world of the artist. It is through the opposing influences of Giles Revelstoke, the gifted, eccentric composer, and of Sir Benedict Domdaniel, also gifted but a more sobering and levelling influence, that Monica gains entry into this greater world. Giles Revelstoke, who offers her the first direct experience of this new life, also symbolizes a darker presence in the novel, whose insight and self-knowledge driven by a daemonic spirit ultimately lead to his suicide.

While A Mixture of Frailties is less assured in its style and approach, it is also less heavy-handed than the earlier Salterton novels, and offers the sense of increased insight and perception which
fulfills itself in his later novels. At one point in *A Mixture of Frailties*, Sir Benedict remarks: "The metamorphosis of physical man into spiritual man; a great theme", a reference to *The Golden Asse*, Giles' superb adaptation of the legendary tale dealing with the ambiguity of man's aspirations and his redemption through self-knowledge, and which relates closely to the Jungian theory of individuation.

This theme is central to the story of Dunstan Ramsay in *Fifth Business*: his interest in sainthood, in the relation of history and myth, his spiritual rebirth after being seriously wounded on the battlefield, and in the archetypal figures who guide him toward self-knowledge. Like Dunstan, David Staunton in *The Manticore* has reached a point in life where he can no longer deny the unconscious or Shadow side of his psyche, which he also has suppressed. As Dunstan has become an authority in hagiography, David has reached the top in his field of criminal law. Like Dunstan, who is in a sense reborn after battling with his personal devil, David's frightening experience in a Swiss cave also leads to a sort of rebirth when he emerges into the sunlight, and it is the enigmatic Liesl who is a kind of devil-figure in both cases, bringing about the events which lead to self-knowledge. Both novels are strongly influenced by Jung's depth psychology, particularly *The Manticore*, in which David undergoes Jungian analysis, and in which many of the references are specifically Jungian. Davies ties together these thematic threads in the concluding novel of the

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Deptford trilogy, *World of Wonders*. This trilogy of novels might suggest the possible directions in his continuing development as a novelist, especially in the light of Davies' comments on Peter DeVries.

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44 While *World of Wonders*, discussed in the Conclusion, elaborates on some of the themes in the earlier Deptford novels, it was published after the basic outline of this thesis had been formulated.
CHAPTER I

THE MARCHBANKS BOOKS, TEMPEST-TOST, AND LEAVEN OF MALICE

Robertson Davies' growth as a novelist illustrates the dichotomy in his own character, represented by the Jungian opposites in the psyche: the Conscious self, which recognizes only those surface, external realities, and the Unconscious or Shadow self, which is the hidden, repressed but complementary side of the totality of the Self. It is this search for a union of the opposites which Davies perceives as a necessary aspect of creativity, and which he finds lacking in much of modern literature:

The failure of literature to offer anything upon which we can fasten, finding in it a reflection of what is deepest in our time, is partly owing to the nature of literature itself; it has become a form of entertainment during a period when the plastic arts have moved out of that category... The popular nature of literature has led it to reflect the chaos of our time - the chaos which lies beneath the surface - but in a muddied fashion, because the writer does not want his reader to suspect what he himself only half knows.\(^1\)

The search for order in the midst of chaos is the goal of all serious literature, culminating in the poetic insight which is a quality of the artistic mind. Davies' search for his own creative norm, encompassing a romantic, idealized past and a chaotic present,

\(^1\)Davies, "Spelunking on Parnassus", in A Voice from the Attic, p. 349.
begins with the Marchbanks books, written mainly during his career as a journalist in the forties, in which experimentation in theme and characterization are evident.

As the first stage in Davies' individuation process as a comic writer, Samuel Marchbanks embodies the egocentric stage. Marchbanks' egoism is a response on Davies' part to those traits which allow him free play to express his ideas and opinions without the need for novelistic insight. The Marchbanks persona, in effect, reflects the extreme in Davies' own personality, summed up in the self-description, "my curmudgeonly, reclusive, grudge-bearing, suspicious, happy self".\(^2\) Marchbanks most closely resembles eighteenth century essayists like Dr. Johnson, Addison and Steele; other voices, including those of Leacock and Swift, can also be discerned. In the manner of Addison and Steele in *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, Davies' fictional personality enables him to vent his spleen under a pseudonym. Like the last-named, he is also concerned with the manners, morals and culture (or lack of it) of the community in which he resides, with forays into the themes of man versus machine and man versus nature. The Marchbanks persona also allows Davies, like Dr. Johnson, to demonstrate his immense lore, and his ill-concealed contempt for those who do not measure up to his own demanding standards. Mixed with this somewhat haughty attitude is a raffishness and vitality, a contempt for convention, which is characteristic of Marchbanks' role as an unrepentant critic of Canadian life. He is essentially a dramatic

creation, a talkative, acerbic wit who could easily be assimilated to the stage, as the Leacock and Twain personae have been.

Like Jung's modern man, Marchbanks is "rational" man, whose ancient gods and demons now are called by different names, but are nevertheless there to trap the unwary. It is essentially with practical and social concerns that he is occupied, reflected in a satirical and anti-romantic approach, giving him an opportunity to poke irreverent fun at various aspects of Canadian life: climate, education, puritanism, the arts, children, dogs, and the Canadian sense of humor:

"Not original, but Faithful to Death" is our motto in matters of humour. We like a joke to go off in our faces, like an exploding cigar, and then we can laugh heartily and get back to glum platitudes again. This characteristic is particularly noticeable in Parliament.3

The Marchbanks books are reactions to that Canadian sense of values typified in the national attitude toward humour. The Marchbanks persona, while it offers a dramatic outlet for Davies' views on the unimaginative world he observes around him, finds expression through the wit and taste of a controlled, aware and disciplined observer, not yielding to the simpler role of "funny man," which eventually becomes a trap and stifles creativity.

Marchbanks tends to take an outsider's view of society, to be an observer rather than a participant; he is the iconoclast, the self-centred recluse who enjoys food and drink but hates work, physical discomfort and people he considers his inferiors. A practical man with impractical attributes, he takes an anti-romantic view of life.

3Robertson Davies, The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks (Toronto, 1947), p. 133.
while clinging to a romantic view of the past. Marchbanks betrays a note of mockery in parodying the more conventional side of Davies' own character, as well as demolishing the various "sacred cows" of our society, including motherhood, bureaucracy, and the professions. It is this "daemonic" side of the humorist which is evident in Marchbanks:

As the tragic writer rids us of what is petty and ignoble in our nature, so also the humorist rids us of what is cautious, calculating, and priggish—about half of our social conscience, indeed.4

Those concerns which Davies develops in his later work, particularly the dilemma of the creative imagination in Canada, are evident, however, in an amoebic stage:

Most Canadians still think of actors as gay, carefree souls and not quite respectable by our grisly national standard. (In Canada anyone is respectable who does no obvious harm to his fellow man, and who takes care to be very solemn, and disapproving toward those who are not solemn).5

The three Marchbanks books, The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks, The Table Talk of Samuel Marchbanks, and Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack, do not conform to the conventions of the novel, but are loosely arranged around the days of the week and the seasons, the various courses of a full-course meal, or the signs of the zodiac, allowing for treatment of a great many topics and experimentation with themes and characters free of a rigid framework. While a number of characters are introduced, notably in the last-named work, they are exaggerated caricatures of comic types: Osceola Thunderbelly, Chief of the Crokinoles, Marchbanks'

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5 Robertson Davies, The Table Talk of Samuel Marchbanks (Toronto, 1949), p. 118.
neighbour Dick Dandiprat, who is a strain on Marchbanks' fraternal instincts, and the "nervy" student, Mervyn Noseigh, who is writing a thesis on Marchbanks. Marchbanks is essentially a loner, who is seeking his Nirvana in his own way, without the help of those he considers meddling busybodies:

An envelope full of tracts came for me in the mail this morning. Tracts always ask foolish questions. "Are you on the way to Heaven?" said one of these...I wish that whatever God-intoxicated pinhead directs these inquiries to me would cease and desist. In the struggle of the Alone toward the Alone, I do not like to be jostled.

For Marchbanks, character remains an unknown element:

Every man and woman is a mystery, built like those Chinese puzzles which consist of one box inside another, so that ten or twelve boxes have to be opened before the final solution is found.

Marchbanks tends to mock those apparently invulnerable aspects of society which seem to wilt under his discerning eye and rapier wit; in fact, however, like his eccentric caricatures, there is no really incisive depth evident in his comments and diatribes. Consciously developing his role as diarist of the Canadian scene, and modelling his essays on the great diarists of the past, he nevertheless admits his own shortcomings: "I have the less desirable characteristics of a number of great men...but none of their genius."

In addition to turning to the great eighteenth century essayists, Marchbanks is influenced by Leacock's style in carrying the logical to the absurd; compare Leacock's "My Financial Career" with

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6 Ibid., p. 219.


8 Ibid., p. 13.
the following passage:

To the bank this afternoon, and was again amazed by the nonchalance with which the young women behind the bars treat my balance. Without being aware of it, they can drive their cruel pens deep into my heart. That is, they are not aware of it unless I sink upon the floor with a despairing cry and attempt to disembowel myself with my penknife; then they call the assistant manager to throw me out. Banks hate suicides on the premises - looks bad.  

Unlike Davies, however, Leacock never became a great comic novelist, although, as previously noted, the elements are there in Sunshine Sketches. While possessing the gift of a true sense of humour, the pressures of an avid public and love of financial gain, combined with an unwillingness to offend his readers, led Leacock to the proliferation of "funny pieces" at the cost of his own artistic development.

As further specimens of the "pitfall of humorous writing", Davies cites those newspaper columnists whose "funny pieces" become mechanical humour, and who become enslaved to a treadmill in their efforts to maintain an audience:

It may be some time before his defeat is perceptible, for the applause is mounting; but then the fashion changes, and when jokes about onions give way to jokes about flogging kittens, he is a back number.

There is a gap of eighteen years between The Table Talk of Samuel Marchbanks and Samuel Marchbank's Almanack; during this time Davies had ceased writing his Marchbanks newspaper column, and turned to the writing of novels, drama and criticism. Of the Marchbanks books, the Almanack, while chiefly a miscellany, is the most original in format;

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9 Ibid., p. 154.


11 Ibid., p. 218.
in his own words, "the themes of my book are Astrological and Inspirational", reflecting a broader range of experience and a spiritual and artistic growth during the intervening years. Marchbanks' role as "Wizard" is itself an indication of an increased awareness in the inner being, and of an ability to gain new insight from his experience. Davies is able to look on the world with some degree of disillusionment without losing his sense of humour, a man for whom knowledge and experience become a kind of revelation. As a Wizard, a self-styled "man with unusual knowledge of the human heart and the power of insight into the future", Marchbanks anticipates those themes which become dominant in his later works: the mythical elements in our lives and the spiritual side of the personality which we neglect at our peril, and the world of illusion revealed in Magnus Eisengrim's magic show, in Fifth Business and World of Wonders.

Although the Marchbanks essays maintain a high quality, there is some evidence of mechanical humour, suggested by Marchbanks' penchant for flogging dogs as opposed to "flogging kittens":

For a time I used to lie in wait in my kitchen until the dogs gathered for the evening, and then (choosing my time very precisely) I would rush out among them, striking to right and left with a broom and uttering loud and terrifying cries, like a Japanese warrior going into battle.14

It is doubtless no accident that Davies has since turned to other forms of expression in his growth toward the humorist's climacteric, the result in part of the difficulty of sustaining the Marchbanks persona

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12 Robertson Davies, Samuel Marchbanks Almanack (Toronto, 1967), p. XV.
14 Robertson Davies, The Table Talk of Samuel Marchbanks (Toronto, 1949), pp. 195-96.
at a high level of comic satire. As P. W. Martin notes, all too easily "the perceptive connoisseur, the appreciator of quality... becomes the sterile aesthete". And in turning to other forms, Davies had discovered the darker aspect of humour, the "perception of shadows" from which true humour springs, and which becomes an integral part of his later novels.

In *Tempest-Tost*, however, the first of Davies' Salterton novels, the Marchbanks voice is very much in evidence, commenting satirically on events and characters:

> There is a dash of pinchbeck nobility about snobbery. The true snob acknowledges the existence of something greater than himself, and it may, at some time in his life, lead him to commit a selfless act. Nellie would, under circumstances of sufficient excitement, have thrown herself in the path of runaway horses to save the life of Mrs. Caesar Augustus Conquergood, and would have asked no reward — no, not even an invitation to tea — if she survived the ordeal.  

Davies' chief concern is with the bourgeois and puritanical attitudes which stifle the creative imagination in Canada, and in *Tempest-Tost* this is reflected in the town of Salterton and its Little Theatre group. Salterton, out of the cultural mainstream, clings to an Edwardian past in both an historical and cultural sense. It is a place whose social arbiters are also its cultural leaders, where the new and different are not welcomed. Salterton, like Leacock's Mariposa in *Sunshine Sketches*, offers much opportunity for satire. Leacock and Davies assume a god-like view of their communities, and while both works are essentially a series of comic vignettes whose

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protagonists are caricatures, they reveal, sometimes with savage humour, worlds beneath the placid surface which are far from ideal. In both cases, however, no attempt is made to probe these depths. It was Leacock's misfortune to profess the theory that "true humour springs from kindliness and gives no pain",\textsuperscript{18} and out of a desire to please his large public he seemed unwilling to explore the painful aspects of humour. Davies, however, suffered from no such limitation upon his growth as a comic novelist.

All the same, Tempest-Tost, written in the third person with the detached viewpoint of a Marchbanksian narrator, lacks that emotional base which the sense of a shared experience revealed through a first person protagonist would provide. It is the kind of spontaneity in a work that Davies describes as its "essential humanity"\textsuperscript{19} which conveys a sense of truth to what is basically the artificial form of the comic novel.

The novel's comic protagonist, Hector MacKilwraith, is a repressed, bachelor school teacher whose "gods" are "planning and common sense",\textsuperscript{20} but who finds in middle life that these are no longer adequate, that the emotional side of his life can no longer be denied. Hector, who plays Gonzalo in the Salterton Little Theatre's production of The Tempest, becomes infatuated with the play's beautiful young Ariel, Griselda Webster, who is unaware of him. Hector's dramatic role as Gonzalo becomes in a sense his Shadow self, the


\textsuperscript{19}Robertson Davies, "The Hue and Cry After a Good Laugh", in \textit{A Voice from the Attic} (Toronto, 1960), p. 242.

\textsuperscript{20}Robertson Davies, \textit{Tempest-Tost} (Toronto, 1951), p. 87.
romantic character he longs to be, a side of him which he has suppressed:

...his new craving to be a social success was silencing that inner voice which had kept him, for forty years, from making the more obvious kind of fool of himself.21

He seeks in Griselda the Anima-figure who will lead him to self-knowledge. Unfortunately for Hector, Griselda is a negative Anima: instead of providing him with that inner spiritual strength which he so desperately needs, she is merely an object on whom he projects his fantasies. Not only is Griselda incapable of understanding Hector's problem, but Hector himself lacks the maturity and boldness to benefit from his experience and to achieve some kind of spiritual growth:

If only he could tell someone about his love! The urge to talk about it was mastered, but only just, by his fear of making himself foolish, or destroying the magic of his feelings by giving them a voice.22

The tortures which Hector must endure are genuine enough, and although Davies attributes his one-sided personality to an upbringing by a weak and ineffective Presbyterian minister and a mother who tries to dominate him after his father's death, there is little genuine compassion engendered in the portrait of Hector; in Marchbanksian fashion, the omniscient narrator adopts a mocking and sometimes contemptuous tone, yet Hector's dilemma anticipates the author's deeper concern with Dunstan Ramsay's role in Fifth Business:

In his little mental drama he was the principal figure, and Griselda was a supporting player. But as time wore on the emphasis shifted, and Griselda became the chief person of the drama, and he was a minor character, a mere

21Ibid., p. 148.
22Ibid., p. 154.
bit player, aching for a scene with her. For the first
time in his life Hector discovered that it was possible
for someone to be more important to him than himself.23

Following Hector's emotional crisis and attempted suicide, he
is dismissed at the novel's conclusion by the protagonists who serve
as mouthpieces for Davies' ideas: Valentine, the play's director, con-
siders him a "total loss" as an actor, Solly calls him a "vulgarian", and Humphrey analyses his problem as the "male climacteric", but these
diffuse views are for the most part superficial. It is significant,
though, that Humphrey the artist interprets Hector's difficulty as a
spiritual one. Even so, Hector remains essentially a one-sided
individual, a shallow version of Dunstan Ramsay in Fifth Business.
In the latter work, depth of feeling and insight into character are
conveyed by the technique of a central consciousness narrating the
story from the perspective of a single individual, in which the
other "hidden" life is revealed below the surface.

As Hector is an "advocate of Useful Knowledge", Humphrey is
an "advocate of Ornamental Knowledge"; he attempts to explain the
difference to Hector:

You like the mind to be a neat machine, equipped to
work efficiently, if narrowly, and with no extra bits
or useless parts. I like the mind to be a dustbin of
scraps of brilliant fabric, odd gems, worthless but
fascinating curiosities, tinsel, quaint bits of carving,
and a reasonable amount of healthy dirt. Shake the
machine and it goes out of order; shake the dustbin and
it adjusts itself beautifully to its new position.28

23 Ibid., p. 153.
24 Ibid., p. 262.
25 Ibid., p. 279.
26 Ibid., p. 279.
27 Ibid., p. 182.
28 Ibid., p. 182.
In Humphrey Cobbler, the Cathedral organist, the creative imagination is personified, the spokesman for the artistic and spiritual self, manifested by his insight into circumstances which the non-artist fails to grasp. As an artist in Canada, and as a spokesman for the irrational, spiritual side of man, he is an outcast from "polite" society, scorned as a Bohemian, but sure of his creative gifts. Yet however colourful Humphrey is as a character, as a Dickensian creation, he remains largely one-dimensional, reflecting Davies' views on the creative arts without attaining much life of his own. But in *Leaven of Malice* and *A Mixture of Frailties* his role becomes clearer, and he assumes a more dynamic function as a catalyst in the lives of Solly, Pearl and Monica, and as a free spirit unfettered by an oppressive society which attempts to belittle him, but which he exposes to ridicule. Yet he continues to be a paler version of Giles Revelstoke, whose comic genius is seen in its darker aspects in *A Mixture of Frailties*. He also represents Hector's opposite, and the two polarities are later integrated by Davies into a fully-developed personality like Dunstan Ramsay.

In *Tempest-Tost*, Marchbanksian satirical and anti-romantic thoughts frequently intrude on the flow of the novel: as Solly laments his unhappy condition, Davies slyly comments on Mrs. Bridgetower's wealth:

She had told him, he could not reckon how many times, that he was all that she had in the world. This was true only in an emotional sense, of course... It requires a good deal of capital for two people to live as Mrs. Bridgetower and her son lived, when there had been no breadwinner in the family for ten years. Money, it is
often said, does not bring happiness; it must be added, however, that it makes it possible to support unhappiness with exemplary fortitude.\textsuperscript{29}

Like Shaw, Davies also uses monologue to reflect his own ideas, as in Humphrey's comments on critics:

I never pay any attention to criticism. Most critics of anything are frauds. Worse, most of them are bachelors or spinsters. Their opinions of what other people create are firmly hitched to their own sexual cycle.... Every critic carries a twenty-eight-day clock in his gizzard, and what he says about you depends on whether he is ready to strike twelve or one. Rule out the few critics who truly love the arts, and who would be critics even if they weren't paid for it, and the rest are needy riffraff, laughed at by all serious artists.\textsuperscript{30}

The Salterton novels also borrow the dramatic device of tightly-woven comic scenes, in which there is little scope for character development. In \textit{Tempest-Tost} particularly, Davies makes no attempt to depict Hector's emotional crisis or Pearl's feelings of insufficiency, for example, from inside his characters. The Salterton novels are in a sense comedies of manners, and it is most often the "outer" faces of characters which predominate, their stage presence, as in the comedies of Shaw.

In \textit{Leaven of Malice}, however, Davies' development as a comic novelist is notable in his treatment of character and theme. The Marchbanks voice, for instance, no longer serves as an offstage invisible presence, but is dispersed through a number of characters. While the protagonists remain largely mouthpieces for Davies' views, there is evidence of transformation in Gloster Ridley's maturation

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 124.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 248.
process, and in the option of Solly and Pearl to break away from parental authority.

In Gloster Ridley, Davies' journalistic background and his penchant for witty aperçus achieve a focus, distanced, however, by the continued use of the technique of third person narration. Nevertheless, Davies can observe his Marchbanks period in perspective, having developed his novelistic techniques to some extent. Like Tempest-Tost, Leaven of Malice achieves success chiefly in its brilliant comic scenes: Professor Vambrace's ridiculous disguise as a detective ferreting among garbage cans for evidence to avenge the fancied insult to his name and his daughter's reputation, a devastating portrait of the false trails and distorted motives representative of Davies' older generation, and in the comic forced gaiety of the Yarrows' party, with its elements of the absurd. In addition, traces of Marchbanks' daemonic spirit reappear throughout the novel, evident in the exaggerated behaviour of Professor Vambrace, and surfacing in his pungent retort to the facile theories of the young psychologist Norm Yarrow on the Oedipus complex:

Do you recall that in that tragic history, Oedipus met a sphinx? The Sphinx spoke in riddles - very terrible riddles, for those who could not guess them died. But Oedipus guessed the riddle, and the chagrin of the Sphinx was so great that it destroyed itself. I am but a poor shadow of Oedipus, I fear, and you, Mr. Yarrow, but a puny kitten of a Sphinx. But you are, like many another Sphinx of our modern world, and under-educated, brassy young pup, who thinks that gall can take the place of the authority of wisdom, and that a professional lingo can disguise his lack of thought. You aspire to be a Sphinx, without first putting yourself to the labour of acquiring a secret.31

Here again, though, Davies falls short of success in his characterization, creating delightful but insubstantial caricatures in Auntie Puss, Mrs. Bridgetower and her circle, Professor Vambrace, the Old Mess, among others. And one can readily identify George, Edith and the other lower-class characters as stereotypes of the limited imagination and cultural poverty which Davies finds prevalent in Canada. Yet while Gloster Ridley, like Hector Mackilwraith, has reached a transition point in his life, the resemblance between the two protagonists ends there.

As editor of the Salterton Bellman, which has achieved distinction under his guidance, and hopeful of receiving an honorary degree from Waverley University for his achievements in journalism, Gloster feels the need for that sense of security which the degree would provide to compensate for the lack of a higher education, and which would erase that sense of guilt over a disastrous marriage and an automobile accident resulting in his wife's mental breakdown. A false marriage notice announcing the union of Solly Bridgetower and Pearl Vambrace which is printed in the Bellman, threatens Ridley with a lawsuit, and endangers his career and his hopes for a degree.

Unlike Hector, however, Gloster is able to pass his climacteric and to continue growing as an individual, and in Elspeth Fielding he finds the Anima-figure who guides him toward self-knowledge. For Hector, Griselda appears as a Venus-figure but is in reality a bitch-goddess, who calmly ignores him and at the conclusion of
Tempest-Tost, reflecting the author's approach to Hector, can offer him only a sort of condescending pity. Elspeth Fielding, on the other hand, has the wisdom, understanding and gentleness which Gloster seeks, a woman in whom he can confide and whose advice he values. Through her guidance, the original act of malice, the false marriage notice which threatens his future, becomes a leavening agent which allows him to abandon his long-standing ambition of an honorary degree, and to come to terms with his tragic past.

It is in its Biblical meaning, rather than in a legal sense, that malice is defined in the novel, and the novel's title finds its source in The Prayer Book. Appropriately, it is Dean Knapp who explains how malice works:

It works like a leaven; it stirs, and swells, and changes all that surrounds it. If you seek to pin it down in law, it may well elude you.... It may cause the greatest misery and distress in many unexpected quarters. I have even known it to have quite unforeseen good results. But those things which it invades will never be quite the same again.32

This leavening power of malice also transforms the lives of Solly and Pearl, who personify a common theme in Davies' novels, youth's need to rebel against overbearing and possessive elders, analogous to the larger Canadian experience in the search for a cultural identity. In Tempest-Tost, this theme is important largely for its comic value; yet, in a sense Pearl's parents can be seen as the two polarities of her personality: the egocentric Professor Vambrace, and her introverted, religious mother. Pearl's path toward self-identity

32 Ibid., pp. 266-67.
is really a very narrow one, and this becomes clearer in *Leaven of Malice* in which the parent-child theme assumes a darker aspect.

Pearl's oppressive relationship with her heavy-handed father becomes a struggle for her survival as an individual, and again it is the false marriage notice which acts as the leavening agent, transforming her by necessity into an individual in her own right. Ironically, when Professor Vambrace smashes his cane over Solly's car and cuffs his daughter in an effort to assert his authority, he is unwittingly yielding his authority, literally breaking up the old parent-child relationship and bringing the young couple closer together.

Solly, too, is burdened by a domineering mother, and is virtually "tied to her apron strings". At a crucial point in Solly's relations with Pearl (now Veronica), he feels the strong pull of parental authority, and almost reverts to his submissive role as dutiful son:

> How easy, how utterly simple, for Solly to turn back to Mother - to drive away the powerful but still strange vision of Veronica, and to give himself to Mother forever! Should he run down the stairs and into her room now, to kiss her, and tell her that he would be her little boy forever? Thus life and death warred in Solly's bosom in the night and in her bedroom his mother lay, yearning for him, willing him to come to her.

Once this crisis is passed, however, the mother-son relationship is altered, and Solly's development is assured in his forthcoming marriage to Veronica and in his choice of a career as a creative writer rather than as a critic of *AmCan*, a role which involves "the scholarly dis-embowelling of whatever seemed durable in American-Canadian literature".

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It is again Humphrey Cobbler who symbolizes the creative imagination as a positive force in Canadian life, and who influences Solly's decision. His opposite is Bevill Higgin, a sham artist and opportunist, who exploits the cultural pretensions of Salterton's élite, and whose rejection by those who see through him provokes the act of malice in the false notice. As in Tempest-Tost, the novel excels in the depiction of larger-than-life comic types like Snelgrove the lawyer, Auntie Puss, and Dean Knapp, who even so remain caricatures, reflecting Davies' difficulty in penetrating beyond the personae, the outer public faces of his characters:

If Dean Knapp's ideal was the urbane cleric of the nineteenth century, Mr. Snelgrove's was the lawyer-squire of the eighteenth; he was a snob, ready to play the dignified toady to anyone whom he considered his superior, and heavily patronizing to those beneath him; it was with people who might be considered his equals that he was uneasy and contentious.\[36\]

Still, there is some evidence in Leaven of Malice of Davies' growth toward a humorist's climactic, toward a balance between the egocentric satirical humour of his early works and a more introspective level which encompasses a wider comic vision and a sense of the tragic, and which interprets individual development in terms of Jungian depth psychology. The central event in the novel, an act of malice which affects the lives of a number of persons, hints at Davies' later concerns: how peoples' lives intertwine and affect each other in ways not always visibly apparent, and the need for insight and emotion, as well as reason, in coming to terms with life's duplicity, qualities necessary to the creative imagination and which Humphrey finds in

\[36\] Ibid., p. 73.
Galen isn't just a dead doctor, man; he was a great spirit. Probably a lot of his ideas are fantastic now. But he had flashes of insight which we can't discount. That's what makes a man great; his flashes of insight, when he pierces through the nonsense of his time and gets at something that really matters.37

37 Robertson Davies, Tempest-Tost (Toronto, 1951), p. 181.
CHAPTER II

A MIXTURE OF FRAILTIES

A Mixture of Frailties marks a transition point in Robertson Davies' development as a comic novelist. It focusses on the viewpoint of a central consciousness, while retaining the third person narrative technique, and contains thematic threads which he later develops in his essays on humour and the humorist's climactic in A Voice from the Attic. While essentially a social satire like the two previous Salterton novels, A Mixture of Frailties also demonstrates an underlying concern with the inner life of the individual and his spiritual growth, which becomes a dominant theme in the Deptford novels.

The plot revolves around the experiences of Monica Gall, a Canadian girl who wins a scholarship, through the Bridgetower Trust, to study singing in England, and whose transformation is revealed through her expanding consciousness as she moves from a provincial Salterton background to the larger world of the professional artist. The story which leads up to the central theme, begins where Leaven of Malice leaves off, and it is again a malicious act which sets the plot in motion.

Mrs. Bridgetower's Trust Fund enables Monica to study in England until Solly and Veronica can produce a male heir, at which time the
estate reverts to them. The will's stipulation is really a deliberate attempt by the "dead hand" of the older generation to exert control over the young from beyond the grave, and throws its recipients off guard, creating chaos and dissension where none existed before.

The comic satire of the earlier Salterton novels, with their vignettes and caricatures, is sustained in A Mixture of Frailties, serving to place the Salterton locale in its provincial and Edwardian context, and giving Davies the opportunity to deride the tastes and eccentricities of the older generation, personified by Auntie Puss, Snelgrove and others, and to poke fun at Canadian manners and customs:

A superstitious belief persists in Canada that nothing of importance can be done in the summer. The sun, which exacts the uttermost from Nature, seems to have a numbing effect upon the works of man. Thus Matthew Snelgrove while assuring Solly that he was going ahead at full speed in settling Mrs. Bridgetower's estate, went to his office later in the morning, and left it earlier in the afternoon and was quite unavailable at night .... Miss Puss Pottinger, according to her custom, went to Preston Springs for two weeks in June, to drink the waters .... The Dean went to his summer cottage, removed his clerical collar and settled himself to fish by day and read detective stories by night. They were all glad to forget about the Bridgetower Trust.¹

Solly, as leading executor of the Bridgetower Trust, is up against tightfisted, narrow and puritanical attitudes, a continuing theme in Davies' novels. While artistic insight in the form of Humphrey Cobbler's advice is the deciding factor in the choice of Monica, a soprano in the Thirteenth Apostle Tabernacle choir, as beneficiary of the Trust, her referral is hampered too by the resistance of the conservative executors:

¹Robertson Davies, A Mixture of Frailties (Toronto, 1958), p. 36.
Miss Puss Pottinger was inclined to dismiss her application on the first reading. Miss Pottinger knew nothing of Pastor Beavis, and had never set foot in the Thirteenth Apostle Tabernacle, but had a powerful contempt for what she called "back-street religion".... The Very Reverend Jevon Knapp also disapproved of Monica's sponsorship.... He had an eighteenth century distaste for Enthusiasm in religion.

And Matthew Snelgrove typifies the repressive, life-denying forces which pervade Salterton society: "His was the perplexity of the man who understands his situation intellectually but has not comprehended it emotionally." In a later essay, Davies notes this attitude as an element of the Canadian character, which, if recognized, offers hope of a true Canadian individuality expressed through the arts:

It is not by superficial, but by psychological characteristics that modern nations show their individuality, and if Canada can find the way to know itself we shall have a national temperament that the rest of the world will quickly recognize, rooted in feeling—feeling understood, accepted and intelligently directed... to put it in Jungian terms, we must meet and understand and make friends with our national Shadow if we truly want to know ourselves, and be known through our arts.

This duality in the Canadian personality is reflected in Monica Gall, seen initially as a rather ordinary girl, her musical talent influenced adversely by her association with the Thirteeners. Her "sincerity and absolute simplicity" are acknowledged by her future mentor, Sir Benedict DomDaniel, as the legacy of her provincial background, as is her need for training and discipline:

... a real natural talent has been overlaid by a

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2 Ibid., p. 42.
3 Ibid., p. 27.
5 Robertson Davies, A Mixture of Frailties (Toronto, 1958), p. 54.
a stultifying home atmosphere and cultural malnutrition...
... she has lived for twenty years in circumstances...
in which art in any of its forms is not even guessed at.  

On the other hand, as the novel evolves through a first person consciousness, Monica emerges as a young woman of temperament, sensitive and easily aroused to outbursts of emotion. Her complex nature is evident in a tendency to criticize her family, while being outwardly idealistic and defensive about her humble roots; in effect, she wants to "have her cake and eat it".  

When she is chosen as beneficiary of the Bridgetower Trust, the balance in her life between dream and reality is upset: "It had suddenly brought the dream out of the realm of the utterly impossible into the realm of the remotely possible". Thus, early in the novel, through the personal vision which reveals her own feelings and attitudes, Monica attains a dimension denied to earlier Davies' characters.

The author goes on to explore fully the sources of her tastes and temperament. Aunt Ellen and the Thirteeners provide the rudiments of her early musical education; Monica derives her romantic notions about the world of opera from the dated books and ideas of Aunt Ellen, and her concept of music "in the service of the cant" from her association with the Thirteeners. From Aunt Ellen she also learns that "a great artist is always a lovely person" (she later learns

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6 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
7 Ibid., p. 62.
8 Ibid., p. 63.
9 Ibid., p. 55.
10 Ibid., p. 71.
that a good artist is not necessarily a good man, and also finds that pretence or "lies" are stimulating to the artistic mind, while self-delusion is "bad art".\textsuperscript{11}

Monica inherits her artistic temperament from Ma Gall (the word "gall" itself signifying Ma Gall's repressed, creative side which she retains like a bitter fluid, and which finds expression in a self-destructive form); a woman of child-like innocence with an unshaken faith in her own intuition, "whose normal lethargy and low spirits were relieved, from time to time, by brief bouts of extreme gaiety",\textsuperscript{12} her life is a pattern of highs and lows which she does not understand but attributes to "indifferent health".\textsuperscript{13} Unlike Monica, however, Ma Gall is a "spoiled artist", one who had never made anything, who was unaware of the nature or genesis of her own discontent, but who nevertheless possessed the artist's temperament; in her that temperament, misunderstood, denied and gone sour, had become a poison which had turned against the very sources of life itself.\textsuperscript{14}

This comment, while it illuminates Ma Gall's failure as an artist, also recalls Davies' omniscient narrator's voice pronouncing on the merits and demerits of his characters, so evident in Tempest-Tost and Leaven of Malice.

Monica's farewell party, before her departure for England, again serves to define the attitudes and tastes of her particular circle, and to draw her Salterton experience to a finale; it is a celebration preceding her transformation - her "death" and "rebirth" realized metaphorically in the sea voyage and arrival in England, in

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 195.
\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 303.
which

although one half of her mind told her that she was about
to die the other half continued to dwell on hopeful
visions of what she would do when, at last, the ship
reached port .... This was the country which was to
transform her. She was determined that in most things
she would be transformed.15

During the voyage, those romantic dreams instilled in Monica by Aunt
Ellen recur in her feverish mind, darkened somewhat by Humphrey's
realistic appraisal of her voice, and ending in a kind of death as
she becomes violently seasick.

Appropriately, on her arrival in England, she undergoes a
misty "rebirth" in which nothing seems clearly defined, and dampness
prevails. In her rebirth there is the sense of reincarnation,
appearing to her as in a dream, in which the strange and familiar
are mingled:

It was odd; being in London was like being in a dream
or in a life you had lived before, in which things seemed
to have meaning but wouldn't be pinned down.16

And at the end of her first day in England, there is the sense of a
line drawn "between herself and her past".17

In A Mixture of Fraillies, Davies elaborates on the theme of a
"lost Eden" which was an idea germinating in Tempest-Tost: the theme
of a brave new world which bears little relation to the characters
and locale of the earlier novel. Man's fall from Paradise and
ultimate redemption symbolized in the constricted view of the arts in
Canada and the possibility of achieving self-knowledge in a more

15 Ibid., p. 88.
16 Ibid., p. 92.
17 Ibid., p. 92.
idyllic setting (namely in England and Europe), is more successfully conveyed in A Mixture of Fraileys, although in a somewhat abstract manner. Monica is in effect a sort of Canadian Miranda who awaits the development of her creative instincts, something which only the Old World can provide.

Monica's initial impressions of English life and customs offer Davies considerable scope for comic satire on such phenomena as English food and restaurants: "...horrible...dirty little holes-in-the-wall, which depended heavily on sausages and boiled cabbage", and lodgings: "The rooms were small and the distemper on the walls had been marked and scuffed by many tenants", while not overlooking English tabloids: "There appeared to be a extraordinary amount of rape in London". In the McCorkills, Davies renders a satiric portrait of Canadian expatriates who refuse to adjust to their new surroundings; in their opinion

England was a compost-heap of follies, iniquities and ineptitudes. A great country - well, at one time perhaps - but its greatness was passing. How could a country, where fish was offered for sale on marble slabs, perfectly open to dust and dirt, expect to hold a position of supremacy? The dirtiness of the English, in the eyes of Lorne and Meg, was their greatest crime.

Yet Monica's suffering and loneliness are also vividly conveyed, reflecting the darker side of her experience:

The cold ...the raw damp of a London winter, and the peculiar London smell were wearing her down. She began to have spells of crying at night. And then, as the third week wore on, she dared not cry, because letting down the

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18 Ibid., P. 94.
19 Ibid., P. 101.
20 Ibid., P. 98.
21 Ibid., P. 101.
barriers of her courage in any way brought such horrible speculations, and tumbled her into such abysses of loneliness, that she could not sleep but lay in her bed for hours, trembling and staring into the darkness.22

This period in her life, when she is emotionally drained and ill, establishes the mood for her initiation into the world of the creative artist, and at this point Sir Benedict DomDaniel, her chief mentor, becomes a dominant influence in her life.

As Monica's mentor, he symbolizes the Apollonian force in art; the unromantic but gifted musical genius who becomes a stabilizing presence in Monica's career, and also mocks her romantic ideas about "refinement" in the world of music:

It's a dog's life, you know, even if you do well at it .... Every old hand tells every novice that a life in music is a dog's life. It's not really true. If you're a musician that's all there is to it; there's no real life for you apart from it.23

He also introduces Monica to the concept of the creative and life-denying forces in art, called Eros men and Thanatossers respectively:

Well, I'm an Eros man myself, and most people who are any good for anything, in the arts or wherever belong to the Eros party. But there are Thanatossers everywhere ...you can sometimes spot them because they blather about the purpose of art being to lift people up out of the mire, and refine them and make them use lace hankies - to castrate them, in fact. You've obviously been in contact with a lot of these crypto-Thanatossers - probably educated by them, insofar as you have been educated at all.24

Sir Benedict's anti-romantic view of art stems from his belief that the Romantics, instead of making the most of music "to

22 Ibid., P. 102.
23 Ibid., p. 105.
24 Ibid., p. 108.
capture the beauty and delight that people found in life",25 its original purpose, often regard music as a sort of vicarious experience:

Music ceased to be a distilment of life and became, for a lot of people, a substitute for life - a substitute for a sea-voyage, or the ecstasies of sainthood, or being raped by a cannibal king, or even for an hour with a psychoanalyst, or a good movement of the bowels.26

Similarly, there are two kinds of singer: the bardic singer attempts to reveal "the life that lies in great music",27 beyond the merely romantic view, and the sexual singer interprets her art as "a form of sexual allurement",28 a kind of celebration of the self, which Domdaniel endorses as the greater art. As in life itself, it is not so much the number of experiences that matter, but how one uses them:

The streets are crammed with people who have had the most extraordinary experiences - been shipwrecked, chased out of Caliph's harems, blown sky-high by bombs - and it hasn't meant a thing to them, because they couldn't distill it. Art's distillation; experience is wine, and art is the brandy we distill from it.29

In Domdaniel's lengthy monologues on art, traces of Marchbank-sian egoism and anti-romanticism emerge, evidence of Davies' voice superimposed upon the voice of Sir Benedict. There are also inconsistencies between Sir Benedict's theories on art and his own role as artist: his admiration for a gifted Dionysian genius like Giles Revelstoke, and his Apollonian function as a rational and stabilizing force, as an interpretive rather than a creative artist. He professes to be an Eros man, while his anti-romantic, authoritarian stance and his disciplined presence suggest otherwise. One is left with the

26 Ibid., p. 107.
27 Ibid., p. 106.
28 Ibid., p. 106.
29 Ibid., p. 137.
impression that Domdaniel is unsuccessful as a character in his own right, but rather serves as an exponent of Davies' theories on art. His role in the novel is really that of Thanatosser in which he "educates" Monica and elevates her, as opposed to Giles' role as a source of aesthetic inspiration.

Another mentor, Murtagh Molloy, also serves to dispel Monica's romantic misconceptions about art. His singing of Tosti's "Good-Bye" differs vastly from Monica's interpretation which she has learned from Aunt Ellen: "The song invaded and possessed her as it had never done in all the time she had known it". Molloy explains the difference:

> You were dipping your bucket into a shallow well and I was dipping mine into a deep one.... I've had no more experience than most men. But I know what to do with mine, and I know how to get at it. Your song was all careful little effects .... But mine had one powerful effect. It had the proper muh.... The muh's everything.

The views of Domdaniel and Molloy on the creative experience anticipates Davies' theory of the humorist's climacteric, in which the comic novelist comes to terms in middle life with the dark side of his personality, so that the humour in his work is balanced by a sense of the tragic element, in life, a synthesis of his "distillation of experience" and a changed perception evident in his approach toward style and the resulting from this self-knowledge. While these views are diffused throughout A Mixture of Frailties by several protagonists,

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30 Ibid., p. 111.
31 Ibid., p. 112.
in Davies' Deptford novels they become major themes and an integral part of the personal vision of his protagonists.

As a third mouthpiece for Davies' theories on the climacteric of the artist, Giles Revelstoke, the destructive and erratic genius (appropriately making his first appearance in the nude) counterbalances the sober influence of Sir Benedict. As Monica's spiritual mentor, Giles is responsible for the emotional or "feeling" side of her development. His recurring references to Tosti's "Good-Bye" are also significant in relation to Davies' theory of the humorist's climacteric, expressing in musical form those feelings of sadness, of impotence, of increasing age with its images of autumn and of death, and a coming to terms with the darker side of life which marks the climacteric of middle life; as Giles explains,

> It is the price which life exacts for maturity. It is the foreknowledge of Death itself. It is the inspiration of some of the world's great art and it is also at the root of an enormous amount of bad theatre, and Hollywood movies, and the boo-hoo-hoo of popular music. It is one of the principal springs of that delicious and somewhat bogus emotion - Renunciation. ... I have related quite a good poem to a desperate human experience which, in my opinion, is the source from which it springs ... if you think of a poem as a flash of insight, a fragment of truth, a break in the cloud of human nonsense and pretence, my interpretation is valid.33

Like the humorist's climacteric, the growth of the artistic experience as Giles interprets it, has its source in the Jungian theory of individuation, the process of self-knowledge:

> Poetry and music can speak directly to depths of experience in us which we possess without being conscious of them,

in language which we understand only imperfectly. But there must be some of us who understand better than others, and who give the best of ourselves to that understanding. If you are to be one of them, you must be ready to make a painful exploration of yourself.\textsuperscript{34}

Rather than slavishly learning what other minds have grasped, Monica must trust her own insight, and come to terms with her own feelings, and it is Giles who is able to guide her toward this goal. An important part of her artistic training is the broadening of her range of feeling, which must be learned in order to distill its essence. This is achieved in part by conquering her own provincial attitudes and inhibitions. When Sir Benedict suggests an affair with Giles to accomplish this, Monica's outrage is placated when Sir Benedict tells her:

The terrible truth is that feeling really does have to be learned. It comes spontaneously when one is in love, or when somebody important dies; but people like you and me — interpretative artists — have to learn to recapture those feelings, and transform them into something which we can offer to the world in our performances. You know what Heine says... "Out of my great sorrows I make my little songs" .... And what we make out of the feelings life brings us in something a little different, something not quite so shattering but very much polished and perhaps also more poignant, than the feelings themselves.\textsuperscript{35}

In A Voice from the Attic, Davies paraphrases the quote from Heine in terms of the humorist: "Out of my great disenchantments I make my little jokes",\textsuperscript{36} a reference to the darker sources from which humour springs.

Unlike Giles, who "feeds" Monica emotionally and deepens her musical talent, but whose demands as a lover have a destructive side,

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 154.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 214.

\textsuperscript{36} Robertson Davies, "The Hue and Cry After a Good Laugh", in A Voice from the Attic (Toronto, 1960), p. 228.
her American friend, John Scott Ripon, with his bookishness and
Henry Jamesian intellect, offers her a broader perspective which allows
her to sift and arrange her experience into some sort of order. For
Monica, music is the focus which gives meaning to life, allowing her
an outlet for those emotions which would remain pent-up and eventually
ossify the creative process. Similarly, the lives of the Welsh
villagers are shaped and given significance by the landscape around
them, symbolized in the holly hedge which gives reality and depth to
the Christmas legend. It is a revelation, as Ripon explains, that
"behind every symbol there is a reality", another Jungian reference
which is later developed thematically in Fifth Business and The
Manticore, in Dunstan Ramsay's pursuit of saints, and his discovery
that "the marvellous is indeed an aspect of the real", and in David
Staunton's recognition of "the nature of our mythic and natural
ancestors, and the relations between them". The tensions in A
Mixture of Frailties are in effect those which unify the mythical and
the real, a result of the ambiguities which Monica discovers between
the romantic notions of the artist which she derives from Aunt Ellen,
and the real world of the artist which she experiences in her training.

As Giles' mistress in particular, she is unsettled by the
ambiguity between her romantic conception of this role and the reality
of her situation, in which she suffers Giles' abuses and endures self-
sacrifice, and the anachronism of her former life as a member of the
Thirteeners and her new situation which she remains committed to her

39 Peter Stevens, "Robertson Davies: The Sage as Psychoanalyst",
early faith and attitudes. When Monica is told that she endures her life with Giles because she lacks a sense of humour, since "a woman with a sense of humour would never have taken up with him in the first place", one observes an obvious analogy between Davies' theory of humour and the creative experience which Monica is undergoing. Elsewhere in the novel, Davies has a minor character remark: "Art begins where common sense leaves off", and it is just this irrational element which is such an important part of humour. Another mentor, Amy Neilson, explains how a sense of humour works:

Wit and high spirits and a sense of fun - yes, they're wonderful things. But a sense of humour - a real one - is a rarity and can be utter hell. Because it's immoral, you know, in the real sense of the word: I mean, it makes its own laws; and it possesses the person who has it like a demon. Fools talk about it as though it were the same thing as a sense of balance, but believe me, it's not. It's a sense of anarchy, and a sense of chaos. Thank God it's rare.42

As elements of Davies' theory of humour and the humorist's climacteric appear in A Mixture of Frailties and are more fully delineated in A Voice from the Attic, so also his concern with spiritual growth as a necessary aspect of the individuation process, a major theme in Fifth Business, becomes a vital part of Monica's development as a singer. Davies' strongly religious temperament, on which he elaborates in a later interview, is not of the conventional sort:

...when I say "religious" I mean immensely conscious of powers of which I can have only the dimmest apprehension, which operate by means that I cannot fathom, in directions which I would be a fool to call either good or bad... it is, I think, a recognition of one's position in an

41 Ibid., p. 118.
42 Ibid., p. 244.
inexplicable universe, in which it is not wholly impossible for you to ally yourself with, let us say, positive rather than negative forces, but in which anything that you do in that direction must be done with a strong recognition that you may be very, very gravely mistaken.\(^{43}\)

It is this coming to grips with the darker side of the self, of acknowledging good and evil as an integral part of the personality, which is specifically Jungian in its source, and which Monica recognizes in her growth toward self-knowledge. As she reaches an emotional crisis in her relationship with Giles, the spiritual side of her nature comes to the fore, ironically while she is rehearsing the part of False Witness in Bach's "St. Matthew Passion":

The noble utterance of Bach wakened in her a degree of religious sensibility of which she had not previously been conscious. She had outgrown the Thirteeners and in one or two daring moments had thought of herself as finished with religion; but in the presence of this majestic faith she was an unworthy pygmy. She was overwhelmed, frightened and repentant.\(^{44}\)

It is significant that in her suffering, none of Monica's worldly, professional advisors and mentors can offer the spiritual help which she needs. The Pantheon, too, with its cold marble statuary dedicated to Reason, repels her, and she flees to the church of St. Etienne du Mont:

She was warmed and soothed by the dark splendour.... Here was feeling, and feeling was reality. If only life could be lived in terms of those windows, of that aspiring, but not frightening, screen! If only things and feelings existed, and thoughts and judgements did not have to trouble and torture!\(^{45}\)

\(^{43}\) Donald Cameron, "Robertson Davies: The Bizarre and Passionate Life of the Canadian People", in *Conversation with Canadian Novelists* (Toronto, 1973), p. 41.


\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 247.
Here she encounters her first saint, St. Genevieve (known for her curative powers), whose help she instinctively seeks in prayer, a symbolic act in which she allows the spiritual side of her nature, long suppressed, to gain control, offering her a release from a kind of bondage in which Reason has held her. This theme is central to *Fifth Business*, in which Dunstan's fascination with saints arising from a life-long involvement with his own personal saint, Mary Dempster, ultimately leads him to a knowledge of that spiritual or emotional side of his personality which he has thwarted.

Again, Monica's "Hiraeth" or yearning for what is unattainable in this world is an interpretation of the creative drive which is close to a religious experience, but which has its origin in Jungian depth psychology:

> It meant the aspiration toward that from which she drew her strength, and to which she returned when the concerns of daily life were set aside.... It lay through, but beyond, the world of music to which she was now committed .... It was the yearning which had been buried in the heart of her mother, denied and thwarted but there, forever alive and demanding. It was a yearning toward all the vast, inexplicable, irrational treasury from which her life drew whatever meaning and worth it possessed.

For Jung, the artist is an instrument through whom the aesthetic or creative drive receives expression. Analogous to recognition of the inner Self in the individuation process, the artist must get to know this drive and come to terms with it. Like the humorist who has reached and passed his climacteric, enabling him to balance a sense of humour with a sense of the tragic, creating a "background of feeling".

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without altering the essentially humorous quality of his work,
Monica moves toward a balance between professional discipline and the
creative "feeling" side of her personality which is a necessary
progression toward self-knowledge and fulfillment as an artist:

Had the irrational side of life no right to be lived?
The answer did not have to be formed; the irrational
rose overwhelmingly from their depths whenever she was
not strenuously bending her mind to some matter of
immediate concern.48

Monica's return to Canada as a result of her mother's illness forces
her into a summing up of her experiences and how they have changed her.

Loyalty, she finds, can be costly:

She had not foreseen that it could mean keeping two
sets of mental and moral books - one for inspection
in the light of home, and another to contain her life
with Revelstoke, and all the new loyalties and attitudes
which had come with Molloy, and particularly with Domcaniel.
To close either set of books forever would be a kind of
suicide, and yet to keep them both was hypocrisy.49

Reluctant to admit that she has far outdistanced her former life, she
nevertheless reveals this self-transformation in her thoughts, evidenced
by her attitude toward Aunt Ellen who obviously "had hold of the wrong
end of the stick."50

Monica's return to Salterton is also reflected in a return to
those characters and preoccupations of Davies' Canadian locale,
embodied in his concern with the bourgeois attitudes toward the arts,
and the "dead hand" which is laid on the younger generation by the old,
symbolized by the control which Mrs. Bridgetower continues to wield
over Solly and Veronica even after her death, reflected in their

49 Ibid., p. 266.
50 Ibid., p. 267.
changed personalities:

Both felt the Dead Hand of Mrs. Bridgetower; its chill had frozen the very fountain of their passion, brought winter to the garden of their love.51

Thus a further dimension is added to the parent-child conflict, in which the darker threads of impotence and possession by the spirit of the dead occur:

Who could say that Louisa Hansen Bridgetower was dead? Freed from the cumbersome, ailing body, freed from any obligation to counterfeit the ordinary goodwill of mortal life, her spirit walked abroad, working out its ends and asserting its mastery through a love which was hate, a hatred which was love.52

Significantly, the Salterton of A Mixture of Frailties is no longer the Salterton of Tempest-Tost and Leaven of Malice, which resembled Leacock's Mariposa in its quaintness and narrow social assumptions. As Davies himself notes:

In A Mixture of Frailties there are things which a lot of people who'd liked the previous two novels disliked very much indeed, because it suggested that I and they had not agreed upon a kind of little provincial city which they could be cozy about. They may have reached some such idea - but I never did.53

This change, reflected in Monica's own consciousness, is a measure of her artistic and spiritual growth. In the dying Ma Gall, Monica is reborn, inheriting from her mother the artistic temperament which she now begins to comprehend: ("My mother lives by the spirit as well as by the flesh"),54 and is enabled to accept her new self (not without some misgivings: like Ma Gall she experiences feelings of

51 Ibid., p. 273.
52 Ibid., p. 273.
elation and fits of depression in which she questions her life as a singer).

Giles' masterpiece, The Golden Asse, which deals with "the ambiguity of man's aspirations toward both wisdom and joy", 55 in which Lucius is turned into an ass and is redeemed (like Dunstan Ramsay) only when he achieves self-knowledge, is linked thematically with Monica's story and ironically with Giles' own fate; in Fifth Business it becomes a dominant theme, and again in World of Wonders in Paul Dempster's transformation from an obscure youth and faceless conjuror who, through his acceptance of the wonder of life itself, becomes a brilliant illusionist. Giles, however, is unable to cope with his own daemonic genius when he ultimately comes face to face with its destructive power; his personality lacks the balance of "a mixture of frailties" and the discipline which tempers art. As DomDaniel observes:

Extraordinary how people sometimes create so much better than they live. The metamorphosis of physical man into spiritual man: a great theme. But though he could do it in art he couldn't do it in life. 56

It is this inner self with which Monica must come to grips when emotional demands are placed upon her after Giles' death, particularly her nagging sense of guilt, while maintaining her outward self-possession. What Monica ultimately learns becomes part of her nature; yet she is aware also, just as the humorist is aware, of "a sense of tragedy..." 57 and of the voices of Ma Gall and of Giles "...as a

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55 Ibid., p. 322.
56 Ibid., p. 360.
57 Davies, A Voice from the Attic, p. 230.
continual pedal point", 58 those voices "which complicated her life, and at the same time kept her romanticism from running away with her". 59

And as Dunstan and David in Fifth Business and The Manticore are guided toward self-knowledge by their Anima-figures, it is Sir Benedict who proves to be the Animus who guides Monica through the maze of guilt and grief over Giles' death, and who will ultimately marry her.

While Monica is trying to come to a decision about marrying him, contrapuntally, as an interwoven theme, Dean Knapp is preaching a sermon on the revelation of God to man. Analogous to the grace which is a gift of God to Simeon, is that creative spirit or insight which is also a gift, like the sense of humour possessed by the humorist, which permits the humorist to find himself through his art:

Monica sang, giving her full attention to what she was doing; sang well and happily, all her perplexities banished as she balanced the delicate vocal meditation above the great chorale in "Three Kings from Persian Lands". And when she was finished, she found that her mind was cleared, and she knew what she should do. 60

While Davies achieves notable success in conveying Monica's transformation as an artist, A Mixture of Frailties retains a certain detachment symptomatic of the earlier Salterton novels and traces of the author's viewpoint in Davies' diffuse views on art and the decidedly masculine vein which runs through Monica's thoughts, not a reflection of the thoughts of a young woman of limited experience and

58 Ibid., p. 230.
59 A Mixture of Frailties, p. 371.
60 Ibid., p. 379.
background. Elspeth Buitenhuys refers to "Davies' failure to project fully into the female mind". In effect, Monica does not achieve the depth of character so evident in his later protagonists, and as Buitenhuys maintains, Monica's inconsistent behaviour contributes to the weakening of the novel as a whole. One is left with the impression also that Davies' background as a playwright has led him to manipulate characters and situations in order to achieve dramatic effect, rather than allowing the novel to follow a natural course. Again, there is the sense that many of the characters are little more than caricatures and mouthpieces for Davies' views. As in drama also, dialogue is used frequently to advance the plot and the speech is the refined language of the theatre rather than the natural dialogue of the novel.

In *Fifth Business*, however, Davies explores his themes through the personal vision of his narrator, Dunstan Ramsay, in his concern with the mythical elements which underly our lives, and the necessity of coming to terms with the inner self in order to achieve individuation. Through Dunstan's intensely personal vision, Davies attains a new level of insight and a depth of characterization previously unmatched in his work.

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62 Ibid., p. 53.
CHAPTER III

FIFTH BUSINESS

In Fifth Business, with its first person narrative form, theme and viewpoint are integrated in Dunstan Ramsay's personal vision. Dunstan discovers that "the marvellous is indeed an aspect of the real", in pursuing his life-long interest in sainthood and "the oddly recurrent themes of history, which are also the themes of myth", and finds that hidden Self which had long been suppressed.

Dunstan's narrative is really a long apologia written on his retirement to his former headmaster to refute the public image of himself as a "typical old schoolmaster doddering into retirement with tears in his eyes and a drop hanging from his nose", and becomes a revelation of that hidden life which lies beneath the surface, manifested in Dunstan's role as "fifth business":

Those roles which, being neither those of Hero nor Heroine, Confidente nor Villain, but which were nonetheless essential to bring about the Recognition or the dénouement, were called the Fifth Business in drama and opera companies organized according to the old style; the player who acted these parts was often referred to as Fifth Business.

Employing this obscure dramatic reference, Davies also intimates that

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2Ibid., p. 133.
3Ibid., p. 6.
4Ibid., p. [iv].
all of us are "fifth business" in some way in relation to each other, the individual without whom you cannot make a plot work... the odd man out, the person who has no opposite of the other sex... who knows the secret of the hero's birth, or comes to the assistance of the heroine when she thinks all is lost... may even be the cause of somebody's death if that is part of the plot.\(^5\)

Unlike Davies' previous novels, the personal vision of Dunstan Ramsay in *Fifth Business* encompasses a much wider scope than the rather narrow concerns of the Salterton trilogy, extending into those hidden aspects of life which are somewhat sketchily dealt with in *A Mixture of Frailties*, diffused there through the viewpoints of Monica's various mentors. While Davies is not entirely successful in penetrating the consciousness of a young woman like Monica Gall, in the male consciousness of Dunstan Ramsay Davies creates an individual resembling his own age, background and experience. There is also a quality in *Fifth Business* which Davies has noted in the later works of Evelyn Waugh, Aldous Huxley, Dickens and Twain: a maturity, an "increased emotional quality .... It is an alteration in the writer's attitude toward himself which shows in his means of expression and the themes he chooses...."\(^6\)

It is significant to Davies' growth as a comic novelist, and something which he has anticipated in essays in *A Voice from the Attic* and elsewhere, that a dominant theme in *Fifth Business* is the recognition of the need for emotion or feeling as a balance to reason in individual development, a theme which is specifically Jungian in origin, and


\(^6\) *Davies, A Voice from the Attic*, pp. 226-27.
which forms the basis for Davies' theory of the humorist's climacteric. Gordon Roper relates the structure of the novel to modern myth and Jungian depth psychology, exemplified in the real and archetypal images with which Dunstan must come to terms in order to achieve individuation.  

This spiritual side of the personality is necessary to the creative artist, including the comic novelist, and in middle life it is manifested in a concern with the approach of death and a darker vision of life which is characteristic of the individuation process; it is the "perception of shadows" which Davies detects at the source of the sense of humour. And it is also the "sense of tragedy" which gives an emotional balance to the later works of comic novelists like Davies, and which becomes an important element in Fifth Business.

Intrinsic to Davies' theory of the humorist's climacteric, the novel finds its source in the Jungian theory of individuation, a process which Jung defines as "becoming a single, homogeneous being... it also implies becoming one's own self", assuming that one half of the personality, the Persona, has developed at the expense of the other half, the Shadow or unconscious self. For Jung, this development of the personality roughly corresponds to "the stages of life" in man.

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9 A Voice from the Attic, p. 226.


which are the early years up to age thirty-five or forty, and maturity. In the first half of life, personal or social goals are uppermost: a career, marriage, and those external goals with which the Persona defines itself; in later life these goals are no longer important, evidenced by a turning inward, a search for wisdom, in which faith or religion plays an important part, as the individual realizes his physical decline and the imminence of death. As Dunstan Ramsay discovers, faith is a psychological reality, and where faith in the invisible side of life has been suppressed, "it invaded and raised bloody hell with things seen." Fifth Business is a revelation of those "big spiritual adventures," which underly somewhat prosaic public image of Dunstan Ramsay, and which retain their plausibility in being characteristic of many public lives. Davies has cited the example of Mackenzie King, outwardly a dull, stolid public figure, as an instance of "the bizarre and passionate life of the Canadian people":

Mackenzie King seemed to be the quintessence of dullness... a duller, more pedantic, dreary man you could scarcely think to find. But what was he in reality? A man who communed with the portrait of his dead mother to get political advice; a man who never set the date of a general election without consulting [a] fortune-teller; a man who could... burst into the most highly coloured and inflammatory kind of blasphemous evil language when he was discussing certain topics; a man who wooed and sort of managed to keep peace with Quebec, but who could talk about French Canadians in a way that would take paint off a barn door - this was Mackenzie King, this was the opposites running into one another, and this is very Canadian...

13 Ibid., p. 256.

15 Ibid., p. 37.
This characteristic trait of Canadians, a tendency to see opposites as part of one another, is a Jungian trait, and relates closely to various themes in *Fifth Business*: the theme of maintaining a public image on a private matter, the importance of roles and ceremony, and the rapidity with which the surface veneer vanishes in the face of stress, all evidence of the duplicity in peoples' lives in which the emotional side of the personality emerges. This is evident in the symbolic hanging of the Kaiser during Deptford’s armistice celebrations:

> And the people of the crowd, as I looked at them, were hardly recognizable as the earnest citizens who, not half an hour ago, had been so biddable under the spell of patriotic oratory... Here they were, in this murky, fiery light, happily acquiescent in a symbolic act of cruelty and hatred... I watched them with dismay that mounted toward horror, for these were my own people.16

Davies' religious views are also closely related to the Jungian view which sees good and evil as aspects of one another, and notably to the Jungian theory of individuation in which religion becomes a necessary part of man's search for wisdom in later life, but which lies outside the framework of any particular creed. In *Fifth Business*, Padre Blazon's interpretation of an old man's religion relates to the Jungian interpretation of man's search for the spiritual life, the need for an all-wise God who comprehends both the good and evil in the world:

> All Christ's teaching is put forward with the dogmatism, the certainty, and the strength of youth: I need something that takes account of the accretion of experience, the sense of paradox and ambiguity that comes with years!

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16 *Fifth Business*, p. 115.
I think after forty we should recognize Christ politely but turn for our comfort and guidance to God the Father, who knows the good and evil of life, and to the Holy Ghost, who possesses a wisdom beyond that of the incarnated Christ.... I think when He comes again it will be to declare the unity of the flesh and the life of the spirit. And then perhaps we shall make some sense of this life of marvels, cruel circumstances, obscenities, and commonplaces.  

Padre Blazon, whose "shadow manifested itself quite late in life", is at that stage in life analogous to the writer's climacteric:  

I am deep in the old man's puzzle, trying to link the wisdom of the body with the wisdom of the spirit until the two are one.  

As a metaphor of the individuation process, Dunstan Ramsay's inner journey leads him to a concern with the spiritual elements in life, and a rejection of those practical, utilitarian attitudes found in Deptford, and personified in his mother, who becomes a devouring force in his life and ultimately drives him further into himself. At an early age, he realizes that "nobody, not even my mother, was to be trusted in a strange world that showed very little of itself on the surface."

Dunstan's discovery of the spiritual side of life emerges out of his interest in sainthood and magic, and the mythical elements in real life. These in turn stimulate his fascination and life-long involvement with Mary Dempster, arising from his guilt over a snowball thrown at Dunstan by his friend Percy "Boy" Staunton, which hits Mary on the head, knocks her unconscious, causes Paul's premature

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17 Ibid., p. 206.  
18 Ibid., p. 204.  
19 Ibid., p. 208.  
20 Ibid., p. 35.
birth and renders her feeble-minded. Dunstan's guilt over the
incident contrasts sharply with Boy's lack of conscience over the deed
and his indifference to Mary's fate. Dunstan later comes to regard
Mary as a saint when she performs certain "miracles": offering her-
self to Joel Surgeoner and thereby redeeming him, rescuing Dunstan's
brother Willie from death, and appearing as the face on the statue of
the Little Madonna which Dunstan envisions as he lies wounded on the
battlefield.

"I liked metaphor better than reason", 21 Dunstan affirms,
acknowledging the relation between the real and the symbolic, and
revealing a religious temperament which rejects the atheistic denial
of the spiritual side of life. He finds this religious temperament
in Mary Dempster:

She lived by a light that arose from within; I could
not comprehend it, except that it seemed to be some-
thing akin to the splendours I found in books, though
not in any way bookish. It was as though she were an
exile from a world that saw things her way, and though
she was sorry Deptford did not understand her she was
not resentful. When you got past her shyness she had
quite positive opinions, but the queerest thing about
her was that she had no fear. 22

Dunstan's fascination with Mary is awakened also through his
rejection of Deptford's harsh morality, which scorns her when she
gives herself to the tramp (and introducing Dunstan to "a particular
kind of reality, which my religion, my upbringing, and the callowly
romantic cast of my mind had declared obscene"). 23 Dunstan's in-
evitable alienation from his stern Presbyterian parents draws him

21 Ibid., p. 57.
22 Ibid., p. 55.
23 Ibid., p. 56.
toward Mary and away from the Deptford mentality, the sort of mentality which Davies satirizes in the Salterton novels: a provincial, bourgeois attitude and a tendency to view the artistic and creative as frivolous and impractical:

I have already said that while our village contained much of what humanity has to show, it did not contain everything, and one of the things it conspicuously lacked was an aesthetic sense; we were all too much the descendants of hard-bitten pioneers to wish for or encourage any such thing, and we gave hard names to qualities that in a more sophisticated society, might have had value. 24

Dunstan's increasing isolation from Deptford society also leads to an interest in conjuring, which he regards as "a glorious extension of life, a creation of a world of wonder", 25 a theme which he embellishes in the final novel of the Deptford trilogy, World of Wonders. In his role as "fifth business" Dunstan initiates Paul Dempster into the arts of conjuring; later, as a magician, Paul as "fifth business" introduces him to the daemonic world of magic and illusion, and to Liesl who as devil-figure helps him to understand the Shadow side of his personality in his growth toward self-knowledge. Yet Dunstan as a seeker of the spiritual believes that Paul (now Magnus Eisengrim) has gained his secret powers as an illusioist, at the cost of his inner, spiritual self, thus becoming in a sense a kind of Faustian figure. Magnus comes to see Dunstan's mythical biography of him as closer to his "real" self than any factual account. His life has thus become that "gigantic hallucination" 26 with which Dunstan, as

24 Ibid., p. 21.
25 Ibid., p. 43.
well as David Staunton in *The Manticore*, must come to terms in middle life. Significantly, Eisengrim is a supreme egoist who, like Boy Staunton, exists only through his Persona:

> It was clear enough to me that his compelling love affair was with himself; his mind was always on his public personality... and I knew that it starved love for anyone else and sometimes burned it out completely.\(^{27}\)

Conversely, Dunstan's various Anima-figures, representing Jung's four stages of the Anima, are personified initially in his mother, a sort of Earth Mother who turns into a destructive force in his life, as is Diana Marfleet, a romantic and sexually attractive Anima who restores him to life, but nevertheless threatens his search for the inner Self by becoming a sort of substitute mother-figure and unwittingly displacing Dunstan's need for spiritual completion, luring him away from his quest. On the other hand, Mary Dempster symbolizes love in its purest sense, attaining the level in Jung's stages of the Anima often represented by the Virgin Mary "who raises love (eros) to the heights of spiritual devotion".\(^{28}\)

As Dunstan becomes alienated from the negative Anima in his mother, he is drawn toward the spirituality of Mary Dempster. Ultimately, conflict between his spiritual inclinations and the demands of his "practical" mother drives him into the army and to another level in his individuation journey. He discovers, in reading the New Testament (the only source of reading available to him), that "religion and Arabian Nights were true in the same way";\(^{29}\) it is

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\(^{27}\) *Fifth Business*, p. 258.


\(^{29}\) *Fifth Business*, p. 77.
psychological rather than literal truth, which is as important in its way as factual or historical truth.

As Jung has observed, and Dunstan discovers, modern man has lost the ability to distill the essential truth which lies behind universal and ancient symbols, and which provides the link between man's mythical past and modern reality. Conventional religious symbols have become "mere objects of belief".

Because these symbols may not have a basis in scientific truth, modern man tends to ignore their significance as psychological truth. Faith itself is a form of psychological truth, as Dunstan discovers; his pursuit of saints leads him to an interest in faith:

Why do people all over the world, and at all times, want marvels that defy all verifiable fact? Are the marvels brought into being by their desire, or is their desire an assurance rising from some deep knowledge, not to be directly experienced and questioned, that the marvellous is indeed an aspect of the real?

Psychological truth becomes symbolized for Dunstan in his personal saint, Mary Dempster, whose face miraculously appears on the statue of the Little Madonna before he loses consciousness from battle wounds. Subsequently, he is "reborn" in a hospital room, and his nurse, Diana Marfleet, a life-giving Anima, who is the instrument of his rebirth, also initiates him into sex:

Thus we became lovers in the fullest sense, and for me the experience was an important step toward the completion of that manhood which had been thrust upon me so one-sidedly in the trenches.

Like Monica's sexual initiation, Dunstan's is an awakening experience.

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32 Ibid., p. 94.
which expands the level of consciousness. He also finds that his sexual experience and subsequent visit to a musical show in London are "not so unlike in psychological weight as you might suppose.... Both were wonders, strange lands revealed to me in circumstances of great excitement". But like Leola, who cannot live up to the image of the fairy princess which Boy has projected on her, Diana, with her romantic view of faith and reality, is Dunstan's fantasy projection who cannot provide him with the self-knowledge which he seeks; also he senses in her those negative devouring traits which caused him to flee his mother:

There was an unreality about our relationship that had its roots in something more lasting than lightheadedness. I will say nothing against her and I shall always be grateful to her for teaching me what the physical side of love was.... But I could not be blind to the fact that she regarded me as her own creation....what was wrong between Diana and me was that she was too much a mother to me, and as I had had one mother, and lost her, I was not in a hurry to acquire another.

The role of myth and legend in our understanding of the "real" world and the archetypes and symbols which provide a link between myth and reality, exemplified in the public images of king and hero for example, is a major theme in Fifth Business. When the King pins a V.C. medal on him, Dunstan reflects on the significance of their respective roles:

We are public icons, we two; he an icon of kingship, and I an icon of heroism, unreal yet very necessary; we have obligations above what is merely personal, and to let personal feelings obscure the obligations would be falling in one's duty.

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33 Ibid., p. 95.
34 Ibid., pp. 97-98.
35 Ibid., p. 96.
Dunstan ponders on the vagaries of fate which have made him a hero and winner of the V.C., ironically the result of a brave act committed out of fear and cowardice; this leads him to the conclusion that "people seemed to need heroes; so long as I don't lose sight of the truth, it might as well be me as anyone else".  

The theme of the dichotomy which exists between the private personality and the public image recurs in Dunstan's relationship with Boy, and their rivalry in relation to Leola: Dunstan is seen as the loser in a romantic triangle, but it is a measure of his growth during his absence in the war that he has forfeited his romantic interest in Leola and replaced it with an emotion which comes more closely to resemble pity, as she is left behind in Boy's rise to power. Boy is Dunstan's opposite: "To him, the reality of life lay in external things, whereas for me the only reality was of the spirit". Unlike Boy, who lives entirely on the conscious level, Dunstan comprehends the inner significance of their triangle relationship, interpreting it in terms of the myth of Gyges and King Candaules; Boy is seen as an extremely complex individual who has never gained insight into his own behaviour, exemplified by Dunstan's mythic and ironic interpretation of Boy's invitation to Dunstan to examine nude photographs of Leola: King Candaules, proud of his wife's beauty, invites his friend Gyges to see her nakedness, resulting in, according to differing versions of the legend, the King's dethronement or murder, when the Queen is attracted to Gyges.

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36 Ibid., p. 96.
37 Ibid., p. 128.
Dunstan's relationship to Boy and Leola is that of insider: he witnesses their faltering marriage, but wisely avoids the role of peacemaker, preferring that of Friend of the Family, which is appropriate to his role as fifth business:

I enjoyed my role... though I was unlike the smart, rich, determinedly youthful people who were their "set". It was some time before I tumbled to the fact that Boy needed me as someone in whose presence he could think aloud, and that a lot of his thinking was about the inadequacy of the wife he had chosen to share his high destiny. 39

It is only later that Dunstan realizes his true role, in relation to Boy, as the conscience of a man who lacks a conscience.

Significantly, as a college student, Dunstan chooses history as his speciality, since during the way years he senses that "I was being used by powers over which I had no control for purposes of which I had no understanding". 40 While he hopes history will enlighten him in this regard, it fails to do so, but rather leads him into a study of "the oddly recurrent themes of history, which are also themes of myth" 41 and to the bonds between the mythical and the real. In his attempt to find the Little Madonna on his travels in Europe, Dunstan redisovers religion, generating a fascination with saints and saint-hood; in a Jungian sense, however, the numinosity of religious art and symbolism, its ability to communicate through primordial images to Dunstan's individual psyche, specifically, in the form of Dunstan's own personal saint, Mary Dempster, is not fulfilled until he undergoes a crisis in middle life and attains his climacteric. In the

39 fift business, p. 178.
40 ibid., p. 123.
41 ibid., p. 133.
interim, he is still preoccupied, though in an unconventional way, with those external goals which are peculiar to the early years of the individuation process. And while he is still troubled by his pursuit of a field which worldly society scorns, he nevertheless nourishes the idea

...that a serious study of any important body of human knowledge, or theory, or belief, if undertaken with a critical but not a cruel mind, would in the end yield some secret, some valuable permanent insight, into the nature of life and the true end of man. 42

In his role as fifth business and possessor of a growing reputation as an author of popular and scholarly books on saints, Dunstan is allowed entry into Boy's rich and influential circle; again, Dunstan's insight into character is apparent: as possessors of a "rare talent," 43 for manipulating money, these "ca-pittle-ists" 44 refuse to concede this talent:

How happy they might have been if they had recognized and gloried in their talent, confronting the world as gifted egotists, comparable to painters, musicians, or sculptors! But that was not their style. They insisted on degrading their talent to the level of mere acquired knowledge and industry. 45

Contrasting with Dunstan's insight in Boy's shallow, if comic, view of Dunstan as an eccentric schoolmaster:

Good God, don't you think the way you rootle in your ear with your little finger delights the boys? And the way you waggle your eyebrows - great wild things like mustaches, I don't know why you don't trim them - and those terrible Harris tweed suits you wear and never have pressed. And that disgusting

42 Ibid., p. 196.
43 Ibid., p. 194.
44 Ibid., p. 194.
trick of blowing your nose and looking into your handkerchief as if you expected to prophesy something from the mess.\textsuperscript{46}

Despite his intellectual attainments and insight into character, Dunstan is unable to respond to Leola's emotional needs at a crucial moment in her life when she discovers Boy's unfaithfulness. It is an instance of those puritanical elements which have been instilled in him by his parents and which are symptomatic of his psychic "disease": guilt feelings, suppression of his emotions, his role as observer of life rather than as participant, a certain smugness, and a kind of guarded curiosity about the exotic or unusual. And while he retains a sense of guilt over Leola's death (because he does not really mourn her loss), there is a sense of satisfaction evident in his public role as rejected lover grieving for his lost love.

Dunstan's guilt over Mary Dempster's fate recurs after her aunt's death, when he becomes her guardian:

As a child I had felt oppressively responsible for her, but I had thought all that was dissipated in the war.... But the guilt had only been thrust away, or thrust down out of sight, for here it was again, in full strength, clamouring to be atoned for, now that the opportunity offered itself ... if Mrs. Dempster was a saint, henceforth she would be my saint.\textsuperscript{47}

Ironically, while Dunstan becomes the keeper of a madwoman, she in turn is the key to the spiritual side of his personality, his guide to a hitherto unknown world of sainthood and religion.

While attempting to rediscover the statue of the Little Madonna

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., pp. 230-31.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., p. 186.
in Europe, Dunstan's research into sainthood draws him into that irrational side of life which is common to both the world of myth and the world of reality, evident in the strange and marvellous circus group in which Paul Dempster (called Faustus Legrand) performs, and subsequently in the underworld of sainthood to which he is introduced by Padre Blazon. It is an aspect of life which his Calvinistic upbringing has denied:

You Protestants, if you think of saints at all, regard them with quite the wrong sort of veneration ... Joseph is history's most celebrated cuckold. Did not God usurp Joseph's function, reputedly by impregnating his wife through her ear? ... It is whispered that the Virgin herself, who was born to Joachim and Anna through God's personal intervention, was a divine daughter as well as a divine mate; the Greeks could hardly improve on that, could they? 48

But this underworld provides a dimension to the mythical and the real worlds, by revealing the darker side which conventional accounts have suppressed. Metaphorically, it represents that unconscious or hidden Self which Dunstan seeks in his inward journey toward self-knowledge. It is a daemonic world with which the individual must come to terms, a recognition of evil and its necessary function as opposite but complementary to good. It is a recognition of this darker side of life with which the humorist must also contend if he is to pass his climacteric and thus ensure his growth as an artist: the sense of tragedy which balances the sense of comedy in his later work:

This second quality, this late-comer, is not sufficiently

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48 Ibid., pp. 199-200.
powerful to alter the quality of his work absolutely, but it gives it a background of feeling which is sufficient to turn the brilliantly humorous young man into the richly but fitfully humorous middle-aged one. 49

At fifty, Dunstan, having sacrificed his emotional life for intellectual achievement, has become a victim of "the revenge of the un-lived life". 50 Dunstan's crisis in middle life superficially resembles Hector's crisis in Tempest-Tost, and Gloster Ridley's transition in Leaven of Malice. In the former, however, Hector's experience is not a maturing one, since he lacks an Anima-figure who will guide him toward self-knowledge, and the mocking stance of an omniscient narrator removes Hector's dilemma from the personal level, that "essential humanity" 51 which is an attribute of the successful comic novel. And while Gloster is enabled to overcome his problems and pass his climacteric, with the help of a positive Anima in Elspeth Fielding, and while his background and point of view resemble those of Davies himself, Gloster's achievement is diluted by a diffusion of viewpoints and situations, and lack of a central consciousness, which detract from the effectiveness of Leaven of Malice. In Fifth Business, however, it is through Dunstan's own widening vision that those spiritual elements which are requisites to self-knowledge become recognized and integrated.

Dunstan, like David Staunton in The Manticore, is at a disadvantage in having faith in mythic truth rather than in the Christian ethic. Both David and Dunstan suffer emotional crises in middle life,

49 A Voice from the Attic, p. 230.

50 Fifth Business, p. 265.

51 A Voice from the Attic, p. 242.
and while both are on the path toward self-knowledge or individuation, their routes differ: David's search is through Jungian analysis which brings to light the nature of our mythic and natural ancestors and the relations between them, while Dunstan explores sainthood and the mythical elements in real life, which reveal his repressed spiritual side. For both, the essential purpose is the same: to integrate those emotional and spiritual elements in their personalities which have been suppressed but which are necessary attributes of the complete individual. Dunstan has already been forewarned about his crisis by Padre Blazon:

Forgive yourself for being a human creature, Ramezay. That is the beginning of wisdom; that is part of what is meant by the fear of God; and for you it is the only way to save your sanity. Begin now, or you will end up with your saint in the madhouse.  

The old priest also arouses Dunstan's interest in "the nature of faith" in questioning Mary Dempster's mythical role in his life, in relation to her real-life role as "fool-saint":

Who is she in your personal mythology? . . . Who is she? That is what you must discover, Ramezay, and you must find your answer in psychological truth, not in objective truth.  

This meditating on psychological truth and the meaning of faith leads Dunstan again into the world of magic and illusion personified in Paul Dempster (now Magnus Eisengrim), where as a member of Eisengrim's magic show, he becomes an integral part of that daemonic world which he has hitherto observed from the sidelines. Eisengrim is a figure.

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52 *Fifth Business*, p. 208.
of elegance and mystery, whose magic show is really a showcase for
his own unique, though self-centred talents; more importantly, how-
ever, it fills a need for that irrational side of life which the public
craves:

    Nowadays this concealed longing is for romance and
    marvels .... People want to marvel at something, and
    the whole spirit of our time is not to let them do
    it. They will pay to do it, if you make it good and
    marvellous for them.55

The symbols in "The Vision of Dr. Faustus" and the "Brazen Head" are
the sort of universal symbols which arouse an emotional and intuitive
response in a world which needs marvels and illusions. They are
analogous to those "primordial images" of Jung, which join the world
of myth and legend to the world of modern man and modern religion:

    What is true of primitive lore is true in even higher
degree of the ruling world religions. They contain a
revealed knowledge that was originally hidden, and
they set forth the secrets of the soul in glorious
images.56

Eisengrim's business partner, Liesl Vitzliputzli, whose "voice
was beautiful and her utterance was an educated speech of some foreign
flavour",57 nevertheless retains some aspects of the primitive and
archetypal appropriate to the image of a Devil-figure:

    The person who was speaking to me .... was probably
a woman but she wore a man's dress, had short hair,
and was certainly the ugliest human creature I had
ever seen ....she had big hands and feet, a huge,
jutting jaw, and a heaviness of bone over the eyes
that seemed to confine them to small, very deep
caverns.58

Later, enticed by Liesl's flattery, Dunstan comes to see her as "a

55 Ibid., p. 244.
56 The Basic Writings of C.G. Jung, p. 290.
58 Ibid., pp. 240-41.
woman of captivating intellect and charm, cruelly imprisoned in a
deformed body". 59

Dunstan's imagination is allowed free play as he is persuaded
to write the scripts for Eisengrim's show, seduced by Liesl's appeal
for "the benefit of your taste, and a particular kind of unusual
assistance". 60 he also becomes Eisengrim's fictional biographer
(significantly Eisengrim's fictional birthplace is not in Canada, but
in Europe, where "big spiritual adventures" are possible). As Dunstan's
imaginative powers develop, he experiences those feelings repressed
since childhood, which find expression in an uncaccustomed talkative-
ness and an infatuation for the beautiful showgirl Faustina. She is
a Venus-figure, an "earthy" goddess who understands nothing of
Dunstan's life or achievements, and lacks the insight to do so; she
thrives on the admiration of others, and her true destiny is "to be
glorious for a few years". 61 Mocked by the discovery of Faustina
in Liesl's arms, Dunstan realizes that he has reached a crisis in his
life, a "collapse of the spirit" 62 which he has not felt to such an
extent before.

Dunstan's great battle with Liesl is really a struggle with
his own personal devil, the darker, "unlived" side of his personality
which he must get to know, and which Liesl herself defines:

You must get to know your personal devil. You
must even get to know his father, the Old Devil.
Oh, this Christianity! Even when people swear

59 Ibid., p. 243.
60 Ibid., p. 246.
61 Ibid., p. 260.
62 Ibid., p. 259.
they don't believe in it, the fifteen hundred years of Christianity that has made our world is in their bones, and they, want to show they can be Christians without Christ. Those are the worst; they have the cruelty of doctrine without the poetic grace of myth .... Why don't you, just for once, do something inexplicable, irrational, at the devil's bidding, and just for the hell of it? You would be a different man.

It is Padre Blazon, the Wise Old Man in Dunstan's search for wisdom, who interprets in mythical terms Dunstan's twisting of Liesl's nose:

"It was St. Dunstan seizing the Devil's snout in his tongs, a thousand years after his time... You met the Devil as an equal, not cringing and frightened or begging for a trashy favour. That is the heroic life, Ramezay. You are fit to be the Devil's friend, without fear of losing yourself to Him!"

While Dunstan's sexual initiation with Diana Marfleet has been a revelation, "there seemed something unseemly about the union of my scarred and maimed body with her unblemished beauty." Significantly, his love-making with Liesl (getting to know his personal devil) offers him a sense of completion, of spiritual and emotional fulfillment which the earlier experience lacked. It is an invasion of that daemonic spirit, the world of emotion and feeling which he has previously excluded, and which leads him to conclude that "never have I known such deep delight or such an aftermath of healing tenderness."

A further erosion of those barriers which have effectively prevented him from getting to know his hidden Self occurs on the death of Mary Dempster, which is accompanied by a "terrible invasion of the spirit."

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63 Ibid., p. 266.
64 Ibid., p. 294.
65 Ibid., p. 94.
66 Ibid., p. 267.
67 Ibid., p. 287.
It was a very bad night for me. I kept up a kind of dismal stoicism until I went to bed, and then I wept. I had not done such a thing since my mother had beaten me so many years before — no, not even in the worst of the war — and it frightened and hurt me. When at last I fell asleep I dreamed frightening dreams, in some of which my mother figured in terrible forms... I was plagued by fantasies of desolation and wretchedness so awful that I might as well not have been sixty years old, a terror to boys, and a scholar of modest repute, for they crushed me as if I were the feeblest of children.  

It is that "dark night of the soul" which Dunstan must endure in order to know his spiritual Self; there is the sense of religious possession, through prayer and repentance, though somehow unconstrained by conventional religion:

I prayed for the repose of the soul of Mary Dempster, somewhere and somehow unspecifed, under the benevolence of some power unidentified but deeply felt... I was in the grip of an impulsion that it would have been spiritual suicide to deny.

Significantly, Mary Dempster retains an "odour of sanctity" even in death, and those qualities of sainthood which Dunstan rediscovers in the Little Madonna, "after having abandoned hope and forgotten my search", although the face is not that of Mary Dempster.

The expression was undeniably hers — an expression of mercy and love, tempered with perception and penetration.

The concluding segment of Fifth Business serves as an epilogue: it sheds some light on the mystery surrounding Boy Staunton's death; it provides a connecting link between Fifth Business and The Manticore:

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68 Ibid., p. 287.
69 Ibid., p. 288.
70 Ibid., p. 288.
71 Ibid., p. 295.
72 Ibid., p. 295.
and it also describes the final stage (a "death" and "rebirth") in Dunstan's individuation process.

Boy's climactic comes too late for him to achieve self-knowledge: Boy, who "seemed to have made himself out of nothing", after reaching a stage in life when the search for wisdom and the spiritual Self become vital, discovers that his spiritual side is bankrupt; as Dunstan explains:

You created a God in your own image, and when you found out he was no good you abolished him. It's quite a common form of psychological suicide.

Even marriage to Denyse, in whom he seeks completion, offers no solution; he finds he has married a domineering woman of masculine mind who indirectly destroys him. Boy, the "boy" who wants to remain forever young, must learn to grow old, but cannot do so. When confronted with his own role in the fateful snowballing incident which launches events in the novel, Boy denies his responsibility, reverting to those childish traits which have never left him, his habit of being "angry and ugly when things went against him". His need for eternal youth and its advantages are evident in his life story: his rise to wealth and power, his sexual prowess, and his denial of the inner Self which comes with maturity. Boy's death, in which he is found in his car at the bottom of Lake Ontario, with the stone in his mouth, is a realization of his "truly mythological wish" which he has expressed in private to Dunstan, a wish which Eisengrim comprehends.

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73 Ibid., p. 125.
74 Ibid., p. 284.
75 Ibid., p. 285.
76 Ibid., p. 284.
and indirectly fulfills. When Boy reaches his crisis on the eve of
the most significant event in his life, his loss of youth and sexual
prowess, combined with the responsibilities of an office which he no
longer desires and his inability to face the prospect of abdication as
his hero, the Prince of Wales, had done, drives him to suicide. Boy,
in a sense, dies with his "secret": the stone in his mouth which
has so greatly influenced the lives of others, the symbolic "con-
science" which he refuses to acknowledge.

The agonized cry: "Who killed Boy Staunton?"\textsuperscript{77} which Boy's
son, David, emits in the theatre balcony where Magnus' magic show is
appearing, is answered by Liesl as the Brazen Head:

He was killed by the usual cabal: by himself, first
of all; by the woman he knew; by the woman he did not
know; by the man who granted his inmost wish; and by
the inevitable fifth, who was keeper of his conscience
and keeper of the stone.\textsuperscript{78}

The reply is an enigma which serves as a bond between the three Deptford
novels until it is finally resolved in the last of the trilogy, World
of Wonders.

Dunstan's heart attack and subsequent reunion in Switzerland
with Liesl and Eisengrim is in a sense the final stage in his death
and rebirth in which Liesl is instrumental as Devil-figure and Anima,
the role of "fifth business" which she again fulfills in David's re-
birth following his terrible experience in a Swiss cave, where man's
ancient ancestors worshipped bears; it provides a link between the
dilemma of modern man and the primitive, archetypal world of man's

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., p. 313.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., p. 313.
ancestors.

The role of myth and legend in our understanding of the modern world, and those archetypal symbols or primordial images which provide a common bond between myth and reality through all forms of creative expression, often surfacing in times of crisis, unify Fifth Business and The Manticore. While the Jungian theory of individuation forms a basic theme in both novels, in The Manticore the Jungian elements are incorporated directly into the story, and the references are specifically Jungian. The comic vision of Fifth Business is given added dimension in the later novel in David's view of the characters and events common to both novels. It is an example of that multi-levelled reality which is an indication of a future direction in Davies' growth as a comic novelist, and which is further developed in the final novel of the Deptford trilogy, World of Wonders.
CHAPTER IV

THE MANTICORE

In *The Manticore*, David Staunton's inner journey toward the Self, like Dunstan Ramsay's "heroic" quest in *Fifth Business*, is inspired by the Jungian theory of individuation. Although Dunstan and David are both in a sense fallen heroes, having reached a peak in their careers and a point where they can no longer deny their spiritual selves, the routes which they follow on their respective journeys toward selfhood are somewhat different, and the two novels when read as a unit provide different levels from which to view their common theme. While Dunstan's growth as an individual is revealed as the result of his introspective nature and his fascination with the spiritual side of life, David at the outset displays a practical temperament, a persona suited to the hard-boiled criminal lawyer who despises charlatanism and the hokum which he identifies with Magnus Eisengrim's magic show, for instance, and even with psychiatry itself; yet he turns to psychoanalysis for help following his mental breakdown. Both protagonists are products of the hard-headed Canadian environment which Davies cites as hostile to the spiritual and aesthetic imagination.

Like Dunstan, David must contend with a background which does
not even recognize the unconscious Self. In this sense, Dunstan's
level-headed mother, and David's rich and successful father, Boy
Staunton, are incomplete personalities. Again, the theme of parental
domination of the young, which runs through all Davies' novels,
emerges in the need for Dunstan and David to break away in order to
avoid the submersion of their own personalities, now revealed in the
light of their intensely personal vision. The reality which lies
behind the essentially comic vision in *Fifth Business* and *The Manticore*,
however, remains undistorted. It is this essential truth characteristic
of the successful comic novel which Davies has discussed in *A Voice
from the Attic* and elsewhere.

David's story is a distillation in diary form of a life leading
to that emotional chaos which is his climacteric, and which causes
him to seek Jungian analysis in Switzerland. Since David's vision is
essentially comic, Thurber's comment about humour as "a kind of
emotional chaos, told about quietly and calmly in retrospect"¹ is
significant when applied to Davies' later work with its "increased
emotional quality",² encompassing a more romantic viewpoint, a "sense
of tragedy"³ which has become an important component in his comic
vision, raising his creation above the level of the merely funny.
This transition in the humorist who has passed his climacteric suggests
a recognition of the darker side of life. As David's analyst, Dr.
Johanna von Haller, notes, he has reached a "critical age ... Between

¹Cited in *A Voice from the Attic*, p. 226.
²Ibid., p. 230.
³Ibid., p. 230.
thirty-five and forty-five everybody has to turn a corner in his life, or smash into a brick wall. If you are ever going to gain a measure of maturity, now is the time.\footnote{Robertson Davies, The Manticore (Toronto, 1922), p. 59.}

For primitive man, the "real" world and the psychic world are not so sharply defined as they are for modern man; for the primitive, recognition of the inner Self is a natural process, involving the ritualistic assimilation of "...all outer sense experiences to inner psychic events... His knowledge of nature is essentially the language and outer dress of an unconscious psychic process".\footnote{C.G. Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious", In The Basic Writings of C.G. Jung (New York, 1959), p. 294.} It is a process which has become lost to modern man, but which remains a part of his unconscious Self through those eternal images which express themselves in archetypal form. Yet for modern man the reality of faith has become meaningless, and along with it the healing power of mythical images, which have been relegated to the lower depths of the psyche and thus dissociated from his everyday life.

For Davies' protagonists, individuation is a complex process involving the realization through painful analysis of that repressed emotional side of their lives which must become integrated into their personalities. David's psychic adventure is really an extension of Dunstan Ramsay's "big spiritual adventure", in which many of the characters and events in Fifth Business recur in The Manticore. David, Dunstan's former pupil and the son of Boy Staunton (Dunstan's life-long friend), emerges as the chief protagonist in The Manticore, revealing through Jungian analysis, his life story and inadequate personality in which the archetypes emanating from his dreams are examined and differentiated: the Shadow, the Friend, and the Anima, which
...represent and body-forth patterns toward which human behaviour seems to be disposed, patterns which repeat themselves endlessly but never in precisely the same way. These Jungian archetypes are symbolized in the manticore, a mythical creature "with a lion's body, a man's face, and a sting in his tail," which represents the repressed "feeling" side of David's nature.

The Manticore also attempts to answer many of the questions left unanswered in Fifth Business: the enigma surrounding Boy Staunton's death, and the reply offered by the Brazen Head to David Staunton's anguished cry: "Who killed Boy Staunton?" in particular, who were the members of the "usual cabal" referred to by Liesl in answer to David's question. And why was the stone found in Boy Staunton's mouth?

The mysterious death of David's father, who had been a larger-than-life figure in his life, has an aura of the daemonic about it. Boy's grime-covered and disheveled appearance when he is removed from his car at the bottom of Lake Ontario is bizarre and shocking, a terrible caricature of a man who once represented for David the epitome of romantic elegance and manhood. It is also in the analysis of his life that David attempts to discover who his "real" father is, and to resolve his ambiguous attitude toward Boy which has coloured and shaped his own development. The awe in which David holds his father even after his death (stubbornly maintaining that he was murdered, since suicide would be an irrational act, out of character for a man

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6 The Manticore, p. 207.
7 Ibid., p. 158.
8 Ibid., p. 2.
9 Ibid., p. 255.
known for his stability and about to be appointed Lieutenant-Governor) is an aspect of David's psychic problem: a need to come to terms with his view of Boy as a princely figure, a symbol of manhood, and a constant reminder to David, as a child, of those manly attributes in which he feels deficient. It is essentially an illusory view, since Boy, in denying the existence of the spiritual Self, lacks the fully-integrated personality of the whole man. David must also contend with what he senses is Boy's disaffection and loss of love, his disappointment that David refuses to marry and thus continue the Staunton line, evidenced in Boy's will which appoints David director of his foundations but does not acknowledge him as his son. For David, who hoped to find in Boy's will "the measure of what he thought of me as a man, and as his son," it is a shattering blow; yet he denies the word "love" as unmasculine and an unsuitable term for their relationship.

For Dr. von Haller, however, the father-son conflict is part of a mythic pattern in human behaviour which has its roots in Biblical antiquity:

The patterns of human feeling do not change as much as many people suppose. King David's estimate of his rebellious son Absalom was certainly in masculine terms. But I suppose you recall David's lament when Absalom was slain?  

Mythic patterns of behaviour are also evident in the various roles and ceremonies which regulate our lives; this becomes obvious to David as the son of a rich man, so that "even your grief takes on a special quality, and nobody quite likes to dry your golden tears".  

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10 Ibid., p. 40.
11 Ibid., p. 43.
12 Ibid., p. 22.
In death, the rich continue to be endowed with that special status which they enjoyed in life: the significance of the burial rites, which David tended to deride, affects him in all its numinosity when he becomes personally involved:

You've told yourself for years that it doesn't matter what happens to a corpse.... But when you get into the cemetery, it's quite different. And the cemetery people know it. So you move out of the working-class and ethnic district into the area of suburban confines, but the gravestones are really rather close together.... Then things begin to brighten; bigger plots, no crowding, an altogether classier type of headstone and—best of all—the names of families you know. On the Resurrection Morn, after all, one doesn't want to jostle up to the Throne with a pack of strangers. And that's where the deal is settled.\textsuperscript{13}

Like Dunstan Ramsay, David is a careful observer of ceremonial occasions and highly conscious of the importance of role-playing in these circumstances; and one detects vestiges of the acerbic Marchbanks wit:

Funerals are among the few ceremonial occasions left to us, and we assume our roles almost without thinking. I was the Only Son, who was bearing up splendidly, but who was also known not to be, and to have no expectation of ever being, the man his father was.\textsuperscript{14}

Again, these roles are part of a mythic behavioral pattern dating from primitive times, although much of their significance has been lost for modern man. In Jungian terms:

Those who have to learn to face death may have to relearn the old message that tells us that death is a mystery for which we must prepare ourselves in the same spirit of submission and humility as we learned to prepare ourselves for life.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., pp. 29-30.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 32.
As befits Davies' propensity for observing humorous aspects in the tragic, even the grim solemnities of Boy's funeral arrangements are balanced by biting satire, and sometimes grotesque humour. Such is the case in David's mockery of the pretensions of Boy's second wife, Denyse, who wants a state funeral for Boy, with his coffin suitably flag-draped and bearing the Staunton coat-of-arms; and notably when David discovers Denyse and a pseudo-artistic friend creating a death mask of Boy's face, succeeding only in destroying his appearance:

Should I have seized the poker and killed the dentist, and forced Denyse's face down on that dreadful plastic head and throttled her, and then screamed for the world to come and look at the last scene of some sub-Shakespearean tragedy? 16

This scene is one example in The Manticore of that Freudian theory of humour "as a way of giving expression to things which would be intolerable if they were said directly". 17 Related to this Freudian theory of humour is the tendency for surface roles to disappear under stress, so that the emotional side of the personality assumes control, depicted in David's "blazing row" 18 with Denyse over her plans for a state funeral for Boy:

Denyse dropped any pretence of liking me and let it rip. I was a cheap mouthpiece for crooks of the worst kind, I was a known drunk, I had always resented my father's superiority and tried to thwart him whenever I could, I had said inexcusable things about her and spied on her, but on this one occasion, by the living God, I would toe the line.... I said she had made a fool of my father since first she met him, reduced his stature before the public with her ridiculous, ignorant pretensions and stupidities, and wanted to turn his

16 The Manticore, p. 35.
17 Davies, A Voice from the Attic, p. 228.
funeral into a circus in which she would ride the biggest elephant.\footnote{Ibid., p. 26.}

In the closed-coffin ceremony, those heroic qualities often denied to the living but freely bestowed in death, are also part of that pattern of human behaviour which emerges in Bishop Woodiwiss' eulogy and his embroidering of the motto "En Dieu ma foy",\footnote{Ibid., p. 37.} on Boy's (faked) coat-of-arms; the real Boy Staunton, the antithesis of the mythical figure, is symbolized in the motto "En moi-meme ma foy' and that was his tragedy".\footnote{Ibid., p. 37.} Significantly, in a congregation crowded with Boy's rich friends, only Dunstan Ramsay, a man of spiritual insight, who has been Boy's "conscience" during his lifetime, "could have explained the difference between the two faiths".\footnote{Ibid., p. 37.} In this eulogy, Boy's life, in effect, has become mythologized.

As an archetypal figure in David's life, Boy Staunton is the embodiment of the handsome prince, who models himself on his idol, the Prince of Wales. Boy symbolizes the attributes of flaming youth of the twenties, Dunstan Ramsay finds in him "the quintessence of the Jazz Age; a Scott Fitzgerald character".\footnote{Ibid., p. 129.} As a romantic figure in a romantic era, Boy is the opposite of MacKenzie King, on whom he places the blame for everything that is wrong with Canada. Yet King typifies in his public and private life the ambiguity which Boy is unable to recognize, but Dunstan (and Davies) discerns in the Canadian personality:
Mackenzie King rules Canada because he himself is the embodiment of Canada—cold and cautious on the outside, dowdy and pussy in every overt action, but inside a mass of intuition and dark intimations. King is Destiny's child. He will probably always do the right thing for the wrong reason.  

David's heroic game, in which, as Mr. Justice Staunton, he sits in self-judgment, playing the roles of judge, prosecuting attorney, defence lawyer, as well as prisoner, results in his decision to seek psychiatric help following a breakdown brought on in part by excessive drinking and fits of weeping:

It was frightening because it was part of the destruction of my mind that was going on; I was being broken down to a very primitive level, and absurd kinds of feeling and crude, inexplicable emotions had taken charge of me.  

As a psychoanalytic maneuver, rather than in a legal sense, Johanna suggests that David plead his case before Mr. Justice Staunton's court. As an heroic and serious method of coming to terms with the Self, it relates to Ibsen's poem:

To live is to battle with trolls/ in the vaults of heart and brain./ To write:/ that is to sit/ in judgement over one's self.  

David's initial defence "It is not easy to be the son of a very rich man" which "could stand as an epigraph for the whole case", has coloured and shaped his whole development, standing as he does in the shadow of his rich and powerful father, and constantly aware of the necessity to live up to his father's standards, and especially to "make a man" of himself.

24 The Manticore, p. 99.
25 Ibid., p. 50.
26 Ibid., p. 65.
27 Ibid., p. 67.
28 Ibid., p. 67.
David's dream prior to his initial meeting with Johanna von Haller reveals the thematic background of the novel itself, an elaborate metaphor of David's search for that spiritual Self in the form of a treasure which awaits him at the bottom of a circular staircase leading into the bowels of the earth, whose entrance is guarded by loutish creatures, and which he cannot enter alone. His guide in this initial dream is a ragged gypsy woman whose speech is unintelligible to David. She is an aspect of that emotional poverty which is David's affliction and which he cannot recognize, preferring to return to his familiar world. The dream is a foreshadowing of the climactic cave episode with Liesl, who is both Anima and devil-figure, his guide to the depths of his primitive side. David's descent into the underworld and his rebirth on returning into daylight is also symbolic of the initiation process which recurs in works of the imagination and in myth and legend: Dante's Inferno, Aeneas and the Sibyl in the cave of Avernus, and the portals of the Underworld guarded by the three-headed dog Cerberus. In Jungian terms,

Whenever a man's logical mind is incapable of discerning facts that are hidden in his unconscious, the anima helps him to dig them out. Even more vital is the role that the anima plays in putting a man's mind in tune with the right inner values and thereby opening the way into more profound inner depths.... the anima takes on the role of guide, or mediator, to the world within and to the Self...this is the role of Beatrice in Dante's Paradiso, and also of the goddess Isis when she appeared in a dream to Apuleius, the famous author of The Golden Ass, in order to initiate him into a higher, more spiritual form of life.29

Johanna interprets dreams in this Jungian sense rather than as

a fortune-teller: "They reveal states of mind in which the future
may be implicit". 30 At this juncture, however, David denies the idea
of significance in dreams, since it contradicts everything he has
learned as a lawyer. Allied to his distrust of dream interpretation
is his reaction to having a woman as his analyst:

Would a woman - could a woman - understand what was
wrong? There used to be a widespread idea that women
are very sensitive. My experience of them as clients,
witnesses, and professional opponents have dispelled
any illusions I might have had of that kind. 31

David's concern at having a woman probe his mind is an indication of
his inability to recognize this female side of his personality which
he has suppressed. At the outset also, there is an element of dis-
trust and rivalry between David and Johanna. David's attitude toward
women is in a sense an aspect of his personality problem: while
claiming to have "a very high regard for women", 32 he tends to view
them as cold and calculating, rather than as emotional creatures,
indicating a refusal to recognize this trait in his own personality.

David's idyllic first love, Judy Wolff, is viewed coldly in retrospect
as a stranger, David's way of safeguarding his boyhood dream of her.
His sister Caroline is referred to as "a very fine person, in her
frosty way", 33 and "rather a cold woman, but not a fool". 34 And
Donyse bears a certain resemblance to the archetypal "wicked step-
mother"; David holds her responsible for the "psychological" murder of
Boy: "She destroyed him. She made him unhappy and unlike himself". 35

30 The Manticore, p. 15.
31 Ibid., p. 8.
32 Ibid., p. 42.
33 Ibid., p. 46.
34 Ibid., p. 23.
Even David's sexual initiation with Myrrha, while it awakens his consciousness at least on the level of physical awareness, is also in a sense a betrayal; a calculated arrangement between Boy and his mistress; thus it too encourages David's negative outlook toward women.

Yet contrasting with the self-control evident in Caroline and Denyse following Boy's death, is the reaction of Netty Quelch, the Stauntons' life-long retainer; despite David's estimate of her "unshakable character and authority", she becomes hysterical: "She whooped and hollered and made awful feminine roaring noises until I was extremely frightened". 36 It is an indication that David, like Boy, is not always a good judge of character; as a thinking type, David can piece things together logically, but lacks the complementary intuitive nature, the capacity to sense intangibles in a given situation. His less well-developed function is that of the sensation man, a function which was a dominant trait in Boy, "because his sense of the real, the actual and tangible, was so strong". 37

Dunstan Ramsay, on the other hand, with his intuitive sense, has the ability to see the intangibles in a situation. While still young, he detects in his mother, and later in Diana, those negative traits of the Anima-figure, which would eventually lead to the sacrificing of his own uniqueness; he chooses instead the inner route to self-discovery. Dunstan's insight is also evident in his triangular relationship with Boy and Leola; he senses its mythic pattern and his

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36 Ibid., p. 23.
37 Ibid., p. 96.
own role as fifth business, and Boy's unwitting destruction of Leola when she is unable to fulfill the Anima role of fairy princess to the handsome prince, a role with which Boy has invested her out of the blindness of idealistic love.

As Dunstan is unable to respond to Leola in her emotional crisis, since he is lacking in the feeling function, so also David, as a "thinking eight" attempts to view an intensely emotional situation (Leola's despondency over Boy's adultery, Dunstan's rejection of her, and her attempted suicide) in a logical light:

I had all kinds of emotions I could not understand. Why should Ramsay love Mother? That was what Father did. What was Ramsay doing in Mother's room? I had seen movies and knew that men did not go to bedrooms just to make conversation; something special went on there, though I had no clear idea what it was.... I thought about it till I had a headache, and I was cross with Caroline, who was not inclined to put up with that from me and made a terrible fuss.

Following the crisis of the Christmas of the Abdication, when Boy in a sense abdicates his parental role and Leola withdraws into herself, Dunstan Ramsay assumes a larger role in David's life, becoming a combination father-figure and mentor, and his ideas of the relation between history and myth and his interest in saints make a strong impression on David's sensitive, retentive nature. Dunstan's role as surrogate father becomes even more prominent following Leola's death, when he takes charge of funeral arrangements and accepts responsibility for the children's welfare in Boy's absence. David's attitude toward Dunstan is considerably altered by Caroline's

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38 Ibid., p. 101.
suggestion that he is actually Dunstan's son, creating doubt and confusion in his own mind. Metaphorically, the incident relates to David's problem of coming to terms with the archetypal image of his own father, and to Dunstan's elucidation at the novel's conclusion, of the difference between David's 'real father' and the various father-figures who are essential elements in his growth toward self-discovery.

As an "advanced Feeling" type, who "does not...always share feeling or use it tenderly," but who understands it and is "very good at evoking and managing feeling in others," Caroline manipulates seemingly natural events which surround Leola's death. She suggests Dunstan's role as Leola's lover and attempts to undermine Netty's authority in the household by implicating her in Leola's death, creating a situation of dark intrigue. Caroline's childish yet clever machinations cause David to examine himself, and to view his mother in a new light, points on which Johanna elaborates:

At fourteen, you were no match for a girl of twelve who was an advanced Feeling Type. You were trying to think your way out of an extremely emotional situation. She was just interested in stirring things up and getting Netty under her thumb... She made you think of who you were. And she put your beautiful mother in a different perspective, as somebody over whom men might quarrel, and whom another woman might think it worthwhile to murder.

The archetypal image of his mother, like that of his father, is reflected in David's constant refrain, "my mother knew great unhappiness."
Johanna urges him to re-examine these pre-conceived projections, symbolized in his attitude toward his mother, and to reconsider her role in his real world and as an archetypal figure, in an attempt to resolve his ambiguous feelings. For David, as for Boy, Leola bears the attributes of the positive Anima: beauty, kindliness, a fairy-like quality; yet David's ultimate estimate of her reflects Boy's view of her as an unsuitable mate for an ambitious man. As a further instance of the patterns of behaviour which recur in Davies' novels, there is the analogy of David's adolescent worship of Judy Wolff; both David and Boy view their loves in an idealistic, romantic sense, as enchantresses. Significantly, David weaves fantasies about Judy, and the resulting impression of her is vague. David's enchantment precludes a clear vision of her; like Boy, who "several times...warned me against marrying a boyhood sweetheart", David "loved a projection of your own Anima". 

Mother was your father's Anima-figure, whom he had been so unfortunate, or so unwise, as to marry. No wonder she seemed weak, poor woman, with such a load to carry for such a man. And no wonder he turned against her, as you would probably have turned against poor Judy, if she had been so unfortunate as to fall into the clutch of such a clever thinker and such a primitive feeder as you are.

Those psychic opposites which have already been observed in Dunstan Ramsay and Boy Staunton are again evident in the personalities of David's "spiritual" father, Father Knopwood, and Boy, his "real" father, particularly in their attitudes toward sex, and specifically

46 Ibid., p. 190.
47 Ibid., p. 190.
to David's sexual initiation. Characteristically, as a philanderer in whose life "sex was so much of the grain...that he noticed it no more than the air he breathed", 48 it is Boy himself, in his determination that "little David must be manly in all things", 49 who arranges David's initiation into sex, with Boy's mistress, Myrrha Martindale. As an ironic variation of the mythic Oedipal pattern, David's sexual initiation is the most detailed and the most comic in Davies' novels. Its irony originates from the fact that, far from being a spiritual awakening, it has the opposite effect of alienating David from Judy Wolff, and from her parents, in their eyes he is the swordsman's son following in his father's footsteps. It is also a measure of David's naïveté and of the awe in which he holds his father that he remains unaware of the prearranged affair until it is revealed to him by his spiritual mentor, Father Knopwood. David is more willing to follow the advice of his father ("Why didn't I look a little lower down?") 50 in his relations with Judy Wolff, than that of Father Knopwood, and is alienated from Knopwood when he defines Boy's role as swordsman and as a corrupting influence in David's life:

Now you have had some skilful instruction in the swordsman-and-amorist game. What is it? Nothing but the cheeful trumpet-and-drum of the act of kind. Simple music for simple souls. Is that what you want with Judy? 51

Knopwood's ideal love is "a high condition of honour...a pattern of the spirit", 52 a reflection of those unpopular beliefs which modern

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48 *Fifth Business*, p. 213.
50 *The Manticore*, p. 147.
man tends to reject, in which the reality of faith is implicit: "God is not dead. And I can assure you God is not mocked". As a formative influence in David's individuation process, he symbolizes the spirituality which David cannot resolve for himself:

For him, God was here and Christ was now. He thought God was not mocked. I seemed to see God being mocked, and rewarding the mocker with splendid success, every day of my life.54

For Davies, however, the reality of faith has its source outside conventional religion, and implies a Jungian acceptance of the necessity of evil, as well as good, as a force to be reckoned with:

Orthodox Christianity has always had for me the difficulty that it won't come, in what is for me a satisfactory way, to grips with the problem of evil..... evil is always the other thing; it is something which is apart from perfection, and man's duty is to strive for perfection. I could not reconcile that with such experience of life as I had, and the Jungian feeling that things tend to run into one another, that what looks good can be pushed to the point where it becomes evil, and that evil very frequently bears what can only be regarded as good fruit....made enormous sense to me.55

David's lack of charity, in which he dismisses Knopwood as a homosexual, and cannot forgive him "for trying to blacken Father", is an aspect of his unconscious or Shadow self, consisting of "those qualities and impulses he denies in himself but can plainly see in other people."57 Yet this Shadow side must be recognized and integrated

53 Ibid., p. 185.
54 Ibid., p. 193.
55 Cited in Donald Cameron, Conversations with Canadian Novelists (Toronto, 1973), p. 41.
56 The Manticore, p. 186.
57 Man and His Symbols, p. 174.
before he can achieve individuation. This hidden self is also evident in David's opinion of Matey, Netty's brother, who typifies those traits which he finds most detestable, and which he fears in his own character:

Matey's struggle to qualify as a Chartered Accountant pretty much paralleled my own studies for the Bar, but of course in Netty's eyes everything had been made easy for me, whereas he did it the hard way. Meritorious Matey! But when I met him, which was as seldom as decency allowed, I always thought he was a loathsome little squirt. 58

This Shadow self recalls Davies' Marchbanks persona, whose comic satire is often an expression of those less inhibited aspects of Davies' own personality, and which is later coupled in his novels with a sense of the tragic, and a recognition of the presence of both good and evil in the world, the "perception of shadows" 59 with which the humorist must come to terms.

Another archetypal figure, the Friend, is manifested in David's childhood toy bear, Felix; as interpreted by Johanna: "He was a loving friend, but because of your own disposition, he was very much a thinking, considering friend." 60 David's "battle with trolls" is metaphorically his recognition of these archetypes of the inner Self which are often projected onto familiar people and objects, obscuring their true nature. Johanna's role, in part, is to be "the bearer of your projections". 61 Evidence of this emerges in David's dramatic changes of attitude toward her, ranging from indifference, to distaste, to love, as he resurrects those real and archetypal images which appear

58. The Manticore, p. 122.
60. The Manticore, p. 123.
61. Ibid., p. 124.
in his dreams as the Shadow, the Friend, the Anima, and others.

Johanna emerges in his dream as a sibyl leading a lion (actually a mythical manticore with David's face) on a chain; the manticore, the central symbol of the novel, is "a fabulous creature with a lion's body, a man's face, and a sting in his tail, and like Felix, symbolizes David's repressed, instinctual animal nature. In David's dream, the manticore is a noble creature, but possibly dangerous and only human in part... The undeveloped feelings are touchy — very defensive. The manticore can be extremely dangerous. Sometimes he is even described as hurling darts from his tail... Not a bad picture of you in court, would you say? Head of a man, brave and dangerous as a lion, capable of wounding with barbs? But not a whole man, or a whole lion, or a merely barbed opponent. A manticore. The Unconscious chooses its symbolism with breath-taking virtuosity.

To the creative artist — the poet, the novelist — the Anima is analogous to Robert Graves' White Goddess. While she appears differently to each artist, her function is the same: to bestow her gifts on the deserving, and as easily to withdraw them from those who exploit her, as the humorist who is unable to achieve his climactic discovers when he turns to mechanical humour to maintain his reputation.

As an aspect of the mythic pattern of the psyche, the Anima may be ambiguous, concealed in either a positive or a negative guise. In David's childhood, Netty Quelch, the Stauntons' housekeeper, is seen as a healing figure, breathing life into David's frail body. Later, she becomes an "afreet", an "evil power" in the Staunton household.

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62 Ibid., p. 158.
64 Ibid., p. 17.
a power which she gains through her knowledge of the "terrible" secrets from which David and Caroline are excluded.

As women in David's dreams have been negative Animas, a reflection of his negative view of women in general, and a projection of his Shadow self, as also this Shadow side is projected on the various mentors or Magus-figures in David's life: Dunstan Ramsay, Father Knopwood, even Pargetter, his "father in art", are geniuses of a sort, but flawed geniuses. Like David, they also possess physical or psychic handicaps. In Dunstan, the eccentric schoolmaster with the wooden leg, David retains the public view of him as "a man who missed his way in life", an image which Dunstan refutes in Fifth Business. Father Knopwood "wanted to manipulate people; he wanted to make them good, and he was sure he knew what was good". David rejects his father's attempts to manipulate him, to remake him in his own image. In the blind Pargetter, he finds his most "powerful formative influence":

Exactitude, calm appraisal, close reasoning applied to problems which so often had their beginning in other people's untidy emotions acted like balm on my hurt mind.... I wanted to be melted down, purged of dross, and remoulded in a new and better form; Pargetter was just the man to do it.

Yet Pargetter's flaw is, in a legal sense, unforgivable: he neglects to make his own will, possibly indicating a fear of death on his part.

Still, all these Magus-figures achieve self-knowledge to some extent. Only Boy Staunton, who has the outward trappings of per-

65 Ibid., p. 196.
66 Ibid., p. 208.
67 Ibid., p. 193.
68 Ibid., p. 207.
69 Ibid., pp. 195-96.
fection, is an incomplete individual. It is symptomatic of Boy's romanticism, his desire to add prestige to the accountrements of wealth, that he goes in pursuit of his mythic ancestors and ironically discovers his real ancestor, Maria Ann Dymock, a domestic servant whose illegitimate child is David's grandfather; thus, as David is the son of a swordsman, Boy is the son of a bastard. Yet Maria Ann is a woman of no mean courage, defying her persecutors and resourcefully seeking a better life in Canada for her child. And David draws upon the courage of his ancestor as a source of strength at a crucial moment in his life, just as Dunstan finds spiritual guidance in Mary Dempster. There is a strong resemblance in these two women, not only in their first names and initials, but also in the elements of saintliness which both possess; also, because of their promiscuity they have been reviled and ostracized, and repudiated by their own sons. And Boy, always the external man concerned with his public image, following his presaging remark, "we're probably bastards", is not amused when the reality is made known to him.

David must inevitably come to terms with the ideal of his father, an archetypal image which he has formed over the years, as he observes Boy's decline and fall following his remarriage to Denyse:

'It disgusted and grieved me to see Father being filed and pounded down to meet that inordinate woman's idea of a fit candidate for ceremonial office.... He became an unimaginative woman's creation. Delilah had shorn his locks and assured him he looked much neater and cooler without them. He gave her his soul, and she transformed it into a cabbage.'

\[70\] Ibid., p. 197.

\[71\] Ibid., p. 233.
The roles of David's other "fathers" as guides in his search for self-knowledge must be recognized, and in this dilemma David draws on the insightful advice of Dunstan Ramsay, David's former teacher and a man closely linked with the Staunton family as Boy's personal friend and even as substitute father to the Staunton children:

Every man who amounts to a damn has several fathers, and the man who begat him in lust or drink or for a bet or even in the sweetness of honest love may not be the most important father. The fathers you choose for yourself are the significant ones. But you didn't choose Boy, and you never knew him. No, no man knows his father.... What lives is a notion, a fantasy, a whim-wham in your head that you call Father, but which never had anything seriously to do with the man you attached to it.\(^72\)

Recognition of those archetypal images which are part of each individual's psyche, and ultimately recognition of the totality which is the Self, necessitates what Jung terms "the realization of the shadow",\(^73\) that hidden side which may be positive or negative, but nevertheless must be integrated into the total personality; it implies that evil, as well as good, is a part of the individual. The Jungian view of evil and its effects as a reality with which the individual must come to grips, is a necessary stage in the individuation process, and thematically the problem of evil is an important one for Davies, as he has indicated in his view on religion.

David's choice of law as a career, specifically criminal law, arises from his fascination with the power of evil and its effect on those who are possessed by it, like Bill Unsworth: Bill's senseless

\(^{72}\)Ibid., p. 261.

\(^{73}\)Cited in Man and His Symbols, p. 174.
act of defiance, in which he leads David and other boys from a summer camp to wreck a cottage belonging to strangers, and defecates on family photographs, is an instance of the uncontrollable daemonic element in pure evil:

...So far as I can judge...he is simply being as evil as his strong will and deficient imagination will permit. He is possessed, and what possesses him is Evil.\textsuperscript{74}

There is an analogy here between the power of evil and the sense of humour as Davies interprets it: both stem from the unconscious, and being daemonic, those who are given these powers are also possessed by them. Ultimately no theory can fully explain the source of evil, any more than the source of humour can be explained:

The search for the sense of humour is as fruitless and as enduring as the hunt for the unicorn; the really wise man knows that the unicorn, being no reality but a life-enhancing myth, must never be hunted, and may only be glimpsed by the well-disposed and the lucky; it cannot be captured, and it is encountered only by indirection. He who insists on hunting the unicorn will certainly discover, when at last he is sure that the fabulous creature is in his net, that he has snared a laughing jackass.\textsuperscript{75}

David discovers the prototype of the criminal mind in Jimmy Veale, an unrepentant small-time crook and petty thief, sentenced to hang for the robbery and murder of an old woman; in his hanging the darker or Shadow side of the law emerges:

Jimmy's evil had infected us all - had indeed spread far beyond his prison until something of it touched everybody in his country. The law had been tainted by evil, though its great import was for good...

\textsuperscript{74} The Manticore, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{75} A Voice from the Attic, pp. 250-51.
But it would be absurd to attribute so much power to Jimmy, who was no more than a fool whose folly had become the conduit by which evil had poured into so many lives. When I visited Jimmy in prison I had sometimes seen on his face a look I knew, the look I had seen on the face of Bill Unsworth as he squatted obscenely over a pile of photographs. It was the look of one who has laid himself open to a force that is imincible to man, and whose power to loose that force upon the world is limited only by his imagination, his opportunities, and his daring.

As Dunstan Ramsay's fascination with saints emerges out of his choice of history as a study which would show him how the world works, and his interest in "the oddly recurrent themes of history, which are also the themes of myth",77 likewise David's fascination with the criminal mind is an outgrowth of his choice of law as a career:

I wanted to be master of my own craft and I wanted a great craft. Also, I wanted to know a great deal about people, and I wanted a body of knowledge that would go as far as possible to explain people.78

Although history and the law cannot provide complete answers for Dunstan and David, they do reveal the mythical elements which are common to the roles of the criminal and the saint: as hard-core criminals like Jimmy are in a sense receptors of a power much greater than themselves, saints (symbolized in Mary Dempster), also possess powers beyond the ordinary, notably those irrational elements which appeal to the unconscious in Dunstan and David, leading to Dunstan's involvement with Mary as his personal saint, and allowing David to relish his proximity to evil without becoming absorbed by it:

I have consciously played the Devil's Advocate, and

77 Fifth Business, p. 133.
78 The Manticore, p. 193.
I must say I have enjoyed it. I like the struggle, and I had better admit that I like the moral danger. I am like a man who has built his house on the lip of a volcano. Until the volcano claims me I live, in a sense, heroically.  

It is this heroic self, his Persona, which David displays to the world, and which distances him from others, resembling the egoism which he discerns in Magnus Eisengrim: "He wants people to be in awe of him and at a distance; so do I". David has embellished and embroidered this Persona with a commanding courtroom style and a reputation as an alcoholic, which protects him from incursions which would shatter his illusion. It is a side of him which Pargetter has foreseen as a symptom of David's crisis in middle life: "You think the world is your idea... and if you don't understand that and check it now it will make your whole life a gigantic hallucination." Having distinguished himself in his chosen field, he is now also worthy as a man in his father's eyes, and it is this trait which Johanna is quick to point out:

In fact, you created a romantic Persona that successfully rivalled that of the rich, sexually adventurous Boy Staunton without ever challenging him on his own ground.  

David's "anamnesis... a reassessment of some personal, profound experience" in his life, brings him to the stage in his analysis where he must make a choice to continue his analysis with Johanna,

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79 Ibid., p. 226.
80 Ibid., p. 257.
81 Ibid., p. 242.
82 Ibid., p. 232.
83 Ibid., pp. 234-35.
progressing from the comprehension of "who you are" to understanding "what you are";\textsuperscript{84} or, alternatively, to seek his own answers. In terms of the dream metaphor in which a treasure awaits him at the bottom of a staircase, his choice lies between venturing beyond the familiar world where he finds security and into an unknown world, but a world which promises much.

Again, the dream in which his "father" bares his "back parts"\textsuperscript{85} demonstrates the virtuosity with which the Unconscious reveals itself, and is also a revelation of the sense of humour which stems from the Unconscious, in which the hidden side of the dreamer is revealed:

I believe that you have, in a literal sense, seen the end of Mr. Justice Staunton. The old Troll King has lost his trappings. No court, no robes, a sense of kindness and concern, a revelation of that part of his anatomy he keeps nearest to the honoured Bench, and which nobody has ever attempted to invest with awe and dignity.... If he should come again, as he well may, at least you have seen him with his trousers down....\textsuperscript{86}

David's analysis has also "sharpened my already razorlike ethical sense",\textsuperscript{87} allowing him to recognize the worst in himself, and to view the world more objectively than his carefully-constructed persona allowed. He is too pragmatic however, to interpret his meeting with Dunstan, Liesl and Eisengrim as anything other than "coincidence";\textsuperscript{88} the intuitive Dunstan, on the other hand, views it

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 236.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p. 237.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p. 238.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p. 240.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 250.
as part of a mythic pattern, and coincidences as a "spiritual sort of puns". 89 David's first impression of Liesl, is appropriately, like Dunstan's, that of an "ogress" 90 or devil-figure who also displays a charming side. Sorgenfrei, the "enchanted castle" which captures his imagination, is, like Liesl,

....a fascinating monstrosity.... One might think the architect had gained all his previous experience illustrating Grimm's fairy stories.... Yet, on second glance, it seems all to be meant seriously, and the architect was obviously a man of gifts, for though the house is big, it is still a house for people to live in and not a folly. 91

Containing elements of the mythic and the real, Sorgenfrei is a kind of resting place in David's spiritual journey. The name Sorgenfrei, "free of care", also, despite its monstrosity, denotes an acceptance by David of a world which lies beyond his hitherto subjective world. David's Sorgenfrei episodé also provides him with a multi-levelled interpretation of the Brazen Head's answer to his question: "Who killed Boy Staunton?". Liesl, as the Brazen Head, cautions him:

You must not interpret too closely.... You know there are always things that fit almost any enquirer .... 'The woman he knew - the woman he did not know' .... I would have said the woman he knew was your mother, and the woman he did not know was your stepmother. He felt guilty about your mother, and the second time he married a woman who was far stronger than he had understood.... I have a tiny gift in this sort of thing; that was why Eisengrim trusted me to speak for the Head; maybe I sensed something - because one does, you know, if one permits it. But don't brood on it and try to make too much of it. Let it go. 92

Eisengrim admits he is "the man who granted his inmost wish" 93

89 Ibid., p. 253.
90 Ibid., p. 245.
92 Ibid., pp. 255-56.
93 Ibid., p. 259.
- Boy's wish to escape from a life which had become oppressive. For Magnus, "the woman he did not know" was his mother, Mary Dempster. Dunstan, however, as an insider in relation to Boy and Leola, and an intuitive type, offers an alternative interpretation:

Who killed Boy Staunton? Didn't the Head say, 'Himself, first of all?' ..... We determine the time of our death, and perhaps the means. As for the 'usual cabal' I myself think 'the woman he knew and the woman he did not know' were the same person - your mother. He never had any serious appraisal of her weakness or her strength. She had strength, you know, that he never wanted or called on.... When we have linked our destiny with somebody, we neglect them at our peril. But Boy never knew that. He was so well graced so gifted, such a genius in his money-spinning way, that he never sensed the reality of other people. Her weakness galled him, but her occasional shows of strength shamed him.

Dunstan himself is "the inevitable fifth, who was keeper of his conscience and keeper of the stone" (the stone which is found in Boy's mouth when he drowns, and which David now possesses). Dunstan advises David:

Don't cling to it as if you owned it. I did that. I harboured it for sixty years, and perhaps my hope was for revenge. But at last I lost it, and Boy got it back, and certainly you will lose it. None of us counts for much in the long, voiceless inert history of the stone.

Since primitive times, the Self has been symbolized in stones and their many shapes, as embodiments of the life-force of the universe, and links between the spiritual and material worlds:

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94 Ibid., p. 259.
95 Ibid., p. 260.
96 Ibid., p. 262.
97 Ibid., p. 262.
For while the human being is as different as possible from a stone yet man's innermost centre is in a strange and special way akin to it.... In this sense the stone symbolizes what is perhaps the simplest and deepest experience - the experience of something eternal that man can have in those moments when he feels immortal and unalterable.

The stone can thus be interpreted as symbolic of the primal, archetypal world with which David must come to terms.

It is Liesl who urges David to make his own inner journey, which is really the only heroic quest remaining to modern man: "The modern hero is the man who conquers in the inner struggle. How do you know you aren't that kind of hero?" 99 As a kind of devil-figure, Liesl's "metier" 100 is to "shake up" thinkers like Dunstan and David, and in this sense she is an Anima to both, introducing them to the irrational side of life, and enabling them to see the ambiguity in man's nature; as Knopwood believes that "God is here and Christ is now", so Liesl provides the opposite and complementary view that "Odin is here and Loki is now". 101 Both good and evil must be acknowledged if the individual is to achieve completion. Recognition of this reality is a necessary part of the heroic struggle.

David's visit with Liesl to the cave where man's primitive ancestors worshipped bears, is his initiation into the spiritual self, his rebirth resulting from "a re-entry and return from the womb of mankind". 102 It is literally a descent and return from the underworld.

98 *Man and His Symbols*, p. 2241.
99 Ibid., pp. 266-67.
100 Ibid., p. 268.
101 Ibid., p. 267.
102 Ibid., p. 268.
and is thus a part of the mythic pattern of the individuation journey:

We stand where men once came to terms with the facts of death and mortality, and continuance.... They worshipped the bear and felt themselves better and greater because they had done so. Compared with this place the Sistine Chapel is of yesterday. But the purpose of both places is the same.... Does this place give you no sense of the greatness and indomitability and spiritual splendour of man? Man is a noble animal, Davey. Not a good animal; a noble animal.103

On his return journey, David must draw on his inner resources, and on the courage of his ancestor, Maria Ann Dymock, to see him through a journey in which he experiences the imminence of death itself prior to his rebirth into the sunshine of a Christmas eve.

David's emergence from the bear cave, in which he senses "a glimmering of something better",104 is a prelude to his acknowledgement of the inner Self, and a coming to terms, like Dunstan, with his personal devil, embodied again in the enigmatic Liesl. David's spiritual adventure is also part of a mythic pattern which has its origin in the legend of the Irish monk Gallus and his deal with the bear which shares his cave, and which shows us that we must all "make a working arrangement with the bear that lives with us, because otherwise we shall starve or perhaps be eaten by the bear".105

While David has come to terms with the mythical and the real patterns which have influenced his own development, and is able to view his father in a more objective light (finalized in a sense by Dunstan's symbolic tossing of the fatal stone over the mountainside), David's

103 Ibid., p. 273.
104 Ibid., p. 276.
105 Ibid., p. 279.
final dream also intimates that his story is incomplete, and that he will seek the treasure which awaits him, guided by a woman whose face is obscured, but who may be either Liesl or Johanna.

David's individuation process has thus become a reality, and no longer something which he, as modern man, would reject as fantasy. In his recognition of the darker side of the personality, David has, like Davies the humorist, passed his climacteric, and is now enabled to move toward a triumphant later phase in his life, aware of his own value and uniqueness. In World of Wonders, the final novel in the Deptford trilogy, Davies proclaims the life which is open to a world full of romance and mystery, a recognition of the glory of the unfettered human spirit, which marks the ultimate resolution of the central problem of his early novels, the depiction of the inner life and humanity of his characters.
CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters of my thesis, I have discussed Robertson Davies' transformation as a comic novelist in the light of his theory of the humorist's climacteric. The dramatic Marchbanks persona with its strong emphasis on the witty, rhetorical style of the classical essayists is carried over to some extent into the earlier Salterton novels, signified in the offstage omniscient voice and theatrical utilization of comic vignettes and caricatures. In Davies' later novels, however, the inner lives of his protagonists are explored through their intensely personal viewpoints, indicating a recognition by the comic novelist of the darker or Shadow side of the personality and a sense of the tragic which are an integral part of the humorist's climacteric.

While the basic outline of my thesis was formed before the publication of World of Wonders, and the novel itself adds little that is new to the discussion, it does, however, serve to tie together many of the thematic threads and to elaborate certain themes intrinsic to the earlier Deptford novels. In this context, I propose to refer to World of Wonders in relation to the Deptford trilogy as a whole and its significance to Davies' growth as a comic novelist. As with the journeys of Dunstan Ramsay and David Staunton to individuation, the final novel of the trilogy is relevant in its concern with the fate
of Paul Dempster, the callow Upper Canadian youth, and his transformation into the illusionist and magician Magnus Eisengrim: "How had he come by this new self, and where had he acquired this tasteful, beautiful entertainment?" And the nagging question: "Who killed Boy Staunton?" is finally drawn out of Magnus by Dunstan Ramsay, who has been instrumental as fifth business in Paul's fate and is now an intimate friend. Dunstan is a sort of confessor in the novel, supported by the debating and questioning of a chorus-like group which includes Liesl as Magnus' apprentice in art, and the T.V. crew making a film on the life of Robert Houdin in which Magnus stars. The novel itself is chiefly a confessional monologue which serves as the sub-text to the film. Thus World of Wonders resembles The Manticore in its narrative style, but its roots derive from Fifth Business and from the fateful snowballing incident which sets off the chain of events resulting in these interconnected novels.

Through the central consciousness of Magnus Eisengrim and his initiation into good and evil, World of Wonders marks a reaffirmation of Davies' recurring theme of the free, creative spirit unencumbered by formal education ("a shield against experience"), but open to the wonders of life and gifted with the Magian World View, a Spenglerian theory which incorporates the Jungian view of the religious experience and the theory of individuation:

It was a sense of the unfathomable wonder of the invisible world that existed side by side with a hard recognition of the roughness and cruelty and

2 World of Wonders (Toronto, 1975), p. 18.
day-to-day demands of the tangible world. It was a readiness to see demons where nowadays we see neuroses, and to see the hand of a guardian angel in what we are apt to shrug off ungratefully as a stroke of luck. It was religion, but a religion with a thousand gods, none of them all-powerful and most of them ambiguous in their attitude toward man. It was poetry and wonder which might reveal themselves in the dunghill that lurks in poetry and wonder. It was a sense of living in what Spengler called a quivering cavern-light which is always in danger of being swallowed up in the surrounding, impenetrable darkness.³

There is the sense of individual helplessness against fate and the forces of good and evil, symbolized in Magnus' abduction and journey toward the Self: "It was as if I were being thrust toward something I did not know by something I could not see".⁴ Interwoven with this journey is the dilemma of the egoist in coping with the Shadow self, personified in Eisengrim who is cast in various roles under different names before achieving selfhood. Metaphorically, these roles relate to Davies' experimentation with novelistic techniques, and his problems with character development in his growth toward the humorist's climacteric, ranging from the egoistic Marchbanks persona to the depth of character and insight personified in his later protagonists, in which the darker or Shadow self emerges.

The tensions exemplified in the good-evil polarities, as in the previous Deptford novels, give World of Wonders its strong narrative thrust, and the good-evil ambiguity of life itself reinforces Davies' theory that humour, like tragedy, knows no limits:

³Ibid., pp. 323-24.
freaks who also possess human frailties, is in a sense Davies' physical realization of the good-evil ambiguity, as is Dunstan's "first encounter with a particular kind of reality, which my religion, my upbringing, and the callowly-romantic cast of my mind had declared obscene," in Mary Dempster's submission to the tramp which also results in his miraculous conversion.

As in his earlier novels and essays, the theory of humour is discussed at some length in World of Wonders; Dunstan argues from the theological stance that humour is perhaps

...one of the most brilliant inventions of the Devil...it diminishes the horrors of the past, and it veils the horrors of the present, and therefore it prevents us from seeing straight, and perhaps from learning things we ought to know.

Liesl, however, as Devil-figure, retorts:

Humour is quite as often the pointer to truth as it is a cloud over truth...at the time of the Creation, the Creator displayed his masterpiece, Man, to the Heavenly Host, and only the Devil was so tactless as to make a joke about it. And that was why he was thrown out of Heaven, with all the angels who had been unable to suppress their laughter. So they set up Hell as a kind of joker's club, and thereby complicated the universe in a way that must often embarrass God.

A third figure, Roland Ingestree, the BBC man who represents a kind of nemesis from Magnus' past, lends support to the good-evil ambiguity symbolized in the sense of humour; for him, religion has

...no humour.... Whereas the Devil, when he is represented in literature, is full of excellent jokes and we can't resist him because he and his jokes make so much sense.... If the Devil had not existed, we

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5 Fifth Business, p. 56.

6 World of Wonders, p. 92.

7 Ibid., p. 92.
should have had to invent him. He is the only explanation of the appalling ambiguities of life. I give you the Devil."^{8}

The notion that each of us is fifth business is also extended in *World of Wonders* in the different roles that Magnus is called upon to play in his career. The wronged innocent, forced into a sort of marriage with Willard the conjuror which is consummated in hell, later becomes a kind of Mephistopheles who allows Willard to cling to life when he succumbs to addiction, thus gaining power over him. Later, as a protege and "double" in Sir John Tresise's theatre company, Magnus undergoes "a long apprenticeship to an egoism."^{9} Again, as with Boy Staunton, one senses the inability of an egoist like Sir John, despite his courage and suffering, to face impending old age and death, and who fears the Shadow self which he finds in Magnus: "...a seedy little carnie, with the shifty eyes of a pickpocket and the breath of somebody who eats the cheapest food ..."^{10} A clear distinction is made in the novel between an egoist and an egotist, analogous to the change in the humorist in middle life and his awareness of the need to control the daemonic aspect of humour:

An egotist is a self-absorbed creature, delighted with himself and ready to tell the world about his enthralling love affair. But an egoist, like Sir John, is a much more serious being, who makes himself, his instincts, yearnings, and tastes the touchstone of every experience. The world, truly, is his creation. Outwardly, he may be courteous, modest, and charming ... but beneath the velvet is the steel; if anything comes along that will not yield to the steel, the steel will retreat from it and ignore

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^{8} Ibid., p. 93.

^{9} Ibid., p. 191.

^{10} Ibid., p. 190.
its existence. The egotist is all surface; underneath is a pulpy mess and a lot of self-doubt. But the egotist may be yielding and even deferential in things he doesn't consider important; in anything that touches his core he is remorseless.11

As Sir John's double, Magnus recognizes that Shadow "wolf" in his nature which is symbolized in the name Eisengrim, and his need to devour all he is taught even at the cost of his mentors. Yet his admiration for Sir John and his adoration of Milady, his Anima-figure, enables him to keep his Shadow self under control, and eventually to come to terms with it. Both Magnus and Boy Staunton demonstrate a need to possess things and especially people. Unlike Magnus, however, Boy "had lived facing the sun, and he had no real comprehension of the shadow-wolf that loped after him".12

The portrait of Magnus in World of Wonders contrasts with Dunstan's view of him in Fifth Business, that "his compelling love affair was with himself".13 For Liesl, however, Magnus' ability to bring life to mechanical objects symbolizes for her the world of wonders and "I apprenticed myself to it".14 Even her adopted surname, Vitzliputzli, derives from the Faust legend, in which the least of the demons by that name attends on the great magician. The view of Magnus in World of Wonders is a restatement of the difference between the private and the public image, between the mythical and the real, depicting

11 Ibid., pp. 191-92.
12 Ibid., p. 347.
14 World of Wonders, p. 324.
...what a gulf lies between the reality of a magician with the Magian World View and such a pack of lies as Robert-Houdin's bland, bourgeois memoirs. You have seen, too, what a distance there is between the pack of lies Ramsay wrote so artfully as a commercial life of our dear Eisengrim, and the sad little boy from Deptford.15

World of Wonders also clears up the mystery of Boy Staunton's death, and elaborates on Davies' theory that out of evil, good may emerge, and what is seen as evil may produce good results. With his Calvinistic turn of mind, Dunstan believes Magnus has murdered Boy to avenge his mother's death and the terrible world into which he was tossed. Magnus, on the other hand, views the snowballing incident as a blessing which led him into a world of wonders which, as a Baptist parson's son, would normally have been denied him. In effect, he owes his Magian World View to Staunton. Boy's confession to Magnus which reveals his depth of despair despite his outward success, also provides a view of Dunstan as envious and a seeker of vengeance, far different from the self-portrait in Fifth Business: Dunstan displays evidence of a vindictive nature, jealous of Boy's success and of his marriage to Leola, and keeping the fateful stone as a reminder of Boy's wilful act. Ultimately, Boy sees Dunstan's friendship as a betrayal of confidence, while his own success symbols are meaningless, and his "truly mythological wish"16 drives him to self-destruction.

Davies' recognition of the central problem of characterization in his novels, the egoistic stance of his protagonists, is integrated with the author's recognition of that essential humanity necessary

15Ibid., p. 332.
to the successful comic novel, embodied in the need for humility as well as egoism in order to achieve self-awareness, a coming to terms with the darker or Shadow self. His problems with characterization have been particularly evident in his treatment of the lower classes, whose dialogue and behaviour tend to be stereotyped, and are largely caricatures. While Davies' characterization is truest when he observes the eccentricities and preoccupations of the Canadian middle class establishment, that group with which he is most familiar, there is also a revelation of a broadening vision encompassing basic human values, a vision which includes the underside of life realized in the carnival troupe with its passions and human failings, in which he confronts with empathy and wit, a world far removed from his own.

Liesl's final epithet directed toward Dunstan, the middle class schoolmaster: "Egoist!" is in a sense Davies' ultimate recognition of this central problem, the need to come to terms with the darker Self, and marks an affirmation of his growth as a comic novelist, in which he works his way through the various stages of egoism to the inner spirit of his protagonists.

When studied as interconnected works, the Deptford trilogy projects that multi-levelled reality which Davies has referred to in the later works of Peter DeVries, including Reuben, Reuben and The Cat's Pajamas and Witches Milk, in which the central protagonists are revealed from different perspectives, from which the Shadow selves emerge. While the tones of the novels remain essentially comic, their vision is heightened by a sense of tragedy and a concern with the spiritual elements in life which raises them above the level of mundane and mechanical humour.
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